

Embracing Vulnerability: A Drama Analysis of the Johannine Prologue and Crucifixion Scenes

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Declaration

By submitting this dissertation, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the sole author thereof (save to the extent explicitly otherwise stated), that reproduction and publication thereof by Stellenbosch University will not infringe any third-party rights and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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Abstract

The author of the Fourth Gospel introduces Jesus' life as a display of glory (δόξα), communally witnessed (θεάομαι) by its audience (1:14). Moreover, the same author testifies of an *experience* of the divine (which was heard, seen with the eyes, looked upon, and touched with the hands – 1 Jn. 1:1), and which asks for a response from its audience (Jn. 20:30-31). Various scholars have speculated about the possible link between the Fourth Gospel and drama, arguing that its structure, characterisation, dialogue, plotline, and many other elements mimic the ancient Greek drama to strengthen its rhetorical impact on the audience. If such a connection is valid, there ought to be a methodological lens with which one could read the Fourth Gospel to explore and enhance its dramatic elements and their rhetorical impact. While the exegetic field of biblical performance criticism has done much to bring the performative and oral elements of biblical texts into the conversation, an attempt to formulate a methodology for a drama analysis of the text still needs to be made. Moreover, while the Johannine prologue identifies the protagonist as the one who will reveal God through the drama (1:18) and display his glory (1:14b), the narrator also describes his entrance into the earthly realm with the word σάρξ (flesh – 1:14a): a term denoting frailty and vulnerability. This peculiar marrying of σάρξ and δόξα seems to play itself out through the life of Jesus and climaxes at his death on a Roman cross. The Fourth Gospel was probably composed in a milieu where a glorious and divine display would have been marked by honour, power, strength, masculinity, health, resilience, control, and prosperity. Considering this, the use of σάρξ, how it plays into the plot and divine performance of the protagonist, and the effect thereof on a first-time hypothetical audience's satisfaction and understanding of the drama, could make for a rhetorically powerful analysis. This study, therefore, sets out to read the Fourth Gospel's prologue (as beginning) and crucifixion (as climax) through a drama lens in order to explore its point of view on vulnerability and the rhetorical effect thereof on a first-time hypothetical audience immersed in the first-century Mediterranean culture of honour, power, and dominance. The appropriation of biblical drama criticism holds the potential to illuminate the audience's own journey of vulnerability with the performance, and to instil hope in various vulnerable audiences, including the Johannine community and contemporary communities, as it affirms that vulnerability is included in the good and

abundant life (Jn. 10:10; 20:30-31) and that the glory of God is revealed in vulnerable vessels.

Opsomming

Die skrywer van die Johannese Evangelie identifiseer Jesus se lewe as 'n tentoonstelling van God se heerlijkheid (δόξα), wat deur die gehoor op 'n gesamentlike wyse besigtig word (θεάομαι – 1:14). Dieselfde skrywer getuig ook van 'n *ervaring* van die Goddelike (wat gehoor is, met die oog gesien is, na gekyk is, en met hande aangeraak is – 1 Joh. 1:1), wat 'n reaksie van die gehoor verlang (Joh. 20:30-31). Verskeie kenners het al gespekuleer oor die moontlike verband tussen die Vierde Evangelie en die drama, wat aan die Evangelie se struktuur, karakterisering, dialoog, storielyn, en verskeie ander elemente toegeskryf kan word. As so 'n verband geldig is, behoort dit moontlik te wees om die Evangelie met 'n drama-kritiese lens te lees. Waar die eksegetiese veld van bybelse voordragkritiek (*biblical performance criticism*) al soveel gedoen het om die voordrag-elemente en mondelinge dimensies van die teks as gespreksvennote te betrek, is die formulering van bybelse drama kritiek nog 'n ongedane taak. Terwyl die proloog die protagonis identifiseer as die een wat God (1:18) en God se heerlijkheid (1:14b) sal voordra, beskryf die verteller ook sy verskyning met die woord σάρξ (vlees – 1:14a): 'n term wat na swakheid en broosheid verwys. Hierdie vreemde samevoeging van σάρξ en δόξα is konstant sigbaar in Jesus se lewe en bereik 'n klimaks by sy dood aan 'n Romeinse kruis. Die Johannese Evangelie is waarskynlik geskryf in 'n milieu waar heerlijkheid en Goddelikheid met eer, mag, krag, manlikheid, gesondheid, veerkragtigheid en voorspoed verbind is. Met dit in gedagte, blyk dit belowend om die gebruik van σάρξ, hoe dit in die storielyn en protagonis se optrede funksioneer, en die retoriese effek daarvan op 'n eerste hipotetiese gehoor in die bogenoemde konteks te bestudeer. Hierdie studie beoog daarom om die Vierde Evangelie se proloog (as begin) en kruisiging (as klimaks) deur 'n drama lens te lees en daardeur die effek van die drama se perspektief op broosheid op 'n hipotetiese gehoor in die eerste-eeuse Mediterreense konteks van eer, mag en oorheersing te verken. Die toepassing van bybelse drama kritiek blyk belowend te wees om die gehoor se eie brose reis deur middel van voordrag uit te lig. So 'n verkenning beskik oor die potensiaal om hoop te skep tussen 'n verskeidenheid gehore – insluitend the Johannese gemeenskap en kontemporêre gehore, omdat dit bevestig dat broosheid deel van die goeie en oorfloedige lewe is (Joh. 10:10; 20:30-31) en dat die heerlijkheid van God in kruike van broosheid bekend gemaak word.

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See how rich he is: “*All things were made through him*” [1:3]. See how poor he is: “*The Word became flesh and dwelt among us*” [1:14]...

Who can fittingly ponder his riches? Let us ponder his poverty instead, in case being poor ourselves we may just be able to grasp it.

(Augustine, 2006:22-23)

Can you imagine a musicologist spending years sitting in libraries looking at scores but never hearing the music performed? Can you imagine theatre critics studying scripts but never seeing a performance of a play? Can you imagine how we biblical scholars have studied these texts for centuries without hearing them performed as stories and speeches? Can we imagine biblical scholars themselves performing these writings? The meaning of a text comes to bear at the point where it is performed.

(Rhoads, 2009:88)

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1. Setting the Stage

Even with a musical score full of markers of tempo and other dynamics, it is virtually impossible to imagine how alive the text becomes when experienced as a performance, with gestures, movement, facial expressions, tone of voice, and interaction with the audience (Horsley, 2013:xix).

1.1. Background and introduction

In my short, yet enriching journey with the Johannine Gospel, I have come to realise that Burrige's (2007:287) remark considering the Fourth Gospel being simple enough for a child to paddle in, yet complex enough for an elephant to swim deep, is anything but an exaggeration. In my Master's thesis, I explored Jesus' counter-ethos in light of the ancient Mediterranean societal world and found my perceptions on the Gospel radically challenged and enriched (De Milander, 2015). Moreover, I found that the methodology of narrative criticism brought the poetic witness of the Gospel alive and that the story of the text was exceptionally nuanced and artistically rich.

Upon reading biblical (and well established Johannine) scholar, Jo-Ann Brant's *Dialogue and Drama. Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (2004), my eyes were opened to the various dramatic components of the Johannine Gospel.¹ Brant (2004:3) argues that the author of the Fourth Gospel was familiar with the elements of the Greek drama and that the Gospel therefore intentionally resembles the Greek tragedy in order to have a certain rhetorical impact on its audience. Brant's analysis refers to the Fourth Gospel's dramatic structure (2004:16-73), illustrates how Johannine speech mirrors action (2004:74-158), discusses the Johannine cast and their characterisation (2004:159-232), and unpacks Jesus' death in the vocabulary of the ancient tragedy (2004:233-255). While Brant provides an effective overview of the Johannine Gospel and its mirroring of the ancient tragedy, her book does not aim to translate this approach into a working methodology for New Testament texts.

¹ While a drama is the enactment or performance of a story, the word "dramatic" can be used in two different ways. It can refer to something being drama-like or akin to drama, or it can be used as an adjective or adverb describing something which is exaggerated, artificial, thrilling, or tense (Keuris, 1996:2). Unless stated otherwise, the references to the word dramatic in this study imply the former interpretation.

Brant is not the only scholar who has identified the possible link between the Fourth Gospel and drama. Others like F.R.M. Hitchcock (1923), C.R. Bowen (1930), Milo Connick (1948), Stephen Smalley (1978:192-203), William Domeris (1983; 2018), S.A. Cummins (2008), Harold Attridge (2015), and Cathleen Conway (2015) have discussed this possible resemblance and its rhetorical effect(s).² Like Brant, these scholars have laboured hard to sketch a bigger picture of John and drama, but have not ventured to develop a relevant methodology for a drama analysis of the text.

In the last two decades, biblical interpretation has begun to make some room for approaches which take the oral and performative nature of texts more seriously. Davidson (2005:194) argues that ancient narratives have often been limited to their textual form in the past and have mostly been allowed to merely serve as literature and products of countless translations. The need for the *performance* and *experience* of these stories ought to be emphasised, as they were not only produced to be read, analysed and translated, but contain the potential to be to be *relived* and perhaps even *performed* (Rhoads, 2009:83). The small interest and formulation of methodologies which harness the performative aspects of biblical material is lamented by New Testament scholar and performance critic David Rhoads (2010:163-164) as a “gap in New Testament studies” which needs to be filled through the reorientation of methodologies and “a good measure of pioneering efforts”.

Scholars such as Tom Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, David Rhoads, and Holly Hearon have therefore begun to experiment with an exegetical avenue referred to as biblical performance criticism, which reads biblical texts as witnesses composed to be read out loud and even performed in front of faith communities and churches (see Maxey, 2012:1). This “paradigm shift from print medium to oral medium” (Rhoads, 2009:88) has opened the methodological possibilities of biblical exegesis. In an overview of the emerging field of performance criticism, Rhoads (2006b:172-173; see also 2009:94) mentions theatre and drama studies as a possible conversation partner in the development of fresh exegetical methodologies. Others who affirm the study of the Fourth Gospel through a drama lens include Cummins (2008:65) and Swanson (2009:133).

² Rhetoric can be defined as the art of using (mostly) speech or language to persuade others (Blackburn, 2008:317). The rhetorical effect therefore refers to the persuasive effect of the text on its audience.

The author of the Fourth Gospel introduces the protagonist's life as a display of glory (δόξα – 1:14) which the audience will witness in a theatrical fashion by using the verb θεάομαι, syntactically related to τὸ θέατρον (the word used for the ancient theatre – Carver, 2009:3; Louw & Nida, 1996; Worthen, 2000:3). Moreover, the same author testifies of an *experience* of the divine (which was heard, seen with the eyes, looked upon, and touched with the hands – 1 Jn. 1:1). The content of both these texts is thus far more than information, but a revelation of life which ought to be seen, heard, touched, and responded to by its audience (Jn. 20:30-31). Such markers reference a “live dramatic performance”, where the audience is invited to participate (Loubser, 2013:108). Rhoads (2009:83) emphasises this when he states that biblical witnesses were “not originally experienced as Scripture of inked pages but as oral stories and epic-like tales and speeches and drama”, which means that they were not read silently in isolation, but *performed* before faith communities, calling for a response. Rhoads (2009:84) therefore asserts that, in order to enrich our understanding of these biblical texts, something of their performance will have to be (re)constructed.

This potential experience is invited by the Gospel of John, which has the potential to speak not only to *readers*, but audiences. In her discussion of the language of the Fourth Gospel, Brant (2004:3) argues that the Gospel is unique in the sense that its language does not simply *tell*, but essentially *shows* something, which makes it dramatic. In order to facilitate a dramatic experience of the Johannine Gospel, a creative approach regarding its genre possibilities and methodologies towards the text, is needed.

Drama scholar and historian, John Styan (1975:27) emphasises that, in drama, “the experience is the meaning”. The heart of drama criticism is to engage the senses and hopefully create an experience that is more than words on paper: it is to become an exercise of seeing, hearing, feeling, smelling, tasting, and, ultimately, reflecting together with an audience who grapples with the story acted out in front of them. Green (1995:3) notes that the reading of a text as words on paper often problematises the communicative process, since it does not account for gestures, intonation, tone,³ et cetera, as these elements were conveyed by oral performers (Loubser, 2013:173), giving rise to an “emergent meaning” among audience members (Styan, 1975:27).

³ Horsley (2011:145) emphasises the importance of the tone of voice in the performance of biblical texts within ancient faith communities.

Hearon (2006:11) calls for new methodologies, arguing that there is a need to explore biblical texts “in terms of the interactions between a performer and an audience” in the hermeneutical discussion.⁴ In the same vein, Rhoads (2012:44) calls for hermeneutical experiences which seek to imagine “performer, performance, physical location, social context, audience participation, rhetorical impact, and so on”.

Moreover, while the prologue identifies the protagonist as the one who will reveal God through the drama (1:18) and display his glory (1:14), the narrator also describes his entrance into the earthly realm with the word σάρξ (1:14): a term familiar to a first-century audience, referring to “human existence in its frailty and vulnerability” (Milne, 1993:46). This peculiar marrying of flesh and glory seems to play itself out through the entire life of Jesus and climaxes at his death on a Roman cross (see Bruner, 2012:28; Neyrey, 2007:45; Reynolds, 2008:228-252).

For an audience immersed in the first-century context which held power (Conway, 2008a:39; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:77; Simmons, 2008:43-44), purity (Brant, 2011:7; DeSilva, 2000:248, 272; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:114), and wisdom (Scott, 1992:92) as divine attributes, the inclusion of the concept of flesh (and the vulnerability it entails) in a drama of a divine hero, would not be easy to grasp. Moreover, its culmination at the climatic crucifixion would be particularly antithetical to a first-century understanding of the divine, and a human life of abundance and honour (Thompson, 1988:34; see Aristotle, 1959:1.5.4; DeSilva, 2000:248).

Analogously, twenty-first century Western ideas regarding an abundant life are often marked by triumphalism, a way of thinking in which power, triumph, and perfection seem to be characteristics regarded as the norm (Hall, 2003:212-213). This way of thinking infiltrates the social, political, emotional, economic, and, especially theological dimensions of the lives of individuals and groups, often resulting in dangerous ideologies. Such thinking results in world views where suffering, vulnerability, and defeat can become problematic since they are regarded as antithetical to the ideals of being independent, prosperous, in control (especially physically – Reynolds, 2013:22), and out of risk of outsiders (Placher, 1994:5; see Root, 2014:247-248).

⁴ This does not mean that the story has no meaning until it is performed in front of a specific audience, but that specific audiences draw specific meanings from the dramas to make sense of their own worlds.

In light of such perceptions, the Fourth Gospel presents its audience with a possibly problematic portrait of a divine hero whose life and person are displays of God (1:18; 5:19; 14:9) and abundant life (10:10; 20:30-31). However, how the notion of flesh and vulnerability tie into these realities is for the audience to make sense of. It therefore seems like a worthwhile task to put the theme of vulnerability on the table in the drama analysis of the Gospel and to explore the effect(s) of the drama's point of view on the theme amidst a context where vulnerability was anything but embraced.

1.2. Problem statement

Considering the above information, the following problem statement came to be:⁵

1.2.1. Primary research question

How would a drama analysis of the Gospel of John influence our understanding of its rhetorical effect on a first-time hypothetical audience, particularly when the theme of vulnerability is considered?

1.2.2. Secondary research questions

- How is the methodological lens of drama and the theme of vulnerability invited by the Johannine text and how do they relate?
- What would the methodology of biblical drama criticism look like?
- What probable expectations would a first-time hypothetical audience residing in the first-century Mediterranean have of a drama with a divine hero?
- When reading the Johannine prologue and crucifixion scenes through a drama lens, what would be the responses of such a first-time hypothetical audience?
- When read through a drama lens, what would be the rhetorical effect(s) of the director's point of view on vulnerability on the first-time hypothetical audience, the Johannine community, and contemporary audiences?

1.3. Hypothesis

This study aims to explore the Fourth Gospel's point of view on the theme of vulnerability through a drama-critical reading of the Gospel. The proposition is that the drama analysis will open up the exegetical process to new interpretational and rhetorical possibilities, as it will highlight various often-hidden dramatic elements in the

⁵ The problem statement will be formulated in the form of primary and secondary research questions, which will serve as guiding lines for the layout of the study.

text and introduce the reader to the hypothetical audience's grappling with the story of the Gospel in a new way. This includes allowing the reader to experience the challenge of becoming the implied (or ideal) audience.

While the drama analysis does not promise a precise reconstruction of an ancient performance (see Rhoads, 1999:278), it aims to make the text come alive through a construction of a possible performance of the text by translating it into script format and speculating regarding a first-time hypothetical audience's reactions to the drama against the wider backdrop of the first-century Mediterranean. This will entail searching for clues inside the text regarding how it might have been performed (Rhoads, 2009:89).

Moreover, when the lens of vulnerability is considered, the drama analysis aims to illustrate the interwoven nature of glory and vulnerability in the Johannine plot and characterisation of Jesus, acknowledging vulnerability as not simply foundational to the human experience, but also as something embraced by the incarnate God and a vehicle for divine revelation and glory. The idea is to challenge perceptions of vulnerability as an enemy and mark of God's absence, to a potential friend which opens humanity up to the good and the communal (Culp, 2010:2-4; Eiesland, 1994:103; Reynolds, 2008:41).⁶ The appropriation of drama analysis holds the potential to illuminate the audience's journey of vulnerability, as they witness the incarnate life of ὁ λόγος in all his vulnerability and glory. This study therefore wishes to imaginatively reconstruct the Fourth Gospel as a dramatisation of "the ambiguity of human experience and the paradox of divine truth" (Brant, 2004:259).

The drama analysis will thus be a helpful tool with which to illuminate new dimensions of the text (including the theme of vulnerability) and will help to bring the grappling of the audience with the Gospel to the fore. Moreover, the study aims to explore new ways of reading other biblical narratives through a drama lens.

⁶ Labooy (2002:305) however warns against the extreme position where the suffering of the vulnerable becomes romanticised or encouraged. It is important to mention that this study in no way wishes to glorify suffering, victimisation, or injustice, but simply aims to explore the way in which the Jesus of the FG (and therefore the God of the FG) manifests glory in the form of vulnerability. Weaver (2009:11) stresses that glorifying Christ as passive victim can lead to a dangerous theology where victims of abuse can seem to be encouraged to embrace their situation since it mimics the same glorious suffering as their Lord Jesus.

1.4. Research design and methodology

Regarding the research design, this will be a non-empirical, exegetical study. Since the methodology to be appropriated for an analysis of the Fourth Gospel as drama seems to be in need of clearer formulation and demarcation, part of the focus of this study will be the development of a methodological tool with which to explore narrative biblical texts through the lens of drama criticism.⁷ This methodology, which will be referred to as biblical drama criticism, will use sentiments of the field of biblical performance criticism and engage modern drama or theatre criticism.⁸ Biblical performance criticism is a methodological movement which seeks to explore the performative nature of texts and the possible effects thereof on its audience (Rhoads, 2012:26). Scholars within the movement typically imagine the biblical text as storytelling (Hearon, 2009:24) or rhetorical speech (Rhoads, 2009:83), performed to a community of spectators. Drama or theatre criticism is a methodology used to analyse plays and dramas, focusing on the elements present on the stage and how they affect the audience (Styan, 1975:1). These elements include the setting and stage layout, atmosphere and lighting, sound, wardrobe, characterisation, and dialogue.

The desired outcome of drama criticism would be to explore the possible effects the Fourth Gospel could have had on a hypothetical audience experiencing it for the first time if performed as a drama, and then evaluate the invitation to become the implied⁹ (ideal) audience from that vantage point.¹⁰ The encounter between the performance and audience will therefore take the foreground in such an analysis, which means that the world in front of the text will be the main focus.¹¹

⁷ A narrative refers to any body of literature that tells a story (Powell, 1990:23). According to Powell (2010:240), this category is ideal for the study of the four Gospels, as it focuses on the texts and specifically on the stories within them.

⁸ Rhoads (2006b:172) argues that performance criticism can be merged with theatre and drama (which he uses interchangeably) to develop new methodologies with which biblical texts could be explored.

⁹ The word 'implied' refers to the perspective from and to which the work appears to be written. The implied author is the author's perspective as discerned from the text, which can differ from the perspective of the actual historical author, and the implied audience is the audience which will respond to the text as the implied author wills it (Powell, 2010:241). In a drama analysis, the hypothetical audience and their probable responses to the drama will take priority over that of the implied (or ideal) audience. The invitation to become the implied audience will only be explored after the drama reading (§8.3.). Moreover, rather than referring to an implied author, the drama analysis will refer to the director.

¹⁰ Similar to narrative criticism, where the possible rhetorical effect on the audience *reading* the text is considered (Powell, 2010:241).

¹¹ This reminds of Gadamer's (1975:269-274) sentiment that there is a fusion of two horizons when a text is received. In this fusion, the world of the text encounters the world of the audience.

As is expected from an approach that highlights the world in front of the text, an extensive study will not be done on the historical author or possible redactional processes that led to the Gospel (Green, 2010:10-13). Rather, the experience of a first-time hypothetical audience (a textually constructed and historically informed audience situated in the first-century Mediterranean when the FG was penned down) to the performance of the drama will be placed on the foreground.¹²

One of the biggest contributors to the field of performance criticism, Richard Horsley (2011:145), emphasises that, in order to imagine the text in performance, one needs to explore the text, the historical realities of the audience, and the tradition from which the performance speaks to resonate with the audience. For this, an overarching construction of the world of the first-time hypothetical audience will be provided with special attention given to ideas regarding vulnerability and what it would have meant to live an abundant and good life. In order to do this, socio-scientific criticism, which comments on wide and general sociological categories and tendencies of the first-century Mediterranean (see Rhoads, 2011:113; Barton, 2010:47; Loubser, 2013:93), will be appropriated.

Therefore, without assuming or implying that the Fourth Gospel was composed as a drama, it will be imaginatively read as one. Such an analysis serves to recognise the exchange between the director (the perspective from which the story seems to be portrayed – Keuris, 1996:76; Kreitzer, 1993:16; see Booth, 1983:71-75; Powell, 2010:241; Tovey, 1997:46) and audience. Moreover, the audience's engagement with elements of the drama, including plot, characterisation, theme(s), the auditive, and the visual will come under the magnifying glass.¹³ Moreover, throughout the drama analysis, the theme of vulnerability will take the forefront. This implies that the socio-scientific unpacking of the first-century Mediterranean world will pay special attention to the role of vulnerability in various societal categories and that the director's point of view on the theme of vulnerability will be evaluated throughout and after the drama analysis.

¹² It is important to mention upfront that the constructed hypothetical audience (which will be unpacked in ch.4) is in no way assumed to be the *actual* ancient audience of the FG or even the accurate reconstruction of such an audience. It remains a construction based on various sources which often *interpret* the ancient context in simplified and modernistic ways.

¹³ These will be unpacked in ch.3.

1.5. Demarcation and scope of study

The reason for choosing the Fourth Gospel for this analysis is twofold: the first reason is its unique dramatic artistry (far stronger than that of the Synoptics – Smalley, 1978:192; see Domeris, 1983, 2018), which makes it an excellent companion to drama criticism. According to Johnson (1999:531), the “whole drama of God’s relationship with humanity is played out” in the Fourth Gospel, with Jesus being the central character.¹⁴ It contains various dramatic effects such as strong themes, irony and symbolism (Culpepper, 1983:165-198; Johnson, 1999:533), and paradox and dualism (Barrett, 1982:98-115). The Fourth Gospel is also easily divided into smaller scenes, due to the author’s episodic writing style (Brant, 2011:13). This demarcation into scenes allows for a more detailed reading of smaller units.

While the methodology of drama criticism allows for the entire Johannine drama to be put under the magnifying glass, doing an in-depth drama analysis of all twenty-one chapters would take this study far beyond its scope. Although the entire Gospel of John will feature for the sake of coherence, the prologue (1:1-18) and two scenes surrounding the crucifixion (18:28-19:16 as Roman trial and 19:17-30 as crucifixion) will receive a close reading through the appropriation of drama analysis.¹⁵ In terms of dramatic structure, these specific scenes represent pinnacles in the Johannine drama: the prologue serves as an essential introduction which fashions the audience (Skinner, 2013:113) by orientating them towards the point of view of the director (Bruner, 2012:3).¹⁶ The trial and crucifixion scenes will be essential, as they function as the climax of the drama representing the heightened point of conflict (cf. Powell, 1990:33).¹⁷

Scenes are generally demarcated by entrances and exits, or shifts in time, location, or tone (Brant, 2011:13). These criteria will be used to demarcate the three scenes for

¹⁴ Beasley-Murray (1991:vii) refers to the story of Jesus as the climax of God’s dealings with his people.

¹⁵ For these three scenes, I have translated the Greek text into a stage-type script according to the guidelines provided in appendix A, “The stage-play script format” (p.246). For the overview of the rest of the drama, the English Standard Version will be used together with the Greek text.

¹⁶ The prologue thus prepares the audience to “be an audience,” since they are immediately initiated into the “privileged realm of knowing that makes irony possible” and oriented towards the story (Brant, 2004:17; cf. Myers, 2012:73). Ray (2002:37) writes of the prologue: “In its short span of eighteen verses, it states briefly what the whole of the Gospel will spell out over twenty-one chapters.” Therefore, the prologue becomes, what Michelini (1987:105) refers to as “the pre-conditions for the dramatic action” and serves as a vantage point from which the audience can interpret and experience the drama (Skinner, 2013:112).

¹⁷ See §§5.1.1 & 5.1.2 for a thorough motivation and demarcation of the chosen texts.

the drama analysis. The prologue is introduced by 1:1, which initiates the entire Johannine drama with the introductory phrase, 'Ev ἀρχῆ (‘‘In the beginning’’). The tone and setting remain relatively the same until 1:19, which marks the beginning of a new scene with the entrance of new characters (priests & Levites). A brief overview will be given of John 1:19-18:27,¹⁸ leading into the drama analysis of the next two scenes.

The second scene to be analysed will be 18:28-19:16, which portrays Jesus’ Roman trial before Pilate. The scene can be said to start with 18:28, since a new setting is announced (Pilate’s praetorium), and ends at 19:16, where Jesus is taken away from the praetorium to be crucified. 19:17 therefore marks a new scene which begins at Golgotha and ends with Jesus’ death as the climax in verse 30. From 19:31 (which indicates a new scene due to the change in temporal setting and mood), another overview of the rest of the drama (up to 21:25) will be given.¹⁹

The second reason for choosing the Fourth Gospel is the Gospel’s explicit connection of the divine and the human and the presence of both δόξα and σάρξ in the act of incarnation, where the divine takes on a fully human existence (Barrett, 1982:4) and is revealed by the protagonist (1:18; see Barrett, 1982:3; Thompson, 2001:6). The form of God’s revelation is described by the evangelist as σάρξ, which refers to the human condition, including weakness, frailty, and mortality (Eklund, 2015:53). The Fourth Gospel, therefore, does not attempt to divorce Jesus’ divinity and his vulnerability. Hernandez (2006:79) affirms this by referring to God’s deliberate choice to enter humanity through the person of Jesus, who manifested weakness and vulnerability in both birth and death. Wedderburn (1999:164) emphasises that the Gospel of John is an exceptional tool with which to explore meanings concerning bodily and earthly existence, since the Fourth Gospel points the audience ‘‘to what Jesus offers here and now already, in this world’’ (see Guthrie, 1981:158).

However, the Gospel of John does not simply present us with opportunities, but also challenges, since it is also well known as the Gospel which emphasises the divinity, sovereignty, and glory of God. ‘‘It is hardly an exaggeration to say that the entire Gospel of John is permeated with the sovereignty of Jesus’’ (Cassidy, 1992:29). This once again raises the issue of the (so-called) disconnect of glory, divinity, and

¹⁸ §6.2.

¹⁹ §6.4.

sovereignty with flesh and vulnerability. This seeming contradiction has been a great motivation for the choice of text, since it is something that the Fourth Gospel does not shy away from (see Bruner, 2012:53-54). The divide between power, perfection and domination, and vulnerability, weakness and dependence, has complicated the experience of life for centuries and was already present amongst the early believers, as Jervell (1984:54) explains:

Early Christianity had to grapple with the problem of a Messiah who suffered and died and thereby endured defeat. [H]ere was an enigmatic, puzzling event, for which an explanation was necessary. For the Fourth Gospel, however, the passion and death of Jesus pose no problem whatsoever.²⁰

The Fourth Gospel therefore potentially invites both the methodology and theme of this study. This twofold emphasis also holds promising prospects when the possible contribution(s) of the dissertation are considered.

1.6. Contribution

This study aims to contribute methodologically to the field of New Testament (and potentially biblical studies as a whole) through the formulation and experimental appropriation of biblical drama criticism. By building on the work of scholars like Brant, the study wishes to further develop the marriage between biblical studies and drama with the confidence that New Testament studies can be enriched by the exploration of the dramatic elements of biblical narratives (Levy, 2004; Brant, 2004) and the performative dynamics of New Testament texts (Rhoads, 2010:167). Through the formulation and development of a drama analysis, and the reading of the Johannine Gospel as drama, this dissertation will hopefully broaden the exegetical lens on the narratives in the New Testament (and possibly OT) and allow for some refreshing exegetical endeavours in the future.

²⁰ Because the FG makes much of God's power and control, even amidst great vulnerability, it has often been accused of minimising the anguish of the cross and spiritualising the life of Jesus in such a manner that it becomes "naïvely docetic" (Käsemann, 1968:26; 65-66, 77). Käsemann (1968:77) argued that the FG seems to portray the exalted Christ throughout, and that the Johannine theology of glory runs the risk of being docetic, albeit naïvely so. While this might seem like a good reason to avoid the Gospel in a study of the theme of vulnerability, it is precisely a text such as the FG which begs for the redemption of vulnerability in the life of Christ and God. Why not take the Gospel which has been used most to deny God's experience of vulnerability to assert it?

Lee (2002:9-14) calls for the development of new and creative exegetical methodologies which move away from the ideas of the Enlightenment. These methodologies should seek to serve a community of believers and not simply be of benefit to individual academics. A methodology such as biblical drama criticism invites more creativity and experience into the reading of a text, which allows the audience to take part, and will hopefully open the exegetical process to a wider audience. Therefore, reading the Fourth Gospel as a drama is an attempt to bring the text closer to the faith community: to those who not only *read*, but who want to *experience*.

Rhoads (1999:276) makes a similar remark when he calls for the incorporation of new disciplines into the existing field of narrative criticism, especially methods which “attend carefully to the oral arts and performance arts embedded in the biblical writings” (Rhoads, 2012:43). Likewise, Hearon (2006:20) emphasises the need for new methodological avenues which reconstruct the “performance contexts” of biblical texts. One of the shortcomings of various existing exegetical methods (including narrative criticism) is the fact that it neglects the oral nature of the Gospel accounts. Rhoads (1999:276) argues that “the Gospels were written to be performed to audiences in a predominantly non-literature culture” (cf. Horsley, 2011:125-148). Since the Johannine Gospel was initially *heard* (and not read) by an audience (Loubser, 2013:166), the appropriation of drama criticism might serve to bring the audience’s other senses into the conversation.

In this way, the Johannine drama is allowed to be an “emotional experience (similar to viewing a film), rather than simply a source of information” (Rhoads, 1999:277). Not only can drama criticism serve to bring biblical texts closer to the audience’s own experiences, but it also brings it closer to familiar means of entertainment, expression, and learning by using the “moving picture”, which has largely dominated modern culture since the early 90s (Kreitzer, 1993:14-15).²¹ Additionally, the imaginative experience as *first-time* audience also aims to stimulate an experience where readers can escape their familiarity with the text for a while and encounter and associate with it anew.

²¹ Although Kreitzer (1993:15) does not exclude theatre, he mainly refers to television and movies in his argument. This argument, however, rests on the basis of the entertainment value and portrayal of story and not necessarily the means. He goes on to argue that entertainment has become “the primary means” by which individuals gather information and are intellectually stimulated.

This study therefore wishes to explore such a need and hopefully aid in the pioneering of fresh ways to approach texts, as well as fresh ways to relive and experience the story of God through the life of Jesus. The second aim of the study is to (re)discover a theology and Christology which includes vulnerability. As biblical studies have often been criticised for formulating theology which largely underemphasises the topics of vulnerability and dependence (MacIntyre, 1999:1-3), the discipline would gain much from a biblical argument for the embrace of vulnerability – by both humanity and God through the life of Jesus.

Moreover, exploring the theme of vulnerability in the life of Jesus is not only important in biblical studies, but has essential contributions to make in other fields, such as disability theology. This is affirmed by disability scholar Nancy Eiesland (1994:70), who has pleaded for the exercise of biblical interpretation with a regard for vulnerability which will include individuals with disabilities in God's display of glory. The study of vulnerability in Jesus' life could also be invaluable in the field of pastoral theology, where the assurance of the presence and glory of God amidst suffering and vulnerability is essential.

1.7. Limitations

As any scholarly contribution, this study contains a certain lens with which texts and contexts are approached and interpreted. In order to produce the most effective body of work, the scope of the study cannot be too broad. As mentioned before, the methodology of biblical drama criticism, like narrative criticism, does not set out to explore the possible complex compositional processes of biblical texts as it reads the text in its final form (cf. De Boer, 1992:43; Merenlahti & Hakola, 1999:24; Powell, 1990:91-92; Rhoads, 1999:267).²²

While it is not foreign for a modern cast to perform an ancient text, it is essential to realise that the ancient text was not necessarily written with the intent of being performed or experienced in modern contexts. Moreover, we also have no certainty *how* biblical texts were performed and heard in the first century (Hearon, 2006:13), so the construction of an experience of the Johannine drama is, at its best, an informed guess. Many hurdles arise in the attempt to read an ancient text as a drama. Barr

²² Rhoads (1999:267) motivates his statement by asserting that "a first-century audience hearing a Gospel would have experienced it as a whole and not as pieces of earlier tradition".

(2002:17-18) refers to, among others, the hurdles of language and culture. While knowledge of the Greek language and ancient Mediterranean culture can perhaps shrink these hurdles somewhat, there will always be hurdles, since words find meaning when spoken and heard in context.²³

Therefore, the interpretations of tone, attitudes, facial and bodily expressions, et cetera, will be read into the drama and can be exaggerated or misunderstood.²⁴ While it is important to note that drama criticism intends to analyse biblical texts according to their *form* and *poetic function* (see Powell, 1990:94), drama analysis might overemphasise themes or interpretations that the author regarded as minor or vice versa.

Another limitation is the hypothetical nature of the constructed first-time audience's probable context and social world as discussed in chapter four and appropriated in chapters five and six of this study. Although the construction of this audience is done using the text and a variety of good sources, such a construction is always hypothetical and subjective. Therefore, the settings, costumes, and social conventions explored in the text can never be regarded as absolute. Moreover, the possible reactions and experiences of the hypothetical audience should also not be seen as a realistic portrayal of exactly how a late first-century audience would have reacted. As part of this study seeks to take the reader on an imaginative journey of identification with a hypothetical audience, it is essential to note that we can never escape our own ideologies and perceptions and truly *become* this audience (Barr, 2002:7).

Similarly, the methodology used is also informed by modern critique and elements,²⁵ which will probably result in anachronistically reading various elements into the text which were not necessarily intended by the author. This includes the drama lens. Even

²³ Let us take the word knowledge (γνῶσις) as example. Within a twenty-first-century (Western) context, knowledge is something associated with the mind and is available to all through learning. However, considering the possible influence of Gnostic thought at the end of the first century in Ephesus, knowledge could have been considered as something hidden, not acquired through learning, but revealed to a select few. Thus, when the Fourth Gospel uses the word γνῶσις, it becomes all too easy to miss some of its nuances.

²⁴ Rhoads (2010:178) likens the construction of ancient performances to the construction of ancient animal species through the excavation of fossils. As scientists infer what an animal could have looked like, performance critics infer what a performance could have looked like by analysing the text. With such informed guess work, it is inevitable that one might run the risk of over-complicating the biblical text through a detailed analysis of its dramatic dimension (see Ashton, 1994:141-165).

²⁵ As is also the case with narrative criticism, which draws on methods and components of modern literary criticism in the reading of ancient texts (Powell, 2010:240).

though some scholars speculate that the author of the Fourth Gospel might have drawn from established methods and elements of the ancient drama (Brant, 2004:256; Hitchcock, 1923:15), this association is nothing more than speculation and cannot be pinned on the ancient author's intentions. Therefore, while this study seeks to show that the Johannine Gospel *can* be read through a drama lens, it is not argued that the Johannine Gospel *is* a drama or was *composed* as one.²⁶

The creative journey ought therefore to be undertaken with humility, sensitivity, and the necessary respect for the biblical text and its context, as well as the sober awareness of the influence of one's own context, ideologies, and assumptions.

1.8. Layout of the study

The dissertation will consist of seven chapters. **Chapter one**, "Setting the Stage", will serve as a general introduction to the study. This chapter provides background to the study and gives an overview of the problem statement, research questions, hypothesis, research design and methodology, demarcation and scope, as well as possible contributions and limitations of the study. The layout of the entire study is also presented in this chapter.

Chapter two, "John, Drama, and Vulnerability", aims to illustrate how the Gospel of John, the methodology of drama criticism, and the theme of vulnerability intersect. This includes motivating how the Johannine text invites a drama-critical reading, how the theme of vulnerability can be found in the life and death of Jesus, and how drama and vulnerability meet in the Johannine Gospel's emphasis on the role and responsibility of its audience.

Chapter three, "John as Drama", serves to unpack the methodology used in the study. This includes situating the methodology within the exegetical field of biblical performance criticism, and unpacking the experimental methodology of biblical drama criticism using insights from modern (and ancient) drama and theatre criticism.

Chapter four, "Becoming an Audience", attempts to paint a portrait of the social world of a first-time hypothetical audience in the first-century Mediterranean in order to orientate the reader in terms of the possible expectations of a first-time hypothetical

²⁶ This study will often refer to the *Johannine drama*. This terminology wishes not to contradict the above statement, but to immerse the reader into the position of audience member and enhance the poetic feel of the language used.

ancient audience of a divine drama. This includes situating the hypothetical audience in a wider context and exploring important values or aspects of a life worth living from such an audience's perspective(s).

Chapter five, "Framing the Drama: Drama Analysis of the Johannine Prologue", contains a thorough demarcation and motivation of the chosen texts. This is followed by the appropriation of the methodology of drama analysis on the Johannine prologue, which will be translated into stage-play script format.

Chapter six, "Towards the Climax: Drama Analysis of the Trial and Crucifixion" builds on chapter five's drama analysis with a run through of John 1:19-18:27, followed by a drama analysis of the Roman trial (18:28-19:16) and the crucifixion (19:17-30), also translated into stage-play script format. This is followed by a summary of the rest of the Johannine drama (19:31-21:25). The chapter also contains an excursus with a few brief thoughts on John 11:17-45 for possible further study regarding the dramatic nature and portrayal of vulnerability in this scene.

Chapter seven, "Embracing Vulnerability", serves to reflect on the first-time hypothetical audience's probable state of mind after the experience of the Johannine drama and seeks to explore the possible rhetorical effect(s) of the drama by exploring the director's invitation to the hypothetical audience to become the implied audience. This includes a discussion of what this invitation could have looked like for the Johannine community and what it could look like for vulnerable communities today. The chapter also evaluates the methodology of biblical drama criticism and its possible contributions to biblical exegesis and closes with a conclusion which reiterates the gist of the entire study.

2. John, Drama, and Vulnerability

The whole drama of God's relationship with humanity is played out in the FG, with Jesus as the central character (Johnson, 1999:531).

2.1. Introduction

Since this study aims to bring three foci, namely, the Fourth Gospel, the methodological lens of drama criticism, and the theme of vulnerability together, it is important to indicate how they possibly intersect. In order to do so, this chapter will argue that the methodological tool of drama criticism and the theme of vulnerability are implicitly invited by the Johannine text, indicating how such a drama lens may serve to enhance the exploration of the theme of vulnerability throughout the Fourth Gospel. The chapter will also serve to bring the focus of drama and vulnerability together by emphasising the role of the audience in the exegetical process.

2.2. John and drama?

In any exegetical exercise, *how* the text is read is equally as important as *what* is read. Therefore, to explore the text and chosen theme in the most effective way, according to its nature and purpose, an appropriate exegetical perspective and methodology will have to be identified. The idea to use (and formulate) drama criticism as a possible exegetical methodology for reading the Johannine Gospel was birthed in 2015, as I completed my Master's Thesis. It was through the reading of John with the lens of narrative criticism, where questions began to arise whether an imaginative drama lens could serve the interpretation of the Fourth Gospel.

2.2.1. *The journey from narrative criticism to drama*

Powell (1990:90) refers to the fact that the creative methodology of narrative criticism has already done so much to stimulate the interpretation of biblical texts, especially the Four Gospels (see Culpepper, 1998:62; Rhoads, 2011:107; Van Aarde, 2009:383). My Master's thesis served to explore this sentiment as I read John 4:1-42 and 9:1-41 using a narrative critical approach (De Milander, 2015). The aim of narrative criticism is to read and interpret a text in its final form, and to use mostly contemporary literary theory to explore various literary elements of the story (Gunn, 1993:171; Jonker, 2005:95 Malbon, 2009:80; Rhoads, 2011:107). These various elements include the plot, use of characterisation, different settings, and rhetoric strategies meant to have

a certain impact on an audience (Gooder, 2009:47; Malbon, 2009:82; Stibbe, 1992:10). When the audience responds to the narrative as intended by the implied author, they become the ideal or implied audience. Identifying this implied audience, which Powell (2012:242) defines as the audience in which the potential meaning and rhetorical effect of the text is actualised, is the aim of a narrative analysis.²⁷

A narrative critical reading of John 4 and 9 therefore brought the importance of the implied rhetorical effect of the text on an ancient audience to the fore. In reading these two narratives against the grain of the possible context of the first-century Johannine community,²⁸ it became clear that, not only did the Samaritan woman and formerly blind man partake in an invitation to identity transformation (De Milander, 2015:88-91, 106-112), but an invitation of identity transformation was made to the audience through the narrative (2015:119). This invitation included questioning the societal order of their contexts and allowing themselves to break free from it by imitating the ethos of Jesus in the Fourth Gospel.

However, the peculiarity of Jesus' ethos amidst the first-century Mediterranean context brought questions regarding the hypothetical process of becoming this ideal or implied audience to the fore and pricked the imagination regarding what the audience's interaction with the story of the Fourth Gospel could have looked like. Ricoeur (1991:494) refers to a "struggle with the text" which appears when a text is read by its audience, since the world of the text or message collides with the world of the audience in a highly complex way. Meaning is thus made as the audience struggles with the message within the text.

While the invitation for transformation came to the fore, the methodology of narrative criticism did not seem to engage this possible struggle with (and perhaps resistance to) the becoming of the ideal or implied audience adequately. In other words, due to the scope and focus of the methodology, narrative critical readings often seem to provide oversimplified sketches of the audience by ignoring the possible hurdles that an audience had/s to overcome to become the ideal audience. Performance critic, David Rhoads (2006a:119) highlights this lack when arguing that narrative criticism often fails to consider "multiple implied audiences". And rightfully so, the probable

²⁷ I discussed the methodology of narrative criticism in my Master's thesis (De Milander, 2015:26-36) and will therefore not be doing so in this study.

²⁸ See De Milander (2015:45-61).

negotiation of meaning between various audiences and the text is not the major concern of narrative criticism, as the focus of this methodology is the biblical text, and the one ideal or implied audience it aims to create (Rhoads, 2011:109).

Dunn (1993:13) emphasises that the exegetical process is constantly searching for some “weakness in order to improve”. The identification of shortcomings or weaknesses within existing methodologies is therefore helpful, as it leads to the formulation of new and exciting methodological ideas to be experimented with. Rhoads (2011:113), in his discussion of narrative criticism, mentions the possibility of inviting ancient audiences to the story world of New Testament narratives by using knowledge from social sciences to place oneself “hypothetically in the position of different first century audiences in specific contexts” to imaginatively explore “how ancient hearers may have experienced” these stories.

The hermeneutical movement of biblical performance criticism has played a crucial role in breaking open such an approach to biblical texts.²⁹ Horsley (2013:304) sums up the focus of performance criticism as the “exploration of orally performed texts”, with the aims to analyse the performance of texts and their effects on audience members in a specific context. This approach, where texts are explored as “texts-in-performance”, places high importance on the exploration of how texts may have resonated with their respective audiences (2013:306). Within this interpretational field, Horsley (2013:308) predicts that various “criticisms” (methodologies) will come to the fore and “continue along their own innovative paths”.

It is precisely this sentiment that gave rise to the ponderings of a possible exegetical methodology which could imaginatively explore a first-time audience’s experiences of the Fourth Gospel as a drama, without necessarily assuming that they have *become* the implied audience. In other words, the possible struggle of the audience to make sense of the Gospel is what gave rise to the idea of making a methodological shift from narrative criticism to something which could capture the hypothetical experience of a first-time audience which has not yet become the implied audience (or is in the process of *becoming* the implied audience). This will allow readers to situate themselves among an audience who is interacting (and perhaps struggling) with the

²⁹ See §3.5 for a discussion of biblical performance criticism.

values of the drama. This is where the possibility of experiencing the Fourth Gospel through a lens of drama criticism comes in.

While the reading of the Johannine Gospel has the potential to create an alternative identity and community among its audience (see Carter, 2008:256), drama criticism could be a helpful methodology with which to imaginatively explore the interaction of the various pre-narrative identities of a hypothetical first-time audience with the Gospel as they see the drama unfold for the very first time. While narrative criticism served as a helpful exegetical tool for the Fourth Gospel, it cannot be uncritically assumed that drama criticism will do the same. Therefore, before drama criticism can be unpacked in any way, it is essential to explore whether it could be compatible with the Fourth Gospel. To do this, it will be important to see whether the type of literature, or genre, of the Johannine Gospel allows for such a lens.

Larsen (2015:17) refers to the Gospel of John as a “genre mosaic”, which implies that it comprises of a variety of genres and genre possibilities. This sentiment was shared by Tovey (1997:209), who spoke of a “spectrum of genres”, which opens up many interpretational possibilities of the Johannine text and the ways in which it can be read, explored, heard, and experienced. Although the literature of John, together with Matthew, Mark, and Luke, is categorised as gospel, the *form* in which the literature is presented seems to borrow from a variety of literary types and genres such as ancient histories, biographies, epics, and dramas (Brant, 2011:12).³⁰ Rhoads (2011:14) affirms this sentiment by emphasising the “richness and the many facets” of texts from the New Testament. For this study, the element or facet of *drama* will be the one on which the lens is cast. Before the possibility of a drama lens can be explored, the concept of drama, and what it entails, will be unpacked.

2.2.2. *What is a drama?*

Ancient Greek drama scholar, Alan Sommerstein (2002:1) defines a drama as follows:

[A]n enactment of a story... in which each performer, or group of performers, represents... a person or persons in the framework of the story, speaking or singing the words of a more or less fixed text.

³⁰ Johnson (1999:529-530) distinguishes the FG from the Synoptics as a “*theological reflection in the form of a story*”. Moreover, Windisch (1923:61) argues that the FG lies somewhere between a gospel of the synoptic type, a drama, and a tragedy.

The word drama stems from the Greek word δράω, which translates as “I do” or “I act” (Keuris, 1996:46). The drama, as we have it today, probably has its origins in the sixth century BC in Ancient Greece (Carver, 2009:3; Sommerstein, 2002:2).³¹ The first dramas were mostly categorised as tragedy, but the art of comedy also developed and became nuanced as time progressed (Sommerstein, 2002:3). These dramas were performed in amphitheatres and always contained an all-male cast (Carver, 2009:4). Women were therefore played by men wearing masks. The ancient Greek drama remained strong and popular into the first century AD. According to the ancient layout of public buildings, it is apparent that the most important public activities in the Greek and Roman world would have been sport events, *theatre*,³² and musical performance (Barr, 2002:37). Drama, therefore, had a significant role to play in the ancient Greek and Roman culture and lifestyle. Not only were various dramas performed in the theatre, but poetry was often performed at festivals and within households (Horsley, 2011:127).

Ancient dramas functioned as far more than mere entertainment. Littlewood (1952:9) refers to the ancient Greek theatre as a “temple of dramatic art”, since it was deeply intertwined with religious and cultic life (Worthen, 2000:3). Drama and theatre served many purposes, among which was functioning as a reminder of heritages or the past (Sommerstein, 2002:3), the honouring of gods (Green, 1994:170), providing commentary on social, religious, and political life and circumstances (Barr, 2002:37), and portraying patterns in the god-human relationship (Mastronarde, 2005:321).

Through the Middle Ages, the notion of liturgical dramas developed (Carver, 2009:8). This era consisted of performances of the Christian Bible, and, towards the tenth century, various dramatisations illustrating the liturgies of the Catholic Church’s mass became popular (Worthen, 2000:6). In this era, drama was largely supported and sponsored by the church, which led to a revival of the art (2000:221). By the fourteenth century, many dramas were performed to illustrate doctrines of the Christian faith, and in celebration of specific religious days.

³¹ Since this study is undertaken with the conviction of the historical existence of Jesus Christ, the Julian and Gregorian abbreviations BC (before Christ) and AD (*anno Domini*, translating as “in the year of the Lord”) will be used to refer to dates.

³² Greek and Roman theatres seated about 15000-20000 people in a semicircle around a raised stage. The chorus and dancers performed on a flat platform in front of the stage (Barr, 2002:38).

The Middle Ages also saw the development of dramatic performances based on historical events and later mysteries (Carver, 2009:8). Moreover, the English morality play, in which characters represented human virtues and vices, gained popularity near the end of this era (Styan, 2000:56). This was the dramatic era which liberated the drama from the stationary theatre as stages were constructed on wagons, which allowed performances to move from town to town. The Middle Ages also included a shift from the all-male cast to women being hired as actors in some plays.

Following the Middle Ages, the fifteenth and sixteenth century's Renaissance saw the move from the outside to the inside theatre and fictional stories, especially tragedy and love stories, became increasingly popular (Carver, 2009:9). Moreover, this era facilitated the shift from drama as religious art to popular art, and the aims of entertainment and money-making became increasingly important in the dramatic arts (Worthen, 2000:6). This included the rise of *commedia dell'Arte*, the Italian improvisational comedy where the interaction between actors and audience members became paramount (Styan, 2000:58-59).

The late seventeenth century marked a revival of drama in London, Paris, and Madrid: this time under the support of the king and his court, resulting in an era of state regulated performances (Worthen, 2000:391, 401). The emphasis of this era was structure, order, and control, and various playwrights specialised in the rewriting and revival of classic Greek plays (2000:403).

The era of the modern drama is marked by the nineteenth and twentieth century, in which the use of technology and media became increasingly important (Worthen, 2000:579). Actors also began using costume and make up (2000:580).³³ This era also marked the invention of the fourth wall (an imaginative divide between the actors on stage and the audience), and the use of the dark auditorium became popular (2000:582-583). In contrast to the previous state-controlled drama industry, the modern era ushered in the use of drama to resist society and its norms and values.

Since the 1950s, much emphasis has been placed on innovation in the field of drama, in order to compete with the rise of film and television. Drama has become much more experimental, and various approaches such as post-modern and post-colonial

³³ Before the 19th century, actors mostly wore their own everyday clothes when performing a play (Worthern, 2000:580).

performance have come to the fore (Worthen, 2000:589-590). Drama remains an art which exceeds the realm of entertainment and is used as a powerful means with which “social, political, philosophical and aesthetic attitudes” are represented and challenged (2000:3).

When the broad strokes of the development of the drama are considered, it becomes apparent that the form of art has had anything but a marginal role in society. Moreover, its role in existential and societal representation and reflection has been an important one. In this vein, it would be helpful to explore the possible link between the drama and the Fourth Gospel.

The Johannine narrator introduces the main character’s entrance into the world of the audience as a display of glory which they have seen together with the narrator (ἐθεασάμεθα τὴν δόξαν – 1:14). In order to do so, he uses the verb θεάομαι, meaning “to observe something with continuity and attention” (Louw & Nida, 1996) and not ὁράω or βλέπω, commonly used for the action of seeing. To an author in the first century, the syntactic connection between θεάομαι and τὸ θέατρον – the word used to describe the space where dramas were performed (Carver, 2009:3; Louw & Nida, 1996; Worthen, 2000:3) – would not be unknown. Therefore, the link between the Gospel of John and drama remains an interesting topic for discussion.

2.2.3. *John as drama?*

The art of connecting the Fourth Gospel to a drama is not a new one. One of the first scholars to explore this possibility was F.R.M. Hitchcock with his exploratory article *Is the Fourth Gospel a Drama?* (1923), in which he argued that the Gospel adheres to standard “canons of the drama” (1923:15), and qualified his hypothesis in the following way:

The vividness, variety and progress of the scenes, together with the number, individuality, and distinctness of the characters; the play of question and retort; the pointed and allusive manner of the Master’s sayings; the reality of His surroundings; and the growing interest of the narrative, give dramatic force and movement to the work (1923:16).³⁴

³⁴ Hitchcock (1923:17-23) divided the FG into 5 acts: the prologue (1:1-18), 1:19-4:42, 5-6:71, 7-11:57, and 12-21:25. Years later, Smalley (1978:195-202) used a 4-act structure for the FG as drama, which comprised of an introduction (1), second act (2-12), third act (13-20), and fourth act or epilogue (21). Cummins (2008:65-67) regards the FG as a 2-act divine drama, revealing and enacting the redemption

Other scholars who have explored the Fourth Gospel as a possible drama include Bowen (1930), Connick (1948), Smalley (1978:192-203), Domeris (1983; 2018), Cummins (2008), Attridge (2015; 2016), and Conway (2015). Probably the biggest contribution to this reading methodology comes from Jo-Ann Brant, in her book *Dialogue and Drama. Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (2004). Brant (2004:4) argues that the Fourth Gospel can be, and in many cases is, regarded as a drama.³⁵ She confidently uses the word drama for the gospel since it portrays “a story fraught with tension between characters with a conflict that arises at its beginning and builds to a crisis”. Moreover, she argues that the Fourth Gospel makes use of features which are unique to drama and therefore approaches the text by appropriating the genre of ancient Greek tragedy to it (2004:3).³⁶

Many other scholars use the description “dramatic” when referring to the content and style of the Fourth Gospel (Attridge, 2015:34; see n.1). According to Smalley (1978:192), the Fourth Gospel is “a work of superb literary craftsmanship”, making it, as Dodd (1950:40) remarks, “no ordinary narrative”. Smalley (1978:192) goes further, referring to the author of John as “an artist with a strong feeling for drama”. This, however, does not imply that the *genre* of the Fourth Gospel be classified as drama, but rather that the genre of gospel comprised of various elements and aspects of which drama could have been one (Brant, 2004:257).

Among the four Gospel accounts, that of John may be regarded as having the closest to a dramatic structure (Brant, 2011:13) or character (Windisch, 1923:62), which places the Fourth Gospel in “a class of its own” when compared to the Synoptics (1923:61). Smalley (1978:192) argues along the same line when stating that the author of the Fourth Gospel’s “conception of the dramatic value of the material he [sic] is

and recreation of humanity. In this drama, the prologue plays a significant role as it gives the audience a glimpse into the divine and then portrays his entrance into the world. The first act (1:19-12:50) focuses on the works and words of Jesus. The second act focuses on the divine glorification through the departure, death, and resurrection of Jesus and is followed by the epilogue which challenges the audience with the “ongoing embodiment of the divine life in the world” (Cummins, 2008:66).

³⁵ Brant (2004:4) even goes so far as saying that the regard of “the Fourth Gospel as drama has become a habit for Johannine scholars”.

³⁶ For instance, Brant (2004:80-81) refers to the language of the FG as supposing a performative axis, by interpreting the evangelist’s uses of οὐτως (e.g., 4:6; 13:25) as referring to things that an audience can see. Brant makes a similar remark with reference to the ample use of demonstrative pronouns as personal pronouns in the FG.

shaping and composing is altogether more heightened and consistent” than that of the Synoptics.³⁷

Culpepper (1983:97) beautifully states that the Fourth Gospel “dramatizes the message that the Word has become flesh and dwelt among us”.³⁸ The Gospel can be said to portray a certain dramatic force and movement, or, as Smalley (1978:192) refers to it “one continuous dramatic action”. This is seen as “the drama of the Son of man” unfolds chapter by chapter (Pazdan, 1991:63).³⁹ Dramatic force is created by the conflict which arises in the prologue, and develops, especially through dialogue, towards the ultimate climax, creating a “symmetrical and pure type of workmanship”, which Hitchcock (1923:24) claims is rarely found in other dramas aside from Sophocles. The Gospel also contains various extended dialogues, or “discourse material” (Domeris, 2018:4), where the narrator simply interrupts to explain something (e.g., 4:8, 9b), introduce settings (e.g., 5:9; 9:14; 19:14), or hand over to a new speaker (e.g., 6:25-58; Rhoads, 2006b:172). This creates the experience of much of the Johannine drama as dialogue between two or more speakers.⁴⁰

Stibbe (1992:14) affirms that the Gospel of John may be read as a dramatic narrative and that it very closely resembles the ancient Greek drama. Moreover, the action-focussed nature of the Gospel (Single Redman, 2013:61) is also a significant reason to associate it with other dramas. Aulén (1970:144) states that “action versus opposition equals drama”. This statement encapsulates the Johannine Gospel well, as a significant portions of its speech describes or introduces action on the character’s behalf, highlighting the plausibility of its performative nature (e.g., 19:4).⁴¹ Attridge (2015:34) makes a case for the Fourth Gospel as drama by referring to various motifs

³⁷ Domeris (2018:3) speculates that the author of the FG could have written as a dramaturg to illuminate certain aspects of the Gospel story. John’s variation from the Synoptics would then be intentional to highlight certain elements of Jesus’ character, “including his deity and pre-existence”.

³⁸ Aulén (1970:144) describes the entire Bible as a book portraying a “universal drama”: “What we find here is an all-embracing drama, reaching from ‘the beginning’ in the first book of the Bible, to the final act, ‘the end’...” Aulén continues to illustrate how the overarching drama contains within itself many dramas, such as the drama of Israel, God’s covenant people, and the drama of Christ.

³⁹ Scott (1992:13-14) also refers to the “unfolding drama of the Fourth Gospel”.

⁴⁰ This sentiment will be put into practise in the translation of the text in chapters 5 & 6, which will be done in the form of a stage-play script containing only dialogue and stage directions (see appendix A for the format used).

⁴¹ Moreover, Styan (1975:229) emphasises that the elements of anxiety and uncertainty make for the most effective dramatic interaction between a drama and its audience. When approaching the Johannine Gospel through the eyes of a hypothetical first-time audience, these elements are well represented in the plotline and characters on stage portray moments of tension, misunderstanding, uncertainty and surprise well (e.g., 8:27; 10:6; 12:16; 13:7; 18:27; 20:2, 11-16, 28-29; 21:7).

and elements within the text, the first being the prologue in which the beginning of the Johannine drama is consciously constructed (see Kelber, 1990:209).⁴² This beginning or prologue resembles the hypothesis of the ancient Greek drama (Attridge, 2015:35; see Domeris, 2018:3), making the Fourth Gospel the only gospel to begin as a drama. Myers (2012:73) affirms that one is able to compare the prologue of the Johannine Gospel to prologues of Greek and Roman dramas and that the Fourth Gospel can be seen to run along the same lines as ancient dramas (see Domeris, 2018). It is precisely the prologue which “raises the curtain of the divine drama” as it gives the audience a glimpse of the divine (1:1-5), but immediately changes the scene to the earthly realm (1:10-11), into which the divine enters (1:14; Cummins, 2008:66).

Attridge (2015:36; 2016:16) further motivates the possible dramatic nature of John by referring to the vivid use of irony, and particularly, dramatic irony, which is when the audience is very aware of something that the character(s) miss(es) (Culpepper, 1983:176; Powell, 1990:30-31).⁴³ A good example of dramatic irony would be the double meaning of the verb ὑψώω (to raise or lift up – 3:14; 8:28; 12:32) which a post-resurrection audience will understand as referring not only to exaltation, but also crucifixion.

Another dramatic element is the phenomenon of the delayed exit, which was very common to the ancient Greek drama (Attridge, 2015:37). This would take place when an announced action would be interrupted by dialogue (e.g., 14:31).⁴⁴ The function of the delayed exit within the ancient Greek drama was to give a character the opportunity to offer reflections upon what was about to happen. This was usually done in the case where that same character awaited death (Attridge, 2015:37). Attridge (2015:38) further links the Gospel of John to drama by referring to the element of recognition (ἀναγνώρισις), which is typical of the ancient Greek drama. In a recognition scene, characters will realise something that they have not been aware of to that point (Attridge, 2016:16-17; Worthen, 2000:1479; e.g., 1:41, 49; 4:29; 6:69; 9:38; 20:16, 28).

⁴² See ch.5 for a drama analysis of the prologue.

⁴³ The ancient playwright, Aristophanes, was one of the first authors to refer to the concept of irony, using it to describe behaviour that is sly or crafty (O’Day, 1986:12). The concept will be defined and unpacked later in this chapter (§3.8.9).

⁴⁴ Jesus seems to end his talk to his disciples in 14:31, telling them that it is time to get up and go. However, he carries on talking for three more chapters before departing, and chapter 18 seems to follow quite naturally on the ending of chapter 14.

Smalley (1978:192-193), again, identifies two main motivations for the classification of the Johannine Gospel as a drama: the first is the fact that the thoughts of the author are said to operate on two levels at any given moment – heaven and earth, in time and eternity (e.g., 3:12, 31; 5:24; 6:32, 40, 54; 12:25) – and the second, the trial motif (whether Jesus will be accepted or rejected by fellow characters) which runs through the Gospel (e.g., 1:11-12). Moreover, the Fourth Gospel's detailed characterisation also makes for enriching narrative and drama analyses (see Domeris, 2018:7-8; Zimmermann, 2014:101). Hearon (2014:54) argues that the Johannine characterisation is "suggestive of a stage production or drama". A similar perspective can be found in Hitchcock's (1923:24) discussion of the Gospel:

His genius for characterisation and dramatisation, not in the sense of creating scenes or inventing characters, but in the sense of representing the men he had known in all their strength and weakness, of delineating human character in all its complexity and depth.

Some scholars, such as Hitchcock (1923:15) attribute the author's natural dramatic sense to possible experiences and interactions with individuals with artistic taste. Brant (2004:256) even speculates that the author could have drawn upon many established methods and elements of ancient Greek drama. However, whether it was the *intention* of the author to incorporate elements of the ancient drama into the Fourth Gospel, or whether the resemblances are purely coincidental, will not have an effect on this study's methodological lens.⁴⁵ While a dramatist (playwright) usually intends for their text to be performed on stage (Keuris, 1996:4), this study in no way wishes to make the claim that the author of the Fourth Gospel had a dramatic theatre performance in mind when composing the Gospel or that s/he composed it as a drama. The idea of this experience of the text is not to speculate or impose a certain dramatic intention upon the author, *but to facilitate an imaginative and creative reliving of the text*, in which the reader becomes a first-time audience member, feeling like "he or she is present and watching it all happen" (Brant, 2004:3).

Therefore, while it cannot be said that the Fourth Gospel *is* a drama, the Gospel seems to contain various elements that resemble a drama and can thus invite a drama lens

⁴⁵ There are scholars such as Rhoads (2009:86), who argue that the Gospels were without a doubt written down to be performed. However, Rhoads holds that this performance was most probably not fleshed out as a drama or play, but rather a rhetorical speech or narration to faith communities.

to the exegetical process.⁴⁶ A methodology which is informed by drama theory, therefore, holds the potential to be fruitful in exploring the text in new ways, while capturing more of the rhetorical process of the text as it is imaginatively received by a hypothetical audience. Scholars like Cummins (2008:65), Swanson (2009:133), and Rhoads (2009:94) recognise that the interest to study the Fourth Gospel through a drama lens is a noteworthy development. It, therefore, seems worthwhile to explore to which extent such a methodological experiment may indeed prove to be fruitful.

Not only does this study aim to make a methodological contribution to Johannine studies by experimenting with a new way of reading the text, but a significant yet underplayed and probably under evaluated theme, namely that of *vulnerability* has also been identified. Scott (1992:13) states that there are many unexplored facets of Jesus to be found within the Fourth Gospel. This study aims to illustrate that Jesus' vulnerability is one of those facets. The next section sets out to motivate the identification of such a theme by referring to the text of the Johannine Gospel.

2.3. John and vulnerability?

Although my Master's thesis did not set out to focus on vulnerability, a reflection on the narrative of the Samaritan woman and the blind man proved to emphasise the marginalised and vulnerable state of both these individuals woven throughout their respective narratives (De Milander, 2015:21, 74, 77, 80, 83, 88-91, 95, 96, 103-112). In John 4:1-42 we find a woman who is socially, culturally, and economically vulnerable due to her probable state of ostracism among her own people and her lack of a legal husband. Moreover, she finds herself ethnically and religiously vulnerable in the presence of Jesus, a Jewish man. In John 9:1-41, one finds a man who is physically, socially, economically, and religiously vulnerable due to his condition of blindness and the ostracism which that entails. Moreover, his embrace of Jesus' identity leaves him even more vulnerable as he is cast out of the synagogue (9:4). In both episodes, Jesus seems to meet these individuals in their state of compound vulnerability – and perhaps even through their vulnerabilities (4:29⁴⁷; 9:40-41) – to reveal himself to them.

⁴⁶ Rhoads (2006b:172) makes a similar point by referring to various NT texts: "Even if Second Testament writings are not theatre as such, many of them are theatre-like."

⁴⁷ Not only does Jesus find the Samaritan woman in a vulnerable state, but her vulnerability in front of him becomes the *content* of her testimony (4:29; see De Milander, 2015:83-84).

While one may probably make a more obvious case for the vulnerability of the Samaritan woman and (formerly) blind man, Jesus' own vulnerability is also something which emerges in both narratives. Not only does he make himself vulnerable by climbing down the social and religious ladder to be dependent on a Samaritan woman's hospitality (De Milander, 2015:75), but the encounter with the blind man begins with Jesus fleeing for his life from the Jews who attempt to stone him (8:59). Moreover, he touches the blind man (9:6), making himself physically and ritually vulnerable by not avoiding physical contact with an impure or unholy person as would have been expected (Weissenrieder, 2002:207). These instances of vulnerability in two episodes of the Johannine Gospel gave rise to my ponderings of whether one could explore the presence of vulnerability in the incarnated life of Jesus as a worthwhile theme throughout the Fourth Gospel.

Vulnerability can be defined as "the threat of unfulfilled needs" or the threat or risk of suffering (Koopman, 2013:43).⁴⁸ It stems from the Latin word *vulnerare*, which may be translated as "to injure or harm, and to be open to be wounded". It involves being frail and fragile and in a position where one can be hurt or wronged. Vulnerability may also be used to refer to various ways of actual suffering. Although there is no ancient Greek equivalent for the word, various (seemingly) semantically related words and concepts can be found throughout the text of the Fourth Gospel.

2.3.1. *Vulnerability throughout the Johannine text*

In the prologue already, the narrator preludes that Jesus' life will entail rejection from a group identified as "his own" (τὰ ἴδια – 1:11). This theme of being rejected or out-grouped is seen again in instances where people love darkness more than the light (3:19), a significant group of Jesus' disciples leave him (6:66), his closest group of followers abandon or deny him (13:28; 16:32; 18:17, 25, 27), and one of them betrays him (13:21).⁴⁹

Jesus' physical vulnerability is also implied in his act of becoming σὰρξ (flesh; mortal humanity; 1:14), and the effects of his bodily existence are found throughout. He thirsts (4:7; 19:28), is dependent on the hospitality of others (4:40; 12:2), weeps (11:35),

⁴⁸ Koopman (2013:44) identifies three types of vulnerabilities. The first is physical vulnerability, which entails the threat of unmet physical needs such as food, clothing, and education. The second is social vulnerability, which refers to the threat of one's safety and the hindering of participation in society. The third type of vulnerability is theological, which entails the threat of not actualising one's potential.

⁴⁹ See §4.4.9. for more on abandonment, rejection, and out-grouping.

experiences emotional distress (12:27; 13:21), and eventually dies a horrific death (19:30, 33). Various remarks throughout the Gospel also seem to play into an expectation of possible suffering, such as references to Jesus as ὁ ἀμνὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (the lamb of God – 1:36), Jesus' remarks that the Father "gave" (ἔδωκεν) his only begotten (3:16), Jesus' offering of his flesh as the bread for life (6:51) and his blood for drink (6:53, 55-56), his talks about laying down his life (10:11, 15, 17), his burial (12:7), and his prophecies regarding tribulation (16:33).

Jesus also experiences all sorts of suffering and persecution, including being hated (15:18), pursued with harmful intent (5:16; 8:59; 10:31, 39; 11:53; 19:16), and being shamed and mocked (19:2). Moreover, he is accused of leading people astray (7:12), blaspheming (10:33), being demon-possessed (7:20; 8:48, 49, 52; 10:20), and not being from God (9:16). He also suffers physically by being bound and taken (18:12-13), struck (18:22; 19:3), flogged (19:2), crucified (19:18), and stripped of his clothing and dignity (19:23).⁵⁰ Even his resurrected body remained marred by what he had suffered (20:28). Johnson (1999:117) carries a similar sentiment:

Jesus experiences fatigue (4:6) and anguish (12:27; 13:21). His whole being is shaken at the death of Lazarus, and he weeps (11:33-35). Jesus changes his mind (7:1-10)..., shows irritation (2:4; 6:26; 7:6-8; 8:25) and suspicion (2:24-25), and asks for a positive human response (6:66-71).

Therefore, while a concept such as vulnerability is not to be found in the Fourth Gospel in the explicit sense, the life of the incarnated λόγος has themes of vulnerability woven throughout its duration, which makes it a worthwhile theme to explore throughout the Johannine drama.

However, while the Johannine Gospel illustrates the presence of vulnerability in the life of Jesus, his divinity, glory, and majesty are also strong continuous themes. The Gospel thus presents these themes in a paradoxically interwoven way (Cassidy, 1992:29). John 13:1 introduces Jesus' hour (of glory), which plays out as him washing his disciples' feet. Similarly, Jesus prays for the Father to glorify himself (7:1) and Jesus (7:5), after which he is betrayed by Judas and taken captive. However, this

⁵⁰ Brant (2004:242) goes as far as to say that no other gospel account pays this much attention to the physical body of Jesus during the crucifixion.

paradox is never resolved or explained by the Johannine author. Thompson (1988:118) highlights this strange element to the Gospel:

[T]he Gospel speaks of Jesus' flesh in contexts which juxtapose it specifically to his heavenly origins, without apparent conflict, incongruity, or tension.

Therefore, the Fourth Gospel seems to portray a creative tension between these elements which should not be underplayed. The divide between power, perfection and domination, and vulnerability, weakness and dependence has complicated the experience of life for centuries and was already present amongst the early believers (Jervell, 1984:54). What the drama of the Fourth Gospel does with this seeming divide or contradiction is something to take note of and reflect on, and it will serve as an important element to this dissertation.

Although it would be worthwhile to explore the theme of vulnerability throughout the entire Fourth Gospel, such a reading would take this study beyond its scope. It is, therefore, important to demarcate selected portions for reading. When taking the methodological approach of drama and the thematic focus of vulnerability into consideration, two crucial moments in the Fourth Gospel and life of Jesus seem to come to the fore: the prologue and crucifixion.

2.3.2. The prologue and crucifixion as vulnerable scenes

From a drama-critical lens, two of the most crucial elements to any story is its beginning and climax. When the Fourth Gospel is considered, these two elements are represented by the Johannine prologue and the crucifixion. The Johannine prologue (1:1-18) orientates the audience towards the drama (Brant, 2004:24; Brown, 2013:148; Myers, 2012:73), allows them to become part of the story (Moloney, 1993:52; v.14), introduces the protagonist (Brant, 2004:22; cf. Myers, 2012:39; v.1), and pre-empts the plot and the climax of the drama (Brant, 2004:17; Myers, 2012:62; v. 11-12, 14, 18).

The climax of the Johannine drama is represented by the crucifixion (Jervell, 1984:54; Lindars, 1990:81), which is the moment of the most heightened level of conflict (see

Powell, 1990:33).⁵¹ This conflict builds quite dramatically from Jesus' trial in front of Pilate, where he is flogged and interrogated (18:28-19:16), to the carrying of his own cross (19:17) and reaches its most heightened point with Jesus' death on the cross (19:30).

Although both of these moments in the Gospel are significant from a drama point of view, they are also very significant when the theme of vulnerability is considered. The prologue begins with the introduction of a divine λόγος (Word), who was from the beginning (1:2), an agent of creation (1:3), and contains in himself a good and abundant life (ζωή), which is the light to all humanity (1:4). However, this divine life of ὁ λόγος reveals God (1:18) by taking on a fully human existence, as he becomes σάρξ (flesh) in the act of incarnation (1:14). The use of the word σάρξ, and not ἄνθρωπος/άνήρ (human) or σώμα (body) is of great significance (Morris, 1971:102), as it does not simply refer to a body or humanity, but essentially "human existence in its frailty and vulnerability" (Milne, 1993:46), which suggests weakness, fallibility, and mortality (Eklund, 2015:53; Hofius, 1987:22; Voorwinde, 2002:39). It is in the Fourth Gospel, where the eternal, cosmic λόγος, fully divine, submerges himself into humanity and its vulnerable existence.

Without denying the δόξα (glory) of Jesus, the narrator of the Fourth Gospel seems to emphasise and even embrace Jesus' becoming σάρξ. Eiesland (1994:99) criticises the way in which the "reality of God present in human flesh" has often been obscured and underemphasised. This unusual pairing of σάρξ and δόξα is continually used to illustrate something of the life of Jesus, where vulnerability, dependence, and mortality (as represented by the term σάρξ) are in some remarkable way not presented as antonyms of glory and divinity (Voorwinde, 2002:40).

This introduction of Jesus as God in σάρξ not only identifies him as one who finds himself vulnerable, but also as one who, in his life on earth, was eventually subject to the reality of death. It is this brutal death (execution on a Roman cross) which creates the most heightened point of conflict in the Johannine drama, and it is here where the incarnate God seems to embody not an "overwhelming, dazzling, and unapproachable splendour", but a strange glory revealed in the "lowliness of his life and ultimately in

⁵¹ Myers (2012:170) affirms this by referring to Jesus' death on the cross as the culmination of his works and words on earth. Brown (1994:11) calls this section a "truly dramatic" narrative and argues that its genre can be classified as tragedy.

his death” (Voorwinde, 2002:40). New Testament scholar, Andreas Köstenberger (2009:117), refers to the dramatic and tragic nature of Jesus’ death, which reveals a significant degree of vulnerability amidst language of honour and glory.

Nowhere is Jesus’ glory more splendid than in the Fourth Gospel, nor is his humanity more human anywhere else – right down to the account of his death and resurrection (19:34; 20:20, 27). And nowhere else does the Son of man, clothed by God with all power, descend more deeply, realistically, and scandalously into human flesh (cf. 6:27, 53) (Ridderbos, 1997:14).

Both prologue and crucifixion therefore represent moments in the life of Jesus where vulnerability is present. The prologue sets the pace for the entire Johannine drama, where the theme of vulnerability seems to unfold, not only in the incarnation of God, but in Jesus’ life, reaching a climax at his death on a cross (Jervell, 1984:54; Lindars, 1990:81). Moreover, this unfolding of vulnerability is woven into language which paradoxically emphasises the divinity, sovereignty, and glory of God (Cassidy, 1992:29).

Therefore, the question this dissertation wishes to ask, through a drama analysis of the Fourth Gospel, is how a first-time audience would make sense of this strange tapestry of vulnerability, especially in light of the glorious and divine representation of Jesus in the Gospel and in conversation with such an audience’s culturally-conditioned foreknowledge of the divine. Although it might seem worthwhile to solely undertake a literary study of the Fourth Gospel and its portrayal of vulnerability, analysing the Gospel and this theme through a drama lens invites the interpreter not only into the story of the Johannine Gospel, but potentially into the story of a hypothetical first-time audience grappling with the Johannine drama and its display of the divine against their own ideological backdrops.

It is in this process of sense-making and confrontation with the drama of the divine, where a first-time hypothetical audience is placed on the foreground of the analysis. Drama analysis therefore attempts to place a spotlight on the audience together with the actors on stage. It is precisely here where the element of drama and the theme of vulnerability intersect, as the hypothetical audience finds itself in a vulnerable position.

2.4. Drama and vulnerability?

Horsley (2011:147) refers to the power of a performance not only to evoke meaning, but essentially to “work on or among the group of hearers in the context”. Rhoads (2006a:128) argues along the same line when asserting that a performance “does not work until the audience works it out”, as performers seek to transform their audiences and to “impel them to action” (Rhoads, 2006a:130). The idea is that the audience becomes part of the drama and that the drama, in turn, challenges and shapes the audience’s own context and circumstances (Powell, 2010:241).

To analyse a drama and its implied effects on audience members, it is important to see *why* it was composed and performed (Styan, 2000:7). The author of the Fourth Gospel makes the purpose of the Gospel clear in John 20:30-31. The Gospel was written so that its audience may believe (πιστεύ[ς]ητε) that Jesus is the Christ, the son of God (ὁ χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ), and that this belief will produce life in his name. In other words, the Fourth Gospel supposes an audience of individuals which were intended to become “participators and propagators” of Jesus’ life and words (Loubser, 2013:169).

Since πιστεύ[ς]ητε can be regarded as either an aorist subjunctive (πιστεύςητε) or present subjunctive (πιστεύητε), it can be interpreted in a twofold manner. The interpretation of the verb as an aorist implies that the Gospel set out to achieve an evangelistic goal in leading its audience to belief in Jesus as the Christ (see Johnson, 1999:527-528; Köstenberger, 2009:85). Many of the characters encountering Jesus model such a *first belief* (e.g., Nathanael – 1:44-51; the Samaritan woman – 4:1:42; the blind man – 9:1-41; the crowd – 10:41-42). At other times, the Gospel seems to presuppose an audience which already believes (Köstenberger, 2009:85), aligning with an interpretation of the verb as present tense, which points to a continuous action (“that you may continue to believe”).⁵²

The Gospel of John, therefore, had the potential to reach unbelievers in an evangelical sense, but also to edify existing believers in a pastoral way. While this study will lean more towards the aorist interpretation as it envisions a first-time audience who have not yet embraced the revelation of God through Jesus, the pastoral application will also be explored in the final chapter when the rhetorical effect of the director’s point of

⁵² Jesus’ lengthy teachings aimed at his disciples in Jn. 13-17 is a good example of this.

view on vulnerability on the Johannine community is explored. However, whether evangelical or pastoral in nature, the implications for the verb πιστεύω (“I believe”) are weighty, as it demands action from the audience. This belief is not a cognitive process but speaks of a “complete trust and reliance” on Jesus (Louw-Nida, 1996; Köstenberger, 2009:86; Souter, 1917:203). In other words, the Johannine Gospel seeks an “existential and holistic involvement” with Jesus, “inspired through the live performance” of the drama (Loubser, 2013:169).

This sense of a “high degree of involvement” from the audience is characteristic of drama (Styan, 1975:4). The Fourth Gospel therefore not only sets out to communicate something, but to *do* something to its audience. This is also emphasised by the narrator’s use of the “authoritative ‘we’” (Köstenberger, 2009:116) in various sections of the Gospel (e.g., ἐθεασάμεθα in 1:14 and οἶδαμεν in 21:24), which not only includes the audience in the story, but nudges them in the direction of becoming the implied audience. The audience is thereby compelled to a “decisive action in the immediate future” (Loubser, 2013:176) through their witness of the Fourth Gospel. The Gospel can only do what it set out to do if the audience responds to it in a certain way.⁵³ Rhoads (2010:178) succinctly expresses this reality:

A performance is *embodied* in the performer and the audience. The performer is present in body with voice, sounds, movements, gestures, proximity, appearance, and context. The audience is present and experience all of these dimensions along with the reactions of others in the audience. Performance is word-become-flesh in an event of embodied immediacy.

The responsibility of the audience to respond emphasises the role of the receivers of the Fourth Gospel, as they are essentially invited as meaning-making participants in the performance of the drama (Loubser, 2013:108; Vanhoozer, 2010:259), and have, therefore, become part of what is put under the magnifying glass.⁵⁴ However, it cannot be assumed that the (first, historical) audience simply responded in accordance with the (implied, textual) aim communicated in 20:30-31. As the failure to recognise Jesus for who he really is, is one of the main elements driving along the plotline of the Fourth

⁵³ Styan (2000:2) therefore emphasises that drama is a “uniquely shared activity”, since “actor and audience need one another absolutely”.

⁵⁴ Vanhoozer (2010:267) refers to audience members as “performers of the text”.

Gospel (Brant, 2004:50; Culpepper, 1983:84; Jn. 1:11), it should not be assumed that the audience immediately and uncritically embraced the expression of God found in Jesus throughout the Fourth Gospel (Vanhoozer, 2010:280). As Jesus often had great difficulty convincing characters in the Johannine drama of who he is, it would not be unrealistic to suppose that he could have had some difficulty convincing a first-time audience of the drama – especially when one explores the counter-cultural message that he embodied and the vulnerable situation in which many first-century individuals found themselves after making the decision to believe in Jesus (see Ashton, 1991:172; O’Day, 2012:518; Rensberger, 2009:339).

Apart from the fact that one cannot uncritically assume that audience members did not mimic some of the reactions of Jesus’ opponents throughout the Gospel, even if the audience identified with Jesus in a positive manner, their identity as implied audience should not be oversimplified. Not only did those on the side of the antagonist resist Jesus, but most of his most passionate followers abandoned him, dissociated from him, or did not believe in him at his most vulnerable moments (Jn. 6:66; 18:17, 25-27; 20:25).⁵⁵ Moreover, the narrator’s clarifying remarks in which misunderstandings of various characters are cleared up and pointed out (e.g., 12:16) could indicate that the audience needed some help interpreting the happenings of the Gospel. Drama criticism therefore sets out to explore the complicated interaction between the message and its reception – the wrestle among the audience to become the implied or ideal audience.

As with other reader-response methodologies, drama criticism wishes to cast the lens on the audience,⁵⁶ and not simply on the text, since the conviction stands that the story within the text was not necessarily composed for “individual silent readers” (Horsley, 2011:125), but an audience with the capacity to act and react upon the drama. The Johannine Gospel does not only invite the performers or actors into the drama, but essentially the audience as well as they are exhorted to choose for or against Jesus and bear the consequences (Loubser, 2013:169).⁵⁷

⁵⁵ Peter’s denial of Jesus in Jn. 18:17 & 25-27 was precisely an attempt to avoid vulnerability in order to self-preserve.

⁵⁶ This will be discussed in §3.2.

⁵⁷ Loubser (2013:169) therefore refers to the receivers of the Johannine Gospel as a “participating audience”.

South African literature and arts scholar, Marisa Keuris (1996:43), emphasises the stage and auditorium as equally important spaces for meaning-making in the drama. In this sense, the audience becomes a vulnerable group themselves as they find themselves under the spotlight by having their involvement in the drama analysed (1996:19). While the text of the Johannine Gospel comes to us (as later readers) in a finished and edited form, the possible reaction(s) of the audience is far from this. Moreover, the genre of tragedy⁵⁸ undresses the audience even further, as it is not their laughter and pleasure which is observed and analysed, but their passionate responses of shock, fear, disbelief, and even brokenness (Styan, 2000:78).⁵⁹

As the experience of the hypothetical first-time audience is placed on the foreground, the interrogation of their various probable world views by the drama becomes inevitable. The display of the vulnerability of Jesus therefore affects the audience, as it will have to be brought into conversation with contemporary⁶⁰ and societal ideas regarding vulnerability and the divine, and especially ideas regarding what it meant to live a good and abundant life (Jn. 10:10; 20:30-31) in the ancient Mediterranean. The ancient drama was a profound tool with which societal ideas and values were interrogated. In a Jewish, Greek, and Roman society where the idea that the good life, and closeness to God was symbolised by the embodiment of a certain wholeness, power, and perfection (DeSilva, 2000:248), the drama of the Fourth Gospel had plenty to say (and to do) to its ancient audience as they look at ὁ λόγος' glorious journey in the flesh which finds its ultimate expression in the brutal death on a cross (Thompson, 1988:52). Moreover, the audience needs to place full trust in this expression of God if they were to become the ideal or implied audience (20:30-31).

The rhetorical power of a drama analysis of the Fourth Gospel with the theme of vulnerability in mind, also does not stop with the hypothetical first-time audience, but has the potential to echo into the twenty-first century context. Koopman (2013:46) refers to a common human anxiety which surfaces when we feel vulnerable. This anxiety and unsettlement are intimately connected to a fear of not living up to the standards of what might be considered a good life. Since Western thought generally regards vulnerability and dependence as undignified and less than ideal to the human

⁵⁸ See §7.2 for the motivation and implications of the FG as a tragedy.

⁵⁹ Aristotle (1995, 1452b) identified the effect of tragedy as the arousal of pity and fear.

⁶⁰ The term contemporary can be defined as one thing/person "belonging to the same period" as another (De Mello Vianna, 1978:49).

experience (Brand, 2013:72), it would make sense that a good life would be regarded as one displaying the least amount of vulnerability (Eiesland, 1994:96; Hauerwas, 2005:129; Kittay, 1999:47; Niebuhr, 1949:161-213. Reynolds, 2008:67, 73-77, 83; Wendell, 1996:41-42).

In an individualistic (Westernised) 21st century, vulnerability is therefore often seen as something that ought to be excluded from society and hidden from those around us. A general, yet harmful, assumption is that identity and worth are found in the capacity to be independent and (especially physically) in control (Reynolds, 2008:63; 2013:22).⁶¹ Amid such theological perspectives, vulnerability has become “a fate to be avoided... rather than [part of] an ordinary life to be lived” (Eiesland, 1994:75), while independence, power, and perfection have often been portrayed as the theological norm (1994:99), since it reflects an independent, powerful, and perfect God. The Fourth Gospel demands a response of belief and embrace from its audience by confronting them with a protagonist and plot which seemingly fits uneasily with such perceptions.

A drama analysis of the Johannine prologue and crucifixion scenes, therefore, seems like a promising exercise to amplify the theme of vulnerability (amidst that of glory) in the life and death of Jesus. Moreover, such a drama reading places the emphasis on the audience, inviting them to become vulnerable performers in the Johannine drama, to be challenged, shocked, and changed by it.

2.5. Conclusion

Although it cannot be said that the Fourth Gospel was composed as a drama, this chapter has explored the possible resemblances between the Gospel of John and the art of drama in order to motivate why a drama analysis of the Gospel could be a fruitful exercise. Moreover, the theme of vulnerability has been identified as a worthwhile element to explore in the story of Jesus, specifically in the Johannine prologue and crucifixion scenes. While the theme of vulnerability and the methodological possibility of a drama analysis can be well argued from the Johannine text, the intersection of these two elements can also be found in the Gospel’s expectation of a response, which, in congruence with drama, casts a spotlight on the experience (unrehearsed

⁶¹ Disability theologian Nancy Eiesland (1994:72) refers to a theological climate where flawlessness and absolute freedom are regarded as ideal.

performance) of the audience. This chapter has thus served to illustrate how the three legs of the dissertation, namely, the Fourth Gospel, drama, and vulnerability can be brought into conversation with one another. Before the exegesis on the identified scenes can commence, it will be helpful to zoom in on the focus of drama by defining and demarcating the methodological lens of the study.

3. Drama Criticism

It is no surprise that the most widespread experience, as well as the most profound thinking and the most sacred beliefs of human kind have been marked and celebrated by timeless moments of drama (Styan, 2000:1).

3.1. Introduction

Porter (2015:37) argues that the Johannine Gospel was written with a “public proclamation in mind”. Although this public performance probably refers to a public recitation of the text in a faith community, this study seeks to explore the possible rhetorical power of analysing the Fourth Gospel through the lens of drama in order to unlock something of the performative dimension of the text. The previous chapter served to integrate the methodological possibility of drama and the theme of vulnerability in the Johannine Gospel. This chapter will focus on the methodological side of the study by unpacking biblical drama criticism. This will be done by situating the methodology in the avenue of biblical performance criticism, identifying the important introductory matters of drama criticism, and then formulating a tool with which biblical narratives may be experienced through a drama analysis.

3.2. The exegetical avenue of biblical performance criticism

When considering biblical texts, scholars agree on (at least) three main routes to follow in the exegetical process.⁶² The first main route is most commonly referred to as the *behind-the-text* approach. Methodologies within this approach focus on finding (probable) meaning(s) of biblical texts in the history assumed by the texts, the history that gave rise to the texts, and/or the history to which the texts give witness (Green, 2010:10). In other words, meaning is found in the historical world behind the texts and, in this way, biblical texts become a (be it hazy) window through which contexts are explored and unpacked (2010:10).⁶³ Barr (2002:3) simplifies the description of this route by also referring to it as looking at the “world prior to the writing of the text”.

⁶² See Green (2010) for a thorough discussion on the various approaches to NT texts, as well as clear explanations and discussions of some of the various methodologies that feature within these approaches.

⁶³ It is important to emphasise that, while the world behind the text serves as exegetical key in these methodologies, the world behind the text should never be thought of as separate from the text, as context is always woven into the fabric of a text.

Examples of methodologies within this approach are historical criticism, socio-scientific criticism, and the use of extra-canonical ancient sources.

The second main route is commonly referred to as the *in-text* approach. When following this route, scholars mainly focus on the biblical text itself for meaning and interpretation, and texts are read in their final form (Green, 2010:10). In other words, the perspectives within the text are on the foreground, while possible complex processes that lie behind the composition of the texts are moved to the background (Tovey, 1997:21). Examples of methodologies within this approach are genre-analysis, narrative criticism, and discourse analysis (Green, 2010:12).

The third main route of exegesis can be referred to as the *in-front-of-the-text* approach. These methodologies are audience-centred, and meaning and interpretation of biblical texts are derived from the context of various audiences (Green, 2010:10). The important question to ask in this approach is: “who is doing the reading?” (2010:13). Examples of methodologies within this approach are reception criticism, feminist criticism, and post-colonial criticism.

An important observation to make regarding these three routes is that they are not as distinguishable as one might think. Green (2010:10) emphasises that the three approaches to biblical texts are, in fact, intertwined and interlinked. Therefore, in any exegetical exercise, it is important to disclaim which perspectives will be put on the foreground and which will remain on the background. According to the above explanations, reading the Gospel of John through a drama lens will fall into the lines of an *in-front-of-the-text* approach. This means that the reading of the text will be audience-centred, since the exegesis will be guided by the probable experience of a (constructed) first-time hypothetical audience.⁶⁴ The role of the audience will therefore be essential in the making of meaning (Tovey, 1997:22). Tovey (1997:22) describes meaning as “the outcome of a creative interchange between the author of a text and its readers”, which means that the reception, interpretation and appropriation of a text may vary as the audience of that text varies.

⁶⁴ Hearon (2006:11) soberly states: “For biblical scholars, this task is complicated exponentially because we can only glimpse performer, audience, and context through reconstructions [sic] based on fragments of literary and material remains.” I will therefore be referring to a construction (and not a reconstruction) of the hypothetical audience and the performance of the FG.

However, this does not imply that meaning will only be found in the experience of the audience. The presupposition of drama criticism is that the text or performance has the potential to challenge and transform the audience and it is therefore supposed that the text or performance in itself contains meaning (see Vanhoozer, 2010:275).⁶⁵ This potential of meaning comes alive when an audience picks up on, or reacts to various “gaps, indeterminacies, instructions, flags, and signals” in the text or performance and brings the performance into conversation with their different world views, expectations, and ideas. This process can be imaginatively constructed by focussing on the performative and theatrical potential of the Johannine text and harnessing it in such a way that the hypothetical first-time audience becomes a witness to the Johannine drama.

The process of experiencing⁶⁶ the Fourth Gospel as a drama is one that acknowledges the text as a witness to be performed in an oral culture. African biblical scholar Musa Dube (2001:1-19) has long emphasised the importance of biblical scholarship which takes seriously the oral culture within African communities. Moreover, scholars such as Tom Boomershine, Joanna Dewey, David Rhoads, and Holly Hearon have addressed the general lack of attention to the oral/aural nature of texts in biblical studies. To bring the oral nature of biblical texts to life, some have experimented with an exegetical avenue referred to as biblical performance criticism, which approaches biblical texts as witnesses composed to be read out loud and even performed in front of faith communities and churches (Maxey, 2012:1).⁶⁷

Biblical performance criticism is nuanced by Rhoads (2012:26) as “an effort to recover the oral performative nature of biblical materials”. Rather than being a methodology, it is an emerging discipline or exegetical field representing a “paradigm shift from print

⁶⁵ Vanhoozer (2010:266-270) distinguishes between conservative reader-response criticism, which sees the audience as the makers of meaning which can be found in the text, and radical reader-response criticism, which argues that meaning cannot be found in the text, but is only produced by the audience. Vanhoozer (2010:275) warns against radical reader-response criticism as it underplays the fact that texts are meant to “challenge, inform, or transform” their audiences.

⁶⁶ I will be using the word “experience” rather than the word “read”, since a drama is far more than simply a text. Hearon (2006:8) emphasises that biblical texts exceed the visual realm (in which they are only read) and hold an oral element to them which invites an experience. An audience thus finds itself in a space where they “enter into the world of the drama” (Rhoads, 2010:177). However, Hearon (2006:8) remarks that we only have access to this experience through written remains. The exercise will thus require imagination to move beyond only reading to hearing, feeling, seeing, even tasting and smelling the happenings in the drama (see 1 Jn. 1:1).

⁶⁷ Rhoads (2009:88) laments that there exists a gap in NT studies, “namely the oral/aural events in which early Christian writings were performed before a communal audience”.

medium to oral medium” (Rhoads, 2009:88). This methodological field also acknowledges the probability of the oral composition of these texts. Horsley (2011:141) explains that most writings were either composed orally over a long period of time, or orally dictated to a scribe in order to be read aloud to the receivers (mostly an assembled community) as audience.⁶⁸ Loubser (2013:170) argues that the Fourth Gospel was produced audibly in order to be memorised and performed and that it was probably penned down as the result of many performances of it (2013:86).

Keuris, (1996:4) defines a performance as “the representations of characters, events, times and space” which happens in front of an audience (cf. Horsley, 2013:xviii). This audience is seen as a group or community, which react both individually and collectively to the performance (Rhoads, 2006a:128-129). These imaginative responses can take the form of acceptance or rejection, audible remarks, or even bodily responses such as clapping or walking away from the performance.⁶⁹

Biblical performance criticism mostly imagines the biblical text as a storytelling (Hearon, 2009:24) or rhetorical speech (Rhoads, 2009:83), performed or told by one reader or performer, who takes on the role of the narrator, as well as the present characters (2009:89). Performance critics incorporate sound, sight, speech, the reaction/response of an audience (influenced by their shared value systems, context and circumstances), to explore the rhetorical effect of the performance of a text on its audience (Rhoads, 2006a:126). Performance criticism leans mostly on the genre of a text to speculate on the type of performance. For instance, where Paul’s letters would have probably been performed as rhetoric speeches, the gospel narratives would have been recited as stories (2009:86). Rhoads (2012:26) highlights an important sentiment of performance criticism by stating that the performance of a text plays an essential role in its interpretation.

Horsley (2011:125) motivates the need for the appropriation of performance criticism by referring to the danger of the “typographical captivity of biblical studies”, which stems from the assumption that “biblical ‘books’ were widely distributed, readily

⁶⁸ Scholars like Dewey (1989), Shiner, (2003), Rhoads (2009:86), and Ruge-Jones (2009:102) argue specifically for the probability of the Gospel of Mark being composed orally and performed various times before it was penned down.

⁶⁹ Rhoads (2006a:128) uses the diatribe in Romans to speculate that an audience of this letter might have possibly heckled or interrupted the performer with responses to Paul’s messages, and that Paul’s writing style possibly anticipated this.

available, and easily read” in the ancient Mediterranean. According to Horsley, literacy was, in fact, extremely limited in ancient contexts (even among the elite), and oral transmission was the chosen (but not only) medium of communication.⁷⁰ This included the communication of biblical texts, which were “repeatedly ‘reactivated’ in oral performance” (Horsley, 2011:139; cf. Hearon, 2006:6; Rhoads, 1999:276). Without creating a false dichotomy between literacy and orality (see Loubser, 2013:16),⁷¹ or ascribing any motives of playwright to the Johannine author, this study wishes to latch on to the momentum of biblical performance criticism by exploring the Fourth Gospel as drama, acknowledging it as more than a static (written) text, but as a dynamic oral text with various performative possibilities.⁷² Horsley (2013:xvii) highlights that the field of performance criticism is vast in that it allows interpreters to explore various elements or versions of performance.⁷³ This means that the field leaves room for various creative methodologies to be explored.

Rhoads (2009:88) argues along the same line when calling for the emergence of new biblical methodologies within performance criticism which can bring the performative nature of biblical texts to the fore, among which he mentions theatre studies as a potential partner for more enriching biblical exegesis (2009:94; see also Brant, 2004:8). Moreover, Swanson (2009:133) explores the possibility of biblical narratives finding “ensemble dramatic representation” in the exegetical field. According to Rhoads (2009:94), such new methodologies can take on one of three approaches.

⁷⁰ An estimated 10% of the population in the Roman empire, and 3% of the population in Palestine would have been considered as literate in the first century (Horsley, 2011:126, 128). Even among the literate, oral communication was an essential component (Loubser, 2013:76). Therefore, oral communication was necessary in the lives of the majority of the population. Horsley (2011:127) makes this point by referring to the fact that even legal matters were rather conducted orally and backed up by present witnesses than by written documents. Botha (2012:89) argues along the same line, stating that the house of an educated man in the first century would probably have contained an auditorium instead of a study. However, Loubser (2013:77) emphasises that the impact and role of writing in the first century should not be underestimated.

⁷¹ Absolute binary thinking regarding literacy and orality in the first-century Mediterranean should be steered clear from, since written texts were “embedded in the wider oral communication” (Horsley, 2011:125), as literacy and orality were essentially interrelated (Loubser, 2013:88). Horsley (2011:133) further warns against falsely imagining that the scribal and oral were completely different mediums in ancient contexts. For instance, scribal training “proceeded mainly in an oral-aural mode” (Horsley, 2011:133). Written manuscripts therefore served to reference the oral (2011:134). However, as twenty-first century readers we only have access to the written form of these stories and need to engage imaginatively with them in order to explore possible oral dimensions.

⁷² Hearon (2009:22) asserts that, although we have the Gospels in written form, they are oriented towards the spoken word.

⁷³ Horsley (2013:xvii) refers to studies with narrower foci, such as those who explore “the actor in the theatre, the musician in concert, or the artist in the open studio or museum”. Broader studies in this field include, for example, explorations of a culture or group’s identity and tradition in terms of performance.

The first is to imaginatively reconstruct the performance of a specific writing and then to explore that writing with the hypothetical performance (or “performative event”) in mind. Such a reconstruction focusses on the performance, performer(s), audience, settings (time, location, as well as socio-historical settings), and the implied rhetorical effect on an audience. The question woven throughout such an analysis would be, “How do all these factors combine to suggest a range of meanings and potential rhetorical impacts?” The second approach is to reorient existing methodologies to focus on the oral dimension of biblical writings, and the third is to actually perform these texts in our own languages and explore and analyse those performances (Rhoads, 2009:89).⁷⁴

This study wishes to take the first and second of the above approaches by attempting to reconstruct a dramatic performance of the Fourth Gospel and analysing the text according to this probable experience, and by formulating a new methodological tool based on the field of drama criticism.⁷⁵ In this way, the study wishes to pave the way for others to explore other biblical texts through drama criticism. Moreover, the study wishes to stimulate the imagination of contemporary readers by imaginatively constructing the performance of the drama, translating the text into script format. Drama and theatre scholar William Worthen (2000:5) emphasises the importance and fruitfulness of such a construction of the drama when one only has access to the text.

As discussed earlier, a drama analysis of the Fourth Gospel will focus primarily on the world in front of the text. Rhoads (2006b:167) argues for reader-response criticism to be incorporated into performance criticism, in order to develop a tool with which the impact of the performance of a text on its audience can be explored. This study aims to undertake the development of such a tool by bringing together biblical hermeneutics and drama under the umbrella of performance criticism. Although biblical performance criticism is well established and nuanced, its marriage with drama will be a new one. This means that, instead of imagining *storytelling*, this study will imagine *story-showing*.

⁷⁴ See Dewey (2009:143-155) for a colourful testimony of the experience of performing biblical texts.

⁷⁵ This study also paves the way for Rhoads’ (2009:89) third suggestion (a modern performance of the drama) by translating the text in the form of a script using stage-play formatting rules. See appendix A for a summary of these formatting rules.

Since the imagining and exploration of the *story showing* of a biblical text does not fit easily into established methods of biblical exegesis, it will be helpful to define and demarcate the experimental methodology with which this study will analyse the Fourth Gospel. The next section will aim to bring the field of drama and some of its ways of analysis together with biblical exegesis to develop the methodological tool of biblical drama criticism.

3.3. Towards developing a tool: biblical drama criticism

The art of drama or theatre has a unique vocabulary connected to it (Carver, 2009:3). In order to appropriate this vocabulary, the basic elements of drama or theatre will have to be unpacked. The word theatre comes from the Greek τὸ θέατρον: “a theatre, a semi-circular stone building, generally open to the sky” (Louw & Nida, 1996; Literally a spectacle, unusual sight, or seeing place – Worthen, 2000:3), related to the verb θεάομαι (see Jn. 1:14), meaning “to observe something with continuity and attention” (Louw & Nida, 1996). Τὸ θέατρον was originally used to describe the space in which dramatic performances and spectacles were acted out (Carver, 2009:3). However, the term has been adapted to refer not only to the space where dramas are performed, but also to the art and act of drama itself.

Drama criticism, other than narrative criticism, does not simply consider the text, but considers the text *acted out*. This means that, while literary features within the text are important, non-literary features between the lines or beyond the text are also taken into consideration. Since we do not have access to the acting-out of the Fourth Gospel, this methodology will require some form of imagination (Bradby, Thomas & Pickering, 1983:7; see Powell, 2010:245).⁷⁶ Drama criticism seeks to explore all things on stage, including the setting and stage layout, atmosphere and lighting, sound, wardrobe, characterisation, as well as text and dialogue in order to “examine the line of communication, the transmission of signals between stage and audience and back again” (Styan, 1975:1).

⁷⁶ Lategan (1996:213) laments the underestimation of the role of imagination in the exegetical process. The imaginative participation of every exegete, reader, or audience member is an essential component to biblical studies (Green, 2010:6). For more on the role of imagination in the exegetical process, see Lategan (1996:213-232). To help stimulate the imagination of the reader, this study has packaged the Johannine text in the form of a script.

Besides the elements on stage, drama criticism also carefully considers the socio-historical world found beneath the dialogue (White, 2001:13-24), as well as the audience's different reactions to the performance. Styan (1975:239), emphasises that performance or drama criticism is encapsulated by "perceptual criticism", which means that the perception of the audience becomes paramount in the exploration of the rhetorical effect. The audience will therefore play an essential role in the analysis (Styan, 1975:224), as they are a key (although, not the only) element to meaning-making when they are acknowledged as "explorers" of the potential interpretations and appropriations of the drama (see Kozel, 2015:59-61).

Although the inspiration for a drama analysis came from a narrative reading of the Johannine text, drama criticism differs quite significantly from narrative criticism. While the focus of narrative criticism is the literary conventions of the story, the focus of drama criticism is the constant interaction of an audience with the performance of a story. Moreover, where narrative criticism focusses on the implied response of the ideal (textual) audience, drama criticism explores the possible real responses of a hypothetical (textually based and historically informed) audience, even if these responses are not in line with the expectations of the director or implied author. Since an audience is essential to "let drama happen" (Styan, 1975:3), the possible reactions of the audience become important in drama criticism.

Bradby, Thomas and Pickering (1983:224) emphasise that, even though an older drama can be performed in modern theatre, drama criticism at least has to take note of the social conditions and contexts in which the performance was written. This knowledge is of great help, especially when elements such as settings and characterisation are considered. This implies that "a student of drama must also be a student of social and political history" (1983:224). Although the relevant message lies in the drama itself, the world in which it originated adds depth and context to the message, since the director often uses contemporary images, speech, et cetera, to make a rhetorical point. Of equal importance, Rhoads (1999:272) argues, literary critics also have much to gain from paying more attention to reader-response criticism, since it casts the lens on the audience's experience of a text. Included here is reception theory, which seeks to explore possible ways in which ancient audiences could have responded to a text (1999:273) and holds that the meaning of a text comes to life when it is brought into contact with readers or audiences (Lategan, 1984:10).

In the field of theatre or drama, the date of composition of a text does not determine or limit the date of its performance. In other words, texts from earlier centuries are regularly performed in the twenty-first century and then evaluated through the lens of modern theatre criticism. Rhoads (2012:29) picks up on this when referring to ancient texts as records of performances that have already taken place, yet scripts for performances that are still to come.⁷⁷ Although the recovery of the ancient performance is beyond our grasp, we can experiment with modern performance in order to illuminate the rhetorical artistry of biblical texts – even in their ancient contexts (Rhoads, 2009:95).

Therefore, while the ancient audience of the Johannine drama found themselves in a context of ancient Greek drama, elements from modern drama will be used to explore the performance.⁷⁸ As literary criticism uses tools from modern literary theory, similarly, drama criticism will be appropriating tools from modern drama analysis. We will therefore look at modern elements such as lighting and sounds, and ignore or downplay elements unique to the Greek drama such as the wearing of masks and the performance of the chorus.⁷⁹

White (2001:1) asserts that there are “many ways of making theatre”, and consequently, there will be many ways of exploring a play or drama. This requires that the methodology developed and appropriated in this study will need to be demarcated and unpacked. As discussed earlier, this study will come into the slipstream of biblical performance criticism by using drama criticism to develop a tool (biblical drama criticism) with which the Fourth Gospel can be analysed through a drama lens.

The idea of biblical drama criticism is to immerse the Fourth Gospel in orality and performativity, seeing the text as something which could have been performed “in

⁷⁷ Davidson (2005:194) refers to the modern art of performing plays from ancient theatre as something which profoundly carries through a message of the drama even though these dramas are not performed and experienced in the same way they would have been in the ancient world.

⁷⁸ Carver (2009:4) argues that “much of what we still do today is based on the Greek theatre” and that the difference between ancient and modern drama is not that great and rests more on technical elements.

⁷⁹ The chorus consisted of a group of individuals, who used song or chants to provide the audience with commentary or additional information throughout the drama (Sommerstein, 2002:11; Worthen, 2000:19-20). According to Brant (2004:3) the role of the chorus for tragedy was reduced by Aeschylus (5-6 BC), who rather allowed the protagonist to do most of the talking in the play. Worthen (2000:23) affirms the underplaying or ignoring of the ancient chorus in the modern performance of ancient plays by arguing that it often results in confusion. Moreover, while acknowledging the history and culture behind the use of masks, Worthen leans towards not using them in modern performances.

lively ways by a flesh and blood performer before communal audiences in a predominantly oral culture – experienced in sound (pace, volume, inflection), with gestures, facial expressions and movement” (Rhoads, 2011:114). This means that various facets, both on and off stage, will become important in the analysis. Before the elements on stage can be explored, it is important to consider the overarching process of communication between the stage and auditorium by identifying the various parties involved in the communication process of the performance on stage.

3.4. Parties involved in the communication process

Communication usually involves a sender, a message and a receiver of that message. While a drama is acted out by various characters, it carries a message which is communicated by the implied author, or *director*.

3.4.1. Implied author/director

Every piece of communication has to have a *communicator*. Like reading a narrative, the viewing of a drama does not always reveal sufficient information regarding the real or historical author as it goes beyond what is shown in the performance (Powell, 1990:19). For this reason, the historical author (dramaturg) will not be the focal point of drama criticism.⁸⁰ Rather, reference will be made to the perspective from which the drama seems to be portrayed. In narrative analysis, this party is referred to as the implied author (Powell, 2010:241; Tovey, 1997:46).⁸¹

When experiencing a drama, the audience will inevitably form an impression of the supposed author (Powell, 1990:5). This impression or perspective is not historically reconstructed, but derived from the performance:

The “implied author” chooses, consciously or unconsciously, what we read; we infer him [sic] as an ideal, literary, created version of the real man [sic]; he is the sum of his own choices (Booth, 1983:71-75).

In the art of drama, these choices regarding what an audience sees and hears are made by the director. The author (dramatist or playwright) will hand over the script to the director, who will interpret it by making choices in terms of what will be portrayed, as well as how it will be portrayed (Kreitzer, 1993:16). It can thus be said that the

⁸⁰ For a detailed discussion on the possible author of the FG, see Kysar (2008:138-140).

⁸¹ However, it is once again important not to see the implied and historical author (and audience) as complete separate entities, since narrative, or drama, and history are interwoven.

director of a drama functions like an implied author, responsible for the sum of choices which will directly determine what the audience experiences (see Keuris, 1996:76). This means that, when considering the text, the real author or dramaturg “is no longer present...[but] what remains in the text are certain *traces* of the author” (Lategan, 2009:88; see Powell, 1990:6). These traces represent the point of view from which the story is told or from which the director chooses to represent it. According to Tovey (1997:46), the concept of implied author is especially helpful in the study of the Fourth Gospel, since specific knowledge of the real author is not necessarily available to us.

In terms of the communicative process taking place through drama, the director will function as the sender of the message, while the receivers will be the audience (see Lategan, 2009:88). Experiencing the Fourth Gospel as a drama will introduce the audience to the specific perspective(s) and voice of a hypothetical director. As the audience believes this voice, and reacts to it in ways that correlate to the values and perspectives of the drama, they become a certain type of audience commonly referred to as the *implied audience*. However, instead of only exploring how the ideal or implied audience should have reacted to the drama,⁸² drama criticism begins by following the possible reactions of a first-time hypothetical audience witnessing the play – even if these reactions run counter to the implied reaction that the director had in mind.

3.4.2. A hypothetical audience

In any drama or play, the two-way communication between the characters and the audience runs throughout the performance. Both audience and actors feed off of one another for energy, and respond to one another in various ways (Shiner, 2009:60).⁸³ The (first-time) hypothetical audience is a key element in the exploration of the possible rhetorical effect of the drama, since their (probable) reactions to the drama will underline elements of shock, relief, humour, et cetera. Moreover, the audience becomes part of the meaning-making process of the drama as they too become performers with their various actions and reactions towards the drama (Loubser, 2013:169).

Styan (1975:234) emphasises that there are “innumerable ways of arousing an audience”. Ancient performers were often evaluated by the effect (or lack of effect) on

⁸² As is the objective of narrative criticism (Lategan, 2009:89).

⁸³ Worthen (2000:3) speaks of a community or society of performers and spectators which is created by a drama.

audience members, which would have included the stirring of compassion and affection for protagonists, and ill will towards antagonists (Shiner, 2009:58). The audience would respond to the drama by cheering and jeering, clapping, weeping, gasping, leaping from their seats, and even rushing to the stage in pure excitement (2009:60).⁸⁴ Moreover, audiences were constantly looking for connections between the drama and their own situations (2009:61). Barber (2009:137-138) emphasises the importance of the audience and its reaction as the audience essentially becomes the entity which bestows meaning upon the drama – whether their reactions align with or against the director’s point of view.

Drama-critical scholars therefore view the analysis of a drama as far more than the evaluation of entertainment value, but as the exploration of the life that a drama wished to breathe to a specific audience by creating a communion between the stage and auditorium (Styan, 1975:109). Styan (2000:5) emphasises that the “dramatic experience of a play is generated in its audience”, since audience members do far more than simply watch the drama, but they essentially draw various conclusions from what they experience. The viewing of a drama thus becomes far more complex than merely receiving and interpreting words (Horsley, 2011:147; Keuris, 1996:76). Part of this experience is the visual aspect of the performance. This includes the actors (with their various costumes, gestures, facial expressions, etc.), as well as the stage set, and lighting. Apart from these “visual signs”, audience members also experience “auditive signs”, which include dialogue, sound effects, and the various reactions of other audience members (Keuris, 1996:76).

Important to take into consideration is the various levels on which an audience experiences a performance. Keuris (1996:78) identifies four levels of experience. The first is the representative level, which refers to the audience’s sensory absorbance of the world and atmosphere created on stage. A second level is the emotional involvement of the audience in a performance (Keuris, 1996:79). This is determined by the audience’s identification with the main character(s) and their fate. At times, audience members might experience an emotional distance between themselves and the main character, and, at other times, they might feel intimately connected and emotionally invested in him/her. A third level is that of the intellectual. This refers to

⁸⁴ Rhoads (2010:178) argues that ancient (communal) audiences were probably much more vocal in their responses to drama and performances than modern (individualistic) audiences.

audience members' recognition and interpretation of symbolism, irony, images, motifs, et cetera (Keuris, 1996:79-80). The last level of experience is that of the aesthetic. This includes the general satisfaction and enjoyment of the world created on stage, as well as the structure or plot, usage of time and space, characterisation, and dialogue of the drama (1996:80).

Biblical drama criticism aims to experience the performance with the context of its audience in mind and discern probable reactions and experiences from the first-time hypothetical audience throughout. However, drama criticism aims not to stop with the probable experiences of the hypothetical audience, but to interpret these experiences in line with the director's implied or ideal audience in mind.⁸⁵

The hypothetical audience will be historically informed, yet constructed from the text. A construction from the text is essential, as the director shares information with the audience which serves to aid them in the interpretation of the drama by using shared points of reference to make rhetorical points (O'Day, 1986:29).⁸⁶ This is mostly done through the use of explanatory notes added by the narrator (Loubser, 2012:174).⁸⁷ Therefore, it will be important for interpreters to familiarise themselves with the language, perspectives, and allusions in the text (Lategan, 2009:90) and to see what information is shared with the audience and what information is withheld from them as the drama progresses. Moreover, the audience has various interests and expectations before, during and after the witness of the drama (Vanhoozer, 2010:263). In order to explore the various probable responses from this first-time hypothetical audience, the overarching socio-historical world, as well as specific sub-groups within the context of

⁸⁵ Rhoads (2011:115) leans towards such an exploration in his narrative analysis of Mark 3:1-6, where he imaginatively places himself among a peasant audience listening to the story. At times, Rhoads supposes that the hypothetical audience even grumbles in an audible way at some of the nuances within the story, while they later cheer and laugh.

⁸⁶ It is important to note that, while the director and audience share a frame of reference (context, language, etc.), they do not necessarily share a point of view (value judgements, convictions, etc.). See §3.7.1 for a discussion on point of view.

⁸⁷ The voice or teller of the story is referred to as the narrator, who carries along the message of the director to persuade the hypothetical audience to become the implied audience (See Powell, 1990:25; Tolmie, 1999:13; Tovey, 1997:46). Although literary narratives almost always contain a narrative voice (Tovey, 1997:47), the presence of a narrator within a drama is uncommon (Brant, 2004:7, 202; McIntyre, 2006:3; Parsenios, 2015:86; Stibbe, 1992:130). Some dramas, however, do make use of a narrator, who can either be present on stage (in the form of a character within the story or as a third person teller), or simply function as a voice. In the FG, the narrator's voice is often redundant or unnecessary for the flow of the plotline (Brant, 2004:37; Parsenios, 2015:86; Rhoads, 2006b:172). Therefore, the narrator's remarks will not be included in the stage-script, except where he addresses the audience directly (1:1-18; 20:30-31; 21:24-25). The narrator will be discussed as character in §3.6.1.

the Johannine drama will be explored and unpacked (see Powell, 1990:20; Rhoads, 2009:90).⁸⁸ This audience will be treated as a heterogenous group witnessing the drama together and, therefore, the possible different contexts, convictions, and roles of different audience members will also have to be accounted for (see Rhoads, 2009:90).⁸⁹ However, Lategan (1989:10-14) also emphasises the importance of acknowledging the communal nature of a hypothetical audience in biblical exegesis. The hypothetical audience will also be considered as a group of people witnessing the Johannine drama for the first time.

Johnson (1999:14) refers to the dialectic process between experience and interpretation, where experiences are interpreted, giving rise to symbolic worlds, which, in turn, help individuals make sense of their experiences. In a realistic drama (a drama creating a specific world which resembles reality), the director does this by creating a world which is recognisable to its audience as the characters represent “possible persons” in the audience’s reality (Keuris, 1996:19). When observing such a realistic drama, audience members usually aim to get to know characters and find meaning for their actions. Moreover, characters create different expectations among audience members (Rhoads, 2011:118). The unfolding of the plot against these expectations will either create suspense and uncertainty, or satisfaction among the audience.

While drama criticism seeks to explore possible reactions of a hypothetical audience to the performance of a text, the exegetical exercise does not stop here as the performance of the text seeks to evoke certain implied or ideal responses from the audience. Rhoads (2011:118) refers to the fact that biblical stories serve to bring audiences to “beliefs and values different from what they may have embraced before they heard it”. It is therefore important to seek the text-itself to see what its aims were. Vanhoozer (2010:268) refers to a certain surrender from the audience to the performance or text in which they are invited to be changed by the message.⁹⁰ This is where the invitation to become the implied audience becomes important.

⁸⁸ This will be done in ch.4. See O’Day (1986:29) for the importance of familiarising oneself with the possible historical context surrounding biblical texts for an enhanced understanding of the communicational process between the author and audience.

⁸⁹ Köstenberger (2009:84) affirms that the FG does not seem to limit its audience to one specific group.

⁹⁰ Vanhoozer (2010:273) warns against “overstanding” instead of understanding, which is when the interpretation of a text does not correlate with its sense and genre. Audiences should therefore take

The implied audience, which can be defined as the audience actualising “the potential for meaning in a text”, can be found within the language of the drama (Powell, 2010:242). Styan (1975:239) refers to the power of drama to utilise the imagination of its audience to create a community experience in which audience members are guided towards a “moral or religious consciousness” which prompts a change in identity and ethos. The implied audience would therefore be those who respond to this prompting in the way that the director would envision (Lategan, 2009:88; Powell, 2010:242; Tolmie, 1999:8). In many cases this will differ from actual responses of the first-time hypothetical audience to the text or performance (Powell, 2010:24; Vorster, 1989:27).

The narrator of the Johannine drama clearly voices the drama’s objective as stirring the audience to a place of belief in Jesus as Messiah and son of God, resulting in life in his name (20:30-31). The communication of the drama can be deemed successful when the hypothetical audience acts on the expectation placed on the implied audience (Lategan, 2009:89; Vorster, 1989:27).⁹¹ However, it cannot simply be assumed that the audience aligned with the director’s expectations (Vanhoozer, 2010:280). It is therefore essential to explore the possible reactions of different audience members throughout the drama, to extract the rhetorical power in terms of what the director seems to be calling the audience to *become* amidst their different reactions (cf. Powell, 1990:20; Rhoads, 2009:92).

Vanhoozer (2010:273) highlights the golden thread in a drama-critical analysis:

Will the reader [audience], confronted with the text’s initiatives and invitation, respect or suspect them, obey or rebel against them?

For this question to be explored, the performance-itself will have to be analysed in order to imaginatively consider what an audience of the Fourth Gospel could have seen, heard, and touched (1 Jn. 1:1). For such an analysis, the elements of drama (that which happens on stage) will be unpacked. Probably one of the most important conversation partners in this regard is Aristotle, who discusses the drama, and specifically the Greek tragedy, in his *Περὶ ποιητικῆς* (commonly referred to as *The*

need to explore what the text itself communicates regarding its interpretation in order to respond responsibly.

⁹¹ However, it needs to be mentioned that the full grasp of the ideal response of the implied audience will never be possible. Hermeneutics promises to unlock potential meaning(s) of a text, but can never guarantee a perfect understanding.

Poetics). In his discussion, Aristotle (1995, 1450a) identifies six essential elements of the tragedy. These are plot, character, language/diction, theme/thought, song, and spectacle/visual. Although Aristotle discusses these elements under the theme of tragedy, Fink (2014:2) argues that the elements apply to all forms of drama (even comedy) and are commonly used in script writing and drama analysis. These elements will be condensed into five sections (language and song will be combined) and will serve as the guiding principles for a drama analysis.

3.5. Plot

Like all good narratives, the Fourth Gospel has a plot (Ashton, 2007:366).

Aristotle (1995, 1450a) identifies the first essential component to the drama as ὁ μῦθος (the plot) and defines it as the sequence of events that carries along the drama. In short, a plot represents what happens in the drama (Fink, 2014:11). It mainly consists of a linear sequence,⁹² which includes a beginning,⁹³ middle, and conclusion (Van Aarde, 2009:386).⁹⁴ These three components work together to set the action into motion, build on it, and ultimately reach the completion thereof (2009:286). The plot of the drama usually contains a problem, in the form of a lack, tension, or conflict of some sort (Steussy, 2009:116). This tension or conflict builds to a climax, which is the most heightened point of crisis or conflict in the drama (Powell, 2010:246).⁹⁵

The idea of the plot is to intrigue the audience. Styan (2000:65) therefore describes it as “a plan of attack”, since it is “managed by an assault of expectation, surprise and suspense on the imagination” to “keep the audience alert and actively engaged”. The events of a drama are thus arranged in such a way that it will create a certain mood or feel. This mood is referred to as the *genre*.

3.5.1. Genre

To appreciate biblical texts for what they are, it is helpful to identify their genres (Bailey, 2010:140-141). Similar, an important consideration in the field of drama is the *type* of

⁹² However, a director can make use of a pivot, where s/he (often unexpectedly) changes the direction of the drama (Powell, 1990:33).

⁹³ This beginning often contains an introduction which gives the audience all necessary information in order to prepare them for what is to come (Powell, 1990:33).

⁹⁴ A successful ending or conclusion does not necessarily imply the dissolution of all tension in the drama (Van Aarde, 2009:387).

⁹⁵ Some dramas could contain more than one plot (Styan, 2000:73-74; Worthen, 2000:1486).

performance, or genre, one is witnessing (Styan, 2000:77). In general, genre refers to a “conventional and repeatable pattern of oral and written speech that facilitates interaction among people in specific social situations” (Bailey, 2010:143). The genre of a drama can be defined as the “category of artistic composition characterised by similarities in form, style, or subject matter” (Carver, 2009:444). The mood and message of the play will be influenced by its genre.⁹⁶ The genre of a drama therefore answers two main questions. The first is what the intended impact or effect ought to be on the audience (why?), and the second is how the drama should be performed to achieve this effect (how?) (Styan, 2000:77).

Although there exists “a forest of different genres and subgenres” in drama (Styan, 2000:77), Carver (2009:20) identifies seven main drama genres. The first is comedy, which refers to a drama containing light themes, humour, and a happy ending. Building on that, the romantic comedy, which portrays a romantic affiliation between characters using the features of comedy, is a second option. The third option is that of fantasy, which refers to plays set “in another realm”. A fourth option is the farce, which can be defined as an extreme comedy, often over-animated and stereotypical. Another option is the melodrama, which is a “sentimental drama similar in themes to daytime soap operas”. The sixth genre identified by Carver is the theatre for social change, which refers to a genre of drama which addresses social issues. Finally, the seventh possible dramatic genre is that of tragedy, which Carver (2009:20) defines as “a drama that deals in a serious and dignified way about sorrowful or terrible events”.

In a general sense, the broad categorisation of a drama as either tragedy or comedy is a very effective place to start (Styan, 2000:77-78). Comedy can be defined as a drama which portrays human imperfections in a ridiculous way, causing the audience to affectionately laugh at them (2000:86), where tragedy displays “pain and punishment for sin” (2000:78; see Sommerstein, 2002:15). In terms of an audience’s experience, tragedy is the genre which most passionately includes its spectators in the drama (Styan, 2000:78). Where a comedy leaves behind a more satisfied audience, a tragedy leaves its audience behind with a sense of pain and perplexity. The audience of a tragedy will experience a struggle between the urge to “approach and share” with the protagonist (pity), and to “retreat and evade” said character (fear).

⁹⁶ According to Rhoads (1999:275), the identification of the genre “helps to identify an implied audience, the social ethos, the issues being dealt with, and the expectations that an audience brings to a story”.

Styan (2000:78) therefore makes the profound remark that the spectator of a tragedy experiences a sense of being torn apart after the drama has ended. While one could paint the genre of a drama in broad strokes before watching it, it becomes nuanced through various elements as the audience engages with the play. One of these is the *structure* of the drama.

3.5.2. Structure

When it comes to structure, all dramas share the basics of having a beginning, middle and end. The opening moments of a drama is meant to communicate various “hints and suggestions” to the audience, which they then absorb and use to make predictions regarding the outcome (Styan, 2000:4). The first scene to be acted out is referred to as “the point of attack” (Fink, 2014:17). While some dramas begin with the point of attack, which immediately immerses the audience in the drama’s setting(s), others (like the FG), begin with a narration or monologue.

Each drama is riddled with the presence and absence of action and tension which keeps audience members engaged as they are pulled in and then relieved from tension (Fink, 2014:21). Woven in between these bursts of tension are “all goes well”, or “reward” moments, in which the protagonist has smaller victories or brief moments of reward (2014:24). This interplay between tension moments and rewards moments usually builds up until a larger measure of conflict or imminent danger arises for the protagonist to confront. The climb towards the climax of the drama is usually marked by various failed attempts from the hero or protagonist, which leads to a heightened sense of tension among audience members as the positive outcome is prolonged. It is usually at this point where the audience, together with the protagonist, experiences a rapid loss of hope which accumulates at the hero’s darkest hour (2014:26).

The darkest hour is necessary for the director, who plays on the desperation of the audience by utilising a “spark”: a moment which sets the story in a new direction and pulls the protagonist or hero back into the fight or conflict. This new direction builds up to the climax, which is the point of the most concentrated sense of conflict and action in the drama (Fink, 2014:27, 29). The climax usually contains a “final battle” (whether physical or metaphorical), and a victory. In tragedies, the victory comes at a cost, as the hero is ruined by it. The last scene of the drama, commonly referred to as the *denouement*, serves to help the audience “breathe and regroup” after the final battle

(Fink, 2014:28). It essentially serves to illustrate how “the world has changed because of this story”, what the life of the hero is like after the battle, and sets the tone for the *ever after*.

While the plotline of a drama is executed in a certain structure of order, it pulls in the audience by evoking feelings of *suspense*. This is mostly done using *conflict* and action.

3.5.3. *Suspense and conflict*

Styan (2000:65) emphasises that suspense is, and has always been, one of the essential components to drama. Fink (2014:29) therefore refers to suspense as “the primary ingredient of an interesting plot” as it is the element that maintains the audience’s interest in the drama. The plot of a drama is riddled with suspense, which can be described as the combination of expectation and surprise (Styan, 2000:65). The element of suspense works among the audience to create an expectation of a payoff: when various questions and uncertainties will be answered and explained, and the conflicts of the drama will be resolved (Fink, 2014:29). It is therefore important for a drama to contain some form of conflict.

Perrine (1974:44) defines conflict as “a clash of actions, ideas, desires, or wills”. The way in which conflicts are portrayed and resolved is essential in a drama analysis, since it drives along the plot and eventually leads to the climax (Powell, 2010:246). Conflict can be external, as in the case of a physical disaster or where two characters oppose one another, or internal, which is usually portrayed by struggles such as fear, anxieties, despair, et cetera (Keuris, 1996:50). Internal conflict can also play itself out in the conflict that a character experiences with abstract notions such as their fate, or higher powers such as a political system, and characters can even be said to be in conflict with themselves (Keuris, 1996:50; Powell, 1990:42-43). External conflict between characters is usually expressed verbally or physically and the audience can choose the side of one of the opposing parties.

The tempo of events also has a big impact on the audience’s experience of suspense and the drama’s portrayal of conflict. When a drama moves quickly by portraying various short events following on one another in a fast tempo, tension is created among audience members – especially with regards to how such a portrayal of events might end (Keuris, 1996:53). Directors can therefore use the tempo of a drama to

create climatic scenes which draw the audience in and amplifies the atmosphere by creating a sense of “urgency and immediacy” among the spectators (Styan, 1975:235).

The effect that conflict has on audience members is essential in a drama analysis. Moments of conflict or tension, often called moments of “situational tension” (Styan, 1975:231), serve to grab the attention of the audience (Keuris, 1996:50). This includes tension created by doubt concerning the motives of a character, a difficult choice that needs to be made, expectations not being met (both that of the audience and characters), frightening or conflict-filled circumstances, or a heightened sense of conflict between characters (Styan, 1975:234). Most dramas seek to resolve the tension at the end, but this is certainly not a given, especially in the genre of tragedy (see van Aarde, 2009:387).

In order to systematically build on suspense and conflict, the director will have to master the art of dividing the larger plot into smaller sections, called *scenes*.

3.5.4. *Scenes*

Scholars mainly distinguish between summaries and scenes. Summaries are events where the discourse or performance time (the time taken to perform the play) is shorter than the story time (the time that passes in the world of the drama), where scenes are events where the discourse or performance time and story time are the same length (Powell, 1990:36, 38). In drama, different scenes are usually marked by entrances and exits (Taplin, 1978:31),⁹⁷ or the “change in personae” (Brant, 2004:28; Keuris, 1996:55). When a person arrives on the scene, or the attention shifts to a new character, it usually leads to the formation of a dialogue (Brant, 2004:27).⁹⁸ Within a drama, an example of a summary would be a telling by the narrator of a day’s events in a few short sentences, where a scene would be acted out in real time. Dramas mostly make use of scenes, but often fast forward through events using summaries.⁹⁹

⁹⁷ The use of entrances and exits are also important for emphasis. The director would often use entrances and exits to isolate a character/group in order to portray conflicts, relationships, etc.

⁹⁸ Brant (2004:27) emphasises that, even though the narrator of the FG is not always careful in terms of how scenes end, he pays good attention to the way characters enter and leave the proverbial stage. Entrances and exits will therefore be important in the demarcation of scenes within the drama analysis of the FG.

⁹⁹ Different events also carry a different weight within the scope of the plot. Powell (1990:36) refers to two different types of events, namely kernels and satellites. Kernels are those events which, when removed, would radically alter the plot, where satellites are events which can be removed without affecting the main thrust of the plot.

Dramas can also make use of a stretch, where the acting out of an event is longer than the actual event would have been. This can be achieved using slow motion, the focus on detail, or the portrayal of different perspectives on an event. On the opposite side of the spectrum is the ellipsis, where the acting stops, but the story continues. An example hereof would be the audience seeing a character leave the stage by entering the doors of their workplace. The audience knows that the character is at work, but it is not acted out. Finally, a pause is where the story time stops, but the narration or acting continues. This is usually done when a narrator or character reflects upon the happenings (Powell, 1990:39).

In a drama analysis, the plot is not only important for the sake of artistic appreciation, but it is an essential component in the experience of the audience. Therefore, the interaction of the audience with the plot will be an important consideration leading the analysis.

3.5.5. Plot and audience

Styan (1975:240) asserts that the goal of drama is to produce an audience which leaves the theatre “richer in mind and spirit, challenged and changed”. The plot of the drama is essential in this challenge as it will directly influence the sense of satisfaction among audience members (Keuris, 1996:52-53). Each drama is structured in such a way that the audience receives information from the very beginning. Each parcel of information serves to create certain expectations regarding how the drama will develop and eventually end. If these expectations are fulfilled, the audience’s experience will be satisfactory. If the audience’s expectations are not met, a general sense of dissatisfaction may be found in the auditorium. Such an unsatisfactory ending is referred to as an “anti-climax” (Keuris, 1996:53).

Audience members’ satisfaction is also influenced by whether the conflicts in the drama have been sufficiently resolved or not. A well-concluded drama, which portrays the conflicts as solved, is labelled as having a “closed dramatic structure” (Keuris, 1996:54). Such dramas usually leave their audiences satisfied. In contrast to such dramas are those with open dramatic structures. These dramas do not resolve all conflicts or answer all of the audience’s questions, but leave behind a more perplexed audience. Such an audience will have to take up the role of interpreters to make sense of the drama.

The director uses various elements on stage to carry forth the plot. One of the most important vehicles for the plotline is the group of characters found in the play (Powell, 1990:51). Drama criticism will therefore pay attention to the element of characterisation.

3.6. Characterisation

It quickly becomes apparent that each of the Gospels is richly peopled, producing a cast that would rival any of Shakespeare's historical plays (Hearon, 2014:53).

The second element of drama identified by Aristotle (1995:1450b) is that of ἥθος (custom, habit, or behavioural pattern – Louw & Nida, 1996), which refers to the characterisation of the play. Characterisation can loosely be defined as the “presentation of people by the actors” (Fink, 2014:44). Worthen (2000:1480) defines a character as “a fictional ‘person’ appearing in a play or other work”. Characters are known through various means, such as their speech, actions, gestures, and clothing, the speech of others, and the settings in which they appear and function (Keuris, 1996:20-21, 24-27; Resseguie, 2013:11). Each drama portrays a variety of character types.

3.6.1. *Types of characters*

Every drama has a protagonist, hero or “good guy” (Fink, 2014:44). This character is usually easy to identify. The protagonist is the main character, on whose side the director usually tries to get the audience (Van Aarde, 2009:405).¹⁰⁰ This character would typically be introduced early on in the drama through an “inciting incident”: a moment which pulls him/her into the drama and necessitates their role in the story (Fink, 2014:18). Often this incident introduces a problem which the audience will assume that the protagonist or hero comes to solve.¹⁰¹

A protagonist also commonly has an Achilles' heel, which is a deficit already visible at the beginning of the drama (Fink, 2014:48). This is not necessarily a moral fault, but it

¹⁰⁰ Worthen (2000:1487) defines a protagonist as “literally the ‘first contestant’ in the ancient Greek theatre”. In modern terms, it is used to refer to the main character of the drama.

¹⁰¹ To ensure an interesting plot, dramaturgs often combine the ordinary and extraordinary in their choice of protagonist and storyline. If the protagonist is an extraordinary individual (like a superhero), his/her confrontation with ordinary challenges will be found interesting by the audience. However, if the protagonist is an ordinary character, the drama will often portray some challenge out of the ordinary to grab the attention of the audience (Fink, 2014:47-48).

could be a weakness which hinders them in their journey. This Achilles' heel usually adds to the conflict that the character experiences, which forces the protagonist to grow and develop throughout the drama. The progression made by the protagonist is referred to as an arc (2014:49).¹⁰²

It is through the arc that the protagonist learns the drama's theme or lesson (Fink, 2014:45). If the drama is successfully performed, the audience will walk out having learned the same lesson as the protagonist. Moreover, the audience will learn something of the protagonist. As the drama develops, the identity of the protagonist is revealed bit by bit until the audience has a far deeper understanding of him/her than in the beginning (2014:58). However, the development of the protagonist is not possible without a rival, which is commonly referred to as an *antagonist*.

The antagonist can be defined as a character, force, or group of characters who aim to sabotage the protagonist in their journey and whose efforts are aimed at causing the protagonist to fail (Fink, 2014:51). The antagonist can come in the form of a human character who has the Achilles' heel of the protagonist (2014:52), a hostile environment which oppresses the protagonist (2014:53-54), or an internal force (weakness) within the protagonist which threatens to destroy them if not overcome (2014:54-55). Both the protagonist and antagonist do not function independently but are in relationship to *supporting characters*.

Supporting characters are major characters who influence the plot by complementing the protagonist or antagonist (Fink, 2014:56; Van Aarde, 2009:405). These characters can appear in the form of mentors or helpers. The drama also contains some characters who have no (or very little) effect on the plot. These characters are commonly referred to as *functionaries* (Fink, 2014:57). Functionaries usually only appear in one or two scenes and do not develop at all. Among this group are all the background characters who fill the space. These characters merely function as persons at whom the values of the protagonist(s) would be directed. An example of

¹⁰² Character development, or lack thereof, is important when a drama is considered. Characters can be static (those who are the same in the end of the drama as in the beginning), or dynamic (those who have shown development from the beginning to the end). Dynamic characters can also show negative development and regress (Resseguie, 2013:11). It is uncommon for a protagonist to be the same person at the end of the play as in the beginning. However, sometimes the arc of the protagonist does not involve change in the protagonist, but rather a "reaffirmation of what is right" (Fink, 2014:50).

this in biblical literature would be the crowds or marginalised characters who become the objects of Jesus' mission (Van Aarde, 2009:405).

Dramas also have different ways in which they portray characters in relation to the plot. Most scholars would distinguish between round and flat characters (Styan, 2000:55; Tolmie, 1999:54). Round characters are those who are portrayed as being more multi-dimensional and the most life-like, where flat characters are portrayed as one-dimensional (Bennema, 2013:46; Blomberg & Markley, 2010:114). The difference between the two is that flat characters portray only one ideological perspective throughout the drama, where round characters often act in unexpected ways which create tension and can surprise, even shock, the audience (Bennema, 2013:46; Styan, 2000:55; Van Aarde, 2009:404).¹⁰³ A round character will also mostly have the ability to influence or move along the plot of the drama in ways that a flat character will not be able to achieve. Some scholars, like Blomberg and Markley (2010:114), will refer to a third type of character, namely the stark character. These are characters who are often exaggerated, stereotyped, or caricatured.

The narrator can also function as a character telling the story to his/her audience, while simultaneously reacting to it (Rhoads, 2010:181). While scholars like Culpepper (1983:16), Myers (2012:24), and Tovey (1997:68) argue that the Johannine narrator is not a character, a drama-critical lens on the Fourth Gospel could bring another perspective to the fore. As most of the Johannine plot unfolds through dialogue (Brant, 2004:202), with the narrator's words only providing stage directions and introducing speakers, the narrator's commentary through most of the Fourth Gospel becomes unnecessary, since it can be acted out or worked into the dialogue of the characters. However, there are instances in the Gospel where the narrator addresses the audience directly or speaks in a self-conscious way (e.g., 1:1-18; 20:30-31; 21:24-25). Moreover, the narrator (whose identity is a mystery to the audience throughout the drama) reveals his identity in 21:24 as that of the beloved disciple.¹⁰⁴ Keuris (1996:11) emphasises that it is not strange for characters to interact with the audience. This

¹⁰³ However, Styan (2000:55) emphasises that playing a flat character is no easy task and that a flat character "may require skills of character recognition and a sense of audience response above the ordinary".

¹⁰⁴ This is also the reason for using the male pronoun for the narrator. The late reveal of the narrator's identity in Jn. 21:24 adds to the dramatic effect of the Johannine drama.

usually takes the form of a monologue.¹⁰⁵ A drama analysis of the Fourth Gospel will thus consider the narrator as part of the *dramatis personae*,¹⁰⁶ albeit a unique character that seems to be situated among the audience at some stages in the drama.¹⁰⁷ However, the perspective of this narrator remains aligned with the point of view of the director throughout the drama (Powell, 1990:26; Stibbe, 1992:20).¹⁰⁸

Each character in a drama, including the narrator, is characterised in a specific way to facilitate the audience's interpretation of them. To do this, the director makes use of various *means of characterisation*.

3.6.2. *Means of characterisation*

Just as a distinction can be made between the actual historical author and the implied (textual) author, the distinction between actors and characters is something to take note of. Where an actor or actress is the actual person performing in the drama, the character is the person portrayed by the actor. Actors will perform their characters' dialogue by making specific choices in terms of "tone, volume, pitch, pace, accentuation", and by picking up on subtext (that which is not stated in the text) (2009:98).¹⁰⁹ Rhoads (2012:29) emphasises that, although the Gospels were not necessarily composed as scripts, they contain a number of stage directions for "voice inflection and volume, gestures, movement, body language, and emotions". Such stage directions are especially prevalent in the speech and dialogue of different characters throughout the Johannine drama (Brant, 2004:78-79, 85).¹¹⁰ Important in a drama analysis will be the inclusion of gestures, inflection, and movement in the

¹⁰⁵ A monologue is a speech given by one character (Keuris, 1996:11). It is usually addressed to (an)other character(s) or the audience. A monologue should not be confused with a soliloquy, where no hearer is addressed or assumed (for example, then a character thinks out loud).

¹⁰⁶ *Dramatis personae* is a collective term for the characters of a drama (Keuris, 1996:19).

¹⁰⁷ Brant (2004:7) affirms the role of the narrator as one who seems to contribute to the dramatic structure and theatrical qualities of the FG.

¹⁰⁸ Nthuping (2003:174) affirms this by referring to the narrator as the voice who "lays down perspectives of faith by means of which the reader has to orientate himself/herself towards Jesus who is being narrated".

¹⁰⁹ Subtext is a term originally coined by Russian dramaturg Constantin Stanislavski and refers to the "unspoken motive for a given line or speech" (Worthen, 2000:1488). For more on subtext in biblical performance criticism, see Rhoads (2010:184-185).

¹¹⁰ Rhoads (2012:29) argues that these stage or performance directions occur in "virtually every episode of the gospel stories".

presentation of the text (see Loubser, 2013:109).¹¹¹ These elements will be reflected in the stage directions within the script.

Characterisation can also be done explicitly through the dialogue, or implicitly, through the actions and attitudes of those on stage (Bennema, 2013:43; Van Aarde, 2009:404). An important aspect to consider is the way in which characters are introduced. This can be done by a narrator or another character, or no introduction can be given in which case the actions of the character function as his/her introduction (Powell, 1990:52).¹¹² The way in which characters relate to one another also portrays something of the perspective and point of view of the director (Van Aarde, 2009:404). This can be well portrayed on stage using space (how close/far characters are from one another, whether they are facing one another, etc.), which will give the audience a sense of the feelings between characters (Swanson, 2009:134). Besides acting, the actor/actress will make use of several visual aids to portray a character. These include *costume* and *makeup*.

Whereas narrative criticism does not pay attention to the costumes of characters, drama criticism holds the view that it comprises a very crucial part of characterisation. Apart from what they do and say, characters are portrayed, interpreted, and judged by the audience based on how they physically appear (Styan, 2000:27; White, 2001:31). A costume can say much about a character's personality and role in their society (Fink, 2014:125). Moreover, costumes, properties, and accessories give insight into the setting(s) of the drama (see Fink, 2014:123).¹¹³ Although biblical texts do not give thorough costume descriptions, hints regarding costumes and how they change can be picked up throughout and will be used in the experience of the drama.

Often coupled together with costume is the element of makeup (Carver, 2009:339; Fink, 2014:125; Styan, 2000:26). The discussion of a character's makeup is essential when fantasy characters are portrayed, or when the application of the makeup adds significantly to characterisation (for example, when an old person is played by a young actor). However, a technical discussion of stage makeup will not be relevant in a drama

¹¹¹ Since gestures are not always explicitly found in the text (Loubser, 2013:173), drama analysis seeks to attribute various gestures and movements to the speech and happenings in the text. These elements will be woven into the presentation of the text as a script in the analysis (see §5.2)

¹¹² The thorough and deliberate introduction of a character by a reliable narrator is commonly referred to as *telling*, whereas characterisation which takes place through actions and remarks by other characters is commonly referred to as *showing* (Powell, 1990:52).

¹¹³ Carver (2009:332) refers to a "period feel" which is created by the selection of certain costumes.

analysis. Therefore, only references to physical appearances and their dramatisations, such as the description of someone as old or sick, or the appearance of blood, will be discussed.

As with the plot, the idea of characterisation is to have a certain impact on an audience and to convey a certain message. The relationship between the characters on stage and the audience in the auditorium is therefore an important one in any drama analysis.

3.6.3. *Characterisation and audience*

The entrance of each character in a drama immediately creates expectations among its audience members (Keuris, 1996:56) – some positive, others negative, some highly significant, others less impressionable. Rhoads (2009:89) refers to the “sheer force of the bodily presence of the performer to evoke emotions and commitments” among audience members.

The conduct of all characters is evaluated throughout the entire drama. Audience members are prone to evaluate behaviour on the grounds of motivation, consistency, and development (Styan, 2000:52). This means that audience members will consider whether there is a good reason for a character’s behaviour, whether his/her behaviour is consistent with previous conduct or characterisation, and whether the development or change in a character can be justified. A character’s actions are evaluated on several grounds, including *who* is performing the action, the actor’s *intention* with the action, the *type* of action, the *way* it is done, the *function* of the action, and the *situating* of the particular action in a specific frame of time, space, and context (Keuris, 1996:47). As the drama takes its course, the perceptions of audience members will keep on developing and evolving and it is not uncommon for audience members to hold various conflicting views on a character until the very end.

Moreover, characterisation and its effect on an audience is explored through analysis of the “foreknowledge” about certain characters (Keuris, 1996:25). This foreknowledge refers to the pre-performance information or perceptions that the audience has of the character(s) at hand and it becomes especially significant in plays which contain religious, mythological, or historical characters. As the Fourth Gospel is a performance of Jesus (the Messiah), and essentially God (Jn. 1:18), the possible foreknowledge of

a first-time audience with regards to these characters will be an essential conversation partner in a drama analysis of the Gospel.¹¹⁴

Dramas, specifically ancient dramas, utilise individual characters to portray certain sets of values and behaviours which the audience will then recognise in themselves or in others (Neyrey, 2009:5). In this way, characterisation becomes a powerful tool to pull the audience into the drama. The audience can (or choose not to) identify with characters in various ways. This creates a feeling of being part of the drama among the audience. It is essential for audience members to feel something towards the protagonist, otherwise they will not be engaged in the drama (Fink, 2014:60). Powell (1990:56) refers to empathy, sympathy, and antipathy as reactions from the audience towards different characters (see also Fink, 2014:59-60).

Empathy is the act of reading oneself into the narrative by “feeling into” characters (Powell, 1990:57). The audience will mostly achieve this state when the characters are like them or found in situations which they can identify with. However, audience members can also empathise (feel alongside) antagonists or other characters (Styan, 1975:225). The second way of associating with a character is that of sympathy, where the audience feels “alongside” the character (Powell, 1990:57). This is when the audience can understand what the character is feeling or experiencing, but cannot feel it with them, since they are not able to relate.

A third way of associating with a character is that of antipathy, which implies feelings of alienation or disdain (Powell, 1990:57). A director can effectively trap the audience by confronting them with a character or situation which evokes an uncertain response from them (Styan, 1975:228). This is especially effective when the audience finds it difficult to associate with the protagonist or central character due to certain imperfections or their fate or ethos (1975:228-229). To achieve this perplexing reaction from the audience, the director would portray the character in a way which evokes sympathy or empathy at first, only to introduce conduct or fate which evokes feelings of alienation at a later stage in the drama (Styan, 1975:229).¹¹⁵ The director can also use *hybris*, the portrayal of the protagonist’s boastful pride, to alienate the audience

¹¹⁴ This will be done in ch.4.

¹¹⁵ Attridge (2016:18) argues that the FG not only encourages its audience to associate with the protagonist, but also with various characters who find themselves close to the protagonist (see e.g., 13:23; 19:26; 20:8).

from him/her (Fink, 2014:61). This excess of pride is especially common in a tragedy, where the hero comes to fall because of it.

The director also evokes empathy, sympathy, and even antipathy from the audience through various rhetorical devices. Aristotle (1959, 1b.3), in his discussion of rhetoric speech, refers to three possible modes of persuading an audience. The first depends on the character of the speaker (τῷ ἦθει τοῦ λέγοντος), the second, on putting the hearer in a certain [frame of mind] (τῷ τὸν ἀκροατὴν διαθεῖναι πῶς), and the third, on the speech itself (ἐν αὐτῷ τῷ λόγῳ). These three components are generally summarised as the rhetorical strategies of *ethos*, *pathos*, and *logos* (Mack, 1990:36; Kennedy, 1984:15).

A speaker can convince the audience through their *ethos* when his/her speech is delivered in a manner of certainty, which evokes confidence among the audience, and when their presentation is a display of good moral character, knowledge, ability, and authority (1b.4; Kennedy, 1984:15). The technique of *pathos* can be used by the speaker to arouse strong emotions among the audience, which influence the way in which they interpret the speech (1b.5). The speaker can thus play on the feelings of the audience to convince them of something (Kennedy, 1984:15; Mack, 1990:36). The rhetorical technique of *logos* hangs on the truthfulness and logical flow of the word of the speaker (1b.6). In drama theory, the techniques of *ethos* and *pathos* become increasingly important (Fink, 2014:59). As the association and dissociation with characters are important in the rhetorical effect of the drama, the director can use both strategies to sway the audience towards or away from a character.

In terms of *ethos*, the revelation of a formidable personality, high ethical standards, positive attitudes, and good habits of a character, especially through their confrontation with conflict, draws the audience in to associate with him/her (Fink, 2014:60). When a protagonist shows bravery, kindness, strength, et cetera, the audience jumps at the opportunity to identify with them in triumph. Moreover, things like clothes (costume), social role and rank, speech and vocabulary of a character effect whether they are presented as trustworthy to the audience.

When the director uses the technique of *pathos*, the feelings evoked among audience members will determine if and how they associate with a character. While the director can promise the audience a reward if they associate with the protagonist (e.g., Jn.

1:12; 20:31), s/he can also use the feeling of pity to create empathy, sympathy, or even antipathy towards the protagonist. This usually happens when the protagonist fails or is defeated (Fink, 2014:61).

The director will also often use a character (the protagonist, in particular) and his/her fate to allow certain *themes* to be brought to the fore. These themes carry with them certain lessons and values with which the audience will interact and hopefully respond to.

3.7. Theme

Aristotle (1995, 1450b) refers to δίανοια (thought; lit. “through knowledge”) as the third essential element in drama and defines it as “the ability to say what is possible and appropriate”. Important to note is that the theme is not the plot (what happens in the drama), but the moral or lessons that the audience can learn within the story (Fink, 2014:73). Stibbe (1992:27) defines themes as the basic ideas of a narrative or drama. They function as overarching concepts which bind episodes and give internal shape and completeness. Themes tend to summarise or allude to the message of the drama and are often repeated throughout the performance, and especially in the arc (change) of the protagonist throughout the drama (Fink, 2014:74). A dramatic theme can normally be summed up in one word or concept (e.g., love, pride, vengeance, etc.).¹¹⁶ It is identified by asking questions about the relationship between good and evil, the lesson(s) learned by the protagonist, and the relationship between cause and effect (2014:78).

3.7.1. Theme and point of view

The theme(s) of a drama is/are also bound up with the point of view of the director. The point of view refers to the world view presented in the drama. This includes the perspective from which the drama is performed (Tolmie, 1999:29), as well as *how* it is performed (Resseguie, 2013:3). The director will also have a point of view considering specific themes (Fink, 2014:74-75). For instance, the theme of fear can be portrayed in a diversity of ways: where a horror film would portray a point of view that *fear is real*, children’s animations would usually opt for a point of view that *fear can be overcome*.

¹¹⁶ Many ancient tragedies explored the theme of humanity’s fate due to pride (*hybris*) (Fink, 2014:76).

The point of view of the director will not necessarily be shared by all the characters, and often does not even exactly correlate with that of the protagonist.¹¹⁷ It is an overarching system of thought which makes value judgements on all events and characters. This is referred to by Powell (1990:24) as the evaluative point of view, which can be defined as “the standards of judgement by which readers [sic] are led to evaluate the events, characters, and settings that comprise the story”.

3.7.2. *Theme and audience*

To take on the role of the implied audience, the audience of a drama needs to accept the point of view of the director and narrator (Powell, 1990:24). Tolmie (1999:31) explains this by referring to the point of view as the way in which the vision or camera is pointed and manipulated and thus through whose eyes the play is viewed. The point of view is brought across by the words of the narrator, dialogue, actions, settings, events, and many more elements expressed on stage (Resseguie, 2013:3). In the Fourth Gospel, the narrator makes it clear that the audience will only share in the life (20:30-31) and kinship (1:12) of the divine if they embrace the character of Jesus and recognise his divine identity. However, the director has no guarantee that an audience will accept this point of view or agree with their interpretation of a certain theme.

Moreover, while the director might have included certain themes in the performance, it is also up to the audience to recognise themes that are relatable to them. In the drama analysis of the Fourth Gospel, vulnerability will be regarded as the chosen theme for this dissertation. This does not imply that it is *the* theme of the Johannine drama or that the text was composed to convey something about vulnerability, but that the theme is presented strong enough for an analysis on it.¹¹⁸ In order to explore the theme, the director’s point of view on it (whether vulnerability is rejected or embraced, separated from, or identified with the divine protagonist) will become increasingly important. For the audience, this point of view will need to be brought into conversation with their foreknowledge of the protagonist, as well as the expectations evoked by the prologue.

¹¹⁷ Powell (1990:53) asserts that characters will always be introduced and discussed from the director’s evaluative point of view.

¹¹⁸ As argued in §2.3.

While a drama analysis intersects with narrative criticism through its focus on plot, characterisation, and themes, it stands apart quite significantly when *auditive* and *visual* components are considered.

3.8. The auditive

The auditive refers to everything that the audience hears in the experience of the drama. This includes Aristotle's (1995, 1450b) fourth and fifth elements, namely *language* and *sound plot* (referred to by Aristotle as melody).

3.8.1. Language

Aristotle (1995, 1450b) refers to λέξις (a saying; a speech) as the fourth crucial element in a drama. Fink (2014:84) defines this element as the "word choice and speech construction for characters". The language, and especially dialogue of a drama, serves three main functions, namely, "to advance the plot, reveal character traits, and point to the theme" (2014:93). While language serves to inform, the director can also play with it to confuse the audience, or create a dual meaning (Fink, 2014:102). The hidden or intended meaning behind words (or actions) in a drama functions as subtext, which can be found in various forms, including symbolism, irony, contrast, and comparison.

Symbolism and irony

Symbolism and irony are powerful rhetorical devices used by the director to persuade the audience to accept a certain interpretation (Powell, 1990:31).¹¹⁹ Symbolism can be defined as something meaning more than it would appear (1990:30). In a drama, it is used to comment on realities within the drama, but also on realities which transcend the drama and touch the lives of audience members (Styan, 1975:236). The director might include a certain symbol repetitively to strengthen its effect among the audience. Irony, again, is where the true interpretation of an event or situation is the opposite of what it appears to mean (Powell, 1990:30). Irony always opens up two possible interpretations: the superficial, and the deeper level (Stibbe, 1992:27).

Dramatic (or situational) irony is commonly associated with the drama and can be defined as the instance where the audience is aware of something that the character(s) do(es) not know (Powell, 1990:30-31). This knowing creates tension among the audience and usually predicts an event which will be shocking, surprising,

¹¹⁹ See Culpepper (1983:165-198) for an insightful discussion of symbolism and irony in the FG.

or devastating to the actor(s) at hand. Dramatic irony was a common tool within ancient drama, especially tragedy (Barr, 2002:389). The goal of symbolism and irony is to encourage the audience to try out or consider alternative interpretations, since that which is said means more than what it appears to mean (Powell, 1990:27-28) These elements create a dialectical interaction between the drama and its audience (Styan, 1975:234).

Contrast and comparison

Another strategy used by the director is the comparison or contrast of two or more elements, happenings, settings, or characters. A contrast can be defined as a juxtaposition of things that are opposite or dissimilar (Powell, 1990:32). This is usually done to emphasise the nature of the elements which are compared, or often to create a sense of shock or awe among the audience. A comparison can be defined as an association of things that are similar or alike (1990:33) and serves as a powerful rhetorical tool with which the director can emphasise the characteristics of that which is compared.

Memorability

The director can also use the memories of audience members to drive along a certain point. For example, a character can be introduced using very specific language which makes a particular impression on the audience. This introduction remains with audience members throughout the drama.¹²⁰ The director can also make use of specific memorable lines to keep the audience engaged, and create a certain expectation among them (Fink, 2014:99-100). A good memorable line will be brief (2014:101) and carry a certain gravity, as it will be meaningful later on. The audience will usually be reminded of the memorable line when something happens which either confirms or contradicts it.

While language is an important auditive component to drama, speech and dialogue will not be the only things that the audience hears. In order to add dimension to the audience's aural experience, the director will make use of a *sound plot*.

¹²⁰ This can be seen in the Johannine prologue, as the language used triggers various known categories among audience members, which create certain expectations of the protagonist and plot.

3.8.2. *Sound plot*

In his discussion of drama, Aristotle (1995, 1450b) refers to μέλος (tune; melody) as the fifth element of drama. Since a sound plot was not common use in the ancient theatre, this category can be broadened to refer to all elements of background sound in the drama, which includes sound effects, music, and vocal dramatisation (Fink, 2014:106). Sound (or the absence thereof) adds dimension to the settings (Keuris, 1996:9), as well as the happenings in the drama (White, 2001:23). Sound serves to “reinforce the spoken word”, or to “add direction and effects” (Carver, 2009:363), and its use serves to enhance the experience of the drama and pull the audience into the world presented on stage (Fink, 2014:111).

Besides music, which serves to create a certain mood, sound effects can serve to situate a scene in its broader context. For example, at Jesus’ trial in front of Pilate, the narrator refers to a crowd which appears to be anything but silent. The director will therefore play a sound effect of a crowd murmuring in the background to amplify the murmurings of the crowd on stage. The sound plot will be especially helpful in creating a sense of “aural depth” (Fink, 2014:113), which can hopefully bring the sense of hearing into the exegetical experience. This will be done by picking up on cues in the biblical text and exploring the probable sounds heard by the audience.

3.8.3. *The auditive and the audience*

Both language and sound plot serve to stimulate the audience and add depth to the drama. Language usually has a dividing effect among audience members, since it serves to both inform and confuse (see Fink, 2014:96). While the Fourth Gospel contains various clarifications, which serve to clear up possible confusion and cast more light on certain elements to create a knowledgeable auditorium (e.g., the prologue), the director also employs various symbols and makes use of irony, contrast, and comparison to force audience members to make interpretations and choices regarding whom they will align themselves with. Johannine language also contains known categories and words which trigger the foreknowledge of various audience members to connect them to characters or events (e.g., ὁ ἀμνὸς, ὁ λόγος).

The sound plot serves to stimulate the aural senses of the audience and immerse them into the drama. Apart from sound effects, the tone and volume of characters’ speech is also important to create an effect among the audience. It is important to note

that, while the sounds on stage are important in drama, the sounds from among the audience are equally as important, as a reaction from some audience members can either spread through the auditorium in a unifying manner (like laughter), or it can divide the audience (like heckles or insults). While it is important that an audience is stimulated in the aural sense, the director will also have to pay attention to the *visual*.

3.9. The visual

The final element that Aristotle (1995, 1450b) emphasises is that of ὄψις (visuals). This refers to all seen elements on stage, which includes the stage design, lighting, properties, costume, and stage movement and gestures (Fink, 2014:116). The goal of the visual is to capture and hold the attention of the audience and to reinforce other elements of the drama (2014:117). The first aspect of the visual is the settings of the drama, which are portrayed on *stage*.

3.9.1. The stage

Every drama plays out in a certain space, as characters always find themselves to be *somewhere* (Van Aarde, 2009:403). It is important to realise that settings are more than locations and backdrops: they are usually, as Resseguie (2013:9) states, “saturated with meaning”, as they determine the mood of a scene and contribute to the shaping or development of the plot and characters.¹²¹ A drama comprises of various types of settings. Firstly, the spatial setting describes the physical place or environment in which the story takes place (Powell, 1990:70). This setting can be geographical (Galilee), topographical (a mountain), architectural (the temple), or religious (Passover) (Resseguie, 2013:9). Secondly, the temporal setting refers to the time and era in which the events play off, as well as the time frame in which the drama is placed (Powell, 1990:72). Thirdly, the social or cultural setting refers to the socio-symbolic world operating within the narrative. It generally represents the “political institutions, class structures, economic systems, social customs, and general cultural context” of the drama (Powell, 1990:74).

The settings within a drama are usually communicated through formal stage directions, and the words and actions of characters (Keuris, 1996:40). When the description of settings in the Johannine drama is considered, the audience is provided with a relatively thorough and colourful description of the locations, times, and contexts

¹²¹ However, while settings usually are significant, some can have no meaning at all (Tolmie, 1999:106).

of the drama's happenings.¹²² Brant (2004:92) praises the Johannine drama for its "scenographic detail" and argues that the author manages to portray various settings with relative finesse, which implies that the text of the Fourth Gospel makes for enriching stage design.

Any drama has a limited or framed space in which settings will have to be represented as realistically as possible (Keuris 1996:8). To do this, the director will have to create the appropriate scenery (McKinney, 2015:122). Scenery is portrayed and amplified with the use of costumes, décor, sound, lighting, and properties (Carver, 2009:438). However, the starting point would be the backdrop: a painted back wall, which aids the audience in situating the drama. The backdrop will then be complemented by a certain choice of décor (stationary elements on stage) and properties (more personal elements which are used by actors and moved around on stage).¹²³

Social or cultural settings are also portrayed by stage design, but many complexities of the context cannot be expressed and must be discerned through the dialogue, characterisation, narrator's comments, and events. Beyond these cues, a basic knowledge of the social world portrayed within the drama is also helpful in order to pick up on that which the text does not spell out, but is still at work in it (Powell, 1990:86).¹²⁴ After the settings have been laid out on stage, they are brought to life through lighting, sound, and special effects.

3.9.2. *Lighting*

Lighting is a very important tool within the drama (White, 2001:90), especially when settings are considered, as it can often serve to minimise the "special limitations on stage" (Keuris, 1996:9). It can be used for various purposes, including to create an atmosphere (for example, warm or cold), draw attention to something (using a spotlight), or simply to indicate a time of day (light or dark – Fink, 2014:121).

¹²² These descriptions are usually given by the narrator. However, when the text is translated into script format, it will mostly be reflected in the stage directions.

¹²³ A property, or prop, is any item used in the drama which is not built into the set (White, 2001:14), serves to support the character (McKinney, 2015:124), and aids in characterisation (Fink, 2014:127). Like costume and makeup, properties can also reveal much of a character's socio-economic status and an audience will immediately begin drawing conclusions based on the properties that a character carries. Drama scholars distinguish between a hand prop, which is a prop carried by the actor and aiding in his/her characterisation (e.g., a soldier's sword), and a stage prop, which is handled by the actor, but forms part of the décor (e.g., Jesus' cross; Styan, 2000:30).

¹²⁴ Bennema (2013:44) also emphasises the importance of a basic knowledge of the socio-historic world within the experience of a text such as the FG. Since it is considered non-fictional literature, the drama does somewhat move beyond that which we find in the text.

Dramaturgs usually differentiate between conventional lighting, which refers to lights which cannot move, and intelligent lighting, which refers to lights which are able to move (Carver, 2009:269). As this study wishes to experience the drama of the Fourth Gospel from the angle of an audience, technicalities regarding lighting (such as detailed descriptions of the types of lights) will not aid the drama analysis and will therefore not be part of the discussion. Rather, the *effects* of the possible modes and uses of lighting (such as warm or cold, a spotlight on a character, et cetera) will be highlighted and included in the stage-script.

3.9.3. *Special effects*

Similar to lighting and sound, special effects serve to help along the imagination of the audience and add dimension to the settings and happenings in the drama. Special effects are those elements which give life to the things that actors are unable to produce by themselves. This would include natural phenomena, such as fires, rain, or wind (Carver, 2009:380), or supernatural phenomenon, such as a character flying through the air (2009:379).

It should be clear that the exploration of settings is more detailed in drama than it would be in narrative, since drama takes the narrative descriptions and fleshes them out in various ways (stage design, lighting, sound, special effects, etc.). An important thing to note is that, despite these elements seeming very technical, they are essential components in the world which the drama creates and contribute to the audience's experience.

3.9.4. *The visual and the audience*

Dramas rely very heavily on visual elements to convincingly portray a story to its audience. That which the audience sees on stage does not only situate the drama, but also serves to evoke response from audience members (Rhoads, 2009:91). Each element of "space, light, sound, structures, objects, fabrics, textures, and colors" is therefore chosen and utilised as an essential component in the audience's experience (McKinney, 2015:121).

Moreover, the visual element of the action on stage carries significant weight. While the reading of a narrative stimulates the imagination to see the scene played out, the physical portrayal on stage often evokes a clash between the portrayal that the audience could have imagined and the portrayal with which they are confronted.

Another important element to take into consideration throughout the drama is the fact that the audience does not only witness the happenings on stage, but also the happenings in the auditorium. The facial expressions and gestures of fellow audience members reacting to what they are witnessing on stage are therefore important in the analysis.

In conclusion, whether it is the plot, characterisation, themes, auditive elements, or the visual components of a performance, the focus of a drama analysis is to explore the impact of a drama on an audience experiencing these elements (a first-time audience in this specific study).¹²⁵ The focal point of such an analysis is therefore the hypothetical audience and their reception of and grappling with the drama by focussing on the five elements discussed above. While these do not constitute a comprehensive list of what a drama analysis can be, they are plausible starting points for a creative methodology which explores the dramatic and performative side of the Fourth Gospel.

3.10. Conclusion

Biblical drama criticism is anything but a clear cut and unproblematic tool with which to experience a text, but the promises and possibilities that this methodology holds make it worthwhile to take the calculated and creative risk and test it on the Fourth Gospel. This chapter has sought to define and demarcate the methodology for its appropriation on the Fourth Gospel. As an exegetical tool, the methodology was placed within the wider scope of performance criticism and its focus was identified as the world in front of the text (the audience). Important communicative parties in the process were identified as the director and hypothetical audience, and the focus of the methodology was demarcated as the plot, characterisation, theme, auditive elements, and visual components of the drama.

The idea of a drama analysis is a reading of the text which allows it to function poetically as a drama that “fire[s] the imagination, provoke[s] repentance, [and] inspire[s] worship” (Powell, 2010:241). As the first-time hypothetical audience and their

¹²⁵ Vanhoozer (2010:267) emphasises that there is no one performance which can exhaust the meaning potential of a text. Drama criticism therefore has the potential to explore the FG in a very specific sense as it attempts to imaginatively draw on the supposed reactions of a specific hypothetical context. The idea would be to develop a tool for interpretation which could be used to explore multiple hypothetical audiences’ experiences of biblical texts – each time aiming to highlight certain rhetorical elements of the text.

experience of the drama amidst their own unique situations (see Rhoads, 2009:91) is key in this methodology, it will be helpful to attempt, as far as possible, to step into the shoes (sandals?) of such a hypothetical audience who found themselves in the socio-historical context in which the Fourth Gospel was (probably) penned down. The next chapter will therefore serve to unpack this hypothetical social world and attempt to seek out their possible/probable expectations of a drama which promises to make God known.

4. Becoming an Audience

Since society gets the theatre it deserves, its drama therefore tells us a great deal about the people who go there, why they go and what happens to them (Styan, 1975:109).

4.1. Introduction

The drama, as any narrative, creates an alternative world which has its own presuppositions, values, and boundaries (Lategan, 2009:97). This world is mostly known to the audience, and by creating a drama which mimics that which an audience would be familiar with, the director can create a rhetorical masterpiece which forces the audience to evaluate their own world(s). Styan (1975:239) therefore asserts that good playwriting begins with intimate knowledge of the audience. The director uses the drama to alienate the audience from their surroundings (Brant, 2004:73), and invite them to abandon their identities as actual audience members and clothe themselves in the identity of the implied audience.

Drama therefore entails two crucial spaces: that of the actors and that of the spectators (Keuris, 1996:43). Bradby, Thomas and Pickering (1983:236) emphasise that the creation of a drama or play involves both the commitment to communicate something and the commitment from the audience to hear and interpret.¹²⁶ As discussed in chapter two,¹²⁷ the Fourth Gospel calls for such a commitment, which holds the promise of a good, abundant and eternal life (10:10; 20:31) and new identity (1:12) in the lives of its audience (Brant, 2004:73).¹²⁸ These promises come through the life (and death) of Jesus of Nazareth.

However, as a twenty-first-century audience, the association and familiarity with the world portrayed in the drama of the Fourth Gospel seem to be a far more difficult and complicated task since the context(s) portrayed differ(s) quite dramatically¹²⁹ from our

¹²⁶ Styan (1975:1) exclaims that “a play must communicate or it is not a play at all”.

¹²⁷ See §2.4.

¹²⁸ Various scholars have referred to this rhetorical technique of estranging and re-socialising. Ricoeur (1975:122-128) describes it as “orientation, disorientation and reorientation”, while Lategan (1993:402) refers to “association and disassociation” (see Mouton, 2002:137-142). Rhoads (2010:176) evaluates this process in the language of performance. He argues that a performance will present both a world known to its audience (with which they identify), and a world foreign to them (which they are invited into).

¹²⁹ Pun intended.

own. Therefore, while a drama analysis will primarily cast the lens on the drama itself, the specific choices made in the forming of the Johannine drama were not random, but influenced by real circumstances (Moloney, 1993:20).

To tap into the performative world and rhetorical art of the text, Rhoads (2009:92) suggests creating “audience scenarios” in an imagination of a performative event. These scenarios include speculation regarding various individuals and groups represented in a probable audience, as well as the various ideologies and world views which could have been present. To unlock something of the transformative power of the Johannine drama in the lives of a first-time audience, a hypothetical (textually and socio-historically informed) layout of this audience will be provided. This layout (or audience scenario) is dependent on two elements: the information shared in the text-itself, and the information we have at our disposal surrounding the first-century Mediterranean.

Styan (1975:10) emphasises that a whole society can be found behind every audience. The Johannine drama tells not only the story of Jesus, but simultaneously shares something of the drama of an audience and their society (Stibbe, 1992:58; see Moloney, 1993:20).¹³⁰ Bradby, Thomas and Pickering (1983:225) refer to the necessity to imaginatively recreate the conditions in which the play could have been written or performed. Moreover, Carver (2009:30) reminds us that no drama can be performed before the necessary research is done with which the elements within the drama can be explored. Any text, script, or performance contains some presupposed information, which the author and director assume the implied audience to know.¹³¹ To better understand that which is said and done throughout the drama, it is helpful to explore some *unsaid* and *undone* elements.

¹³⁰ Reinhartz (2003:15) describes the FG as telling “two stories simultaneously: the story of Jesus in early first-century Palestine and the story, that is, the history and experience, of the Johannine community in late first-century Asia Minor”. While this chapter does not aim to unpack the realities of the Johannine community, it will use the FG’s possible time and location of writing to sketch a hypothetical audience.

¹³¹ Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:16-17) illustrate this by differentiating between “high-context” and “low-context” societies. Where people in a high-context society usually have a thorough understanding of the nuances of their context, those in a low-context society do not possess this general understanding of their social world(s). The author of the FG probably wrote to a high-context society: an audience who was well aware of the world represented within the text. This explains why some information, such as the implications of a woman going to a well at noon (4:6-7), is not included in the evangelist’s account.

Therefore, in order for a contemporary audience to better understand the nuances of the drama, and grasp something of the implied rhetorical effect(s) of the happenings played off against the context(s) portrayed on stage, it will be helpful to, as far as possible, make an attempt¹³² to familiarise ourselves with these contexts.¹³³

4.2. Problematising the exercise

The author of the Fourth Gospel uses the drama to communicate something very specific to a specific audience, who again found themselves within a specific context (Stibbe, 1992:61). Styan (1975:10) emphasises that any drama critic will need to, as far as possible, become aware of the audience's "communal needs and wishes" in order to explore their various moods at certain times in the drama. Unfortunately, as a twenty-first-century audience we are unable to experience the drama, and the invitation to become the implied audience, in the same way as the ancient audience would have. This is understandable as we are not only removed temporarily and spatially, but socially, politically, economically, theologically, and ideologically.

Biblical scholars K.C. Hanson and Douglas Oakman (1998:161) emphasise that, before a text can be interpreted, the audience needs to "*learn to take seriously the distance between [them]selves and the ancients*".¹³⁴ Therefore, it needs to be emphasised that this chapter in no way attempts to reconstruct the first historical audience to receive the Fourth Gospel. Rather, an attempt is made to construct a hypothetical audience, situated in the first-century Mediterranean, experiencing the Johannine drama for the first time. We are therefore not becoming *the* ancient audience (or Johannine community), but rather *an audience* better positioned to experience the Johannine drama in its ancient context.¹³⁵

¹³² I use the word "attempt" on purpose, since going back in time and *becoming* an ancient audience will never be possible. Not only is the data we have surrounding these contexts hypothetical, but it would be ignorant to think that we would be able to fully transcend our twenty-first-century mindsets, or "obliterate our culture and get back to an original reading of these texts" (Barr, 2002:7). Lategan (1984:16) emphasises this point by arguing that the interpreter is unable to "blot out the own horizon" in the exegetical process.

¹³³ At the same time, the audience will have to de-familiarise themselves with the well-known FG, assuming the role of "newcomers to John's story", in order to experience something similar to a first-time audience (Stibbe, 1993:16).

¹³⁴ Fowl (2010:402) also refers to the "enormous historical gap" between the ancient context and our contexts.

¹³⁵ The hypothetical audience would, therefore, not be regarded as a group of "Jesus-loyalists or Christ-believers" (Horsley, 2013:21), but a group of individuals in the ancient Mediterranean who have not yet encountered the Gospel.

Rhoads (2011:113) refers to the possibility of imaginatively immersing oneself in the hypothetical realities of an audience to (attempt to) explore what their possible experience of a drama could have been. To do this, the model of social-scientific criticism is used. A social-scientific analysis is “cultural anthropological” (Rhoads, 2011:113), which means that it identifies general (and often generic) cultural, social, religious, economic, and other categories, and speculates on individuals’ behaviour, identity, and roles based on the information that we have concerning patterns within these categories.¹³⁶

It is, however, essential to mention that social-scientific criticism works with broad and general social categories and runs the risk of facilitating anachronistic readings of the ancient context (Barton, 2010:47; Loubser, 2013:93). Moreover, its analysis of a context can be too general because it does not really account for exceptions to the social norm or variations in social groups (Barton, 2010:41, 49). This method is, therefore, at best, informed guess work based on broader categories such as “kinship patterns, purity and defilement, patron-client relationships, honor and shame”, et cetera (Rhoads, 2011:113). A social-scientific construction of the wider context of the hypothetical audience is therefore in no way a precise historical reflection of what the ancient audience looked like and experienced but a tentative, hypothetical, and very general sketch of what an audience could have looked like and experienced, based on the information available to us.

The tool of social-scientific criticism therefore serves to bring contemporary readers *closer* to the potential realities of a first-time audience. To do this, a backdrop will be painted against which the drama can be experienced, which includes some basic portraits of life in the first-century Mediterranean, especially regarding ideas concerning humanity, living an abundant life, divinity, and how (different expressions of) vulnerability tied into these concepts. This does not guarantee the same experience of the Fourth Gospel as the ancient audience would have had, but grants us the opportunity to at least use our imaginations in an attempt to situate ourselves among an ancient audience and to train our minds to “*think cross-culturally*” (Hanson &

¹³⁶ For a discussion of social-scientific criticism, see De Milander (2015:36-38).

Oakman, 1998:161).¹³⁷ This chapter will therefore take the reader on an imaginative journey as the hypothetical backdrop, guided by the Johannine text, unfolds.

4.3. The text as starting point

Cate (1991:131) emphasises that Jesus was immersed in an early first-century religious, cultural, economic, social, and physical environment in which he walked and talked, and that this reality would be reflected within the Fourth Gospel. However, the author would also have reflected on and reacted to his/her own (probably later first-century) context, as well as the context of the first audience of the drama. The Johannine drama would thus reflect societal realities of a spectrum of contexts as it tells the story of both Jesus, and the first receivers (Reinhartz, 2003:15). New Testament scholars and social-scientific critics, Bruce Malina and Richard Rohrbaugh (1998:11), emphasise that, while the audience's context provides much depth to the drama, this context and the drama can only be fully appreciated by including the context portrayed *within* the drama. This context is essentially the *settings* of the drama and will be the world portrayed on stage for the audience to behold.

When the Fourth Gospel is considered, the emerging context is that of Palestine. Most scholars agree that the historical events in the Gospel can be situated in the second and third decade of the first century (AD 20-30) (Freyne, 2011:417). In terms of spatial settings, the Johannine drama plays out in two main locations, namely Galilee (2:1-12; 4:43-54; 7:1-13) and Jerusalem (2:13-3:21; 5:1-47; 7:14-10:39; 12:12-20:29), as the drama follows Jesus moving back and forth between these locations, mostly due to religious festivals (Köstenberger, 2009:80; Neyrey, 2009:65).¹³⁸ More specific spatial settings which are emphasised include the temple, synagogue, Pilate's praetorium, and Golgotha. These settings contain various social, political, and religious dynamics (social settings), which will be nuanced throughout the drama analysis. New Testament scholar and social-scientific critic, Jerome Neyrey (2007:2), points out that the author of the Fourth Gospel, as well as its audience, seemed to

¹³⁷ Simmons (2008:17) refers to this process as more than the mere collection of data. It is essentially the process where we "seek to own, as much as possible, the values and visions of the ancients so that we may rightly [sic] interpret what they thought, felt, said, and did". Personally, I don't believe that we will ever be able to "rightly" interpret what the ancient audience experienced, but we may take a few steps closer. Perhaps we might speak of *analogously* interpreting what the ancients might have "thought, felt, said, and did".

¹³⁸ Jesus is also found in other locations, such as the Judean countryside (2:22), or the town of Sychar in Samaria (4:1-42), the sea of Galilee (6:1-22; probably 21:1-25), Capernaum (6:22-71), Bethany (just east of Jerusalem; 11:1-44; 12:1-8), and Ephraim (11:54).

have a thorough knowledge regarding the Palestinian context, understanding geographical, social, religious, and political nuances regarding the areas of Judea, Samaria, and Galilee.¹³⁹

In terms of temporal settings, the Johannine drama follows in a chronological order and is centred around Jesus' ministry (Köstenberger, 2009:79). Unlike the Synoptic Gospels, the Johannine drama gives the audience a glimpse of "the beginning", before continuing with Jesus' life at around AD 29-30 (Jn. 1:1-5; see Köstenberger, 2009:80). The Johannine drama covers a span of roughly two and a half years and features three Passovers (2:14-3:21; 6:5-65; 13:1-19:42; see Culpepper, 1983:70).

According to Oakes (2011:89), archaeological work has also shown that the Gospel contains a very accurate portrayal of the Palestinian landscape (also see Freyne, 2011:417). Therefore, backdrops, props, costumes, characters, sounds, lighting, and some of the language used in the script would portray this early Palestinian context. The second relevant context is that of the first-time hypothetical audience.

Since performances resonate with their audiences by making references to social and cultural traditions (Horsley, 2011:147), it will be important to look at the Johannine text itself for clues concerning a possible context for its audience. Various Jewish elements in the Fourth Gospel hint at the probability that a hypothetical first-time audience contained a significant number of Jews. The Johannine drama recalls various Jewish elements, traditions, and notions with which Jewish audience members would have been able to relate quite well. Titles such as ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ (son of God – 1:34, 49; 3:18; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 19:7 20:31), βασιλεύς τοῦ Ἰσραήλ (king of Israel – 1:49; 12:13; 1:35-51), ῥαββί (rabbi/teacher – 1:38, 49; 3:2, 26; 4:1; 6:25; 9:2; 11:8), ὁ Χριστός (Christ/Messiah – 1:17, 20, 25, 41; 3:28; 4:25, 29; 7:26, 27, 31, 41, 42; 9:22; 10:24; 11:27; 12:34; 17:3; 20:31), and the temporal settings provided by festivals such as Passover (12:13; 6:4; 11:55; 12:1; 13:1; 18:28, 39; 19:14) and Booths (7:2) would

¹³⁹ Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:11) argue that both the earlier Palestinian context and the later Ephesian context share "the same overarching system of meaning", since they share a social system, dominated by Greek and Roman culture and rule, and that the difference in social world between these contexts should not be overemphasised. Although Palestine was locally governed by Jewish law, it remained a Greek and Roman "frontier zone", since the overarching rule still belonged to the empire (Alexander, 2010:90). Moreover, Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:17) affirm that change was slow within the first century and that people over different spans of time and distance probably had very similar experiences. The hypothetical audience would therefore not have been complete strangers to the world portrayed within the Gospel

have struck a chord with Jewish audience members (see Witherington III, 1995:32-33).

However, a hypothetical audience to the Johannine drama would not be exclusively Jewish. Porter (2015:37) argues that the Johannine Gospel was fit for a “widespread audience”. Since the story reflects Jesus as God’s “proclaimer” to various people groups, Porter (2015:62) argues that an audience of the Gospel itself could have been equally diverse (see also Köstenberger, 2009:84; Ray, 2002:33; Hwang & Van der Watt, 2007:691). Jesus reveals himself to Galileans (Jn. 1-2), Jews (Jn. 3, 11), Samaritans (Jn. 4), the physically broken and impure (Jn. 5, 9), and Roman political figures (Jn. 18-19; see Porter, 2015:47-56). Moreover, the Greeks (“Ἕλληνες; 12:19-20) joining into worship after Jesus’ triumphant entry also represent a “gentile interest in Jesus” (Hwang & Van der Watt, 2007:690).¹⁴⁰ So also, the inscription on the sign on Jesus’ cross features Hebrew, Latin, and Greek, emphasising the relevance of his death to a variety of people groups.

Based on the above, a hypothetical audience can be sketched in very broad strokes. This audience will be considered as one consisting of contemporaries of the Fourth Gospel’s author, and will be regarded as comprising of Jews, Greeks, Romans, and Samaritans (see Koester, 2003:20-21; Stibbe, 1993:16). The audience will be situated in the broader region of Ephesus on the west coast of Asia Minor in the 90s, since this is generally believed to be the date and wider context of the Fourth Gospel’s composition (Köstenberger, 2009:53; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:11). In order to speculate regarding these audience members’ probable expectations of a divine drama, a background will be sketched of the first-century Mediterranean (and Ephesus in particular) as overarching context.

4.4. Sketching a backdrop

4.4.1. Introduction

Ihenacho (2001:284) refers to the environment of the late first-century Ephesus as culturally complex and confused. The social, economic, cultural, religious, and political climate was influenced by two major elements: the Greek and Roman empire and Judaism (Cate, 1991:141). Moreover, several events and movements impacted the

¹⁴⁰ The term gentile is used to refer to individuals who were not of Jewish conviction or descent. These would include Samaritans, Greeks, Romans, etc.

realities of groups and individuals. Although the ancient Mediterranean was not completely dominated by Greek thought and culture, Carter (2013:10) emphasises that the influence and spreading of Greek thought, values, and culture cannot be overlooked or underestimated.

The first century was also the time of the rule of the Roman empire, and many Roman thoughts and perceptions of life infiltrated society at large. Moreover, Jewish ways of thought and doing had an important role to play in the identity of first-century individuals (Martyn, 2003:149). It would be no surprise that a large portion of the theological climate of the first century was informed and shaped by the tradition of ancient Jewish or Hebrew writings. An important element to consider here is the fact that the Jewish temple had been destroyed in around 70 AD (see Köstenberger, 2009:84-85). To the Jews, this was more than an architectural or religious loss, but essentially the loss of a national identity symbol and place of belonging. Moreover, it symbolised the weakness and defeated state of the Jewish nation in the Roman empire, strengthening the desperation for a powerful Messiah who would be expected to restore Israel's political rule.

These streams of influence contained their own ideologies and perceptions regarding humanity, divinity, and how vulnerability functioned among these categories. To imagine how a hypothetical ancient audience situated in this context might have experienced the drama of the Fourth Gospel, it will be important to unpack their possible realities and especially seek to explore the value systems under which they operated. Neyrey (2009:31) borrows the word "role" from theatre studies and uses it to refer to the behaviour, duties, position(s), and rights of a person within their context. While social location would be crucial in the roles, expectations, and reactions of a hypothetical audience, it will be important to keep the uniqueness *of* and the uniqueness *within* the hypothetical audience in mind. Rhoads (2009:90) succinctly illustrates this point:

Social location was crucial to the response of ancient audiences, especially audiences from divergent cultures – a Gentile audience compared to a Judean one..., or an urban audience in contrast to a rural audience. At the same time, a single audience may have included people from diverse social locations. We may do well to imagine how peasants and elites, slaves and masters, women and men, Pharisees and Sadducees, Judeans and

Romans, as well as others in an audience might have experienced a particular writing.

Through a social-scientific model, this chapter seeks to explore various categories of the ancient Mediterranean, discussing what *ideal* they were intended to establish, and how vulnerability would have functioned in each category. Although broad and hypothetical, such an exploration aims to stimulate the imagination to a point of envisioning various possible expectations an audience within this context could have had of a drama with a divine hero. Since this hero will take the form of a man in the Fourth Gospel, the various categories will pay special attention to the (highly gendered) expectations of a first-century man.

The Fourth Gospel communicates its aim in facilitating a process of belief in the hero among its audience (20:30-31). The result of such a belief is ζωή (life). However, this concept represents more than just biological life (βίος), but refers to a to “abundant life” (ἐγὼ ἦλθον ἵνα ζωὴν ἔχωσιν καὶ περισσὸν ἔχωσιν – Jn. 10:10), “meaningful *life*” (Bruner, 2012:16), or “a particular quality of life” (Brant, 2011:29), which exceeds the biological and contains in itself the “physical, spiritual, and eternal” (Harris, 2015:23). The starting point for sketching the ideological backdrop of the hypothetical audience would therefore be the exploration of what it would have meant for them to live such a meaningful, quality-filled, honourable or good life, and how vulnerability related to the concept.

4.4.2. *The good life*

When considering perceptions regarding a good life in the ancient Mediterranean, the concept of collectivism becomes increasingly important. The Mediterranean first century featured a collective society (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:163) with a strong group orientation, which means that members of society were socialised into “a high degree of group identification, solidarity, conformity, and commitment” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:204). This implies that identity, worth, meaning, and satisfaction of life were gathered from the individual’s experience and position *within* the wider society.¹⁴¹ Such a collectivist perspective can also be seen in the Fourth Gospel in the way that the narrator addresses the audience. Apart from the way in which the narrator includes

¹⁴¹ Collectivism was thus seen as strength and individualism as weakness (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:70). However, collective behaviour always benefitted the individual and their group.

the audience in his experience by using first-person (plural) pronouns to create the feel of a joint experience with them (e.g., 1:14; 21:24), he addresses the audience as a collective group of individuals by also using the second person plural (e.g., πιστεύ[ς]ητε in 20:31). The Johannine drama therefore seems to assume a collectivist audience.

Within a collectivist society, the quality of one's life would have been locked up in societal status (Malina & Pilch, 2000:xxxvi-xxxvii). The better the individual (and their family's) place within the societal system, the closer they would be to living a good or ideal life. The author of the Fourth Gospel does not only offer the characters (and audience) friendship with the divine, but kinship (1:12). The identity and ranking within society would have been influenced by many markers. Malina and Seeman (2000:60-61) describe the most important of these:

Land, wealth, prestige..., health, semen, manliness, honor, friendship and love, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety.

The vast majority of Greek and Roman literature was devoted to this idea of the good life (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:118): an ideology only partially embodied by the minority of the population. This good and ideal lifestyle was not available to all simply because the good things in life, those things “tangible and intangible”, were ultimately regarded as being in limited supply (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:199).¹⁴² Foster (1965:296) explains:

[A]ll the desired things in life such as land, wealth, health, friendship and love, manliness and honor, respect and status, power and influence, security and safety, exist in finite quantity...

This means that, if someone possessed much honour, there would necessarily have to be another person with very little honour. In the Fourth Gospel, an example of this can be seen in John's assertion that Jesus must increase and that he (John) must decrease (3:30). “If one person gets more, someone else has to get less” (Neyrey, 2009:127). This means that the ethos of individuals was often steered by envy and fear. The ideal would be to acquire and maintain what one has acquired. The success of another would not be something that one would celebrate or even encourage, since

¹⁴² Scholars refer to this phenomenon as the principle of limited good (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:199).

it would impede upon one's own *honour* (τιμή), which was regarded as the most important component of a good life.

4.4.3. Honour and shame

The prologue of the Fourth Gospel (esp. 1:1-5) begins with an introduction of the divine λόγος. This introduction serves to situate the protagonist in terms of his position of honour. It is therefore profound that the prologue immediately emphasises ὁ λόγος' eternal being (vv.1-2), his oneness with God (v.1), his role in creation (v.3), identity as patron of light and life (vv.4-5), and his defeat over darkness (v.5). This serves to create a high expectation of honour among audience members.

The first-century Mediterranean world was known as an honour and shame context (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:49). This means that the most important social commodity was honour and every human situation, characteristic, or action was seen as either being honourable or shameful (DeSilva, 2000:23).¹⁴³ For all Greek and Roman men, the ultimate human experience was locked up in the amount of honour connected to them and their kin. Neyrey (2007:16) asserts that honour and shame were not only rooted in Greek and Roman culture, but an essential component to Jewish life as well. Barr (2002:31) defines honour as “the public acknowledgement of the power and prestige due to one by one's class, wealth, station, group identity, and accomplishment”. This includes the “positive worth, value, reputation, and fame of a person” (Neyrey, 2009:213).

As ancient Mediterranean identity was external, communal, and “founded on the realities of the social group” (Barr, 2002:36), honour reflected a public evaluation of how one fared considering the general societal ideas of excellence (ἀρετή) and success (Neyrey, 2009:214).¹⁴⁴ The honour allocated to a person by the group was a direct reflection of the worth of that person and their life (Plevnik, 2000:107), and, therefore, the love of honour (φιλοτιμία) was “commonly acknowledged as the prize both Greeks and Romans sought” (Neyrey, 2007:16).

The allocation of honour depended on the individual and their community. It had to be claimed, as well as acknowledged, based on the perceived value of a person within a

¹⁴³ Neyrey (2009:214) refers to honour as the pivotal value within the ancient Mediterranean world.

¹⁴⁴ While identity and values were set up to serve the collective good, the adherence to these values was not necessarily group-motivated, but rather motivated by the concern for individual honour (DeSilva, 2000:35).

group (DeSilva, 2000:25). It was also static and dynamic. This means that it was ascribed based on things that one had no control over, and yet earned in ways that one could (relatively) control. Static honour was ascribed to a person on the account of birth or family membership (DeSilva, 2000:28; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:147). One's lineage therefore provided the basis for one's honour, together with other factors such as race or citizenship.¹⁴⁵ When the narrator introduces ὁ λόγος as being one with God (1:1-2), he becomes characterised according to a divine lineage.

Since the first-century Mediterranean world was highly stratified with almost no social mobility (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:71), static honour was exceptionally important. If one was not *born* powerful, honourable, and wealthy, one would probably never qualify for this status.¹⁴⁶ However, within a person's static honour, there was the opportunity to gain (or lose) some honour, power, and wealth. Dynamic honour could be gained or lost based on one's public conduct, or the conduct of one's family, kinship group, and those one takes responsibility for (Barr, 2002:31). Every social interaction thus provided the opportunity for the increase or decrease of honour (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:147).

A person would keep her/himself honourable by conforming to behaviour regarded as valuable by their society (DeSilva, 2000:28). Situations within a social space created an opportunity for the display, gain, or loss of honour – especially where two or more men were present. One of these men would usually assert his honour above that of the other: either by a threat or insult, or by the act of giving something to the other, such as an invitation to a party (Barr, 2002:32).¹⁴⁷ All actions were therefore carefully considered and calculated to be of benefit to the honour of the (male) individual and their family (DeSilva, 2000:24). A loss in honour had severe consequences and even resulted in social rejection of an individual by their group (Malina et al., 1995:10). Such

¹⁴⁵ Roman citizenship can be defined as “the legal status of a fully enfranchised member of Roman society” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:169). Less than 10% of the inhabitants of the Greek and Roman empire were citizens of Rome (Although statistics differed from one location to another). Citizenship would grant the individual various advantages and general protection by the empire and was allocated to those born into a family with citizenship or granted to individuals who acted in Rome's interest.

¹⁴⁶ See 1 Co. 1:26. Paul seems to acknowledge the static nature of honour in this section.

¹⁴⁷ The ancient challenge-riposte was a way in which one individual could gain honour at their opponent's expense (DeSilva, 2000:29). This consisted of a public challenge or question which the opponent will have to answer or respond to. Whether the individual was able to defend their honour would be decided by bystanders. If the opponent was unable or unwilling to respond, they would immediately lose honour (2000:31). This exercise of challenge and riposte was only reserved for social equals (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:147).

individuals were labelled as deviants and often excluded from society. Malina et al. (1995:10) refer to this exclusion as a social death sentence.

As with all ancient commodities, the notion of limited good was relevant to honour. The philosopher Plutarch (2003:44B), while reflecting on public addresses and speeches, made the remark that the listeners would feel as if they were robbing themselves of honour if they bestowed honour upon the man delivering the speech. “A grant of honor to another means depriving oneself of honor in equal measure” (Neyrey, 2009:128).

The ‘ideal’ human (and specifically male) experience would therefore be one where one’s honour is kept or increased at the cost of others.¹⁴⁸ This led to various negative challenges of others’ honour in order to increase or preserve one’s own. Verbal or physical attacks, or the act of taking someone to court were among the negative ways in which one could humiliate another and harm their reputation (Neyrey, 2009:217).¹⁴⁹ The protection of one’s honour, as well as the exposure of another’s shame caused for an agonistic culture, where individuals, and especially males, were very conflict-prone (Pilch, 1999:5). Ideal males were those who were front footed and always ready to attack or defend and no decent man would be caught off guard by someone else. The director of the Fourth Gospel seems to play into this reality by already alluding to the fact that ὁ λόγος will be challenged by an antagonist called ἡ σκοτία (the darkness), but that he will not be overcome by it (1:5).

On the other end of the spectrum was shame, which DeSilva (2000:25) defines as “being seen as less than valuable because one has behaved in ways that run contrary to the values of the group”. Shame was regarded as the opposite of honour and represented “contempt, loss of face, defeat, and ridicule” (Neyrey, 2009:417). To be shamed implied that one’s value, as well as the value of your life was diminished (Plevnik, 2000:108). Moreover, the loss of honour, or the shaming of an individual also reflected on their kin and “every member of the family would suffer grief”.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁸ Pilch (1999:5) explains that a person spent “a lifetime guarding, protecting, and maintaining” their honour.

¹⁴⁹ This notion becomes increasingly important in the crucifixion scenes (18:28-19:30), since Jesus is put on trial and attacked both verbally and physically.

¹⁵⁰ Shame also had a positive meaning when it was described within the context of an individual being concerned with their reputation and acting in ways which were deemed acceptable by the group (DeSilva, 2000:25). This definition of shame was associated with females, who were expected to keep themselves chaste and private.

The public sphere (πόλις) was reserved for men and assertiveness within this space was essential (Reese, 2000:10).¹⁵¹ No sign of weakness was appropriate within the public sphere lest a man lose honour. Considering that the Fourth Gospel portrays most of Jesus' ministry, but also his crucifixion in a public sphere,¹⁵² the audience's probable expectations around the πόλις is a valuable insight. To such an audience, honour would be lost in "the exhibition of weakness, cowardice, foolishness, ignorance, or failure to live up to expectations", especially in the πόλις (Barr, 2002:32).

The pursuit of honour was also a common thread within the ancient drama (Cairns, 2005:309), and the protagonist would always be expected to chase honour and avoid shame. This was even true in the genre of tragedy: even though the protagonist would suffer some form of shame, this would often happen precisely because of a pursuit of honour, which included some form of immoral behaviour (Cairns, 2005:310), or the protagonist would defeat the antagonist, but suffer or perish in the process (Fink, 2014:27).

Together with honour, pleasure was also an important component to the good human life (DeSilva, 2000:24). To have conduct which is both pleasurable and honourable was the ultimate, however, pleasure which was not honourable was condemned. Honour and shame therefore had much to do with one's physical *body*, the way in which it looked and operated, as well as the way in which it was treated (by oneself and others).

4.4.4. *The body*

The Johannine drama describes the entrance of the divine protagonist as becoming σάρξ (flesh – 1:14). Moreover, Jesus' body becomes increasingly important as it functions as the focal point in the climax of the crucifixion scene (19:17-30). It will therefore be important to explore how a hypothetical audience thought about the body, its role in the quality of a person's life, and its relationship to vulnerability.

In ancient Mediterranean times, the body of an individual and the social body were very closely related and were regarded as representative of one another (Neyrey,

¹⁵¹ Females were expected to remain in the private sphere (οἶκος), which largely referred to the household and places where women would go about their business, such as communal wells (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:26).

¹⁵² Golgotha being a hill which was open to the public would have placed it in the category of the πόλις (see Franklin, 2016).

2009:416). The way that honour was bestowed upon the social and physical body was also done in a similar fashion. Physical strength, resilience, and perfection were important, and various buildings were dedicated to sports and physical exercise (Barr, 2002:37). One of these was the gymnasium, a space which celebrated and promoted physical as well as intellectual activity (Carter, 2013:9).

The elitist status of the gymnasium was maintained by excluding those deemed inferior from it. These usually included the poor and lower class, as well as those unable to partake in the intellectual and physical activities. The gymnasium's goal was emphasising and maintaining the superior Greek and Roman identity, which would have been marked by strong physique, as well as the ability to philosophise and be rhetorically eloquent (Carter, 2013:9).¹⁵³ There was no room for individuals with imperfections or defects in the gymnasiums. Overall, defects and illnesses drastically altered the honour of a person. Being sick meant not only being physically damaged but removed from one's social and religious network and community (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:114). Brant (2011:236) comments that deformities were often regarded as the "stuff of humor [sic]" and that persons with disabilities and their kin would receive not only shame and blame, but ridicule (Brant, 2011:236).

Persons with disabilities were seen as unable to make valuable contributions within the larger society and regarded as a financial burden to those around them. The Fourth Gospel accurately portrays this by identifying the blind man as a *προσδαίτης* (beggar – 9:8), of which the community was aware. Moreover, it is apparent that the man healed by Jesus at the pool of Bethesda had been laying there for some time, unable to contribute to the wider society (5:3, 6). For this reason, the killing of a deformed infant was not questioned in any way, since the rejection of such a child's life seemed to have been due to "the negligibility of its contribution to the future public good" (Caspary, 2012:27).¹⁵⁴

¹⁵³ The pressure of physical perfection was further emphasised by the fact that exercise was done in the nude within gymnasiums (Carter, 2013:9).

¹⁵⁴ Infants were examined after birth by a midwife, who would decide whether the baby was "sufficiently healthy and well formed to raise" (Wordelman, 1998:486). This led to the abandoning of ill, disabled, or disfigured infants, which were often left at crossroads or temples after birth (Barr, 2002:33). However, infants who were declared healthy still had the chance of being abandoned if the father of the household decided to do so (Malina et al. 1995:7; Wordelman, 1998:486-487). The idea of having a daughter was also less desirable, since female children would often have been regarded as a higher expense due to the dowry that parents had to provide in order to marry off their daughter to a suitable husband (Barr,

While first-century thought advocated a physical appearance that was strong, healthy, beautiful, and resilient, most individuals would have experienced quite the opposite.¹⁵⁵ Individuals in their thirties would most probably have experienced some severe dental health problems, including rotten and worn-down teeth and halitosis (bad breath) (Pilch, 1999:145). “In the ancient world, pain was a constant. The sources for pain were plentiful – tooth abscesses, skin irritations, physically backbreaking work – and the remedies were limited” (Brant, 2011:257). Moreover, intestinal parasites and diminished eyesight would also have been prevalent among individuals. Despite these realities, the perception of an ideal body remained.

Within the Jewish tradition, the condition of the body had more than social and economic implications, but ultimately reflected something of the purity and holiness of the individual and their kin. The standard for physical holiness could be traced back to the account of the creation in Genesis 1, where God made “perfect” creatures (Neyrey, 2000b:204):

For example, a “perfect” bird is defined as one that satisfies all the conditions of being a true bird: it stays in a bird’s place (the air), moves like a bird (flies) and eats a bird’s diet (seeds)... An animal with three or five legs is not whole and so is unholy.

So also with humanity, deformities, illnesses, and imperfections were regarded as signs of un-wholeness and, ultimately, un-holiness.¹⁵⁶ This attitude is seen in the Fourth Gospel, as the disciples ask Jesus whose sin was responsible for the blind man’s disability (9:2). Those with physical ailments and impairments were often disqualified from identifying with and connecting to God as they were not allowed in the sanctuary (DeSilva, 2000:248), and the blind, lame, deformed (Lv. 21:17), injured (Lv. 21:19), hunchbacked, dwarfed, and those with itching diseases, scabs, or crushed

2002:33). Because of this, parents often got rid of daughters. These abandoned children would usually end up being raised as slaves.

¹⁵⁵ Staubli and Schroer (2001:25) illustrate this idealised concern for perfection by referring to a Greek depiction of an archer. This art work depicts the male from an idealised perspective, and, while the depiction of the man might seem disproportionate and highly unachievable by the clear majority, these images were pervasive in ancient Mediterranean society and dictated how whole bodies should look and function.

¹⁵⁶ Someone would only have been regarded whole and clean if they were in the “normal state”: reflecting God and God’s perfect creation (DeSilva, 2000:253-254).

testicles (Lv.21:20) were not permitted near the altar as they would profane it (Lv.21:23).

Pilch (1999:77) writes about individuals who were excluded from the worshipping community because they had leprosy, and comments that their “human experience was much more depressing than the skin lesions”. Therefore, the body was not simply something determining the holiness or purity of the individual, but having an un-whole or impure body also justified social and religious exclusion and ostracism. It is important to note that, for Jews, there existed no difference between cultic (or ritual) law and moral law (DeSilva, 2000:255). Therefore, not only were those considered unclean ostracised for cultic reasons, but they were also degraded to a lower moral standing and often given the blame for their conditions due to some sort of sin.

Not only was honour inscribed in the way a body looked and functioned, but also in the way that it was treated (DeSilva, 2000:31). Where a king’s head would be anointed to represent honour, a criminal’s face would be slapped to represent shame. The mutilation, binding up, torture, or killing of a person’s body would have functioned as a direct attack on their honour. Among these physical inflictions of pain and shame, crucifixion was the absolute worst. Serving as the punishment for slaves (Cicero, 2011:2.5.168), rebels, war prisoners, and thieves (Josephus, 1960:5.451; 2.253), crucifixion served as a public mutilation and humiliation of those who have made themselves enemies of the empire (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:263; Tombs, 1999:92). Since the climax of the Johannine drama confronts the audience with Jesus’ crucifixion, it will be helpful to explore the various connotations to the act from a first-century Mediterranean perspective.

Crucifixions not only served to humiliate the executed individual, but also their entire people group (Thatcher, 2011:147).¹⁵⁷ This is one of the reasons why it was never regarded as an appropriate punishment for Roman citizens.¹⁵⁸ Crucifixion, therefore, said more about the social status of the criminal than their crime (Carter, 2013:89). Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:190) explain how the flogging of a Roman citizen would

¹⁵⁷ Tombs (1999:92) identifies the aim of the Roman crucifixion as creating terror among the group of the crucified individual.

¹⁵⁸ Cicero (2001, 5.16) wrote in this regard: “...the executioner, the veiling of the head, and the very word ‘cross’ should be far removed not only from the person of a Roman citizen but from his thoughts, his eyes and his ears. For it is not only the actual occurrence of these things or the endurance of them, but liability to them, nay, the mere mention of them, that is unworthy of a Roman citizen.”

usually take place in a private space, in order not to dishonour their body in the presence of others. For those who did qualify for the public humiliation of a crucifixion, the shame was immense and drawn-out. In fact, Roman authors regarded crucifixion as too shameful to even write about, since it was “an inappropriate theme for polite conversation” (Thatcher, 2011:146).

Crucifixions usually followed a similar pattern. Following a public trial, where the individual would be degraded, would be a flogging, where the body would be mutilated and severely mistreated, often leading to prisoners losing control over their bodily faculties due to the pain (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:263-264). Apart from being whipped, bodies were often burned or stabbed (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:92). The crucified were also naked during this flogging and their property and items of clothing were usually confiscated (Diodorus, 1935:33.15.1; Tombs, 1999:102).

As honour was symbolically represented by clothing (DeSilva, 2000:32), the withdrawal thereof stripped the individual of honour (Ford, 2000:46), especially if clothing is removed involuntarily by another party (Neyrey, 2000a:138). Crucifixion therefore exceeded physical humiliation, but also contained elements of sexual humiliation (“enforced nudity, sexual mockery, sexual insults”) (Tombs, 1999:100), which emphasised the absolute domination over the crucified individual (1999:101).¹⁵⁹

After the flogging, the crucified would be forced to carry their own cross (Plutarch, 2003, 554B). Not only was this difficult because of severe injuries, but the condemned would have also been sleep deprived at this point (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:92). The final act of humiliation would be the illustration of complete loss of control and power by being pinioned to the cross. Moreover, the above happened in the public sphere (πόλις), where honour was supposed to preside. To make the shaming of the crucified a public affair, the busiest roads were chosen for the execution (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:92; cf. Tombs, 1999:95).

The shame and vulnerability of the prisoner would be intensified by the fact that the crucifixion was treated as a form of entertainment. Crowds would gather around the prisoner to mock and ridicule them (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:264). This shameful

¹⁵⁹ Tombs (1999:100) distinguishes between sexual humiliation and sexual assault (the enforcement of sexual contact). Although there exists less evidence that crucifixions contained elements of sexual assault, sexual humiliation was prevalent.

process would end with a slow and painful death. Some would hang on the cross for days (Tombs, 1999:95). For the crucified, there was no chance of dying with even the slightest bit of dignity: “they were deprived of life and thus the possibility of gaining satisfaction of vengeance” (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:264), and subjected to what Tombs (1999:95) describes as a “sustained attack on the dignity of the human spirit as well as the physical body”. The idea was to reduce the accused to a sub-human state in front of the entire society before their ultimate death (1999:101).¹⁶⁰

In ancient Roman literature, the act of crucifixion was often described as something barbaric people did, ascribing to it a barbarous feeling (Chapman, 2008:70). Within the Jewish tradition, the shame associated with crucifixion was heightened by the conviction that “anyone hung on a tree is accursed” (Dt. 21:23). The crucified were thus seen as under God’s curse and judgement (Tombs, 1999:95).

Once dead, bodies would often be left on the crosses, where wild animals would feast on the remains. While death brought on by crucifixion was utterly shameful, death in general could have been noble in the Greek and Roman society, if the deceased was honoured in a great and public way (Neyrey, 2009:12).¹⁶¹ The criteria for an honourable death was that it benefitted others, displayed courage and loyalty to the empire, was not a result of some sort of defeat, and was not involuntarily enforced (Neyrey, 2009:24). Such deaths deserved posthumous honours and generally led to an “immortal glory”. Here the funeral was significant, as it was used to publicly bestow honours upon the life of the deceased (2009:13). The idea was that, even though the body of the deceased was no more, their honour could be kept alive. In this way, the honourable deceased would continue to have influence, and, essentially, *power*.

4.4.5. *Power*

In the Roman system of thought, power and wealth were decisive and the acquisition thereof was essential (Simmons, 2008:43). Power can be defined as “the ability to

¹⁶⁰ Even though some ancient texts make reference to those who, while being crucified, “spat in the face of death” by refusing to admit defeat, death on a cross would not have been something to consider heroic or romantic in any way (Chapman, 2008:46).

¹⁶¹ While death and mortality were generally avoided and uncomfortable topics, mortality was high in the first century, especially among infants and children. With a death rate among children under 10 years of about 50%, there was a certain awareness of mortality (Barr, 2002:33). Because of this reality, married couples had multiple children. On average, women had to give birth to about 5 babies to secure the lives of only about 2 of them. Under Emperor Augustus (AD 14), upper class Roman women were encouraged and even rewarded for having 3 or more children.

exercise control over the behaviour of others” (Pilch, 2000b:158). When one’s power is accepted by those who fall under it, one receives honour. The kinship group and political sphere were the main domains in which power was exercised and enforced (2000b:158-159). Honour was closely associated with power and control, where shame was associated with the lack thereof (Neyrey, 2009:419). People were therefore either categorised as powerful or weak (2009:34). This way of thinking implied that hierarchies would emerge which ranked individuals and their families in terms of their societal power and worth (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:49).

It also has to be kept in mind that the Greek and Roman world had its roots in the empire of Alexander the Great, who established a culture of domination, conquest, and power.¹⁶² Within the Greek line of thought, Alexander had become somewhat of an “action figure” representing true Greek (and later Roman) masculinity (Carter, 2013:17). This means that the legend and legacy of Alexander defined true human (and especially male) greatness in the Roman republic and later empire since the fourth century BCE and was probably extended into the first-century Mediterranean. Carter (2013:17) unpacks this Alexandrian legacy:

Alexander provided a model for such men (and powerful women) to secure their glorious place in the world by rule and courage. They could display their status, wealth, and power through mastery over others by involvement in government, military activity, civic benefaction, and personal patronage.

The model of rule, power, and courage was therefore regarded as essential to live an honourable and good life. This was not limited to men, but especially prevalent among them. The idea was to embody something great.

Being like Alexander meant acting like Alexander, presenting oneself as a larger-than-life personality, with outstanding accomplishments of power, and of course a stage so that others could observe the spectacle (Carter, 2013:17).¹⁶³

¹⁶² For a thorough ‘resume’ of Alexander the Great, see Carter (2013:2-7).

¹⁶³ This was especially true for rulers and emperors within the Roman empire. Various emperors compared themselves to Alexander, or attempted to emulate, or even ‘summon’ his power, dominion, and strength in their reign. This was true of emperor Caligula (AD 37-41), who claimed to have been wearing the armour of Alexander and therefore thought it appropriate to celebrate military victory even before his campaign (Carter, 2013:18). Others used Alexander as a measure to which they compared themselves and their empires. Emperor Trajan (AD 98-117) used the legacy of Alexander to emphasise his own ultimate superiority, claiming to have travelled even further than Alexander did.

Behind this celebration of Alexander lay the perception that power, conquest, strength, wealth, and force were desirable for a good and abundant life and that their antonyms (powerlessness, defeat, weakness, poverty) were disqualifying factors. Carter (2013:17) puts it as follows: “He was not Alexander the Sensitive or Alexander the Gentle: he was Alexander the Great.” Part of Alexander’s legacy was a very competitive society, where anyone outside of one’s family or extended family groupings was regarded as competition or a threat (DeSilva, 2000:166).¹⁶⁴ Individuals were to compete with one another for honour, influence, wealth, popularity, et cetera, and, since these commodities were limited, one person’s win would always imply another person’s loss. Therefore, fearlessness and assertiveness were to be upheld at all times (Peteet, 1994:34).

Defeat, in any form whatsoever, would have been regarded as shameful and severely reduced the honour of the defeated and their family. Ford (2000:45) argues that a defeat could affect the humanity of a man to such a degree that he could even be regarded as sub-human. This was not only a mentality held by Greeks and Romans, but Jews, who often found themselves on the powerless end of the spectrum, hoped and longed for the reversal of their fate by the means of power and dominion. This line of thinking was especially prevalent in Jewish theology surrounding the coming Messiah, who they believed would come and free them from the dominion of the empire by power and force (Simmons, 2008:43-44; see Martyn, 2003:149). The Johannine drama introduces the concept of the Messiah early on by using the title Χριστός (Greek for Messiah) for Jesus in the prologue (1:17). To Jewish audience members, this title was a loaded concept. The ultimate Jewish philosophy of a restored good life included an earthly reign brought about by a powerful and perfect man who would open the way for the entire nation to be restored to a place of power and dominion. This meant that, through the overcoming of the Messiah, the Jewish nation would be restored to a position where they were in control of their own fate and not vulnerable to the empire.

Together with power was prominence, which indicated the priority and social worth of an individual (Seeman, 2000:166). The Johannine author evokes such language of priority in the characterisation of ὁ λόγος by, for example, introducing him as the one

¹⁶⁴ This competition was not found within the family or kinship group, since the honour of one’s family was directly connected to one’s own honour.

who was before creation (1:3), ranking him higher than the character of John (1:8, 15, 27), and placing him above various Old Testament characters and elements (1:17; 6:48-51; 8:58).

Where a person ranked in the societal system directly determined the power allocated to them. Slaves had almost no power as their lives and destinies were in the hands of others. They were often considered to be from another form of humanity, or “different species”, in the same way that humanity and God were divided (Malina, 2000:183). The ideal was to be in control of one’s own life and destiny and not find oneself passive or at the mercy of/vulnerable to another, especially not someone outside of one’s family or kinship group. Although compliance and cooperation with society’s values and expectations was regarded as honourable conduct, it was differentiated from passivity, which was a societal vice (McVann, 2000:34). Power was therefore not only an indication of status and position, but contained the element of being in control of one’s own life and being *active* rather than passive.

4.4.6. Activeness

For men in the first-century Mediterranean, being in the position of acting, doing, and making the decisions was essential (Lawrence, 2005:82). This included having the necessary knowledge, as well as opportunity to act and decide. Pilch (1999:47) refers to the fact that ignorance was shameful and that individuals would rather pretend to know something and give away false information, than admit that they do not know.¹⁶⁵ The ultimate shame in a public social exchange would be the admission of ignorance or the inability to answer a question or challenge. Since Jesus is asked various public questions in the Fourth Gospel (e.g., 3:4; 5:16; 6:28, 30; 8:5, 7; 9:2; 10:24; 18:19, 33-35, 37), a hypothetical audience will pay good attention to how he responds to them.

Activeness was also something which was reflected by one’s physical condition. Health was associated with activity, where sickness and imperfection were more passive and shameful concepts dissociated from the “proper” well-being of a person (Pilch, 2000a:102). Bodies which did not exhibit control and self-sufficiency were often regarded as “improper”, since they were undesirably vulnerable. Categories of individuals who exhibited passivity and vulnerability included the new born, elderly,

¹⁶⁵ I have argued elsewhere that this behaviour can be seen among the Jewish leaders in Jn. 9 (see De Milander, 2015:104-105).

injured, diseased, poor, and disfigured (Caspary, 2012:24). The idea was to be able to contribute to society in a way which would be deemed valuable (2012:25).

Moreover, the ability to control one's own bodily faculties, even in the case of pressure or affliction, was essential. This meant that, while pain was not ideal, the ability to bear it, and to do it bravely, would have been essential (Conway, 2008a:29). A true man (sic) would thus be the one who does not "exhibit tears of distress when in pain". Cicero (2012, 2.22.53) emphasised this by stating that the ideal would be to be the absolute master of oneself.¹⁶⁶ As the climax of the Johannine drama portrays the body of the protagonist in pain, the audience will pay attention to his reaction amidst his distress.

Men who were not able to control their reactions or conduct were not only shamed, but also often accused of being demon possessed or bewitched. This accusation appears on several occasions in the Johannine drama (7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20-21), and the implication thereof would thus be helpful to discuss. In the ancient Mediterranean, demons were regarded as "personified forces that had the power to control human behaviour" (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:185). Not only would demon possession be associated with shameful behaviour, but it would have been regarded as a shameful condition in which a person has forfeited control over their own behaviour and has become a slave to a non-human being. Demon possession, and even the accusation thereof, thus left the possessed in a passive and shameful state, and vulnerable to be made a spectacle of. Rumours of a person being demon possessed also necessarily implied the notion that they were insane (Jn. 10:20), shameful, sinful, weak, and passive.

Activeness also implied being self-sufficient in terms of material possessions, and the *wealth* of families and kinship groups, although relatively static and fixed, were important identity markers in the first-century Mediterranean.

4.4.7. *Wealth*

Connected to power and honour was the issue of wealth (Barr, 2002:22). Neyrey (2009:35) refers to commercial success as something which would greatly benefit the reputation of an individual and their family.¹⁶⁷ Control over land and "luxurious

¹⁶⁶ Unfortunately, slaves and the poor did not have the luxury of displaying activeness.

¹⁶⁷ Wealth not only consisted of material property, but also of slaves. Honourable families were to own more than a few slaves. For a family to own only 1 or 2 slaves would have been a slight embarrassment (Barr, 2002:34). The wealthy would own dozens, and even hundreds, of slaves.

accommodations” were ideal and celebrated (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:116-117). The introduction of ὁ λόγος in the prologue as the one through whom everything was made (1:3) creates the image of a wealthy protagonist: one who made everything and therefore owns everything. This would probably create an expectation among the audience of a hero with some form of elite status.

The ancient Mediterranean was a highly-stratified society with a very clear divide between the upper-class elite and the low-class peasants.¹⁶⁸ The elite were those who were regarded as superior in terms of class and social position. “They have prestige, social standing, leadership roles, political office, power, and/or wealth” (1998:169). Cities usually functioned around the needs of the elite, while ignoring those of the poor and unimportant (Malina et al., 1995:11). These poor and unimportant individuals were referred to as peasants. They can be described as the “non-elites”, which included “fishers and artisans, potters, weavers, woodworkers, ironsmiths, etc.” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:201). Terms like “insignificant ones” or “the masses” were often used by the elite to refer to peasants.¹⁶⁹

Certain occupations were also frowned upon (Neyrey, 2009:36). Cicero (1913, 1.150) distinguished between two routes of livelihood: one which transforms men into gentlemen, and the other transforming men into “the vulgar”:

First, those whose livelihood are rejected as undesirable... as those of tax-gatherers and usurers... all hired workmen whom we pay for mere manual labor, not for artistic skill... And all mechanics are engaged in vulgar trades; for no workshop can have anything liberal about it. Least respectable of all are those trades which cater for sensual pleasures: “Fishmongers, butchers, cooks, and poulterers, and fishermen,” as Terence says.

Neyrey (2009:37) affirms this by referring to the fact that labour done with one’s hands was generally frowned upon and seen as shameful, where other professions, such as

¹⁶⁸ Hanson and Oakman (1998:195) define class as “the stratum of society to which one belongs (for example, ruling elites, priests, peasants, merchants, artisans, the destitute)”. The first-century Mediterranean was very clearly organised in terms of class and individuals of the same class usually had the same social status.

¹⁶⁹ Although there were some individuals who found themselves in the middle of these two extremes, the ancient Mediterranean did not really have a middle class as we would have it (Barr, 2002:29). Moreover, the division between rich and poor, powerful and powerless, was immense (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:112). There was thus no hiding in the middle: one was either wealthy and successful (and known for it), or poor. This system led a clear majority to be financially vulnerable and dependent.

those who practice philosophy, medicine, architecture, teaching, wholesale on large scale, and agriculture,¹⁷⁰ were deemed honourable and preferable for a good and abundant life. The popular Greek and Roman ideology thus had a disdain for “work, but exalted leisure as the goal of the best life” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:104).

Despite such an ideology, 80 to 90 percent of the population were occupied with hard work within the agricultural section¹⁷¹ and did not attain to these standards of living the leisurely good life (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:104).¹⁷² Moreover, those who worked the hardest had the least amount of control, since decision-making regarding the land and its produce lay not in the hands of those who did the labour, but in the hands of the elite (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:105). A similar pattern was seen in other industries, such as the fishing trade, where low-class individuals did the hard work, while a few “ruling elites” controlled the industry (1998:106).¹⁷³

Not only was a majority of the population powerless and poor, but many were also enslaved due to debt. Since taxation was heavy, the poor often resorted to short-term debt to make tax payments (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:112). Despite these realities, the major mind set among peasants was that “working for others [is] degrading” (1998:113) and these individuals often “dreamed of better times” by yearning for the good and ideal life lived by the elite (1998:117). This life went far beyond one of good material possession, but also entailed good *reputation*.

4.4.8. Reputation

In the honor-shame world of the Mediterranean, reputation means everything (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:141).

The Johannine prologue begins with a public introduction of *ὁ λόγος* as eternal, one with God (1:1-2), the creator of all things (1:3), the giver of light and life (1:4, 9), the

¹⁷⁰ In this context, agriculture does not refer to the work done on the lands, but rather the ownership and management of the lands.

¹⁷¹ The first-century Mediterranean region in which the hypothetical ancient audience found themselves can be identified as “advanced agrarian” (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:2). An advanced agrarian society is a society “in which primary production and subsistence center around agriculture” and where forms of tools and large animals are sometimes employed in the agricultural process (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:194).

¹⁷² Hanson & Oakman (1998:105) refer to the physical difficulty of this agricultural work, since “plowing, sowing, [and] weeding” were done by hand, and “reaping with scythes”.

¹⁷³ This is important, as the protagonist of the FG chooses some fishermen as supporting characters (see Jn. 21:3).

victor in the conflict with the antagonist (1:5), the vessel of glory, only begotten from God, carrier of grace and truth (1:14), the giver of something superior to the law (1:17), and the *revealer* of God (1:18). Moreover, his praises are publicly sung by the character of John, who proclaims ὁ λόγος as the true light (1:8-9) and the one who ranks above him (1:15). The necessity for and implications of such a public introduction on the audience's expectations of the drama will be important in the analysis. Therefore, the category of reputation will be helpful to discuss.

As the first-century context was divided in terms of οἶκος (private) and πόλις (public), the public image of a man and his family was a determinative factor to his honour.¹⁷⁴ This meant that only information which could increase one's honour would be shared in the πόλις. Conway (2008a:65) refers to the importance of the public image of a man by using the example of Augustus, who strategically constructed his public image to convey that which would have been considered admirable: the image of someone who is "courageous, militarily successful, devoted to the gods, benevolent, just, beautiful, and so on".

The Johannine prologue not only made a public proclamation of honour, but resembled a Greek and Roman genre referred to as the encomium. The representation of oneself as living a life which is noble and desirable was so important, that Greek and Roman education even allocated a section of the syllabus to training young men to write an encomium, which was a document of praise and honour. This document was to contain praise on the ground of four areas of an individual's life. Firstly, the person would be honoured for their origin, which includes their place of birth and their lineage. The second area would be that of the person's training. Thirdly, the "display of a person's fortune, physical acumen, and virtue" would be reflected on, and, lastly, "death and posthumous honours" (Neyrey, 2007:19).

What a man did in the πόλις was not only seen as an extension of who he was, but also who his family was (Malina et al., 1995:93). Within the family, the father and sons (especially the eldest son) were responsible for representing and furthering the honour of the family to the outside or public sphere (1995:77). As the only begotten

¹⁷⁴ The division of private and public was also gendered (DeSilva, 2000:33). Whereas men were expected to represent themselves in the πόλις, women were expected to function in οἶκος. The less a woman was known in the πόλις, the more honourable she, and her father or husband, would have been. A woman's honour would have been embedded in the male that she was in submission to (2000:34).

(μονογενής – 1:14, 18), the character of Jesus would therefore have been responsible for furthering the honour of his father through his life in the πόλις. Families were regarded as closed units and vulnerable information regarding family members were not shared with anyone outside of the unit (Barr, 2002:32; DeSilva, 2000:171). Very often family members even lied to outsiders in order not to share vulnerability, weakness, and shame, and keep the societal honour and integrity of the family as high as possible.¹⁷⁵

Since appearances were “more important than reality” (Pilch, 1999:47), this method of “information control” was critical to make sure that nothing that can scar the reputation of an individual or group leaked out into the πόλις (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:141). Pilch (1999:46) refers to a kind of deception which served to cover up failure and shortcomings.¹⁷⁶ Moreover, since houses were quite open, especially to clients of the father, family members were expected to be well-composed at all times, which often led to them acting with “discretion and secrecy” (Barr, 2002:36). Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:141) refer to secrecy as one of the fundamental means of controlling the way in which one was perceived.¹⁷⁷ The aim of this sort of behaviour was to keep shame hidden (DeSilva, 2000:172), since honour was largely determined by public opinion (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:141).

Besides embarrassing and shameful behaviour, certain characteristics, such as forgiveness and sympathy, were not to be shown by strong men. Therefore, the value of compassion was only shown within the (natural or fictive) family unit (Pilch, 2000:30a), which means that the need for compassion, which usually derives from the showing of weakness, was kept from the public eye. Weakness portrayed by anyone from outside of one’s own kinship group was exposed or ignored, but not addressed with compassion or concern – especially not in public. Considering that the Fourth Gospel contains a crucifixion scene, where the vulnerability and failure of the

¹⁷⁵ Malina et al. (1995:5) highlight that individuals were to protect the reputation of the group and of other group members, even with their own lives.

¹⁷⁶ In a sense, such a cover-up can be seen in Peter’s denial of being one of Jesus’ followers (Jn. 18:13-27).

¹⁷⁷ “Secrecy is a formal, conscious, deliberate, and calculated concealment of information, activities, or relationships that outsiders can gain only by espionage” (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:141). Pilch (1999:130) even goes so far as to name secrecy a skill in the first-century context.

protagonist is publicly exposed, this context is helpful in exploring the audience's probable socially-conditioned reactions towards such exposure.¹⁷⁸

When the issue of reputation is considered, the element of gossip becomes increasingly important to discuss. Within the oral culture of the first-century Mediterranean, gossip was especially prevalent, and, while it was frowned upon, tales of gossip were still used as a measure with which to assess individuals (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:103). Examples of such gossip can be found in the Johannine drama, where different groups voice their assessments on Jesus (both positive and negative) in a setting where he is not present (e.g., 7:12; 10:20-21). While positive assessment in one's absence would be honourable, negative assessment would be quite alarming to the culturally-conditioned audience. Being discussed in a negative light while one is not present to defend one's honour, would be a shameful and vulnerable situation to be in. Gossip also served to form and maintain social boundaries and determine who would be regarded as insiders and outsiders. Since outsider status was not ideal, the quest for the protection of one's reputation was vital.

Connected to the phenomenon of gossip was that of stereotyping. In the first-century Mediterranean, stereotyping was an essential aspect of identity formation, and individuals would be known by "general social categories such as place of origin, residence, family, gender, age, and the qualities of other groups to which they might belong" (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:149). One could be stereotyped in a positive or negative way. Negative stereotyping, commonly referred to as "deviance labelling", was rather unideal, and would usually result in the ruin of a person's reputation, as well as the reputation of their family (1998:150). This included labels such as "demon possessed" (e.g., Jn. 7:20; 8:48, 52; 10:20-21), or "sinner" (e.g., Jn. 9:16, 24). These labels would be attached to the person for life and the chances of getting rid of a negative stereotype would be very slim.

The idea would therefore be to avoid negative labelling or stereotyping by controlling one's public behaviour, as well as the information available to the outside. If something which could possibly result in the allocation of a deviance label, could be hidden, it

¹⁷⁸ Although most earlier manuscripts do not contain this account, the urge to expose and shame the weakness and failings of another can be seen in the conduct of the Jewish leaders towards the woman caught in adultery (Jn. 7:53-8:11).

would not be disclosed to the public. Being vulnerable and open in terms of one's societal shortcomings was thus not an option. Malina et al. (1995:84) affirm this by referring to the fact that rewards always matched one's achievements. This led to severe fears of making mistakes, and if mistakes were made, they were covered up or denied. Making a public mistake, or admitting a mistake in public, would serve as an admission of inadequacy and inability, and have a tremendous effect on the honour rating of a person and their family.

Apart from secrecy and deception, the act of blame shifting also served as a technique to cover up the vulnerability created by failure. Individuals would often blame fate or supernatural forces for their own acts or failure to escape the responsibility of a shameful action or event (Malina et al., 1995:85). Not only would a bad reputation harm the individual but it would have a devastating impact on those whom the individual was connected to, and even lead to the loss of social connections and networks, which were essential in the Mediterranean world. Nobody was an island in the first century: being *connected* and associated with others was crucial if one were to live a worthwhile life.

4.4.9. Connections

Within the collectivist first century, being part of a connection or social system was essential. According to Hanson and Oakman (1998:72), one's survival in first-century Mediterranean societies depended upon one's connections to "networks, family, friends, brokers, and patrons". These systems were formed within the family, or extended family, as well as on the ground of mutual favours. Those with the most power and resources were referred to as patrons, who managed and distributed portions of their wealth to "inferiors" (called clients), who would then be indebted to return a favour (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:117-118). Patrons would not only assist clients with material possessions, but also with favours. Although the patron-client relationship served to increase the honour of the patron, the relationship provided a reciprocal gain and protected both the client and patron (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:73). Clients received provision from patrons, and patrons, in return received honour, loyalty, and public acknowledgement from clients (1998:119).¹⁷⁹ Those individuals in

¹⁷⁹ Because of the great gap in honour between patrons and clients, patrons often used brokers to mediate between them and their clients (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:71).

society who had few or no connections would have been regarded as vulnerable and shameful (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:118).

Having friends was also an important aspect of living a good and abundant life. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:236) distinguish between two types of friendships: the first, political friendships, were usually associated with the client-patron agreement. A client would be called a friend of a patron, receiving benefits, and, in return, bestowing upon the patron honour and good reputation. The second type of friendship can be referred to as the fictive-kinship friendship. Fictive-kindship friends were those who were regarded and treated as if they were part of the family (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:236). Early in the Johannine drama, Jesus begins to assemble a group of disciples to whom he later refers as his friends (15:14-15). As the choice of fictive-kin was not simply random in the first-century Mediterranean, the audience of the drama will pay close attention to whom the protagonist chooses to be his friends.

Individuals would usually be friends (fictive-kin) with those whom they regard to be socially equal to them, and the honour of a potential friend was essential. One would not commit to a fictive-kinship friendship with someone who would lower your honour, and the terms for friendships were clear: they needed to hold a social benefit for both parties.¹⁸⁰ As reciprocity was an essential value in the ancient Mediterranean context, a friendship always needed to provide an equal amount of benefit for all parties involved (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:236). The more friends one had, the better a person's wellbeing. Having few friends was shameful and being abandoned by one's friends would have been an utter disgrace (1998:119). For the hypothetical audience, the loyalty of Jesus' friends towards him would be a sure mark of honour or shame on his part. The audience would not have much respect for their protagonist were he to be abandoned by his friends, as the ideal human experience would have been one where one belongs in a social space and functions as high up on the hierarchy as possible.¹⁸¹ Social spaces were always hierarchical and the systems of order were influenced by various aspects.¹⁸² One of these aspects was that of *purity*.

¹⁸⁰ Hanson and Oakman (1998:197) define friendship as "a social relation of commitment and solidarity for mutual benefit".

¹⁸¹ In the FG, the behaviour of Judas, who betrays Jesus (13:18-38), and Peter, who disowns him (18:15-27), will therefore be very significant to culturally-conditioned audience members.

¹⁸² Society was also organised in terms of in-groups and out-groups (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:238). As an ancient Mediterranean person, you would have an in-group, which usually consisted of your "household, extended family, and friends". Once again, the value of reciprocity was emphasised within

4.4.10. Purity

Connected to the notion of honour and shame, ideas of purity were important identity markers and ways in which individuals and groups were categorised (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:94). Purity, wholeness, and cleanness would deem one worthy or unworthy of associating with a group. Moreover, one's purity status was also a direct reflection of one's relation to the ultimate embodiment of purity: God (DeSilva, 2000:272).¹⁸³ From a Jewish perspective, the idea was rooted in the Levitical command from YHWH to his people to be holy as he is holy (Lv. 19:2; 20:26). Systems of purity therefore placed the individual and group within the divine or cosmic order. Staying in this order meant that one would have a "place of favour" with the divine (2000:279). The Fourth Gospel uses the word holy (ἅγιος) for Jesus (6:69), the Father (19:11), and the Spirit (with whom Jesus baptises – 1:33; whom the Father sends in Jesus' name – 14:26; whom Jesus gives to his disciples – 20:22). The Johannine director therefore seems to hold a point of view on the protagonist which identifies him as holy (and pure). This point of view will certainly stir expectations among the hypothetical audience – especially among Jewish members.

The Jewish world was divided into what DeSilva (2000:257) would refer to as "purity maps": systems which organised individuals into different categories of cleanness, holiness, and purity (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:94). To the Jews, these purity maps represented the order of the entire universe as YHWH ordained it (Chingota, 2006:129). The qualifications for purity classifications included status within Israel and the temple.¹⁸⁴ The fear of "mixing" with anything impure, unholy, or unclean permeated temple life, and social and physical boundaries were key in maintaining order (Malina

the in-group. Out-groups consisted of those individuals or groups who were not deemed worthy of one's loyalty, courtesy, or even interaction. Having an out-group status in a certain context would leave an individual vulnerable and without any social capital. Disloyalty to your group could also lead to someone being out-grouped (Malina et al. 1995:33). In terms of social connections, the most vulnerable within society were those referred to as social bandits. These individuals usually lost their property and honour and would, as a result, be left severely out-grouped (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:87-88). Due to the lack of friends, kin, and patrons, they would usually resort to stealing and banditry to survive. As a result, such individuals would constantly be in a state of hiding and isolation (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:90). Josephus (2006, 15.346) writes of the lifestyle of social bandits: "For they were living neither in the city nor on the agricultural estate, but resided only in underground shelters and caves with their animals."

¹⁸³ E.g., Jn. 9:31.

¹⁸⁴ The hierarchy of purity within the temple had the high priest on top, followed by the priests and then the Levites (DeSilva, 2000:257). Gentiles were not even considered to feature on the purity map and the dividing line between Jew and Gentile was marked very clearly (2000:258). Due to menstruation, women found themselves unclean for 25% of their adult lives and therefore experienced limited access to holy places.

& Rohrbaugh, 1998:177). The Johannine director seems aware of this notion, as the narrator explains to the audience that Jews and Samaritans did not share utensils (4:9).

The maintenance of the divine and cosmic order was a key concern for the Israelite group called the Pharisees, who kept themselves exclusive and apart from anything or anyone who would be considered unclean or impure (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:177). This concern for cosmic and religious order was not an abstract notion, but rooted in the Hebrew Torah, and especially Leviticus (Mouton, 2016:101). As a devout Jew, social interaction, and especially table fellowship with someone who might tarnish your purity was taboo. Ideas around purity were not exclusive to the Jewish belief system but were also integrated within Greek and Roman ways of thought.

Purity divisions served one purpose: to keep that which is ritually, religiously, and socially clean apart from that which seems inferior and contaminated (Pillay, 2008:150). As discussed above (§4.4.4), the biggest contributor to one's status as being either pure or impure was the body.¹⁸⁵ Moreover, mental illness was also regarded as a state of impurity (DeSilva, 2000:249). The ultimate form of impurity was the dead body. Corpses were regarded as unclean and touching them, or even overshadowing one while bypassing it at a funeral was an act of defilement (DeSilva, 2000:263).

From the above observations, it seems that the first-century Mediterranean world held various ideals and expectations in terms of the embodiment of a good and abundant life. Not only were these expectations to serve the individual and their kin, but they were regarded as reflecting something of the divine. It is therefore imperative to explore the various ideas and perceptions regarding the *divine* in this ancient context.

4.4.11. *Thinking about God*

The Fourth Gospel's characterisation of Jesus is unique in the sense that he is not only introduced as protagonist and hero, but that his life is representative of another character: God. The narrator leads the audience to this conclusion by affirming Jesus' oneness with God (1:1), but also explicitly states that the purpose of the character of Jesus is to make God known to the audience (1:18). Jesus-himself also affirms this

¹⁸⁵ As seen in Jn. 9, where the Jewish leaders (v.34) and disciples (v.2) equate the blind man's defect with sin.

correlation in the Gospel (5:19; 14:9). The director thus creates an expectation among audience members that, what they are about to witness through the life of Jesus, will show them something of who God is. It is therefore helpful to explore possible expectations and connotations that a hypothetical audience could have had concerning the divine. Obviously not all audience members would have the same expectations. This section will thus discuss various (not all) lines of thought about God in the first-century Mediterranean. While these broad categories of thought will once again be generic and somewhat oversimplified, painting the context with a too fine brush will take this study beyond its scope.

Important to realise regarding the first-century Mediterranean is that religious life aligned with political practises and ideologies (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:132). In other words, the idea(s) of God/god(s) in Greek and Roman society adhered to popular perceptions and ideologies. This means that divinity was largely connected to power, dominion, and rule (see Placher, 1994:9). Within the Greek and Roman context, religion was largely practised in the home and in “elite-controlled temples” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:133). God was believed to dwell “in the sky over the temple on the other side of the firmament” (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:77). The Greco-Roman temple functioned very similar to a palace. In other words, “the God(s) accessible in the temple stood in the same relationship to their subjects... as the king did to the populace he governed”. The Jewish temple had a similar feel to it, as Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:77) explain:

[I]f the palace houses a king with a large body of servants... then the temple houses a God who is a divine Monarch with a large body of servants ranging hierarchically from primary majordomo (high priest), subsidiary servants (priests, Levites), an army with officers and soldiers, to temple slaves working temple lands to feed the God (sacrificial animals), the temple household, and staff alike.

Power and hierarchy were essential in religious systems (both Greek, Roman and Jewish), and theology was set by a select elite few (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:134). One’s right to formulate something about God was therefore directly determined by one’s status, honour, and power.¹⁸⁶ Since these were mostly static, lineage and

¹⁸⁶ “This [theological] control sustained the honour of elite groups (their public recognition and prestige). Control of wealth was necessary for that sustenance as well” (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:134).

heritage were essential elements in terms of one's status within the religious sphere (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:139). This means that those who held positions of honour and power within religious systems were mostly born into those positions. A representative of God (Jn. 1:18) would therefore be expected to be born as an elite to have any theological significance.

Not only was there a religious hierarchy in terms of worshippers, but the divide between divinity and humanity was enormous. The Greek author Plutarch was heard exclaiming that it would be nothing less than blasphemy to involve God in the world's affairs (Ray, 2002:50). This distance and estrangement between the divine and humanity was also a recurring theme in ancient Jewish thought. Unlike the Jewish belief system, Greek, and Roman thought occasionally allowed for the line between humanity and divinity to be crossed. However, only mighty and powerful heroes and emperors would be worthy to identify with the gods, since divinity was associated with power, conquest, domination, and control (Placher, 1994:9). The most divine would be the one who is the most in control, and the least altered and affected by other influences (Conway, 2008a:36). The constant display of courage, strength, and wisdom was also associated with divinity.

The idea of divine invulnerability was very well reflected in the ancient drama (Placher, 1994:4). A good example of this is Aristophanes' comedy *The Frogs*, where Dionysius and Xanthias (the slave) both claim to be gods. In order to test who the real god is, they come up with the idea of having a session of flogging, in which the first to moan or even bat an eyelid will be exposed as a mere mortal. The one who rises above the pain by hiding their agony would gain the status of a god, since divinity ought to be marked by "freedom from pain and suffering" (1994:4). Moreover, gods were known to "unleash their undifferentiated power upon human beings" in the Greek drama, and especially tragedy (Brant, 2004:261).

In a system of honour and shame, and in light of the principle of limited goods, the increase of the honour of one individual always implied the decrease of that of another (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:111). This is applicable when the portrayal of deities or immortals in the ancient drama is considered. The presence of a god in the drama would always affect the honour dynamics of the play. The Fourth Gospel seems to portray such an honour dynamic when the character of John is introduced. The

purpose of John's character seems to be to elevate the honour of ὁ λόγος as the two characters are juxtaposed (1:6-8) and as the character of John proclaims the honour of ὁ λόγος, placing him in a higher rank than himself (1:15; see 3:30).

In Greek and Roman culture, gods were held in ultimate honour, were believed to control the fate of mere mortals, and would intervene when a mortal offended them (Cairns, 2005:314-315). The imperial cult also played a role in ancient perceptions of divinity.¹⁸⁷ The worship or veneration of emperors was something not necessarily done because the emperor was regarded as divine, but because the emperor was so powerful that his rule seemed god-like.

Emperors were also often referred to as sons of the gods, since it was believed that they represented the highest form of humanity, while also being able to share in the divine nature (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:52-53). The Fourth Gospel uses this title for Jesus (1:34, 49; 3:16, 18, 36; 5:25; 10:36; 11:4, 27; 20:31). Moreover, it is also the content of the Jewish leaders' accusation of blasphemy against him (19:7). Calling someone a son implied that they share the characteristics of the father. Thus, when emperors were referred to as sons of god, it necessarily implied that they share in the divine. Similarly, when characters in the Fourth Gospel use this title for Jesus, the implications are clear. The litmus test for such a title was power. The status of son of god was granted to emperors because of their power: the more power an emperor had, the more divine honour was bestowed upon him (Conway, 2008a:39).

This connection between divinity and power also featured in the realities of the Jews, especially the elite, among whom the idea of God rested on power. God was seen as the keeper of two kinds of power: creative power (δύναμις ποιείκη) and controlling power (δύναμις βασιλική) (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:53). In other words, God was known for the power to *do* and the power to *control*. This was also seen in the ethos of those who had the privilege of representing God within the temple system. The temple was controlled by "the powerful, especially the high priests and important priestly families" (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:146). These individuals and families were also those who benefitted from the temple.

¹⁸⁷ A sense of loyalty to the emperor can be picked up in the Johannine Gospel in the Jews' assertion that they have no king but Caesar (19:15). In this instance, they choose rather to side with the emperor than with their Messiah (although it needs to be taken into consideration that Jesus seemed to fail their Messianic expectations).

The non-elite, on the other hand, were often burdened by the temple and its institutions and practises, as it laid heavy financial burdens upon them (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:154).¹⁸⁸ Every individual knew their place and position within the temple system. God was seen as the one who, not only took the ultimate position of power and honour in this system, but also as the one who put these systems of honour and ranking in place in order to reflect the divine order. Therefore, the expected Jewish Messiah would emerge at the top of this system of order and would be expected to manifest God as an ultimate temple elite.

Greek thought and philosophy also had a major role to play in popular perceptions regarding the divine. According to the ancient philosopher Philo (about 20 BC to AD 45), God, as well as Sophia (wisdom) existed in the upper realm, untouchable, removed from humanity, and, ultimately, unknowable (Scott, 1992:92). The Johannine director also seems to hint at such a perspective when claiming that “no one has ever seen God” (1:18). The task of ὁ λόγος in the Fourth Gospel is to make God seen for the first time. Philo also spoke of ὁ λόγος, which belonged to the divine upper realm, but had been given the task of mediating that which is knowable about God. However, he believed that ὁ λόγος was an individual identity who functioned as an intermediary between God and humanity and therefore not synonymous with God (Barr, 2002:393).

Ὁ λόγος, according to Philo (1962, 205-6), would thus be identified as God’s revelation and chief messenger, but not as God-self. There therefore remained a clear distinction between the divine and the human in Philo’s philosophy. Although Philo’s God was willing to share a revelation regarding himself with humanity, he was not willing to share *himself* and therefore remained a far-off entity, presiding untouched in his section of the “two extremes” (the upper realm versus the lower realm).

This idea of the “two extremes” was quite prevalent in the Greek way of thought, where dualism had an important role to play. In the Greek system of belief there remained a realm for the divine and a realm for the material and human. This divide was especially prevalent in the Gnostic belief system. Due to their influential and heretical ideas which infiltrated the Christian movement, the Gnostic sect posed a great threat to the faith in the second century (Lindars, 1990:46; Scott, 1992:25). Living at the end of the first

¹⁸⁸ It is important to note that the temple not only burdened and annoyed the non-elite, but provided a sense of identity and hope as well. The experience of belonging to the temple was therefore not only a negative one (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:154).

century, the hypothetical audience would have been part of a world where early notions of Gnosticism were beginning to rise (Brant, 2011:7; Moloney, 1993:16).¹⁸⁹

Gnosticism refers to a variety of movements within Jewish, Christian, and pagan circles in which the material world was regarded as inferior and evil, while that which is spiritual was regarded as superior and pure (Brant, 2011:7).¹⁹⁰ This thought involved a dualism between the soul and its prison, which is the human body. The salvation, and true life of the soul could only be found by the soul being released from the body to “ascend to the divine life” (Lindars, 1990:46). The aim was thus the separation of body and soul. The idea about God was that he was as far removed from the material as possible and that humans were unable to know him while still imprisoned in their material states. Moreover, Gnostic thought resulted in the idea of two opposing gods: “the good god of light and the other the evil god of darkness and matter” (Oakes, 2011:122). The good god of light was removed from all material things, and so, the god of darkness was embedded in the material, removed from all things spiritual. Within some Gnostic circles, the god who created all matter was associated with the god of darkness, and therefore YHWH would not have been recognised as the god of light (2011:122).¹⁹¹

Another Greek idea regarding God was the theological conviction known as the impassability (ἀπράθεια) of God, a doctrine which originated in ancient Greek philosophy, but also made its rounds in the Jewish belief system (Migliore, 2004:413). According to the ancient metaphysic axioms, any form of suffering always subjected the victim to change – either for good or bad. However, since God is above change, it would be clear that God is unable to suffer. This implied an unmovable God who

¹⁸⁹ Kanagaraj (2013:xxvi) refers to the Gnostic movement as being in its “embryonic stage” in the late first century. Some scholars do not agree that Gnosticism had an influence at this time, since the movement only gained momentum in the second century (Brown, 1979:liii), but when the symbols and language of the FG are considered (e.g., ὁ λόγος, τὸ φῶς, and γινώσκω), the probable influence of this movement can be argued.

¹⁹⁰ The Gnostic Myth tells a tale of sparks of light becoming imprisoned (Borgen, 1996:99; Brant, 2011:7). According to the myth, a person who originates in the light-world is taken captive by demonic powers, usually because s/he is led astray or overcome in battle. Splinters of that light-person then form individual selves within the material realm (Bultmann, 1951:166-167). These individual selves need redemption, which comes in the form of γνῶσις, secret knowledge sent by a revealer from the heavenly realm (πλήρωμα; Lindars, 1990:46). This γνῶσις causes the light sparks to remember their heavenly dwelling and can therefore be said to wake them up (Bultmann, 1951:166-167).

¹⁹¹ This also poses a problem for ὁ λόγος, which is said to have created everything in Jn. 1:3. A later expression of this line of thinking can be seen in the doctrine of the second century priest, Marcion, who eventually opted for the rejection of the OT in its entirety (Oakes, 2011:123).

cannot be affected by the tragedies and sufferings on earth. At first glance, the Johannine prologue can seem to feed into this line of thinking by the promise that the light will not be overcome by the darkness (1:5).

Like Roman and Jewish perceptions, the Greek way of thinking of the divine provided humans some opportunity to get closer to God. While Roman thought held power, dominion, and rule as the ladder to the divine, and Jewish thought held position, purity, and holiness, Greek thought saw mysticism and secret knowledge as the gateway to the divine. This means that the further one moved from one's own physical and bodily experience, the closer one might have gotten to the divine, since God was regarded as non-material. This notion was not exclusive to Greek religion and philosophy. If there was anything with which the divinities of the ancient Near East, including YHWH, had nothing at all to do and from which they were sharply distinguished, it was human "flesh": the very essence of vulnerability and mortality (Staubli & Schroer, 2001:32).

Images of God in the first-century Mediterranean thus varied from one belief system to another.¹⁹² However, a common thread was the emphasis of a clear divide and estrangement between that which is human and that which is divine. This divide could be made smaller, or even breached, as the human attempted to resemble the divine by escaping the flesh and its weakness, ridding oneself from all that is undesirable, imperfect and un-whole, and attaining a great measure of power, control, and dominion. In other words, one could get nearer to the divine by embodying that which was considered a good, abundant and noble life. However, the divine could not, and would not, be moved from its place of perfection, glory, and power, and would not be subjected to the same realities as humanity. Moreover, God/god(s) remained unknowable and unreachable to the weak, vulnerable, imperfect, and unimportant since they shared no common ground.

4.5. Conclusion

In this chapter, I briefly explored common and popular ideas regarding humanity and divinity in the first-century Mediterranean world by the hand of a social-scientific model. The discussion included various overarching categories which could also be picked up in the Johannine text. A first-time hypothetical audience immersed in the first-

¹⁹² Moreover, the context contained various other religions and perceptions of God/gods which are not discussed in this study.

century Mediterranean would have been aware of the value system(s) of their society which was built upon the values of honour and shame. The anticipation of a drama about God revealing Godself would thus be an anticipation of a revelation of honour to such a hypothetical audience.

Considering the fact that the character of Jesus serves to reveal who God is (Jn. 1:18), he (Jesus) would be assumed to be born into a position of static honour, while continuously gaining dynamic honour as God is revealed more and more through him. Moreover, since this character serves to reveal the perfect and all-powerful God, he would be expected to embody the physical ideals of strength, masculinity, health, and resilience. His body ought to be treated in a way worthy of the body of (a) god/God and would be kept from pain and shame. This character would also embody the power of God and would be expected to be in control at all times. He would not be subjected to the will and force of any human being, but would, in return, subject all to his will and determination (see Jn. 1:5).

The reputation of such a man/person would also be one of honour and praise and, since God is the ultimate influencer, his embodiment ought to have various important connections and friends. This also implies that he would remove himself as far possible from those who are impure, unholy, and unimportant. In short, as a hypothetical audience, expecting to see God acted out in a drama, the standards and criteria for this character are clear:

[G]ood birth, plenty of friends, good friends, wealth, good children, plenty of children, a happy old age, also such bodily excellences as health, beauty, strength, large stature, athletic powers, together with fame, honour, good luck and virtue (Aristotle, 1982, 1.5.4).

Thompson (1988:34) sums up the hypothetical audience's probable expectation regarding the Johannine drama as one where vulnerable humanity is hidden in order that the divinity might be plainly seen. After all, the aim of the Fourth Gospel is that the audience will have abundantly good life by embracing its hero (20:30-31; cf. 10:10). So far, the curtain of the Johannine drama remains drawn and all that the audience has is expectation and anticipation: God is about to take the stage!

5. Framing the Drama: Drama Analysis of the Johannine Prologue

The more concretely we can place biblical writings in performative space, the closer we will get to grasping their persuasive power (Rhoads, 2012:44).

5.1. Introduction

Experiencing the Fourth Gospel as a drama implies that one not only explores what the words on the pages are saying, but essentially what they are (or could be) *doing* (Brant, 2004:114). In the previous chapter, I briefly unpacked the context known to the first-time hypothetical audience in order to, as far possible, tap into possible expectations that such an audience could have had of a drama in which God takes the stage.

Keeping these expectations in mind, this chapter aims to appropriate the methodology unpacked in chapter three and experience the Fourth Gospel as a drama unfolding before the audience's very eyes. This experience will attempt to evaluate the actual happenings on stage against the probable social world known to the hypothetical audience. This means that, while this chapter contains a drama analysis, the overarching context of the hypothetical audience (as unpacked in chapter four) will be brought up at several occasions. This will also include the explanation of some specific concepts, elaboration on geographical spheres, and background concerning cultural and religious practices, where necessary (see Culpepper, 1983:213-218).

In any textual analysis, it is essential to demarcate the sections which one wishes to explore. Although drama criticism aims to explore the text as a whole, doing a drama analysis of the entire Fourth Gospel would take this study beyond its scope. Since the idea of the study is to observe whether the methodology of drama criticism holds any merit, an experimental appropriation of drama analysis on a smaller portion of scripture will suffice.¹⁹³ The methodology will therefore only be appropriated to two specific sections of the drama, while an overview will be given of the rest of the scenes.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹³ The appropriation of a drama analysis on selected scenes of the FG will be sufficient for an experimental doctoral dissertation. However, it is not *ideal*. Perhaps a further study could serve to appropriate a drama analysis on the entire Gospel.

¹⁹⁴ The provision of such an overview is useful in a drama analysis. Rhoads (2009:84), when referring to the ancient performance of biblical texts, emphasises that biblical narratives were told and retold as

While this implies that the experience of the hypothetical audience cannot effectively be explored and imagined throughout the entire Johannine drama, their probable state(s) of mind will be given in a synopsis of the other scenes. For this, the entire Fourth Gospel will be divided into scenes. A new scene in a drama is commonly indicated by “entrances and exits or journeys and attention to time and place” (Brant, 2011:13; see Taplin, 1978:31). These will serve as the criteria according to which the Fourth Gospel is demarcated for this study. For the drama analysis, two main sections of the Gospel will be used, namely, the *prologue* (1:1-18), and two scenes surrounding the *crucifixion* (18:28-19:16 as the Roman trial and 19:17-30 as the crucifixion).

5.1.1. *The prologue*

The prologue of the Fourth Gospel represents the very first interaction between the drama and the audience. It begins with John 1:1, which clearly serves to introduce the entire drama with the words, “In the beginning” (Ἐν ἀρχῇ). Although the prologue seems to shift the audience’s attention from the eternal to the temporal, there are no real changes in setting within this scene. Moreover, while the character of John utters a brief line (1:15), the rest of the prologue is framed by the narrator’s speech. A next scene can be identified as beginning in verse 19, since new characters (priests and Levites) make their entrance on stage and a new dialogue begins between them and John.¹⁹⁵

Estes (2015:193) emphasises the importance of the beginning of any text.¹⁹⁶ The opening words of a drama are crucial in capturing the audience and giving some indication of what is to come. Bultmann (1971:13) refers to the outcome of the prologue as a scene that arouses the attention of the audience and provides them with the

a whole, since the hearing of only one part of the entire narrative would probably have led to misunderstandings. Therefore, while this overview does not aim to provide exegetical notes on the biblical text, it helps the reader to keep the entire FG in mind during the analysis.

¹⁹⁵ Moreover, scholars are unanimous in their agreement that, due to the change in tone and style, there is a break between v.18 and 19 (Brant, 2011:21; Bruner, 2012:v; Godet, 1970:54; Ridderbos, 1997:17).

¹⁹⁶ As discussed in §1.4, drama criticism assumes a literary whole and accepts the order of events as portrayed in the text despite possible redaction processes. While several scholars are of opinion that the prologue was a later edition to the FG (Anderson, 2008:97; Barr, 2002:388; Bultmann, 1923:18; Moloney, 1993:23; Miller, 1989:3; Ridderbos, 1997:18; Voorwinde, 2011:22) and that the prologue itself shows signs of internal redaction (Bultmann, 1923:18-20; Lamarche, 1964:36; Miller, 1989:5; Schnelle, 1992:213-225), this will not alter the drama analysis as the prologue shares the theological thrust and language of the Gospel (Miller, 1989:4). Moreover, due to the lack of any FG manuscripts without the prologue, as well as references to the prologue in second century commentaries, the possibility of redaction should also not be uncritically accepted (Brant, 2011:23).

worldview which overarches the drama (see Schnelle, 1992:212).¹⁹⁷ The prologue can thus be seen as “an overture¹⁹⁸ to the Gospel that follows” (Heitmüller, 1920:37).¹⁹⁹ It functions much like the chorus in an ancient Greek drama as it sets up the audience for what is to come (Brown, 2013:148; Myers, 2012:73). In this process, one becomes “part of the drama of the narrative that is about to begin” (Moloney, 1993:52). This also implies that the audience can catch a glimpse of how the drama will play out and reach its climax (Kanagaraj, 2013:1; Myers, 2012:62).

The prologue serves as an effective strategy to immerse the audience into the drama by inviting them into its time and space (Brant, 2004:24).²⁰⁰ This immersion into the drama prepares the audience for the entrance of the main character and protagonist (Brant, 2004:22; see Myers, 2012:39). The introduction of a character remains an essential component in their characterisation for the rest of the narrative or drama (Myers, 2012:60). The prologue therefore functions as the “first crucial ingredient in establishing the emerging identity of Jesus” (Ringe, 1999:48).²⁰¹

More than serving as an introduction to the drama, the prologue provides an essential key to interpret the Gospel (Johnson, 1999:534-535; Smalley, 1978:92-93). “Like the prologue of a Greek tragedy, or any other narrative, it prepares the audience to follow its plot” (Brant, 2004:17). It therefore serves as a type of “decoding instrument” (Zumstein, 2008:123), which guides the audience to make sense of the happenings within the drama. It hints at the many themes and motifs to unfold later (Attridge, 2015:35; Estes, 2015:205), and resembles the function of the ancient “hypothesis”,

¹⁹⁷ Scholars have various opinions with regards to the genre of the prologue. Since it is exceptionally unique, it is complicated to unpack and categorise. It has been classified by some as a pre-Johannine Semitic poem (Lindars, 1990:73), a hymn (Miller, 1989:2; Weder, 1996:329), and even a narrative (Sheridan, 2015:173-178). While the border between ancient poetry and prose was not “nearly so fixed” as in modern literature (Miller, 1989:96), the prologue does have a poetic flow to it.

¹⁹⁸ An overture can be defined as “instrumental music composed as a musical introduction to an opera, oratorio, or suite” (Kavanaugh, 1996:262).

¹⁹⁹ Bruner (2012:3) describes the prologue as “the overture to the symphony of the whole gospel”.

²⁰⁰ Since ancient theatre did not have dimmed lights or stage curtains, the prologue would be key in quieting the audience and turning their attention to the happenings on stage (Brant, 2004:23).

²⁰¹ Bruner (2012:58-60) makes a creative observation when he discusses the correlation between the Johannine prologue and the beginning of 20th century Western movies. He explains that, in a Western, the hero always comes from outside of town, and that this reminds him of the Johannine prologue where ὁ λόγος is characterised as coming from outside of ὁ κόσμος.

which can be described as a prefatory passage, providing the audience with all the information that they will need for their journey with the drama.²⁰²

To summarise, after the witnessing of the Johannine prologue, the hypothetical audience will have drawn various conclusions based on the information given. They will have some idea regarding the settings (time, space and social space) of the drama, will have been introduced to the protagonist and his fate, captured some sense of the plotline and how the drama will climax, and will have been invited to share the point of view of the director through the narrator's voice. These conclusions raise certain expectations, according to which the drama, and especially, the build-up to the climax are assessed. This climax is found in *the crucifixion*.

5.1.2. *The crucifixion*

The second portion to be analysed, will be two scenes surrounding Jesus' crucifixion. From a dramatic point of view, the crucifixion represents the climax of the Johannine drama (Brant, 2004:35; Jervell, 1984:54; Lindars, 1990:81), since it functions as the scene with the greatest intensity and conflict – both internal and external (see Powell, 1990:33).²⁰³ The reason for using two scenes, is that an ancient Roman crucifixion was marked by more than just the hanging on a cross: the process began with a Roman trial, was followed by interrogation, flogging, and the carrying of one's own cross (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:263-264).²⁰⁴ To include these elements, this study will begin its drama analysis at the scene before the crucifixion, which portrays Jesus' trial before Pilate (18:28-19:16).²⁰⁵ This portion can be demarcated as a scene on its own, since 18:28 indicates a change in setting as Jesus is led from Caiaphas' house to Pilate's praetorium. The entire scene takes place on the inside and outside of the praetorium and the party of characters (the outside crowd, soldiers, Pilate, and Jesus) remains consistent.

²⁰² Valentine (1996:293) beautifully describes the prologue as the “theological matrix from which the themes of the gospel arise; the seed bed of the gospel's teaching.”

²⁰³ Brant (2004:33-35) argues that the events of the FG essentially line up to move towards the final crisis, which is the death of Jesus on the cross. According to Myers (2012:170), this death is the culmination of Jesus' works and words on earth. Brown (1994:11) calls this section a “truly dramatic” narrative and argues that its genre can be classified as tragedy.

²⁰⁴ See §4.4.4.

²⁰⁵ The reason for the exclusion of Jesus' questioning before Annas (18:12-17) is that it is not this trial which makes a judgement on Jesus nor leads up to the Roman crucifixion (See Beasley-Murray, 1987:326; Michaels, 1989:313; Rensberger, 2009:352).

The next scene, which begins in 19:17, is also indicated by the change in setting from Pilate's praetorium to Golgotha. The reason for the unusual split between verse 16b (Παρέλαβον οὖν τὸν Ἰησοῦν – “So, they took Jesus...”) and 17 (...καὶ βαστάζων ἑαυτῷ τὸν σταυρὸν ἐξῆλθεν – “...and, carrying his own cross, he went out...”) is that Jesus was probably already taken by the Roman soldiers at the praetorium.²⁰⁶ It would be confusing to dramatise Jesus being taken by the soldiers (16b), while he is already on the road to Golgotha (17). The action of taking Jesus, which is narrated in verse 16b, therefore works better at the setting of the praetorium, which necessitates that 16b and 17 serve as the dividing line between two scenes. Although this demarcation splits a sentence in half, it serves the drama in a better way.

The crucifixion scene ends with Jesus' death in 19:30. Although the spatial setting does not really change in verse 31, since the soldiers come to break the legs of the crucified men and pierce Jesus' side at the same setting where the crucifixion took place, there is a change in temporal setting. The audience witnesses a conversation between Pilate and the Jews on the side, after which Pilate sends soldiers to Golgotha. This indicates that Jesus' side was not pierced immediately after he died. The entrance of new characters in verse 31 (the soldiers) and the probable disappearance of the crowd of witnesses to the crucifixion, also allows the director to break up the two scenes. Moreover, there seems to be quite a dramatic change in tone between verses 30 and 31. For the audience to absorb the dramatic effect of Jesus' death, it would be appropriate to end the scene and leave them with a dark stage.

While it is important to be explicit about what this analysis will cover, it is also important to be explicit concerning what it *will not* cover, and how the Johannine text will be presented and packaged to the reader.

5.2. The packaging of the Johannine drama

While the three demarcated scenes (1:1-18; 18:28-19:16; 19:17-30) will be placed under the magnifying glass, a brief overview will be given of the entire Fourth Gospel for the sake of coherence and to aid the reader in staying aware of the wider drama. Although the entire Gospel will be divided into scenes, the sections that will not come under the magnifying glass (1:19-18:27; 19:31-21:25), will be treated as summaries.

²⁰⁶ Most scholars demarcate the crucifixion scene as from v.16b to v.42 (Stibbe, 1993:193), since the sentence of 16b carries on into 17.

This means that the discourse time (the time used to tell or act out the story) will be shorter than the actual story time (the duration of the events in the scene) (see Powell, 1990:38; §3.5.4). In other words, these portions will not be exegeted, but only summarised in a fast-forwarded manner. Only the prologue and two scenes surrounding the crucifixion will be treated as scenes, which means that the discourse time and story time will be more or less the same length.

To further stimulate the imagination of the reader, the translation of the prologue and crucifixion scenes will be done from the Greek text and presented in the form of a stage-play script.²⁰⁷ Rhoads (2006b:172) effectively argues that most of the Fourth Gospel can be presented in the form of a dialogue, as the narrator mostly just fills in with stage directions (e.g., the change of setting, entrance of characters, or the lapse of time – Brant, 2004:37). Parsenius (2015:86) agrees with this when commenting that the Gospel of John qualifies as a more dramatic text, since the narrator stands back on several occasions – more often than not in a way that the audience does not even notice.²⁰⁸ Moloney (1993:8) thus refers to the narrator as covert, which means “hidden in the narrative”. Therefore, the translation of the chosen scenes as script, in which the dialogue carries the plot, can be a promising way of translating the drama and can do much to stimulate the imagination of the reader. Apart from the monologues in the prologue and epilogue (21:24), where the narrator directly addresses the audience, his voice will thus fade away.²⁰⁹

Important to note is that the omission of the voice of the narrator throughout the drama will not diminish the important information and exposition given by this voice.²¹⁰ The point of view of the director, which is mostly reflected by the narrator (Myers, 2012:23; Tolmie, 1999:13), will thus be conveyed by the use of stage directions and through the dialogue of the characters on stage.

²⁰⁷ See appendix A for the stage-play script format.

²⁰⁸ One of the examples given by Parsenius (2015:93-94) is in Jn. 14:31, where Jesus utters the words: “Rise, let us be on our way”. According to Parsenius, Jesus is describing his own movements and therefore giving his own stage directions. This makes it unnecessary for the narrator to tell the audience that they departed. Brant (2004:109) also refers to the fact that the narrator’s comments are often redundant in the FG.

²⁰⁹ It is important to note that such a translation will not be word-for-word from the Greek text, but will have to give way to poetic freedom.

²¹⁰ Fink (2014:30) emphasises the importance of a level of exposition throughout any drama to keep the audience informed.

After unpacking the methodology of drama criticism, imaginatively stepping into the shoes of the first-time hypothetical audience, and demarcating the scenes for analysis, the audience²¹¹ is ready to experience the drama of the Fourth Gospel. The rest of the chapter will contain a drama analysis on the prologue.

All are seated, and the house lights have faded.

5.3. [In] the beginning...

5.3.1. Scene 1 – The prologue (1:1-18)

SETTING: An empty and dark stage.

AT RISE: The voice of the narrator breaks the silence as he begins with a dramatic speech.²¹²

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[1] In the beginning was the Word (ὁ λόγος), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. [2] This Word²¹³ was in the beginning from God. [3] All things came into being through him, and without him nothing that was made came into being. [4] In him was life, and the life was the light of humanity. [5] And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness has not mastered it.

The curtains to the Johannine drama open with words of origin.²¹⁴ This beginning is not strange to the audience, who is used to the formula of dramas beginning with an empty stage and a prologue (Worthen, 2000:19). The narrator does not take the

²¹¹ All references to the audience throughout the analysis will refer to the first-time hypothetical audience explored in ch.4 and not to the implied or ideal audience assumed by the text. The invitation to become the implied audience will only be explored in ch.7.

²¹² Dramatic speech can be defined as speaking which oversteps the limits of ordinary language as it often precedes actions (Brant, 2004:62). By this, speech is often accomplished before action. This is precisely how the prologue functions as it gives the audience an introduction to, and description of the entire Johannine plot, and that which is about to happen is described as if it already happened. The use of the past tense does not imply that the events narrated have necessarily already happened (Ridderbos, 1997:38), but is a dramatic tool used by the director to form the point of view of the audience. Powell (1990:37) refers to such a narration, which precedes the actual event(s) narrated, as a prolepsis.

²¹³ Instead of simply translating the οὗτος with “he”, I have chosen to translate it in a way which better reflects the demonstrative nature of the pronoun. According to Brant (2004:81), the use of demonstrative pronouns is characteristic of a drama.

²¹⁴ The phrase “in the beginning” (ἐν ἀρχῇ) refers to a time before creation (Köstenberger, 2004:25).

audience to a specific historical setting, but to a place outside of history: the beginning (ἡ ἀρχή).²¹⁵ The spatial and temporal settings remain vague and abstract at this time. In a dramatic sense, the prologue serves to facilitate “bonding” between the stage and audience (Styan, 2000:17). The narrator uses a monologue to speak to the audience before the drama proper begins (see Keuris, 1996:11).²¹⁶ The “point of attack” (where the action and dialogue begins – Fink, 2014:17) is therefore still to come.

The phrase ἐν ἀρχῇ not only serves to situate the drama in a temporal sense, but also reminds Jewish audience members of something that they have heard before: the first word in Genesis (בְּרֵאשִׁית; see Painter, 2014:39 & Ridderbos, 1997:23).²¹⁷ This probable mimicking of the first phrase of the Torah is strategic to ground the drama within the “realm of the sacred scripture of Israel” (Brown, 2013:150), and stir a foreknowledge of the character among a certain group in the audience.²¹⁸ Jewish members of the audience are immediately reminded of the first time God was introduced to humanity, and prepared for a drama which will have something to say about the divine.²¹⁹ These opening words almost create the expectation that God self will be the first character found on the Johannine stage, which stirs a high regard for the protagonist among Jewish audience members.

Greek and Roman audience members will also recognise the way in which the drama begins as resembling an encomium, which is “a composition in prose or poetry written to praise a human being” (Brant, 2011:25).²²⁰ This creates the expectation that the introduced λόγος enters the drama with a significant amount of static honour.

²¹⁵ Stibbe (1993:22) remarks that, instead of beginning with the usual “once upon a time”, the FG begins with “once before time”. Ridderbos (1997:23) refers to “the beginning” as the *sitz im leben* of the Johannine prologue.

²¹⁶ Stibbe (1993:22) remarks that the relationship between the narrator and audience is established in the prologue. The audience is informed from the beginning that the narrator has an eternal vantage point.

²¹⁷ Gn. 1:1 (“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”). However, while Gn. began with a “divine *doing* (‘In the beginning God made...’), the FG begins with a “divine *being* (*In the beginning was...*)” (Bruner, 2012:10). The Johannine drama therefore “presumes to go behind and beyond the creation to what and to Who preceded it”.

²¹⁸ Hays (2016:10) uses the word “echo” to describe the inclusion of words or phrases, which would be recognised by the alert reader/audience and evoke “a reminiscence of an earlier text”.

²¹⁹ The reiteration of the phrase suggests that there is a continuation of the God-drama. It does not simply remind the audience of the Gn. account, but effectively builds on it (Ridderbos, 1997:26).

²²⁰ See §4.4.8 for more on the encomium. Moreover, the resemblance to an ancient hymn, which was reserved for literature addressed to gods (Porter, 2015:90), seems to promise a drama regarding a divine being.

While the audience cannot yet see ὁ λόγος, his description by the narrator's voice sets the imagination on a journey and every audience member begins to form a picture of the main character²²¹ in their own mind. The description surrounding ὁ λόγος serves as a type of birth announcement, which has everything to do with the static honour of an individual (Neyrey, 2009:214). The audience would thus listen for clues of origin, rank, family ties, class, et cetera, in order to place this character within his appropriate honour ranking in the societal system. Everything said in the prologue will contribute to the characterisation of the protagonist and will influence the expectations that the audience has of him throughout the drama.

The first two statements made by the narrator describe ὁ λόγος as an eternal being with his origin in the bosom of God.²²² The third statement (καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος – “and the Word was God”) gives dimension to this character in a profound way as it emphasises that the character functioning at “the center of the following narrative is none other than God himself” (Zumstein, 2008:124).²²³ No higher remark can be made about the protagonist than this one (Morris, 1995:68; cf. Harris, 2015:19). Ὁ λόγος can thus be understood as an “extension of the personality of God” (Bruce, 1983:31).²²⁴ The audience is made well aware that the dramas of ὁ λόγος and ὁ θεός have married and that the Fourth Gospel will have something significant to say about the eternal God.

This introduction, combined with the fact that the audience has not yet physically seen the protagonist, feeds his potential characterisation in the audience members' imaginations. The divine status of ὁ λόγος creates some very clear parameters in terms of his characteristics as audience members have a certain foreknowledge of the divine (see Keuris, 1996:25).²²⁵ To those immersed in Greek and Roman thought, the idea of power, rule, honour, and dominion would immediately arise (see Placher,

²²¹ Or, as Bruner (2012:6) argues, the “*subject* of the Gospel”.

²²² Moreover, the joining of the two nouns ὁ λόγος and θεός by the imperfect of εἰμί (ἦν) emphasises the relationship between the two, not as a “static ‘being with’”, but as a dynamic mutuality (Moloney, 1993:28). Moloney translates this phrase as “and the Word was turned toward God”, but further states that it may have also been an intention from the author's side to insinuate that God was also turned towards the Word. Miller (1989:91) also refers to the relationship between the Word and God as the two parties being in communion with one another.

²²³ The three uses of ἦν (Ἐν ἀρχῇ ἦν ὁ λόγος; ὁ λόγος ἦν πρὸς τὸν θεόν; θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος) in this first section build up to a climax of the characterisation of ὁ λόγος as God (McHugh, 2009:10).

²²⁴ The phrase καὶ θεὸς ἦν ὁ λόγος indicates a certain “intimacy and mutuality” in the way that “the two parties of the relationship are so close that what one is, the other also is” (Moloney, 1993:28).

²²⁵ See §3.6.3.

1994:9).²²⁶ Surely ὁ λόγος is no ordinary character, but will make his entrance at the absolute top of all hierarchies of power and influence. This would concur with the probable expectation(s) of Jewish audience members, who would begin to picture ὁ λόγος at the top of the temple system, higher than the elite that they know (see Hanson & Oakman, 1998:154): he would not only be absolutely powerful, but also absolutely pure.

For Gnostic audience members, ὁ λόγος fits the description of the eternal God in the πλήρωμα. This means that, if God were to take the stage, it would definitely be in a spiritual or mystical sense in which he would be aloof from matter and unaffected by the things of this world (see Oakes, 2011:122).²²⁷ Moreover, the characterisation of ὁ λόγος as divine would have implications for the supporting characters with whom he would surround himself. To a Jewish audience member, he would keep himself pure by only associating with those who could claim absolute purity. Moreover, since he is divine, his supporting characters will probably come from the temple elite.

To a Roman viewer, his life would emulate power and reign and, since only the powerful and honourable have the right to formulate something of God,²²⁸ he would probably not pay much attention to the shameful and vulnerable. Moreover, his supporting cast will probably be politically and economically powerful. To the Greek, he would be absolute in wisdom, and therefore avoid the unenlightened and material at all costs. Perhaps his supporting cast will constitute of some great philosophers. However, those at the bottom (in terms of power, purity, wisdom, etc.), would not be among his supporting characters, but will probably be functionaries, stark characters, or antagonists in this drama of the divine.²²⁹

This high and glorious characterisation even fits the name given to the protagonist, which would immediately grab the attention of the audience (Beasley-Murray, 1991:30), since the concept of ὁ λόγος was significant in Jewish and Hellenistic thought (Culpepper, 1983:213; Staubli & Schroer, 2001:32).²³⁰ The narrator uses it as

²²⁶ See §4.4.11.

²²⁷ As discussed in §4.4.11.

²²⁸ As mentioned in §4.4.11 (See also Hanson & Oakman, 1998:134).

²²⁹ See §3.6.1 for a discussion of the types of characters.

²³⁰ Irrespective of the specific connotations to the word, Kanagaraj (2013:1) emphasises that the term was “familiar to all sections of society in the first century CE”. Scholars have different opinions concerning the tradition(s) from which the Johannine author borrowed the concept and whether it is, in fact, reminiscent of a particular tradition (Scott, 1992:26). The three traditions which are usually

a type of symbolism, which immediately triggers various associations in audience members' imaginations.²³¹ To Jewish audience members, ὁ λόγος appears to be the heir of personified wisdom (ἡ σοφία) in the Old Testament, prevalent in the books of Proverbs (1-9) and Job (28) (Bultmann, 1923:20; Ihenacho, 2001:76; Tobin, 1983:64).²³² The known discourse regarding ἡ σοφία is here applied to ὁ λόγος (Weder, 1996:328). Both λόγος and σοφία were agents in the process of creation (cf. Pr. 8:30) and both are life to humanity (cf. Pr. 8:35; see Borgen, 1996:108). Within the wisdom tradition, ἡ σοφία functions as an expression of YHWH's mind and creative being (Need, 2008:10), and her function would be to make him present for humanity to observe (Scott, 1992:146). The narrator therefore uses the foreknowledge of Jewish audience members to create an expectation of a drama in which the presence and nature of God will be expressed in and through the protagonist, who serves to communicate between God and humanity.

This emphasises that the protagonist exists to communicate and even *act out* something of the character of God. According to the understanding of Jewish audience members, “wisdom is not only *from* God but is also *of* God” (Thompson, 2001:135), which means that this character, who is essentially identified by his name as “the embodied wisdom of God”, will embody God's very presence. Whether the audible voice of God will be explicitly dramatised in the Johannine drama (as in 12:28) or not, it will be heard loud and clear through the life²³³ of ὁ λόγος (Ashton, 1991:553).²³⁴

Not only do Jewish audience members probably make the connection between ὁ λόγος and ἡ σοφία, but the protagonist's name also reminds of the Hebrew דְבַר (word), which is representative of God's activity within creation (Carson, 1991:115).²³⁵ The

identified in this discussion are Gnosticism, the Jewish Wisdom tradition, and the works of Philo (Scott, 1992:26).

²³¹ The encomium often contained “homonyms and nicknames” which served to compliment and honour the subject (Brant, 2011:27). The use of ὁ λόγος therefore immediately bestows honour upon the character at hand. At this stage, the identity of this character remains a mystery to the audience, which will only be revealed in v.17 with the name Jesus.

²³² While the evidence for the correlation between λόγος and σοφία seems convincing, it is also important to point out some discrepancies in this identification. While the FG identifies ὁ λόγος as creator, ἡ σοφία was created (Pr. 8:22: “The Lord created me at the beginning of his work, the first of his acts of long ago.”).

²³³ And perhaps, death, as this study would wish to explore.

²³⁴ Thatcher (1990:76-77) argues along the same line when stating that the life of ὁ λόγος will not simply speak *for* God, but as God: not simply through his utterings, but through his entire earthly existence.

²³⁵ OT prophets were known for speaking the word of YHWH (Moloney, 1993:30; Porter, 2015:43-44). The prophets of ancient Israel would use the phrase “the word of YHWH came to me” to indicate that

audience is introduced to a character who will take the form of God's self-expression (Carson, 1991:116; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:36; Moloney, 1993:30). In the moving, acting, and speaking of the protagonist, the audience will be allowed to experience God move, act, and speak.²³⁶

Jewish audience members would not be the only ones triggered by the protagonist's name. For audience members familiar with the work of the first-century scholar Philo of Alexandria, the narrator's introduction of the protagonist as ὁ λόγος also implies some assumptions. Philo was known for often using the words λόγος and σοφία interchangeably (Borgen 1996:108). Philo's interpretation was a hybrid of Jewish and Greek philosophical thought and included an understanding of ὁ λόγος as representing the structure and order of the universe, wisdom, and the pre-existent Torah (Need, 2008:11). To such audience members, this is nothing less than a hint at the Johannine plot: since the narrator's words imply that the protagonist will embody the divine structure and order, and that his life will portray things as they ought to be, or as God intended them to be.

Similarly, within Greek thought, ὁ λόγος would have been used by some to refer to "the eternal principle of order in the cosmos" (Brant, 2011:25). It represents the glue that keeps the entire universe together, makes sense of everything, and gives ultimate meaning to life (Need, 2008:11; Porter, 2015:44). The term would have been widely accepted as pre-existent and representing something of the life of the divine (Need, 2008:11), as it resided within the "best and wisest" of people, who live in step with it to "attain dignity and meaning" (Köstenberger, 2004:26). According to the Stoic way of thinking, all stories regarding god(s) would essentially refer to this underlying force named ὁ λόγος (Barr, 2002:391). Greek audience members could therefore foster the expectation that this protagonist would reveal something of the divine and ultimate order of all things and would exude a superior rank and wisdom. Everything that is, and everything that ought to be, will be embodied in this character. This description places ὁ λόγος in his hierarchy and assigns considerable static honour to him.

YHWH spoke to them and wishes for them to prophesy (Is 9:8; Jr. 1:4; Ez. 1:3; Am. 3:1). Greek-speaking Jews also often referred to the Septuagint as ὁ λόγος (Barr, 2002:391). Moreover, Rabbinic and Targumic literature often referred to the presence of YHWH, or his active power in speech, as the word of God (Need, 2008:10). These references speak of communication from God to humanity.

²³⁶ Appleton (1956:19) used similar language: "Men [sic] reveal their inmost thoughts through words. Because Jesus reveals God, John speaks of Him as the Word."

The narrator therefore makes a compelling case for the authority of the protagonist on the basis of ethos. Moreover, he seems to play into these expectations by emphasising that ὁ λόγος is the creator, and, therefore, the author of the perfect order of things. Moreover, the act of creation affirms the protagonist's divine characterisation. Not only is the mysterious protagonist identified with the divine and ultimate, but he is also described as one who caused the universe to exist. This places him on the side of the creator rather than the creation (Voorwinde, 2011:139).

However, to audience members well versed in Gnostic thinking, this characterisation of ὁ λόγος as the creator of all things is somewhat unsettling. The introduction of the protagonist as eternal God places him in the spatial setting of the πλήρωμα or heavenly sphere of perfection. Yet, the very thought of this perfect and eternal one being involved in the creation of material things is surprising (see Oakes, 2011:122), since “the good God could have had nothing to do with it” (Morris, 1995:72).²³⁷ Yet, the narrator insists that *all* things (πάντα) were created by him, but provides some assurance to Gnostic audience members' concerns by referring to the life (ζωή) and light (φῶς) which emulate from the protagonist. This life and light will be imparted to humanity through the drama. With this, the narrator is also defining the relationship between the protagonist and the other characters, as well as the relationship between ὁ λόγος and audience, who will also become recipients of this life and light.²³⁸

The audience is not at all surprised as the life of this protagonist is promised to be the light (φῶς) of humanity. ζωή (life) represents more than just biological life (βίος), but contains in it something of a good or abundant life (Brant, 2011:29; Bruner, 2012:16; Harris, 2015:23). The narrator thus promises the audience that ὁ λόγος will contain in himself a life worth living and imitating, and, therefore, a life embodying something of the absolute best of humanity.²³⁹ This feeds into the characterisation of the protagonist, but also into the expectation of a triumphant plot. One might imagine the audience reacting with an “of course!”. If the protagonist contains within himself the perfect divine order, he would be the key to a good and abundant life. Moreover, the

²³⁷ As discussed in §4.4.11.

²³⁸ Here the focus shifts from defining the protagonist's relationship to all things (πάντα – v.3), to defining it to humanity (τῶν ἀνθρώπων – v.4).

²³⁹ Morris (1995:74) refers to ὁ λόγος as the “life-bringer and light-bearer”. Not only does he contain life in himself, but he gives it to others (Ridderbos, 1997:38). He is essentially already identified as the life-giver in v.3 where he is honoured as the creator of all things (Bultmann, 1971:39).

symbol of light creates a clear expectation among the audience: this character's life will illuminate the human race.²⁴⁰ This moment represents an *inciting incident* (see Fink, 2014:18): a moment which necessitates the protagonist's role as illuminator and life-giver in the drama.²⁴¹ This is especially important to the slightly unsettled Gnostic members of the audience, since it provides an assurance that the hero will, in fact, carry some sort of superior revelation or knowledge.

The narrator also introduces the first antagonist: ἡ σκοτία (the darkness). The use of the symbols of light (φῶς) and darkness (σκοτία) creates a stark contrast or dualism, which serves to grab the attention of the audience.²⁴² It represents the tension between two parties within the drama (Brant, 2004:123), which necessitates that the audience choose sides. The characterisation makes it easy for the audience to make a value judgement on the antagonist and antipathy will immediately begin to arise towards this character as the concept of darkness creates the impression that they will embody some kind of evil, and strengthens the audience's alliance with the protagonist. Moreover, as life and light are connected, the antagonist will, by implication, embody its antonym (death). Since the audience is included in the human race which, according to the narrator, will be illuminated by the light, it would be foolish to side with the darkness.²⁴³

The precise identity of the antagonist(s) is not yet known, but the prospect of conflict is clear. The introduction of an antagonist builds on the inciting incident, as the protagonist's role in the drama will include the confrontation of an adversary. What ὁ λόγος will do with this adversary throughout the drama will become increasingly important. The narrator hints at a triumphant outcome by predicting that the protagonist will not be mastered by the antagonist.²⁴⁴ To a Gnostic audience member,

²⁴⁰ Kanagaraj (2013:4) affirms this by referring to the audience's expectation of a character who enters the human realm to enlighten the human race. This involves "the insight one may get about God and his purpose for human beings".

²⁴¹ See §3.6.1 for more on the inciting incident.

²⁴² The dualisms in the Johannine drama are mostly treated doctrinally, but Brant (2004:122) emphasises that these also function as a dramatic device typically used in Greek tragedy in order to create antithetical structure to conflict.

²⁴³ Neyrey (2007:43) refers to this value judgement by commenting that no wise farmer would "scorn sunlight for his crops", and that no "sage would spurn illumination". The audience's support for the protagonist and light would thus be unanimous at this stage, since any rejection of light is obviously foolish and harmful.

²⁴⁴ Καταλαμβάνω can mean both "I gain control over" and "I understand" (Louw & Nida, 1996; Harris, 2015:23). It can thus be interpreted as meaning that the darkness has not overcome the light, or that

this proclamation holds the promise of exclusivity. The light will not be mastered or understood by the darkness, since its revelation will only be available to a select few. In terms of power, the narrator's words seem to insinuate that the protagonist will in no way be influenced or ruled by his opponents, but will be the influencer and ruler over anyone or anything that comes against him.²⁴⁵ As audience members within a Greek and Roman society, where honour, conquest, power, and dominion are celebrated, this promise creates the expectation of triumph (Morris, 1995:77; see Pilch, 2000b:158). The protagonist seems to be portrayed as the ultimate hero who will overcome the evil darkness through dominion, honour, and dignity. To Jewish audience members, this description is beginning to sound all the more like the triumphant Messiah that they are expecting.

Up to this point, the audience has been introduced to the description of the divine. They have not yet seen ὁ λόγος, nor have they heard him speak, but they can already imagine him. When considering the narrator's description, one might imagine expectations of a character marked by some kind of "luminescence" (Carson, 1991:130). The foresight of bravery and triumph of this character makes it easy for the audience to pledge their allegiance to him on the ground of his ethos. The audience is left in anticipation to meet this hero who has come to reveal the unseen God and God's perfect order. With this, the stage lights up:

SETTING: A desert area in ancient Palestine.²⁴⁶
Day. The area is rocky, pale, and dry
with a desert shrub here and there.²⁴⁷

AT RISE: A simple peasant (JOHN) enters the
stage. He is dressed in clothes made
from camel's hair, which is bound
around his waist with a leather
belt.²⁴⁸ The man wanders around and
cries out in a silent voice while the
narrator is at word

the darkness has not understood the light. For this reason, the verb 'mastered' is used for the translation.

²⁴⁵ See §4.4.5 for a discussion of the importance of power and influence in the first-century Mediterranean.

²⁴⁶ Mk. 1:4.

²⁴⁷ Drane (1998:86).

²⁴⁸ Mk. 1:6.

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[6] There was a man, sent from God, his name was John, [7] he came as witness, to bear witness about the light, so that all may believe through him. [8] He was not the light, but came to bear witness about the light.

The introduction of the character of John shifts the milieu from the divine realm to that of human activity (Brant, 2011:31) and the audience is “thrust into the world of time” (McHugh, 2009:21). The first supporting character for the protagonist is introduced as “a man” (ἄνθρωπος), named John. The narrator does not say where he comes from, who he is related to, or what his social role and stance in society is. Moreover, his characterisation does not trigger any foreknowledge among audience members, as he is given a rather generic name and no titles.

The narrator does not honour John in the same way as ὁ λόγος. In fact, he is not even properly introduced. This is not necessarily strange to the audience: certainly, God would send the lowly to pay respect and honour to the great hero, since the presence of a God in a drama requires that the honour of other parties be kept very low (Hanson & Oakman, 1998:111).²⁴⁹ It would therefore make sense for the narrator not to pay too much attention to this new character, as not to distract from the protagonist. At this stage, the character of John mimics a dependent client singing the praises of his benevolent patron.

From John’s testimony, it is clear that the great λόγος is not only well known in the heavens, but he is also testified of and well-spoken of on the earth. The use of the character of John thus serves as an affirmation of the credibility of ὁ λόγος and his ethos (Brant, 2011:30), as he affirms the narrator’s point of view. To the audience, the behaviour of John creates a preview of the behaviour of characters (and audience members) to come. It would not be unusual to expect that the hero’s praises will be sung by all other characters with the exception of the antagonist(s) and antagonistic supporting cast.

²⁴⁹ As discussed in §4.4.11.

The director further characterises ὁ λόγος by creating a contrast between him and the character of John.²⁵⁰ Ὁ λόγος is the light, something this lowly man only gets the privilege of testifying about. It is clear that John is not the protagonist, but rather a helper or supporter of the protagonist.²⁵¹ The character of John also seems rather flat at this stage as he is not identified as someone who will have any significant effect on the plot. Although he is sent by God, he does not partake in God's divine nature as ὁ λόγος does.²⁵²

John's testimony also serves to affirm the hero's absolute primacy over him, by stating that ὁ λόγος originated and ranks before him (Bruce, 1983:42). In the imagination of the audience, this contrast glorifies the protagonist and creates an expectation of a divine hero who will appear in the opposite manner from the lowly peasant who just took the stage. This adds significant static honour to the character of ὁ λόγος. It makes sense that the narrator does not pay much further attention to the character of John, but continues his glorious description of the divine protagonist to come:

(JOHN continues to wander around on stage, miming the act of testifying of ὁ λόγος.)

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[9] The true light, he who gives light to all humanity, was coming into the world. [10] He was in the world, and the world came into being through him, yet the world knew him not. [11] To his own he came and his own did not receive him. [12] But to all who received him, those who believed in his name, he gave authority to become children of God. [13] Those who were born not out of blood, nor out of the will of flesh, nor the will of a human, but out of God.

²⁵⁰ This contrast is reiterated in the FG. John is referred to as the best man, and not the groom (3:29), and the lamp, but not the light (5:35). Unlike the contrast between the light and darkness, this contrast has little to do with hostility and much to do with hierarchy (Stibbe, 1993:29).

²⁵¹ See van Aarde (2009:405) for a description of the helper of the protagonist. This type of character is also discussed in §3.6.1.

²⁵² Morris (1995:79) asserts that the fact that John was sent from God qualifies the nature of his mission, rather than the nature of his being.

The narrator pivots from situating ὁ λόγος in the heavenlies and eternal realm, to introducing his entrance into the world. This pronouncement stirs the excitement of the audience, as the entrance of the divine hero on stage becomes guaranteed. Although they have not yet seen him in physical form, the narrator guarantees that they will have the honour of observing him, just as the very world which ὁ λόγος created in the beginning, will have the honour of receiving him. What an expectation of glory! However, the narrator warns that this glory might be too much for humanity to grasp. There is probably no surprise at the assertion that the world “knew him not”, since this character is indeed God, who dwells “in the sky over the temple on the other side of the firmament” (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:77). He might have been in the world, but this great and powerful being would be unknowable to humanity due to the great chasm between the two.²⁵³

The utterance which creates an element of confusion is that ὁ λόγος came to his own, which, in turn, rejected him. The expression τὰ ἴδια (his own) can also be translated as “homeland” or “true dwelling place” (Moloney, 1993:38). This would especially grab the attention of Gnostic members of the audience, as it functions as a popular expression among them and is used to refer to “heavenly spheres into which the redeemed would eventually return” (1993:38). The use of this expression for ὁ λόγος coming into the world is puzzling, since the narrator used the first few verses to characterise him in terms of his eternal dwelling place, and now suddenly casts a different lens on the character, identifying the earth (κόσμος) as his homeland.²⁵⁴ Strangely, the divine hero’s own/homeland “is not described as the heavenly spheres, but in the human story” (1993:38). This is unsettling to Gnostic audience members who believe that “God and cosmos are dualistically related to each other” (Ridderbos, 1997:29).

Moreover, the fact that his own did not accept him, creates discomfort among the audience members in general, as it forecasts more hostility towards ὁ λόγος (Stibbe, 1993:29), which pre-emptly possible tragic outcome (Bruner, 2012:25; Köstenberger, 2004:36).²⁵⁵ The audience identifies the failure of recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) as

²⁵³ See §4.4.11.

²⁵⁴ Κόσμος is used to refer to the “material reality of the created world” (Skinner, 2013:115). It is the physical or material realm into which ὁ λόγος enters. However, the word is also used to refer to humanity, and even those who reject Jesus in the Johannine tradition.

²⁵⁵ Ironically, this rejection will come from the world which ὁ λόγος has created (Stibbe, 1993:25).

characteristic of the drama, and especially tragedy (Brant, 2011:32).²⁵⁶ This proclamation is unsettling (see Brant, 2004:21), as it adds more dimension to the characterisation of the antagonist(s) and situates the antagonistic response among the protagonist's own (people). The audience will thus be able to differentiate who the antagonists are, not by their proximity to the protagonist, but by whether they accept or reject him. The failure to recognise the protagonist will also probably be his Achilles' heel in the drama, which he will have to overcome through the arc (the growing and embodying the theme/lesson of the drama).²⁵⁷ To the audience, this will probably be a power display, which will reveal the divine identity of the hero.

Moreover, the promise that light will not be overcome by darkness still rings in the audience's ears. While the narrator predicts antagonism, the logical assumption would be that ὁ λόγος will conquer or dominate those who oppose him. The narrator also shifts over to a triumphant tone by proclaiming that there will be characters who accept the divine hero.²⁵⁸ These characters are described as those who will believe in the name of ὁ λόγος, emphasising that a relational trust (Köstenberger, 2004:34), which includes the acceptance and celebration of the identity and reputation of the divine hero will be a dividing factor among the characters in the drama (Bruce, 1983:38).²⁵⁹ Once again, this dichotomy invites and strengthens the audience's alliance with the divine hero.

An invitation of kinship is extended to those who believe in the revelation of God as it will be experienced through the life of ὁ λόγος.²⁶⁰ This is an unimaginable promise: the characters in the Johannine drama, as well as the audience, will have the opportunity to be regarded as kin of the divine if they embrace his revelation through ὁ λόγος.²⁶¹

²⁵⁶ Brant (2011:33) emphasises that the FG uses recognition, as well as the failure thereof, as a main plot element.

²⁵⁷ See §3.6.1.

²⁵⁸ Bruner (2012:30) suggests that vv.12-13 can be regarded as a move from "The Human Tragedy" to "The Divine Comedy", as the audience is encouraged by the "happy news, indeed, that there were, are, and always will be exceptions to the God-unwelcoming rule".

²⁵⁹ When the social setting is considered, ὄνομα (name) implies more than the title with which a person is addressed, but essentially refers to a person's reputation, identity, being (Bruner, 2012:30), and relevance (Louw & Nida, 1996). Morris (1995:88) puts it as follows: "To believe 'in the name' of the Word, then, means to trust the person of the Word."

²⁶⁰ Harris (2015:32) defines the act of believing as "the total committal of one's total self... something more than an intellectual acceptance". Ridderbos (1997:45) interprets "all who received him, those who believed in his name" as those who "accepted him for what he was and as he manifested himself".

²⁶¹ Culpepper (1981:30-31) regards this promise of kinship as the pivot of the prologue and its chiasmic structure. This promise affirms the understanding of identity among the believers of the Johannine community and stems from the OT tradition.

This is essentially a promise of status granted by the divine-himself (Morris, 1995:87), which makes it an enticing promise of honour. Being fully aware of the degree of honour associated with the divine, audience members would leap at the opportunity to find themselves in this prestigious family, and immediately identify with those who believe in ὁ λόγος. Who would not want to be associated with God and God's honour! Not only will the divine order be revealed to all humanity, but the acceptance of this revelation of God will grant others the opportunity of a role of honour within the drama. The narrator further strengthens this call for identification by explicitly involving the audience in the drama through the use of first person pronouns:

(The Character of JOHN is still miming the testimony of the divine hero in the background.)

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[14] And the word became flesh and dwelled among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only begotten son from the father, full of grace and truth.

Here, at the climax of the prologue (Brant, 2011:34; Kanagaraj, 2013:5),²⁶² the narrator switches over to first person pronouns, including himself as active participant and character within the drama (Resseguie, 2013:4), but also uniting himself with the audience (Myers, 2012:39). The narrator seems to be taking a seat among the audience members, identifying them as fellow eye witnesses of the Johannine drama (Resseguie, 2013:4), and fellow proclaimers of the virtue of ὁ λόγος (Brant, 2011:34).²⁶³

However, the virtue proclamation takes a strange course as ὁ λόγος is characterised by the act of becoming flesh (σάρξ). This description is "crass" (Köstenberger, 2009:185), bold, and dramatic (Carson, 1991:126), and probably the last thing that the audience expects to hear (Lee, 2002:34). Being prepared with a characterisation of

²⁶² Bruner (2012:7) describes this phrase as "the most thrilling place in the prologue". McHugh (2009:50) shares this sentiment, and therefore identifies the καί as "a conjunction expressing astonishment", translating it as: "and then, to crown it all...". Others, such as O'Day (2012:519), go as far as referring to v.14 as the crux or the focal point of the entire FG (See also Thompson, 1988:2).

²⁶³ Brant (2004:25) argues that the narrator could move on stage at this moment. However, since the character of John is still miming his proclamation of ὁ λόγος on stage, the narrator will remain a voice.

the divine hero as God, which was associated with words like light and life, the audience would be in great anticipation to witness the glorious entrance of ὁ λόγος on stage. Perhaps some lights, effects, music, trumpets, and honour from other characters (as John has already begun to set the example) would seem like the appropriate way to welcome such a figure on stage. Yet, the narrator does not play into this expectation of splendour as the word σάρξ is unexpectedly uttered.²⁶⁴ Perhaps a gasp of shock would be in order.²⁶⁵

To a first-century audience, σάρξ is not a foreign concept. However, its place within a drama of the divine seems unusual, as it would have been broadly associated with the human and earthly sphere (Bultmann 1971:61-62; Thompson, 1988:40).²⁶⁶ Although it includes the notions of joy, love, and life, the realities of vulnerability, suffering, and death are also contained in this term (Staubli & Schroer, 2001:203).²⁶⁷ The flesh refers to “humanity’s frailty, transience, vulnerability and mortality” (Voorwinde, 2011:161; cf. Eklund, 2015:53; Kanagaraj, 2013:6), and it is associated with the weak, sickly, and impure (Staubli & Schroer, 2001:212). Fleshly things are those things that are “this-worldly-human, visible and tangible, limited and substantial, frail and susceptible” (Schlier, 1956:281).²⁶⁸ Moreover, the idea of flesh includes the notion of being dependant and even passive (Ridderbos, 1997:49).²⁶⁹ To an ancient audience, the

²⁶⁴ Harris (2015:50) observes that this is the last time that the narrator uses the proper noun λόγος. “[T]he final declaration about the Logos in the Fourth Gospel is [therefore] that it ‘became flesh’.”

²⁶⁵ Kanagaraj (2013:5) refers to the audience’s probable reaction to the use of flesh as one of “astonishment”.

²⁶⁶ The word σάρξ appears several times in the FG, at times referring to unbelief (6:63) and opposed to the spirit (3:6). However, Thompson (1988:49) emphasises that the use of σάρξ in the FG need not be confused with the Pauline use thereof, which has a sinful connotation (See also McHugh, 2009:52). Coloe (2001:25) affirms this by emphasising that the concept of flesh is not used here in contrast to spirit or as something denoting a moral sinfulness, rather, it is a term which refers to “the human state of mortal finitude”. In its most basic understanding, the term refers to the human and material condition, and while it cannot be said to be evil or wicked in itself, the reliance on, or evaluation from the vantage point of the flesh, is that which the FG criticises.

²⁶⁷ Brant (2011:21) and Liew (2008:169) therefore remark that the death of ὁ λόγος is already on the table very early in the FG. However, such a death might be the last thing on the mind of the hypothetical audience at this stage.

²⁶⁸ “A voice says, ‘Cry!’ And I said, ‘What shall I cry?’ All flesh is grass, and all its beauty is like the flower of the field” (Is. 40:6).

²⁶⁹ Liew (2008:175) argues that the concept of flesh encapsulates the conditions of being “captured, displaced, colonized, violated, and... vulnerable”. Such conditions would be irreconcilable with a divine hero.

realities of vulnerability, suffering, mortality, weakness, frailty, and dependence would actually be regarded as antonyms for a life lived by the divine.²⁷⁰

Σάρξ, more than anything in the material creation, is diametrically opposed to the Logos. Flesh is the most vulnerable, the most corruptible, the most easily destructible, part of the human being—in a word the most *impermanent* (McHugh, 2009:53, italics added).

Not only does σάρξ imply an existence of vulnerability, but it also includes the *impermanence* of such a life. In other words, where there is flesh, there is mortality. This leaves the audience even more unsettled, as the fact arises that the one who becomes σάρξ, could probably be subjected to the fate thereof (Hall, 2003:213; Staubli & Schroer, 2001:32). To audience members well-versed in the Jewish wisdom tradition, this is exceptionally shocking. In the ancient Wisdom myth, ἡ σοφία does come down to the earthly sphere, but “returns in desperation to heaven to resume its place among the angels” (Ridderbos, 1997:33). Here, ὁ λόγος does not simply descend, but essentially transforms in order to embody something of the human form (Staubli & Schroer, 2001:32).²⁷¹ Need (2008:11) summarises this shocking twist as follows:

[T]he ‘Logos’, which Jews thought of as God’s activity in creation and in speaking to the prophets of Israel, and which for Greeks was the rational principle of order in the universe, now ‘became flesh’..., united with the whole human condition.²⁷²

To the ancient audience, this twist is not only surprising and puzzling, but also offensive, since σάρξ is precisely that which is regarded to be the “counter-pole” of the divine (Bultmann, 1951:41-42). “The divine Word/Wisdom as agent of creation may well enter the world but not surely in flesh” (Lee, 2002:34). This reaction would

²⁷⁰ McHugh (2009:53) contrasts the eternal λόγος with the temporary σάρξ and comments that, to a first-century audience, these two concepts are “literally poles apart”.

²⁷¹ Staubli and Schroer (2001:32) refer to this incarnation as the “complete entry of God into human bodiliness”. However, there are scholars who would not agree with this statement. One of the biggest critics of the notion that ὁ λόγος transformed through the incarnation would be Käsemann (1968:9-11), who argued that ὁ λόγος becoming flesh was simply a temporary descent in order to bridge the gap between the heavenly and earthly realm. In this line of thinking, ὁ λόγος changes his surroundings, but is himself not changed in the process.

²⁷² Bruner (2012:34) makes a similar remark: “The One who made all things, ‘*The Word*,’ the Only Son of God Almighty, became one ‘thing’ himself, one real, historical, perishable human being about... the year 6 B.C., in Palestine, the man Jesus of Nazareth.”

especially be the case for audience members immersed in Gnostic thought, who regard σάρξ as “a prison-house in which the soul [is] shackled, a tomb in which the spirit [is] confined” (Ray, 2002:50). For Jewish audience members the use of the word σάρξ signifies an uncomfortable break with the wisdom tradition of which the protagonists’ name reminded them (see Brant, 2004:19). Moreover, the power portrait which has been sketched so far does not seem to accommodate the costume of flesh for the divine hero,

The audience is also aware of a progression in this stage of the prologue. The first line of progression is ὁ λόγος moving from a “state of infinity to a state of finitude” (Coloe, 2001:24), or from a place of eternity to a place within history (Thompson, 1988:40).²⁷³ The second line of progression is from a divine to a human spatial setting. Ὁ λόγος moves from being πρὸς τὸν θεόν (v.1) to coming ἐν ἡμῖν (v.14). This is an unthinkable notion to Gnostic audience members, as the narrator begins to turn their doctrine of enlightenment on its head.

To an ancient audience, who identifies the divine with strength, independence, immortality, and dominion, the implications of this turn in the protagonist’s characterisation would be quite unsettling. He who clearly created all things will enter the stage immersing²⁷⁴ himself in the realm of creation (Thompson, 1988:41).²⁷⁵ This moment is more than dramatic: it is effectively comical as well. This is the “overlapping of the Highest and the Lowest” (Žižek, 2012:178).²⁷⁶ While the eternal and divine character of ὁ λόγος has just been emphasised by the narrator, he seems to be ready

²⁷³ The narrator makes a deliberate shift from the imperfect tense (ἦν), which represents incompleteness and continuity, to the aorist (ἐγένετο), which represents something happening in one point in time. Coloe (2001:24) states that the conjunction καί is used in a contrasted way to the statements concerning ὁ λόγος in v.1. She therefore translates the phrase as: “‘In the beginning was the Word...’ and yet ‘the Word became flesh’” (2001:24-25).

²⁷⁴ The word ‘immersed’ effectively encapsulates the meaning of ἐγένετο. McHugh (2009:53) emphasises that the becoming of flesh should not be interpreted as something external “which he could discard at will”, yet it also does not imply that the protagonist “changed into” σάρξ, leaving his divinity behind (See also Louw & Nida, 1996). Ridderbos (1997:50) affirms this by stating that flesh should not be regarded as something that God simply “put on”, like a garment with which he walked the earth, nor should it be seen as “an instrument that God used from time to time”, but, in the incarnation, ὁ λόγος literally takes on the form of flesh without losing his substance as divine (See also Need, 2008:11).

²⁷⁵ Painter (2014:56) also emphasises this point by asserting that the one who created has now fully immersed himself into “created flesh”.

²⁷⁶ Žižek (2012:178) uses the dramatic imagery of a scene in a film where a king is triumphantly announced, yet his entry into the Royal Hall is marked by the staggering in of a “miserable crippled clown”.

to enter the stage fully immersed in σάρξ, “down and dirty” (Bruner, 2012:7), assuring the audience that “the pre-existent Word will have a human story” (Moloney, 1993:29).

The absurdity is further emphasised by the narrator’s claims that he, as well as the audience, have seen the δόξα (glory)²⁷⁷ of this hero after he has taken the form of σάρξ. Obviously, the audience have not yet seen ὁ λόγος or his glory, but they are prepared that he who is about to enact God will do it with a glorious display. The promise of glory holds two possible expectations among the audience: in terms of a human life, glory would play itself out in the maximum attaining of honour, and, in terms of the divine life, it would be associated with a life of praise and majesty from others (Stibbe, 1993:28). Either way, this protagonist would live a life in which he is honoured and celebrated. This promise of glory directly impacts the expectation of plot among audience members: while the costume of flesh has been announced, the plotline of glory will not be altered and God will be made known through the life of the hero (Kanagaraj, 2013:6).

The narrator thus introduces the life of the protagonist as a theatrical display of glory, implying that the audience, together with the narrator, will witness his glory unfold before them (Brant, 2011:35).²⁷⁸ The glory of the divine hero will thus be part of the visual of the drama, as it will be seen “with the bodily eye” (Morris, 1995:93).²⁷⁹ The drama the audience is about to witness will be one of visible glory at which they will be expected to marvel, even as ὁ λόγος takes on σάρξ. By the audience’s understanding of the narrator, he seems to imply that σάρξ is “clearly not the means by which the glory of God is concealed..., but the means by which it is revealed before the eyes of all” (Ridderbos, 1997:49). In line with this, the protagonist will not simply reveal his glory in the realm of σάρξ, or in spite of it, but through his own σάρξ: through his expression of vulnerability, dependence, and mortality (Thompson, 1988:50).²⁸⁰

²⁷⁷ Δόξα is a recurring theme in the Johannine drama and will be of great importance in this study. See Bruce (1983:41) for more on the theme of glory in the FG.

²⁷⁸ The narrator uses the word ἐθεασάμεθα from the present stem θεάομαι to refer to the audience’s witness of the glory of ὁ λόγος. This Greek term is syntactically related to the word for theatre (Brant, 2011:34), which creates the impression that the audience is described as spectators his glory.

²⁷⁹ Ridderbos (1997:53) also emphasises that the verb ἐθεασάμεθα is far stronger than simply ‘seeing’, and that the word is used to “point to the dramatic, spectacular, and totally absorbing nature of what is seen”. Moreover, this way of seeing implies “a sense of wonder” (McHugh, 2009:57).

²⁸⁰ While this does not imply that the protagonist ceases to exist as divine being, “there can be no doubt that there is a transformation that makes the incarnation more than a divine epiphany” (Coloe, 2001:26).

This foretelling by the narrator creates a puzzled and confused audience, who are wondering: How can God's revelation be found in shame?

To Jewish audience members, the word ἐσκήνωσεν (dwelled, tabernacled) reminds of the Hebrew שָׁכַן, which is used to refer to YHWH's dwelling among the people of Israel, as well as the cloud which settled on the tabernacle, representing YHWH's tangible presence (Ex. 24:16; 25:8; see Painter, 2014:56). Similarly, δόξα also reminds Jewish audience members of the Hebrew כָּבֵד, which describes the heavy and weighty presence of YHWH, and contains within itself implications of superiority and high status (Nielsen, 2010:346; Ridderbos, 1997:52). YHWH's כָּבֵד was known not only to rest on Sinai (Ex. 24:16-17) and the temple (1 Kgs. 8:10-11), but also in heaven.

The use of this temple imagery implies that the presence, order, and superiority of God (holiness and glory) will be seen in the life of the protagonist. In other words, God will "presence" Godself through ὁ λόγος (Borchert, 1996:170; see Coloe, 2001:31-39). The audience is once again baffled as this implies that the fleshly manifestation of the hero carries with it the promise of the presence of God.²⁸¹ He is the only begotten (μονογενής) son, which makes him the "sole representative of the Being and character of the One who sent Him" (Ray, 2002:52). The reality is spelled out clearly: no one but the enfleshed λόγος has the right to represent God. To an audience well aware of the social hierarchies of the Mediterranean world, δόξα also carries an association of high social status (Nielsen, 2010:361), which strengthens expectations of a life with much honour.

Moreover, although this character of ὁ λόγος takes on σάρξ and enters the human realm, the description of his life as one full of grace and truth (πλήρης χάριτος καὶ ἀληθείας) is emphasised by the narrator.²⁸² The narrator seems to hint at the fact that, in becoming σάρξ, God is not becoming less God, but that this is precisely the means through which God is to be revealed – in all fullness (Ray, 2002:53). Irrespective of the audience's ideas of God, to a first-century audience, there is no way in which this notion makes theological sense.

²⁸¹ Carson (1991:128) affirms this by stating that ὁ λόγος becoming flesh signifies an ultimate manifestation of the presence of God among humanity.

²⁸² O'Day (2012:519) puts it as follows: "God is made known in the enfleshed life of the Word in the world, and that life is one of fullness and grace".

By becoming flesh, God enters the world in the thin garb of mortality, entering the darkness of creation clad only in the armour of skin and vein, sinew and bone: mortal, vulnerable, naked (Lee, 2002:50).

This is not a comforting description of the divine protagonist and might leave the audience doubtful as to whether they should accept the point of view of the narrator. By now, they have been given a glimpse of the form in which God would wish to reveal himself. They have heard that the glory and reputation of God is becoming flesh, but how this is to be played out still remains a mystery to them (Lee, 2002:48). With this, the focus turns briefly to the character of John:

(The peasant character of JOHN has been silently present on stage since his earlier entrance. The audience hears him for the first time as he cries out in a loud voice.)²⁸³

JOHN

[15] This is him of whom I said: "he who comes after me ranks before me, because he was before me."

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[16] For from his fullness we have all received grace upon grace [gift upon gift]. [17] For the law was given through Moses, grace and truth came into being through Jesus Christ.

The monologue which John performs, seems to draw the attention back to the honour and glory of the protagonist, which creates quite a contrast to the narrator's description of ὁ λόγος becoming σάρξ. The public honour given to the divine hero by this man might serve as a comfort, or at least distraction, considering the puzzling and offensive content regarding his enfleshment. Clearly, the protagonist has at least one client, who loudly sings his praises in the πόλις. Moreover, the audience receives some information regarding his societal status and static honour, as well as an affirmation of his eternal, and, therefore divine, nature (Voorwinde, 2011:159). John's testimony of

²⁸³ John's proclamation is marked by the perfect κέκραγεν (from the present stem, κράζω), which translates as a shout or scream (Louw & Nida, 1996). According to Harris (2015:36) the use of κέκραγεν reminds of a loud and bold prophetic proclamation.

ὁ λόγος, sends a clear message to the audience: “he has surpassed me in importance, has put me in the shadows” (Ridderbos, 1997:55).

The narrator describes a grace upon grace, or gift upon gift (χάριν ἀντὶ χάριτος) that he and the entire audience have received (in other words, *will* receive through the Johannine drama) from ὁ λόγος. The meaning attached to these gifts would probably vary from one audience member to another, but Brown (2013:153) emphasises that a reference to one thing given upon another, implies that the second is superior to the first. It would not be unlikely that Jewish audience members holding a Messianic expectation, would associate the first gift as the revelation of God on Mount Sinai. To such members of the audience, the narrator’s words imply that the life of ὁ λόγος will serve as a superior revelation and gift from God. Not only does the protagonist rank above this peasant supporting character (John), but seems to be honoured as a superior patron when compared to Moses.²⁸⁴

This is significant, especially to those audience members well versed in Jewish thought, who esteem great honour to Moses as religious and political leader.²⁸⁵ If the divine hero administers the fullness of the things initiated by Moses (Stibbe, 1993:24), since he comes to bring a superior gift, he ought to rank relatively higher than Moses in the religious (and temple) system. Moreover, this comparison emphasises the promise of a superior revelation of God. While the divine glory physically radiated from the face of Moses (Ex. 34:29), it will probably radiate from the entire being of this protagonist (Ray, 2002:55).

The expectation of royalty and leadership is strengthened by the fact that ὁ λόγος is finally given a historical name of Jesus (Ἰησοῦς), with Christ (Χριστός) as a title. Up to now, the description of the protagonist could have created the idea of a “supremely great Being or Principle”, but the assignment of a name immerses him into a body (Morris, 1995:67). The Greek Χριστός reminds of the Hebrew מָשִׁיחַ (the anointed one), which immediately triggers Jewish audience members. This hero is no other than the promised Messiah!

²⁸⁴ This comparison, in which Jesus is named superior to Moses, is one of a few in the FG. Jesus is also greater than Jacob, due to the living water he provides (4:12), greater than Abraham, due to the fact that he existed before the patriarch (8:53), and greater than the manna received in the desert, since he eternally sustains those who believe (6:49-50,58).

²⁸⁵ Stibbe (1993:23) refers to the reference to Moses as setting up an “intertextual relationship between the story of Jesus and the story of Moses”.

The allocation of this title to the character of ὁ λόγος has a direct impact on the expectations of the Johannine plot for Jewish (and Samaritan) audience members. The expectation surrounding the Messiah is one of power and dominion, since he will be the one to come and free the Jewish nation from the Empire, and restore the power to Israel in a militant fashion (see Simmons, 2008:43-44).²⁸⁶ This characterisation of the protagonist would thus imply a strong earthly reign which would pave the way for the entire Jewish nation to be in power again. In terms of ethos, Jewish audience members do not need much more than this royal and political title to be swayed to the side of the protagonist. The narrator ends the prologue by reaffirming the intimate connection between God and the protagonist:

NARRATOR

(Voice only.)

[18] No one has ever seen God; the only begotten God, who is in the bosom of the Father, he exposted him.

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

The narrator's last words contain a great promise: that the life of Jesus will be an exposition of the great divine (Moloney, 1993:50). The moment this protagonist enters the stage, the story of God will be shown and told loud and clear for the entire audience to see (cf. ἔθεασάμεθα – 1:14).²⁸⁷ In other words, "the invisible God [will] now be seen in the story of Jesus Christ" (Moloney, 1993:51).²⁸⁸ The implication of this prospect is phenomenal: God is not sending a prophet or messenger to the Johannine stage

²⁸⁶ As discussed in §4.4.5.

²⁸⁷ The aorist ἐξηγήσατο ("he exposted", from the present stem ἐξηγέομαι) can be translated as "to recount a narrative" (Barrett, 1978:170) or "to inform, relate, or tell fully" (Louw & Nida, 1996), or even "to explain" (Bruner, 2012:8). The incarnation of the divine λόγος therefore does not provide a quick glance at God, but ought to be regarded as a thorough and full exposition of him. This is emphasised by the use of the aorist, which indicates an undefined action as opposed to a continuous action. It is as if the narrator is arguing that the life of Jesus was a full and sufficient revelation of the Father. Through this life, God was made known once and for all.

²⁸⁸ Ashton (2007:504) identifies Jesus as God's revelation becoming incarnated. This is emphasised by Barrett (1978:156), who states that "the deeds and words of Jesus are the deeds and words of God".

(Thompson, 2006:182), but is essentially taking the stage himself. The audience will thus be given the opportunity to see God acted out right in front of their eyes.²⁸⁹

The narrator also hints at the fact that the audience's foreknowledge and experience of God is limited up to this point, since neither they, nor anyone else, have ever seen him as he is – until now, that is!²⁹⁰ This reminds the audience of the narrator's description of ὁ λόγος as the light of humanity. While humanity has always been able to see, sight in itself is useless without light (Ray, 2002:42). For the first time, a spotlight will be cast on God, allowing the audience to see him as he is. The audience is therefore assured that they can be confident that "God is as Christ [will reveal] him" (Morris, 1995:101).

He who will exposit God is the one who finds himself in the "bosom of the Father" (εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς). Being in someone's bosom implies intimate knowledge.²⁹¹ The prologue ends with the same theme with which it began: the oneness of God and ὁ λόγος (Stibbe, 1993:29).²⁹² The audience is once again reminded of the fact that Jesus dwells in the heart of God and thus knows God in his inner being (Henry, 1910:12; Ridderbos, 1997:59). All characters who have attempted to *act out* the divine up to this point have been inadequate, however, this audience will be granted the opportunity to be the first to experience God authentically dramatised. The protagonist is therefore identified as round character, as his enactment of God will be the driving force behind the Johannine plot.

He, the divine Logos, was in reality the principle character in the drama; the lines that he was to speak were lines written for him in eternity... and the words he was to utter were the words of God (McHugh, 2009:53).

²⁸⁹ O'Day (1995:524) affirms this by stating that the prologue promises the audience that "human beings can see, hear, and know God in ways never before possible". According to Oakes (2011:89), this verse sums up the whole of Johannine Christology: "that the incarnate Son fully reveals the Father".

²⁹⁰ Since God chooses to reveal Godself through the life of Jesus, Jesus essentially becomes God's autobiography (Bruner, 2012:40).

²⁹¹ Brant (2011:36) translates this section with "the one who is at the breast of the Father" and opts for a metaphor signifying the relationship between a nursing mother and her infant. Using this image, she suggests that "Jesus shares in God's nature the way that a child takes in a mother's nature while nursing" (2011:37).

²⁹² This creates the literary device known as the *inclusio* (when a text or section ends in the same way as it began) (See Stibbe, 1993:29).

With this, the audience is left with a dark and quiet stage again. The prologue has done what it has set out to do and they are granted the opportunity for brief reflection before the first dialogues emerge on stage.

5.4. Reflections on the prologue

The prologue has drawn the audience into the drama with significant force. Not only has it invited them into some of the drama's settings, but it has also begun to characterise the protagonist and hero from the director's point of view and pre-empted the plot and climax. Moreover, the narrator has alluded to various symbols, names, and elements which constitute part of the audience's foreknowledge and have stirred various expectations regarding characters and plot among them.

The most important character is ὁ λόγος and it is clear that he is the central figure of the drama (Culpepper, 1983:106).²⁹³ He is introduced as the divine hero, related to God, identified as God and creator, who will come and act out God by illuminating humanity, embodying an abundant life, and standing firm and victorious against his antagonists. Moreover, the narrator explicitly identifies the hero as the coming Messiah, which implies that his triumph will have lasting implications for Israel. This character will therefore not only illuminate himself, but the audience is explicitly promised an enactment of God through the life of the protagonist (Stibbe, 1992:25).

The narrator has also introduced an antagonist, ἡ σκοτία. The explicit characterisation of this force as darkness makes it clear that the figure will be sinister and malevolent, and the audience is led antipathise with the character.²⁹⁴ Both protagonist and antagonist will have a supporting cast. The characters in the Johannine drama will either not accept ὁ λόγος, which will turn them into supporting characters for the antagonist, or they will believe in him, which will grant them an opportunity for divine kinship. It thus seems like it would be easy for the audience to discern between characters who are virtuous and those who are not. The audience is also granted the opportunity to identify with either protagonist or antagonist. However, the negative

²⁹³ The character of Jesus will be present in almost the entire drama (McCracken, 1994:ix).

²⁹⁴ Johannine characters generally embody either praiseworthy or blameworthy characteristics depending on their reactions to Jesus, which grants the audience the opportunity to easily judge their behaviour and then choose to either associate with or dissociate themselves from them (Neyrey, 2007:5).

characterisation of the antagonist, the promise of kinship, and the seeming reliability of the narrator will surely lead to a unanimous loyalty with the protagonist at this stage.

The prologue has also established the character of Jesus as an essential driving force behind the Johannine plot (Culpepper, 1983:87). The prologue ends with the task of Jesus to reveal God (1:18). In a sense, the identity of the divine seems to be a master-plot for the Johannine drama (Resseguie, 2013:15).²⁹⁵ As discussed in chapter four, the identity of the divine, as well as the relation of the divine to humanity, would have been a well-known point to ponder for the hypothetical audience, and would have brought particular foreknowledge to the fore.

The audience is prepared for the fact that this revelation of the Father will be rejected by some and therefore set up for a drama which will not come without tension, conflict, and perhaps tragedy as the antagonist will gain a following (v.11). Moreover, besides the otherwise perfect characterisation for a divine hero, the presence of a slight unease can also be found. Did the narrator really use the word *σάρξ*? What could a powerful, strong, perfect, honourable, and glorious God have in common with vulnerable, mortal, and dependant flesh? How this will play itself out cannot be fully clear to the audience at this stage, since the director reinforces the theme of glory (*δόξα*) throughout, probably creating certain expectations of triumph among the audience. Moreover, the narrator has been explicit in his characterisation of Jesus as the Messiah (v.17), which has evoked a whole range of political, religious, and even military expectations among Jewish (and Samaritan) audience members. The tension between glory and vulnerability is therefore already introduced in the prologue and creates suspense as to how the drama will unfold.

The odds are that the audience is probably divided regarding the identity and fate of the character of Jesus. While some might grapple with the condition of flesh and what that implies, others might be so focussed on the honour descriptions and images of glory, that the condition of flesh does not unsettle them at all. After all, the narrator promised that God would be revealed. Thus, with an expectation to see the triumphant God that they (think they) know, some members of the audience might not be unsettled by the announcements of the protagonist taking on the form of flesh or being rejected.

²⁹⁵ Master-plots are recurring stories throughout various cultures that deal with universal concerns, such as the meaning of life, questions of origin, quests for identity, et cetera (Resseguie, 2013:14).

The probable expectation would be that those who reject him, will be defeated or dominated by him in his tale of victory over the antagonist.

Apart from possible feelings and expectations of unease or triumph among certain audience members, there might also be a group who take both these interpretations into consideration. For them, a feeling of confusion would be appropriate at this stage: they have heard the words of δόξα, and yet considered the implications of σάρξ. At this stage “the only begotten God” remains a mystery to those about to witness him.

Beyond its complexity, the performative style of the prologue also impacts the audience in a unique way. Not only does it flow in a way that is almost poetic,²⁹⁶ but the monologue style and narrator’s direct interaction with the audience make for a memorable portion of performance. The characterisation of the protagonist (and antagonist), as well as the glimpses into the plot and director’s point of view have been presented to the audience to engage with and carry into the rest of the drama. The prologue thus functions as a scene with high memorability, meant to stick with the audience as they prepare themselves for the rest of the drama to unfold.

This chapter has therefore served to demarcate and motivate the chosen texts, and to place a drama lens on the Fourth Gospel’s prologue in order to explore the possible expectations of a hypothetical audience immersed in first-century Mediterranean culture. While keeping the findings of this section in mind, the next chapter will continue the drama analysis by appropriating this methodology to the climax of the Fourth Gospel.

²⁹⁶ Croally (2005:56-57) refers to the teaching function of poetry in Greek, Roman, and Jewish contexts. The poetic nature of the prologue thus serves an important role in educating and orientating the audience, and allows it to be remembered throughout the drama.

6. Towards the Climax: Drama Analysis of the Trial and Crucifixion

6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter marks the audience's experience of the Johannine prologue, and the probable expectations to which it could have given rise. This experience has been accompanied by mixed emotions. While the narrator promises the audience that the drama will witness of the hero's glory, his immersion into the reality of flesh has also been communicated. Moreover, the reality of acceptance and rejection has been placed on the table and the audience has been drawn into the drama as active participants who will also have to make a choice for or against the protagonist.

The audience has also begun to make assumptions regarding the plotline and climax of the drama. The narrator's last words contain the promise of the hero fully enacting and embodying the divine through the drama that they are about to witness. The nature and content of the prologue has placed it in a category of high memorability, which means that it will serve as an important interpretational key for the rest of the drama. This chapter will contain a drama analysis of Jesus' Roman trial and crucifixion (18:28-19:16; 19:17-30) against the grain of the prologue and the hypothetical audience's social reality (as unpacked in ch.4). As in chapter five, the Greek text will be translated into a stage-type screenplay with exegetical remarks woven in between. Since the two scenes at hand are part of a bigger plot, a (fast-forwarded) summary of John 1:19-18:27 and 19:31-21:25 will be provided. These summaries will not contain exegetical notes, but will only synopsis the main happenings and the audience's journey with them for a more coherent picture.

6.2. The drama continues

6.2.1. John's first testimony (1:19-28)

The prologue is followed by the first acted-out scene of the drama (the "point of attack" – Fink, 2014:17). This scene shifts the audience's attention back to the character of John, who is baptising various individuals in the river Jordan. A few priests and Levites enter the stage and begin questioning him regarding his identity. John once again emphasises that he is not the Messiah, but only the one testifying of this great man. These priests and Levites seem to be entering the stage as supporting characters and

represent other characters who are superior to them. They too have not yet encountered Jesus but are already asking about him. John again strengthens the narrator's earlier perspective of ὁ λόγος as being far greater than he and creates anticipation among the audience who eagerly awaits the entrance of the protagonist on stage.

6.2.2. John's second testimony (1:29-34)

The lights fade and reappear, indicating that a day has passed. Finally, ὁ λόγος enters the stage as a man named Jesus. The character of John is still on the stage. John immediately recognises the divine hero and refers to him as the "Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world" (1:29), while affirming Jesus' superiority to himself. This is another strong characterisation and strengthens the audience's association with the protagonist on the ground of his ethos. Moreover, John testifies that he witnessed God's Spirit descend and rest on Jesus and finally calls Jesus the son of God, affirming his divinity and power. What a glorious entrance! Jesus is immediately recognised for who he is.

6.2.3. John's third testimony (1:35-42)

The lights fade and reappear. John stands on the stage with two of his disciples. As Jesus enters the stage, John once again refers to him as the Lamb of God. Hearing this, the two disciples leave his side and begin to follow Jesus. One of the two, Andrew, calls his brother along the way, testifying that he had found the Messiah (1:41), and he, too, follows Jesus enthusiastically. The audience is pleased as Jesus immediately makes connections and shows his influence. As an honourable Mediterranean man, it would be expected from this hero to be surrounded by a strong network (see Hanson & Oakman, 1998:72). These disciples also follow Jesus and his leadership, creating the idea that he is almost immediately becoming some sort of patron.

6.2.4. Many disciples follow (1:43-51)

As the setting moves to Galilee, the audience watches blissfully as the news regarding Jesus' identity spreads and various people begin to follow him. It is at this stage, where the audience encounters the first resistance to Jesus. This resistance comes in the form of a comment made by a man named Nathanael, who questions Jesus' authenticity based on his supposed place of origin, asking, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Jesus silences these doubts by proving that he has intimate

knowledge regarding Nathanael. Upon hearing this, Nathanael delightfully exclaims: “Rabbi, you are the son of God; you are the king of Israel!” After this exclamation, Jesus promises Nathanael that he will experience greater things to come and even see angels ascending and descending on Jesus, emphasising his divine and glorious nature.²⁹⁷ Nathanael’s transition from doubter to believer (and, therefore, kin of the divine – 1:12), provides a foretaste of the light that shines triumphantly in the darkness and strengthens the audience’s alignment with the protagonist on the basis of his ethos.

At this stage, the audience is ever ready for a drama of glory. As anticipated, the glorious λόγος is following in the patterns of an honourable Mediterranean man. Not only have three characters recognised him as divine by their testimony (Nthuping, 2003:176), but he himself has promised that great things are coming in this drama.²⁹⁸ The testimonies of Messiah (1:41), son of God, and king of Israel (1:49) create a clear expectation of power and rule among the audience members.

6.2.5. *The wedding at Cana (2:1-12)*

The scene opens with a wedding. Among the guests are Jesus, his mother, and a few of his disciples. The audience notices that Jesus’ group of disciples has grown since his first scene. As the wedding wine runs out, Jesus’ mother urges him to do something about it. His uttering to his mother is quite strange: he tells her that his hour has not yet come (2:4). To the audience, this could be referring to his hour of glory (cf. 1:14) or his hour of messianic triumph. Despite Jesus’ comment to his mother, he does his first miracle by turning water used for ceremonial cleansing into great wine.

The audience claps and cheers. Finally, the display of glory begins! This display immediately leads to his disciples confessing belief in him. The audience is well aware of the fact that the disciples’ belief in Jesus is a result of the glorious wonder that they have witnessed. The alignment of the disciples with Jesus seems to provide a foretaste of how other characters in the drama will continually respond to Jesus’ divine revelation.

²⁹⁷ Jewish members of the audience would recognise this use of typical apocalyptic language as a reference back to Gn. 28:10-17, where Jacob had a dream of angels ascending and descending on a ladder from heaven. After this wonderful dream, Jacob named the place Bethel (the house of YHWH), since he was convinced that YHWH must have been there.

²⁹⁸ Nthuping (2003:176) affirms that the Johannine drama starts off on a very positive note, consisting of three recognition scenes regarding Jesus’ identity (by John, Andrew, and Nathanael).

After this great miracle, Jesus, his mother, brothers, and disciples stay in Capernaum for a few days.

6.2.6. Conflict at the temple (2:13-22)

The scene begins with Jesus at the temple in Jerusalem. It is Passover, and the temple is full of money changers and merchants selling cattle, sheep, and doves. The spotlight follows Jesus as he walks through the tables. This is the first scene where conflict enters the Johannine stage in an overt way, as the audience can observe a clash of ideas and wills between Jesus and the merchants in the temple. Jesus is becoming enraged, as he is knotting together some sort of whip.

Suddenly the speed and intensity of the scene picks up as Jesus begins driving the merchants from the temple. In a rage, he overturns tables and scatters the goods being sold. The audience can see that he is experiencing zeal: “the ardour of red-hot passion” (Voorwinde, 2011:163). For Jewish audience members who often find themselves abused by the temple system, this is a very powerful scene as Jesus is essentially overturning that which is skewed in order to rule over a just temple system as Messiah. One might imagine some of these audience members on their feet as their hero exhibits his physical power. This leads to Jesus being confronted by the temple elite, in which he makes a bold claim that he would be able to raise up the temple in three days if they were to destroy it.

The situational tension (see Styan, 1975:231) eases and the scene flows into a series of signs done by Jesus, followed by belief in him (2:23-25). Jesus, as would be expected from an eternal and glorious God, keeps his distance from humanity and does not “entrust himself” to them (2:24).

6.2.7. Jesus enlightens Nicodemus (3:1-21)

In this scene, Jesus enters the stage alone. Blue lighting creates the effect of it being night time. A man, also alone, approaches Jesus. The audience recognises him as a Pharisee and temple elite. He proceeds to affirm Jesus’ identity as from God, since he does many wonderful signs. This leads to an exchange between Jesus and the man about rebirth, in which Jesus asserts that one needs to be born again (of from above) of the Spirit. At the man’s confusion, Jesus criticises him for his lack of wisdom. The audience watches in satisfaction as Jesus, the wise and divine one, schools this man

on the kingdom of God. While Nicodemus' knowledge might be limited to the law of Moses, Jesus brings the superior revelation as promised by the narrator (1:16-17).

Jesus also refers to himself as the son of man, who must be lifted up. This reference draws Jewish audience members into the narrative of Moses lifting up the serpent in order to heal his people (Nm. 21:4-9). The verb ὑψόω, literally meaning "to lift up", also refers to enhancement or exaltation (Carson, 1991:201; Jervell, 1984:58). By those audience members well versed in the Greek and Roman culture of power and prominence and those familiar with the messianic expectations of rule, this is most probably interpreted as a promise of their hero being exalted or enhanced.²⁹⁹ The reward of the good, abundant, and eternal life (ζωή) is reiterated. Moreover, Jesus brings up the dualism of light and darkness again, strengthening the audience's alliance with him (the light) and reminding them of the antagonist (the darkness).

6.2.8. John exalts Jesus again (3:22-36)

The scene begins with John and his disciples on stage, busy baptising at Aenon (near Salim). On the side of the stage, a silent argument arises between some of John's disciples and a Jewish man, after which the disciples approach John and confront him about the fact that Jesus is in Judea baptising many of the people that would have come to them. John uses this opportunity to, once again, affirm Jesus' identity as the Messiah and remarks that his (John's) honour ought to decrease, so that there will be more honour for Jesus.³⁰⁰ The audience would expect nothing less from the Messianic divine hero of the drama. Moreover, John effectively argues for acceptance based on Jesus' ethos by affirming his heavenly origin, the fact that his words are divine, and that the Father has given everything into his hands. Accepting Jesus will lead to the good, abundant, and eternal life, while his rejection will result in God's judgement. This remark strengthens the polarisation between protagonist and antagonist and affirms that cosmic power and dominion are on Jesus' side. With this, the lights fade.

The scene is followed by a quick interlude (4:1-4) of Jesus walking with his disciples towards Galilee. He tells them that they will pass through Samaria soon. With this, Jesus and his disciples split up as they (the disciples) leave to buy food.

²⁹⁹ Moreover, Jesus uses the passive voice (ὑψωθήναι), indicating that he will not exalt himself, but will be exalted.

³⁰⁰ See §4.4.2 for a discussion on the concept of limited goods in the first century.

6.2.9. *Jesus' exchange with a Samaritan woman (4:6-42)*

The scene begins with Jesus sitting next to a well in a town called Sychar. Yellow lighting indicates that it is hot and in the middle of the day.³⁰¹ While sitting there, a Samaritan woman approaches the well. Jesus initiates conversation with her by asking her for water. To the audience, this is strange, since the one who turned water into wine is now showing his dependence on a woman and Samaritan, with whom Jews ought not to associate (4:9; Vanhoozer, 2010:279). However, the scene is redeemed by Jesus proclaiming himself as the giver of water which will lead to the good, abundant, and eternal life. Moreover, like the exchange with Nathanael, he seems to have intimate knowledge regarding this woman, which leads her to affirm him as a prophet.

As they discuss times and ways to worship, Jesus reveals to her that he is the Messiah. At this point, his disciples arrive on the scene with food and the Samaritan woman leaves the stage, testifying of what happened and referring to Jesus as the possible Messiah. After a conversation between Jesus and his disciples, the woman, followed by several other Samaritans, enter the stage and confess their belief in Jesus as the saviour of the world. They also ask him to stay with them, and, after agreeing, Jesus walks off with them to their town. The invitation of kinship with the divine seems to have been extended to Samaritans as well. This is good news indeed for Samaritan members of the audience, while Jewish audience members might not be as impressed. However, Jesus' popularity among the Samaritans affirms that all characters within the drama can recognise him, making him the ultimate hero.

After this, Jesus departs to Galilee, where he is warmly welcomed and praised for his wondrous works (4:43-45).

6.2.10. *Jesus heals an official's son (4:46-54)*

The next scene begins with Jesus being approached by a Roman official, who begs him to heal his fatally ill son. Jesus sends the man away assuring him that his son will live. The stage lights fade out completely. A moment later, a light appears in the corner of the stage. The audience watches in awe as the official's servants meet him on his way home and inform him that his son is completely healed. The official and his

³⁰¹ The narrator refers to the time as ὥρα ἕκτη (the sixth hour), which was probably around noon (Jn. 4:6).

servants rejoice and proceed on their way home to tell the entire household about what Jesus did. For Roman audience members, this display of power and benevolence is especially significant, as Jesus is now beginning to display the divine among the more powerful characters. The Johannine drama continues its illustration of the glory of God and Jesus as he does wonderful miracles and others receive him and believe in him. Moreover, in every encounter thus far, Jesus has been the active and benevolent patron – the superior one.

6.2.11. *Jesus heals a man at Bethesda (5:1-13)*

This scene begins with Jesus approaching the Sheep Gate in Jerusalem. Close to the gate, the audience sees a pool, and around the pool lie various sick and disabled individuals. The audience recognises this pool and is well aware of its healing powers. Whenever the water moves, the first individual to get into the pool, experiences healing. As Jesus walks by, he notices a sick man and heals him. The man immediately gets up, takes his sick bed, and walks away healed. Jesus leaves the scene and heads towards the temple. In the meantime, the Jewish leaders interrogate the man, since he has taken up his sick bed on the Sabbath. The man points them to Jesus, but he has left the scene.

6.2.12. *Tension outside the temple (5:14-47)*

The next scene begins just outside of the temple. The same Jewish leaders who confronted the previously sick man, enter the stage together with the man, who has pointed them to Jesus. The Jewish leaders begin interrogating Jesus for healing the man on the Sabbath. While Jesus was the one actively opposing the merchants at the temple, this is the first instance where he is actively confronted by other characters in an antagonistic way. To Jewish audience members, it seems strange that the Messiah is at odds with his own tradition.

Jesus gives a smooth response, claiming the divine prerogative to work on the Sabbath, as his Father would. This enrages the crowd, who accuses him of making himself equal to God. To the audience, who knows that Jesus *is* indeed equal to God, the crowd seems foolish. Jesus further enrages the crowd by claiming the power to give the good, eternal life and to judge. He equates his own honour to that of God, and even claims to have the power to raise the dead. He reminds the crowd of the witness of John, but asserts that he (Jesus) has a greater witness of his divinity: the works that

the Father sends him to do. Moreover, he claims that the Father himself bears witness about him.

With this, Jesus reiterates the narrator's words at the end of the prologue, informing the crowd that they have never heard the voice of the Father, nor seen his form. He equates the fact that they reject him with the fact that they reject the Father, and do not have the good and eternal life in them. Moreover, he affirms that his honour is from God, and that they are falsely seeking honour from one another. This speech of Jesus seems to emphasise that the members of the Jewish crowd confronting him are not his supporting characters but are currently acting as the supporting cast of the antagonist. This essentially leaves the audience members with a choice to dissociate with these characters, which is not necessarily the easiest task for Jewish audience members. Jesus ends this monologue (and assertion of his authority on the basis of ethos) by making himself the object of Moses' writings, implying that the law essentially pointed to him. Perhaps this strategy motivates Jewish audience members to keep their alliance to Jesus, since he is the true Jewish authority.

After this, he immediately leaves the stage, followed by a great (divided) crowd. While some oppose him, others follow him with an eagerness to hear what he has to say. With this, Jesus announces that they will cross the lake of Tiberias in Galilee (6:1-2).

6.2.13. *Jesus multiplies the food (6:3-15)*

The audience finds Jesus on a hill with his disciples. The sound of a great crowd approaching becomes louder and louder, until various characters begin entering the stage from all over, surrounding Jesus and his disciples. With this, he asks one of his disciples, Philip, how they are going to feed all these people. The disciples seem rather panicked at this point. One of them points to a portion of five barley loaves and two fish. Jesus takes it and, after the crowd sits down, he thanks his Father for the food and breaks it into pieces. The crowd, disciples, and audience are amazed as the food does not run out, and eventually everyone eats and is satisfied. Jesus has just become the patron of all patrons, providing food for an entire crowd. Moreover, the disciples gather twelve baskets of leftovers. At this point, people in the crowd begin chanting: "King of the Jews! King of the Jews!" – an affirmation of Jesus' messianic rule. Indeed, Jesus will be the one to restore the kingdom to Israel and begin his powerful reign. To the surprise of the crowd and audience, Jesus runs away. With this, the lights fade.

While the stage is dark, a short scene follows as interlude (6:16-21). The disciples are found in a boat on the way to Capernaum. The audience watches in amazement as Jesus walks on the water towards the disciples' boat. Moreover, immediately after he climbs in, one of the disciples exclaims that they have arrived on the other side.

A second interlude (6:22-24) takes the audience to the next morning and shifts their attention to the crowd that Jesus had fed the previous day. The crowd is seen searching for Jesus, soon realises that he has left for Capernaum, and decide to follow him.

6.2.14. *Jesus offends many (6:25-71)*

The scene begins with Jesus being met by the crowd who was looking for him. They find him at the synagogue of Capernaum. Jesus responds to their seeking of him by accusing them of only following him because of the share of food that they received the previous day. He once again refers to his divine prerogative to give the good, abundant, and eternal life and affirms that the Father's seal of approval is on him and that belief in him is a work of God. He also uses this opportunity to announce himself the bread of the good life, superior to the manna received in the wilderness, and once again asserts that he came down from heaven and has the power to raise the dead.

He goes on by asserting that the bread he gives to eat is his flesh. This creates absolute havoc among the crowd, to whom Jesus not only repeats his statement about eating his flesh, but adds that those who drink his blood will be granted the good and eternal life. Once again, the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish crowd places Jewish audience members in an uncomfortable position as Jesus' assertions are offensive to the Jewish tradition. However, since this crowd opposes Jesus, they are essentially siding with the antagonist, which means that Jewish audience members need to digest the difficult and offensive words of Jesus in order to align themselves with the protagonist. This is also difficult to do for audience members who align with Gnostic thinking, as they would find it appalling that someone's flesh and blood ought to be consumed to receive eternal life. Jesus responds to the shock of the crowd by accusing them of unbelief. This accusation essentially involves those audience members who are having a hard time with Jesus' claims as well and they are reminded of the dichotomy of light and darkness (1:5) indicated by belief and rejection (1:11-13) that the narrator sketched in the prologue.

In a moment of heightened tension, a large portion of the crowd leaves the synagogue in rage. The audience realises what this action symbolises: these individuals have essentially abandoned Jesus and therefore pledged their allegiance to the antagonist. While some audience members might invest in this dramatic moment on the grounds of pathos (Köstenberger, 2009:117), and some might experience feelings of antipathy towards Jesus based on his offensive speech, others simply regard it as a typical moment of tension in which the protagonist should confront conflict.³⁰² Jesus is clearly not planning to fight for these followers as he turns to his closest disciples and asks them whether they would like to leave him as well. One of them, Peter, uses this invitation to assert his loyalty to Jesus and affirms his identity as the one who has the words of the good and eternal life, and names Jesus “the holy one of God” (6:69). The allegiance to the light is therefore illustrated on the basis of the protagonist’s ethos and the audience is nudged to mimic Peter’s behaviour rather than that of the offended crowd. Jesus ends the scene, reiterating the dichotomy between light and darkness by asserting that one of his twelve disciples is “a devil” (6:70).

6.2.15. *Jesus and his brothers (7:1-10)*

The scene opens as Jesus and his brothers are speaking. The setting is still Galilee. His brothers are urging him to go to the feast of Tabernacles in Judea and to do signs and wonders there, however, Jesus knows the crowd in Judea wants to kill him. This is the first time that the audience is confronted with the evil intention of murder among those on the side of the antagonist. This reality strengthens their allegiance with Jesus, since they do not want to align themselves with murderers. Jesus rejects his brothers’ suggestion by asserting that his time has not yet come and sends them off to Judea by themselves. Shortly after his brothers leave, Jesus also departs to Judea.

6.2.16. *Mutterings about Jesus (7:11-13)*

This scene takes place on a dark stage. The audience hears various questions and remarks about Jesus – some good and others bad. While some say that he is a good man, others accuse him of heresy.³⁰³ This dichotomy yet again strengthens the division between protagonist and antagonist.

³⁰² See §3.5.2.

³⁰³ Neyrey (2007:17) emphasises that the placing of hostile labels on Jesus serves to diminish his honour.

6.2.17. *Jesus at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:14-36)*

The scene opens with Jesus wisely teaching a crowd at the Feast of Tabernacles. Jesus asserts his authoritative ethos by affirming that his words are from God and that he seeks the glory of the Father. Tension begins to build as he brings up the crowd's offence with him healing the man at the pool on the Sabbath. Jesus and these Jewish leaders are clearly divided and the external conflict between them becomes heightened in a fast and loud exchange of accusations.

While Jesus names them hypocrites, he is constantly interrupted by some of them yelling, "You have a demon!" The audience recognises this accusation as implying uncleanness, and passiveness (see Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:195). Evaluated against the prologue, and what they have seen thus far, they know it is not true. However, the audience is aware that Jesus' time of glory has not yet come (7:6) and that he will still be "lifted up" (3:14). Perhaps the Jewish elite will soon realise who he is when he takes his rightful place of authority in the temple.

On the side of the stage, a dialogue begins among a less hostile group, containing individuals who have clearly sided with the protagonist, and others who are struggling to be convinced on the basis of Jesus' place of origin. The discussion among the side crowd is interrupted as Jesus cries: "You know me and you know where I am from!" (7:28). With this, he once again asserts his oneness with the Father. As he speaks, various Jews believe in his words. At the same time, some attendants enter the scene to arrest him. However, when Jesus starts talking, the situational tension falls flat as they remain standing and listen to his words. To the audience, it seems like Jesus' wisdom and influence is so great that it overrides that of the authorities who have called for his arrest. This scene has dramatically changed from a tension-moment to a reward-moment (see Fink, 2014:24).

Jesus' next speech is confusing, as he mentions that he will not be with them much longer and that he will go where they will not find him. Perhaps after his grand display of power, he will return to the "other side of the firmament" (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:77). The lights fade, and the audience is left to ponder what he meant.

6.2.18. *Jesus' last teaching at the Feast of Tabernacles (7:37-8:1)*

The stage is packed with Jews, while Jesus is standing in the middle, teaching. It is the last day of the feast. Jesus opens with the invitation for the thirsty to come to him,

since he will give rivers of water containing the good, abundant, and eternal life. The crowd responds positively to him by using titles such as prophet and Messiah (7:40, 41). However, conflict begins to arise as they start to quarrel about his origin. Among the crowd are the same attendants who were sent to arrest Jesus a few days earlier, yet, once again, they do not take him. This scene has unfolded as yet another reward-moment for the protagonist.

The lights fade on Jesus and the side of the stage is illuminated where the chief priests and Pharisees are standing. They are met by the attendants. The Jewish leaders are furious at the fact that the attendants did not arrest Jesus. The attendants remark that they have never heard someone speak like him, which further infuriates the Jewish leaders. The audience recognises one of these leaders as Nicodemus, the man who came to Jesus in the night. He suggests that, according to the law, Jesus at least deserves a fair trial. The rest of the leaders scoff at these words and once again bring up Jesus' supposed birth in Galilee as a sure sign that he is not the Messiah. It is clear at this stage, that the division between protagonist and antagonist is beginning to manifest itself within the Jewish group.

After this, everyone returns home, while Jesus departs to the Mount of Olives.

6.2.19. *More tension in the temple (8:2-59)*

The scene begins with Jesus teaching in the temple. A group of Jewish leaders appear on stage, dragging a woman up to him. They maliciously ask him what they should do with her since she has been caught in adultery. At this, Jesus slows down the conflict-filled scene, bends down and forms letters on the ground with his finger. Finally, he gets up and charges that the one with no sin ought to throw the first stone. One by one, the leaders leave the stage. Jesus once more goes down and writes something on the ground. When all the leaders have left the scene, he gets up and releases the woman without condemning her. This act of divine forgiveness yet again affirms Jesus' divine authority and ethos to the audience. Moreover, his diffusion of the situational tension and his superiority over those who came with antagonistic intent, is remarkable and affirms his control in the drama.

After the woman leaves, Jesus goes on to teach the crowd. He reiterates the narrator's words in the prologue by asserting that he is the light of the world and that he brings the good and eternal life (8:12). At this, conflict and antagonism arise again as the

Jewish leaders accuse him of bearing a false witness about himself. He responds with an argument on the grounds of ethos by affirming his oneness with the Father. While this is no new news to the audience (see 1:18), many members of the crowd of Jewish leaders do not seem to understand this.

Jesus uses this opportunity to characterise these individuals explicitly. To do this, he draws a distinction between the world and the place where he belongs, creating two spheres. He accuses the Jewish leaders who oppose him of belonging to the world, thereby strengthening his characterisation of them as antagonistic. Moreover, he evokes prologue language by accusing them of not believing in him, and refers to this group as those who will lift him up resulting in the realisation that he is divine.³⁰⁴ This has some clear implications for their characterisation: while Jesus is identifying them as antagonists, he seems to be pre-empting that they will be won over to the protagonist side, since they lift him up.

While some believe in him, a quarrel erupts about who their father is. While they claim that Abraham and God are their fathers, Jesus insults them by accusing them of being children of the devil. He once again affirms their antagonistic characterisation by identifying them as kin of the enemy (as opposed to kin of the divine as mentioned in 1:12). With this, the crowd responds with the same tactic as they accuse him of being a Samaritan and having a demon (8:48). Jesus responds by asserting that it is he who is on the side of God and Abraham. From his introduction in the prologue, the audience knows this to be true. Jesus ends the conversation with the startling remark: “Before Abraham was, ‘I am’”, which serves as a profound claim to divinity.³⁰⁵ This results in a peak of conflict, as the crowd picks up stones to throw at Jesus. He slips away, and the lights fade as the furious crowd seeks to follow him out of the temple.

6.2.20. *Jesus heals another on the Sabbath (9:1-10:21)*

The scene begins with Jesus and his disciples passing by a blind man. Upon healing the man, Jesus and his disciples walk off the stage. In the meantime, some individuals who knew the man, take him to the Pharisees, who have a problem with the fact that this healing took place on the Sabbath, and interrogate him. The man characterises

³⁰⁴ “When you lift up the son of man, then you will know that ‘I am he’” (8:28).

³⁰⁵ This phrase (8:58) is a direct reference to God revealing God’s identity to Moses in the scene of the burning bush (Ex. 3:14) and would immediately be recognised by Jewish audience members. By using this, Jesus is literally naming himself God.

Jesus as from God due to the miracle performed by him. After the Jewish leaders interrogate the man's parents, and question him a second time, Jesus re-enters the scene and reveals to the previously blind man that he is the son of man. The man believes in Jesus' testimony and worships him, which results in an argument between Jesus and the Pharisees.

Jesus goes on to tell a parable and then makes the statement that he is the door to the good and eternal life, as well as the good shepherd, who will lay down his life for those who follow him. Once again, he affirms his union with the Father. Then, he asserts that no one takes his life from him, but that he lays it down out of free will. This seems like a strange remark from a powerful and divine hero. Although the statement emphasises that Jesus will not be passively overcome by anyone, the remark about laying down his life seems puzzling to the audience.

Yet again, accusations of demon possession are made by some individuals, which leads to conflict and division among the crowd. The audience can clearly see that the resistance to Jesus has gained much momentum from the beginning of the drama. Yet, there are still many who believe in him and follow him.

6.2.21. *Jesus infuriates the Jewish leaders once again (10:22-39)*

This scene takes place in the temple in Solomon's colonnade. The audience is aware of a heightened sense of conflict as protagonist and antagonist become more and more distinct. Some Jews surround Jesus and blatantly ask him whether he is the Messiah. To the audience's frustration, he does not give them a clear "yes", but asserts that his works testify of his identity and that they are blind to it. He makes it clear that they are not part of his, or the Father's, followers (sheep), and re-emphasises his unity with the Father. At this, the speed and intensity of the scene increases as they yet again pick up stones, ready to kill him. He does not run away but interrogates their reason for stoning them. The charge is made clear: "It is for blasphemy, because you, a man, are making yourself equal to God!" (10:33). Jesus defends his identity by referring to his works, but this does not convince the crowd, who tries to arrest him. Luckily Jesus escapes.

6.2.22. *Jesus receives bad news (10:40-11:16)*

After fleeing, the audience sees Jesus returning to the place where John was baptising in the beginning of the drama. The atmosphere seems to have shifted from a tension

moment to a reward moment, since Jesus gains many followers there (10:40-42). However, a messenger enters the stage telling Jesus that one of his dear friends, Lazarus, has fallen seriously ill. Upon hearing this news, Jesus asserts that the illness will not lead to death and that the situation will glorify God. This reminds the audience of the healing of the official's son (4:46-54), in which Jesus said a similar thing. Surely, Lazarus will be completely healed when the audience sees him. After two days, Jesus and his disciples make their way to Judea where Lazarus is. The narrator shocks the audience with the news that Lazarus died in those two days (11:1-16).

6.2.23. *A dead man rises (11:17-45)*³⁰⁶

When Jesus and his disciples arrive in Bethany, Martha, runs towards him with the tidings that Lazarus has died. However, she expresses her faith in his ability to raise him from the dead, emphasising that she has aligned herself with the protagonist. To this, Jesus responds by naming himself the resurrection and the life, and Martha responds by calling him the Messiah and God's son. At once, Martha leaves the stage, only to return with her sister Mary, followed by a group of Jews. Upon seeing Jesus, Mary, and the people around her, weep bitterly. The lights fade on this scene, and a few moments later, the lights come on as Jesus, Martha, Mary, and several Jews stand around Lazarus' tomb. Jesus is visibly overcome with internal conflict and he begins to weep along with the others. This reaction from Jesus greatly perplexes the audience. Why is he responding in such a way after he had just affirmed himself to be the resurrection and the life?

After this, Jesus demands that the grave stone be removed. He prays and cries out loudly for Lazarus to come out. The crowd and audience watch in amazement as Lazarus comes out of the tomb. Once again, the atmosphere has shifted from a tension moment to a reward moment. As this is a great miracle, many of the characters on stage profess their belief in him and align with the protagonist. The scene ends as those on stage (and those in the audience) rejoice.

6.2.24. *The temple elite plot against Jesus (11:47-53)*

The stage is filled with chief priests and Pharisees, who find Jesus' popularity to be a threat to the Jewish temple and nation. At this, the high priest named Caiaphas,

³⁰⁶ See the excursus at the end of the chapter (§6.6) for a brief theological reflection on Jn. 11:17-45, with the theme of vulnerability as lens.

announces that it would be better for one man to die than for the entire Jewish nation to perish. At this remark, all present agree that Jesus ought to be killed. While this creates distress among the audience, they cannot but be reminded of the promise that the light of ὁ λόγος will not be mastered by the antagonist (1:4), and that Jesus brings something far greater than the Mosaic tradition (1:17). Therefore, although the temple elite are out to get him, there must be some expectation of Jesus coming out on top. Perhaps he will prove himself to these elite (after all, he is the one to reveal God) and take his rightful place on top of the pyramid at a later stage.

After this, many people begin looking for Jesus in Jerusalem, but do not find him, since he hides in Ephraim with his disciples (11:54-57).

6.2.25. *Jesus at Lazarus, Martha, and Mary's home (12:1-11)*

The setting in this scene is a home in Bethany. At the table sits Jesus, his disciples, and Lazarus. Martha and Mary also function as supporting characters within the scene. The calm atmosphere stands in direct contrast to the previous scene. Martha is busy serving the guests, when Mary takes expensive nard oil and anoints Jesus' feet, drying them with her hair: an appropriate treatment for the Messiah. When Judas, one of the disciples, objects to this, Jesus remarks that she had anointed him for his burial.³⁰⁷ This remark comes as a surprise to the audience. Nothing in the prologue alluded to Jesus dying and this especially does not fit their foreknowledge of a divine hero. Moreover, this is not the first time Jesus uses such language (cf. 10:18). After this, many others come into the home to see both Jesus and Lazarus.

6.2.26. *Jesus comes into Jerusalem (12:12-43)*

The scene opens with Jesus entering Jerusalem on a colt, while bystanders honour him, referring to him as the king of Israel. Although this scene is another reward moment which displays Jesus as honourable, it does not necessarily display him as powerful. Jesus comes riding in on a young donkey – not a war horse, as would be expected from a powerful leader (Carson, 1991:433). The title of king of Israel is well

³⁰⁷ This is probably one of the strongest examples of dramatic speech (speech which precedes action) in the Johannine drama. In the case of a drama, such proleptic speech is characteristic of tragic characters who will suffer death (Genette, 1980:40). In this way, "characters begin to die in speech earlier than they do in body" (Brant, 2004:62). This is especially prevalent in tragedies, where the "process of a character's death begins early" (MacIntosh, 1996:415). Brant (2004:63) refers to this dramatic speech as something which gives the audience an idea of what to expect concerning the fate of the character as well as the ending of the drama. It is therefore not unlikely to imagine that this prediction is unsettling to the audience.

received by Jewish audience members, who see this as the ideal opportunity for Jesus to display the glory of God and begin his quest for power as the Messiah (Carson, 1991:435).

However, seeing this display, the Pharisees become enraged. Jesus uses this opportunity not to emphasise his power and glory, but to speak about his hour (ὥρα), which he describes as a disturbance to his soul.³⁰⁸ Jesus does not hesitate to admit that he is overcome by emotion and fear (Voorwinde, 2011:183). He asks the Father to glorify his name, and, spectacularly, a voice from heaven answers: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again” (12:28). The interpretation of this event creates confusion among the crowd and audience. Why would God’s hour of glory trouble the soul of the Messiah who ought to be his vehicle of power and domination, and why is God audibly acknowledging his glory after the Messiah’ underwhelming entrance on a donkey? Jesus’ troubled state immediately creates tension among audience members. It seems to be foreshadowing a climatic scene in which he confronts the antagonist. However, the affirmation of the presence of God’s glory hints at a victorious outcome for the protagonist.

The events up to this point have done anything but unite the crowd on stage. While some align with the protagonist, others tragically reject him.³⁰⁹ There are also characters present who are too afraid to voice their allegiance to the protagonist.³¹⁰

6.2.27. *Jesus’ monologue (12:44-50)*

Jesus delivers a monologue on an empty stage, in which he once again affirms his oneness with the Father, as well as the fact that he came to deliver the world from the antagonist (ἡ σκοτία). Using language from the prologue, he strengthens the divide between light and darkness, and asserts that the Father is on his side.

³⁰⁸ Jewish audience members would recognise Jesus’ lament from Ps. 6, where the Psalmist calls out to YHWH to save him (6:4) after declaring that his soul is troubled (6:3). However, while Jesus identifies with the Psalmist in angst and desperation, he does not ask the Father to deliver him from the agony which awaits him (Eklund, 2015:26).

³⁰⁹ Köstenberger (2009:117) argues that the element of tragedy becomes present in the rejection of Jesus by characters who have seen the signs performed by him.

³¹⁰ Not only were these followers’ belonging in the synagogue at stake, but their honour in the eyes of society was also diminished if they identified themselves as followers of Jesus (DeSilva, 2000:44).

6.2.28. *Jesus' last supper with his disciples (13:1-17:26)*

The stage is lit with blue lighting, while a few lanterns are burning in the room. The setting is clear: it is night time. While all Jesus' disciples are present at the table, he rises, and, to the audience's surprise, takes on the character of a "menial slave" (Carson, 1991:463) by removing his outer garment and wrapping a towel around his waist.³¹¹ Seeing Jesus in this type of costume already puts the audience at unease. Jesus not only takes on the costume of a slave but acts as one by washing his disciples' feet. Perhaps this is the hour that troubled Jesus' soul so very. It would make sense, as it would probably take much of the son of God to bend down and wash the feet of mere peasant men.

To an audience who have been socialised into connecting honour and glory with prominence (Seeman, 2000:166), Jesus, in making himself less prominent and surrendering his dignity (Rensberger, 2009:349), seems to be dishonouring himself and his Father. Moreover, this action is completely incongruent with the title of king of Israel, which he was honoured with the previous day (12:13). With this action of foot washing, Jesus not only makes the other characters feel embarrassed (Carson, 1991:463), but puts the audience at unease in a raw and vulnerable moment.³¹² After the washing, Jesus leaves them with the command to do the same for one another. Not only does he display this strange behaviour of self-deprivation of honour, but he prescribes it as the way to live for his followers.³¹³

Just as the audience might think that Jesus' terrible hour has possibly passed, he reveals to the disciples that one of them will betray him, and it is at this moment, where Judas Iscariot gets up and leaves the room. This moment marks one of the first clear associations of the audience with Jesus on the basis of pathos. The thought of the divine hero being rejected by one of his close friends sits uncomfortably with the audience. Here he was, vulnerable and on his knees, washing Judas' feet, only to be betrayed by him. Jesus has made himself reject-able, and Judas does not miss the

³¹¹ Carter (2013:19) emphasises that slaves were the opposite of what it would have meant to be "manly men". A slave would be the epitome of someone who was mastered and dominated.

³¹² Carson (1991:463) even goes as far as to refer to the foot washing as a "naked act".

³¹³ Within a stratified society, human pride would always seek to the highest possible role and avoid, as far as possible, the lower role (Carson, 1991:467). Jesus, setting the example for the disciples and ordering that they wash one another's feet emphasises a radical way of being human: being the least, the humble, the lowest. In a powerful way, Jesus opts out of the cycle of competition.

opportunity to turn his back on him. This is perhaps a moment of ἀναγνώρισις for the audience, as they suddenly begin to recognise Judas as a supporting character for the antagonist.

Ironically, after the embarrassing moment where Judas leaves, Jesus announces that he will be glorified, and that this will glorify the Father also. Perhaps Jesus will redeem himself with some display of power. He announces that he will go where they cannot come and emphasises that they need to love one another. Peter objects to Jesus going away and promises to follow him even if it means laying down his life for him. With this, Jesus predicts that Peter will disown him three times before a rooster crows. This leads to a back and forth discussion on where Jesus is going. At this moment, the audience is probably just as confused as the disciples reclining with Jesus. Moreover, the language of honour and shame, glory and vulnerability, domination and defeat, has become intertwined and mixed up.

Finally, Philip asks Jesus this last favour: to show them the Father. This is probably a question on the lips of the confused audience members as well, who have been waiting for the ultimate glorious display of the divine from the beginning of the drama. At this, Jesus reiterates that he is in the Father and that the Father is in him. His whole life has been a display of the Father. Moreover, Jesus promises that he will not leave them orphaned, but that they will see him. He promises that, if they love him and obey his words, he and the Father will make their home in them. He also promises a comforter, whom he calls the Holy Spirit, as well as his peace which he will leave with them. He warns them that “the ruler of the world” (14:30) is coming, but that they need not be distressed at what is about to happen. The audience probably finds Jesus’ speech confusing: who is this ruler of the world? And what does this say about Jesus’ earthly rule?

Jesus does not provide many answers but encourages his disciples with a metaphor of him being the vine, the Father being the vinedresser, and the disciples being the branches. He exhorts them to remain in him and in his word in order to live fruitful lives. He assures them of his love for them and commands them to love one

another.³¹⁴ The audience notices a slight change in tone as Jesus predicts that the world will hate and persecute the disciples. He remarks that they will do that in his name since they do not know the Father, but promises the Helper and Comforter.

The tension among the audience intensifies as Jesus promises the disciples that they will have hardship and be banned from the synagogues. He further predicts that grievous times are ahead, but that they will be turned into joy. Jesus goes on to plainly testify of his oneness with the Father, at which the disciples recognise that he is sent by God (16:30). However, he takes this moment of recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) and predicts the fact that the disciples will abandon him and that they will be scattered. To an audience who knows that the abandonment by one's friends is an utter disgrace (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:119), this prediction is unsettling and pity for the protagonist begins to rise and build among audience members.

After this, Jesus begins to pray to the Father. The audience would probably recognise this prayer as resembling a farewell discourse (Carson, 1991:551). The first thing he says is that the hour has come, and he asks the Father to glorify him so that he might glorify the Father. Jesus asserts that he manifested the name of the Father. He also emphasises his dependence on his Father throughout his earthly life and ministry (1991:560). Moreover, Jesus confesses his dependence on the disciples.

Jesus' speech of dependence is followed by the claim that God gave him authority over all to give the good, abundant, and eternal life. He prays a prayer to the Father to keep the disciples without taking them out of the world. After this, Jesus prays for the ones who will believe on accord of the disciples' testimony and emphasises his request for oneness between his disciples, just as he and the Father are one. The scene ends with Jesus and his disciples getting up and leaving the room.

6.2.29. *Jesus is arrested (18:1-12)*

The scene begins with Jesus and his disciples in a garden. The setting is dark, and it seems cold. Judas, together with a few soldiers, enter the stage. The audience realises that these men are here to arrest Jesus. The clash between protagonist and antagonist has become inevitably physical. Jesus asks the soldiers whom they are

³¹⁴ The image of the vine is a profound way in which Jesus emphasises that, if this community were to survive, they need to become aware of their dependence: on God, but also on one another. They are not separate units, but part of a system (O'Day, 2012:526).

looking for, and they reply, “Jesus of Nazareth”. Upon answering, “I am he,” the soldiers fall to the ground. This is probably the moment where the audience cheers for Jesus to run away or to overpower the soldiers in their moment of weakness. Yet, he remains there, and the dialogue repeats itself. At this, they cease Jesus. In an attempt to stop the soldiers, Peter draws a sword and cuts off one of the soldiers’ ears.³¹⁵ To the audience’s surprise, Jesus rebukes him, condemning his attempt to fight and overcome through power. Here, the drama of God takes an unexpected turning point (περιπέτεια), as he gives himself over into the hands of the supporting characters to the antagonist.³¹⁶ With this, they bind Jesus up and take him away...

6.2.30. *Jesus’ trial begins, and Peter unravels (18:13-27)*

The stage is set up to present the courtyard outside of the high priest’s quarters. The soldiers first lead Jesus into the courtyard. They are followed by Peter and another disciple, but Peter is not let into the gates at first. After the other disciple convinces the servant girl at the gate to let Peter in, she recognises him and asks him if he is one of “that man’s” (τοῦ ἀνθρώπου τούτου) disciples (18:17). It is clear from her reference to Jesus as “that man”, that she does not seem to have “a high opinion of Jesus” (Ridderbos, 1997:582). Without any hesitation, Peter asserts that he is not one of Jesus’ disciples and goes to warm himself by the fire in the courtyard. To the audience’s surprise, Peter does not follow the crowd to where Jesus is interrogated but remains at the fire.³¹⁷ The contrast is very clear. In the cold night, Jesus is interrogated and abused, while Peter, who just earlier promised that he would die for Jesus (13:37), avoids interrogation and abuse in the warm light of the fire. This scene evokes sympathy and pity among the audience as the director employs the technique of pathos.

The attention shifts to the other end of the stage, where Jesus is interrogated by the high priest. Jesus’ response does not seem to amuse the attendants and one of them

³¹⁵ The FG is the only one that mentions the name of Malchus, the soldier whose ear was cut off by Peter. Brant (2011:236) motivates this inclusion of identity in the following way: “While we cannot know John’s purpose, the inclusion of the name reminds us that we cannot reduce the people in the story to symbols. Someone is really hurt.”

³¹⁶ This marks the moment where Jesus becomes deprived of his freedom (Ridderbos, 1997:575). From this point on it is no longer Jesus who is in control of his physical condition, his coming and his going, but he becomes a passive character in the hands of others (Harris, 2015:35; Ridderbos, 1997:573).

³¹⁷ Brant (2011:240) uses Peter’s action here to illustrate a movement from Peter’s loyalty to Jesus, to his own security and comfort.

slaps him on the face. This is the first physical act of violence against Jesus. With this, they take him away to Caiaphas' house. The attention shifts again to Peter, warming himself by the fire. Another person asks him whether he is one of Jesus' disciples. Once again, he denies it. A third time he is asked – this time by someone who alleges to have seen him in the garden during the arrest. Furious and agitated, Peter denies his ties with Jesus for the third time.³¹⁸ It is at this moment that the audience hears a rooster crow. The regret on Peter's face is visible as the lights fade.

Up to this point, the Johannine drama has taken a turn for the worst. While the audience was initiated into the play with the promise of glory, things seem to have taken a strange turn (περιπέτεια) with Jesus becoming more rejected, failing to take his triumphant position as king and Messiah after his entrance into Jerusalem, and making strange references to the laying down of his life and his burial. While the Fourth Gospel has been categorised by the rise and fall of conflict (see Fink, 2014:21), it has quickly escalated, and the protagonist has found himself captured by those who align with the antagonist. Contrary to their expectations, the Johannine drama seems to be getting less and less glorious and divine by the minute, and the audience's identification with the protagonist seems to rest more and more on the basis of pathos than that of his ethos. Not only is Jesus taken captive by the authorities, but he is abandoned by his closest friends and publicly humiliated. If there is any hope of a divine display of glory as promised in the prologue, Jesus will need to use this moment of tension to triumph over the antagonist.

6.3. The Johannine climax³¹⁹

6.3.1. *Jesus before Pilate (18:28-19:16)*

SETTING: Pilate's praetorium.³²⁰ The stage is barely lit as it is still early in

³¹⁸ It is important to realise that, to the ancient audience, there exists no such a thing as indifference, but that every action is viewed as done with either love or hatred. Indifference, detachment, or denial would therefore have been regarded as hatred (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:87). Peter, the friend of Jesus, is therefore not simply denying Jesus, but actually displaying a form of hatred towards him. Moreover, "Peter's threefold denial affirms the loneliness of Jesus' suffering and death" (Ridderbos, 1997:585).

³¹⁹ The drama analysis will resume in this section. The pace and focus will thus change from a fast-forwarded summary, to the exegetical analysis of a scene.

³²⁰ The word praetorium is derived from "praetor", which refers to a "Roman official who often served as a general leading the army" (Brown, 1994:705). The word was later used to describe governors' residences, since praetors often began serving as governors in cities controlled by the empire (1994:706). The praetorium was used for accommodation, but also functioned as the administrative headquarters of the governor. Justice would not be administered inside the praetorium, but often in front

the morning. The stage portrays a “two-stage setting” as both the inside and outside of this extravagant building is shown.³²¹ The inside is decorated with various “images and implements” of Greek and Roman deities,³²² including shields, symbolising military and political power and domination.³²³ The outside area (forecourt/colonnade)³²⁴ is portrayed by mostly cold lighting. The forecourt is paved and contains an elevated platform with a judgement seat on it.³²⁵

AT RISE:

Inside the praetorium is Pontius PILATE.³²⁶ He is a strong and politically powerful man, classified as Roman nobility.³²⁷ He is dressed in a costume of red and white, symbolising military and political power.³²⁸

(A CROWD of Jewish characters, some of whom are part of the Sanhedrin, loudly enter the outside area.³²⁹ Some members of the crowd are holding on to JESUS, shoving him towards the entrance of the praetorium. JESUS seems physically exhausted at this stage and he is

of it. Brown (1994:707) argues that the praetorium was most probably one of the dwellings of Herod the Great, “on the Western hill of the city”. “Its exterior included three immense towers built by Herod,” and “in luxury and extravagance it was indescribable” (see also Köstenberger, 2004:523).

³²¹ See Stibbe (1993:186). Brown (1994:11) refers to the “outside-inside organisation”, where characters move from the inside to the outside, and vice versa (as will be seen in this scene), as an important element of staging.

³²² Brant (2011:242).

³²³ Nthuping (2003:43).

³²⁴ Carson (1991:595).

³²⁵ Brown (1994:706).

³²⁶ Pontius Pilate served as the Judean prefect between AD 26 and 36 (Brown, 1994:694).

³²⁷ Nthuping (2003:29).

³²⁸ Pilate functions as a hybrid between a flat and round character. He does not necessarily portray character development or moves along the plot, but does seem somewhat more complex than a flat character (Nthuping, 2003:198).

³²⁹ According to Pilate’s later remark that these individuals judge Jesus according to their law (18:31), it would be sensible to assume that some of them were members of the Sanhedrin and of high priestly rank (19:6).

escorted into the praetorium by Pilate's SOLDIERS.)³³⁰

(Some of the CROWD members are yelling insults to JESUS, while others are calling for PILATE.)

CROWD

Pilate! Pilate!

PILATE

(Rushing outside.)

[29] What accusation do you bring against this man?

CROWD

[30] If this man were not an evil-doer, we would not have delivered him over to you!³³¹

PILATE

[31] Take him yourselves and judge him against your own law then.

CROWD

[31] But we are not permitted to put anyone to death!

The scene unfolding on stage is quick and loud. A high level of external conflict is present: between Pilate and the crowd, but also between the crowd and Jesus. While it is difficult to determine how Jesus and Pilate will relate to one another, the hostility of the crowd towards Jesus is clear. The audience recognises that the Jewish crowd do not want to enter the praetorium to preserve their religious purity for the Passover.³³² However, they have no regard for Jesus' purity as a Jew and essentially force him to go where they would not set their feet as he is "dumped at the praetorium" (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:257). In this moment, Jesus is not only defiled, but finds

³³⁰ Since his arrest the previous night, he has been taken from the house of Annas (18:13) to that of Caiaphas (18:15) and endured interrogation. It seems clear that he has not had a peaceful night's sleep.

³³¹ The crowd uses the demonstrative pronoun οὗτος to refer to Jesus in order to distance themselves from him. Bruner (2012:1065) argues that the demonstrative pronouns reduce Jesus to a mere "this" (Bruner, 2012:1065).

³³² Ironically, they seem less concerned with their moral purity as they are condemning an innocent man (Stibbe, 1993:189).

himself completely alone. None of the twelve men whom he referred to as his friends (15:15) are even in sight. This abandonment by his fictive kinship group adds more shame to the situation (see Barr, 2002:31; Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:119) and evokes pity among audience members, as Jesus is essentially left connection-less, suffering what Malina et al. (1995:10) would call “a social death sentence”.

The crowd does not bring a specific accusation against Jesus, but simply refers to him as “an evil-doer” (κακὸν ποιῶν – 18:30). The audience has witnessed Jesus’ favour decrease throughout the Johannine drama and are here confronted with the moment where it seems to be reaching its lowest point as he, the promised Messiah, is accused of being an evil-doer by those who were supposed to respect and follow him. Pilate’s response at this stage is a relief to the audience. They can see that he knows the Jewish crowd does not have a very strong case against Jesus (Köstenberger, 2004:525) and that he is attempting to avoid becoming their agent (Brant, 2011:242).

However, the attitude of the crowd is concerning, as the audience learns early on in the trial that they want nothing less than to see Jesus put to death (see Bruner, 2012:1066). This intention of the crowd reminds the audience of Jesus’ references to his burial (12:7) and the laying down of his life (10:18). However, Jesus did say that he would not be a passive victim, since no one would take his life from him, but that he alone had the authority to take it up and lay it down. Since he knows that his life is at stake, he surely ought to exercise his agency over it.

The audience is not given much time to consider this, as the fast-paced scene continues:

(PILATE, taken aback by the drastic demands of the Jewish CROWD, marches back into the praetorium to where JESUS is held by a few SOLDIERS.)

PILATE

(Puzzled, with a derogatory ring to it.)³³³

³³³ The derogatory ring to Pilate’s question emphasises his frustration and irritation with the Jewish crowd’s ridiculous charge of this lowly peasant (Köstenberger, 2004:530; Ridderbos, 1997:597-598). The possibility is there that Pilate remembers Jesus’ triumphant entry into Jerusalem (Brant, 2011:243),

[33] (Pointing at JESUS.) Are yóú the king of the Jews?³³⁴

JESUS

[34] Do you say this of your own accord or did others tell you about me?

PILATE

(Indignant, touching his breast)

[35] I am not a Jew, am I? Your nation and the chief priests have delivered you over to me.

(PILATE draws closer to JESUS until they are almost face to face, pauses, and changes to a very serious tone.)

What have you done?

JESUS

[36] My kingdom is not from this world. If my kingdom were from this world, my servants would have been fighting, that I might not be delivered up to the Jews. But now, my kingdom is not from here.

PILATE

[37] So then you áre a king?

JESUS

[37] You say that I am a king. For this I was born and for this I have come into the world - to testify to the truth. Everyone who is from the truth, listens to my voice.

PILATE

(Walking away.)

but the emphatic óú in v.33 seems to suggest that the connection between Jesus and a king seems rather surprising to Pilate.

³³⁴ The unnecessary óú is translated in an emphatic manner indicating a sense of surprise. Moreover, Brant (2004:82) argues that the unnecessary personal pronouns in the FG can be translated into performance by either imagining the speaker touching their own breast when the first person is used, or pointing to another character when the second or third person is used.

[38] What is truth?

With Pilate marching inside to confront Jesus, the audience recognises that a type of trial has begun.³³⁵ The same Jesus who spoke of being the one to judge all humanity (5:22), seems to be under judgement himself. Jesus does not answer Pilate's question, but questions Pilate's motive for asking it. The response from Pilate ("Am I a Jew?") has an indignant ring to it and serves to make it clear that this man's "royal pretension" does not mean much to him personally (Carson, 1991:593).

With this, Pilate dismissively gets back to the point by spelling out Jesus' horrific position: he has been forsaken and accused by the Jewish elite (chief priests – ἀρχιερείς) and the entire Jewish nation (ἔθνος). Pilate uses this chilling exaggeration to insinuate that Jesus is essentially nation-less and a complete outcast. Moreover, Pilate makes it clear that Jesus is a passive pawn in the situation, since those accusing him have handed him over (παρέδωκάν) to him (Pilate).³³⁶ Jesus' response in this situation is absolutely crucial, as it is important for him to regain his agency as protagonist in the drama and to win the audience over through a display of noble and authoritative character. The prologue described a protagonist with whom the audience could associate on the basis of ethos, and not a hero who fails and merely evokes pity from the viewers.

Jesus does not seem to engage Pilate's question, but changes the topic to his kingship. While this could be a strategy to shift to a characterisation of noble ethos, it seems a bit delusional given Jesus' current circumstances. To the audience, the criteria for kingship are quite clear: a kingship preserves itself "by force and violence" (Carson, 1991:594). In this instance, Jesus being a king or having a kingdom seems very unlikely. If he was a king, he would be obliged to prove it through power and force.³³⁷ Instead, he sits captured in another man's domain of power, whilst his own people are calling for his death. If Jesus really has a strong following, this would be

³³⁵ Although the trial begins in the praetorium, it takes the form of a public trial, since Pilate regularly moves outside to engage the crowd, and, essentially makes his judgement because of, and in front of, the outside crowd. According to Neyrey (2009:412), the public trial would serve as a status degradation ritual, which would label the accused as a shameful person.

³³⁶ Carson (1991:593) argues that παραδίωμι can also relate to the notion of betraying. Jesus is therefore not only handed over, but essentially betrayed by his own into the hands of the enemy (cf. 1:11).

³³⁷ Caputo (2006:44) refers to the societal standards for kingship as meeting "power with power".

his opportunity to claim and prove his kingship in order to stir his followers to fight to avenge him (Köstenberger, 2004:528-529). Instead, he fails to do so.

This might leave audience members cynical. If Jesus really had a kingdom, he would defend it in a way that the audience and Pilate can identify (see Carson, 1991:594) and demonstrate it by the use of power. To the audience, Jesus misses a great opportunity to make himself known with his answers, which seem illogical and incoherent (Neyrey, 2007:187). This is exceptionally disappointing, as the audience would probably expect the one embodying the nature of God to at least have some well thought out responses to Pilate's questions.³³⁸

To make Jesus' response even stranger, he asserts that his kingship is unique in that it comes from another place and is authorised by another institution. These remarks are not only puzzling to Pilate, but especially to Jewish audience members, since it directly opposes their expectation of the Messiah as the one who would physically come and restore the kingdom back to Israel. For these individuals, an earthly reign is essential for God's display of glory and power.³³⁹ Perhaps this man is not the Messiah as the narrator claimed in the prologue (1:17)?

The unfolding of unmet expectations by the protagonist creates a setting of great situational conflict. To some audience members, it might seem as if Jesus is referring to his far away kingdom to mask his abandonment and the fact that he actually does not have an army willing to fight for him (Beasley-Murray, 1987:331). Not even his fictive kin were willing to stick around at this stage – the chances of an army avenging him seem very slim if not impossible. This realisation stirs feelings of antipathy among audience members.

Pilate's response is flippant (Köstenberger, 2004:529), after which he turns his back on Jesus and exits the praetorium again to resume his conflict with the outside crowd.

(PILATE marches outside to address the CROWD. At this stage, warm light is gradually beginning to stream into the scene from afar to create

³³⁸ See §4.4.3 on the importance of Mediterranean men to be front footed and prepared with good responses to every accusation.

³³⁹ See §4.4.5 for a discussion of the Jewish expectations of a Messiah with an earthly dominion and reign.

the idea that the sun seems to be rising as time is progressing.)³⁴⁰

PILATE

[38] I find in him no cause for guilt.

(Pauses.)

[39] But it is your custom that I should release one person for you at Passover. Do you wish that I release the king of the Jews for you?

CROWD

(Roaring, militantly.)

[40] Not this man, but Barabbas, the robber!

As Pilate marches out to the crowd, he makes his first pronouncement of a verdict. He seems to be declaring Jesus as innocent (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:258), denying the crowd's negative characterisation of him as evil-doer. This redemptive declaration on the basis of the protagonist's ethos instils a hopefulness in the audience – there might be an amnesty possibility for Jesus (Bruner, 2012:1070). However, the brief reward moment quickly changes back into a tension moment as the reaction from the crowd demonstrates that the trial is clearly not over.

The audience can see a great deal of internal conflict arising in Pilate and that he fears this crowd more than he fears Jesus (Brant, 2011:244). In a last attempt to declare Jesus innocent, Pilate uses the annual custom of releasing one Jewish prisoner at Passover, essentially playing Jesus off against various criminals. The crowd has gained great momentum in volume and urgency (Köstenberger, 2004:530), and, in an almost fanatic fashion, they demand that a notorious bandit, Barabbas, who clearly represents a great threat to society, be released, while the man who has done no one any harm be killed (2004:531).

Up to this point, the conflict in the Johannine drama has almost reached its ultimate peak. Jesus' trial is under way, and a disorderly atmosphere is reigning inside and

³⁴⁰ The narrator uses the adverb *πρωί* (early) to describe the temporal setting in 18:28. In a technical sense, the Romans referred to the time between 3 AM and 6 AM as *πρωί* (Carson, 1991:588). However, as the Jewish law forbade capital trials at night, the trial probably took place closer to 6 AM (Köstenberger, 2004:524).

outside of Pilate's praetorium. Pilate, who seems anything but calm, has been in and out of his praetorium, moving back and forth between the outside crowd and Jesus. The back and forth movement between the inside and outside of the praetorium, as well as the back and forth between Jesus and Pilate, and the crowd and Pilate, highlights the contrast between the different characters at hand (Rhoads, 2011:118).

While the outside crowd is clearly part of the antagonistic group, Jesus, the protagonist, is left without any supporting characters at this moment. Pilate seems to be a strange in-between character.³⁴¹ He is not particularly accommodating to either Jesus or the crowd, but the audience can see that he is driven by a commitment to protect his own honour and reputation. The internal conflict within Pilate results in a desperate attempt to bring the situation to a point. With this, the first physical attack on Jesus ensues:

(PILATE marches back inside the praetorium.)³⁴²

PILATE

(To the SOLDIERS holding JESUS.)

[19:1] Flog him!³⁴³

(The SOLDIERS surround JESUS. They carry whips with pieces of bone, lead, and metal fastened to the edges.³⁴⁴ One of the SOLDIERS grabs at JESUS' cloak and it rips it off so that he is left standing half

³⁴¹ Neyrey (2007:188) comments that the characterisation of Pilate adds to the sense of "drama and conflict".

³⁴² As 19:4 states that Pilate brings Jesus out of the praetorium, it would make sense that this scourging and mocking (9:1-3) took place inside the praetorium (see Michaels, 1989:317).

³⁴³ Although the Greek text utilises the active verb in the singular (*ἐμαστίγωσεν*), and thus gives the impression that Jesus was only flogged by Pilate, in line with Greek and Roman tradition and in congruence with the later mocking, it would be most probable that multiple men were involved in flogging Jesus (see Brant, 2011:245). This description gives the idea that Jesus was taken and flogged at the hands of Pilate rather than by Pilate.

³⁴⁴ In this scene, Jesus is receiving a Roman flogging. In general, Jewish floggings were less severe, since the number of lashes was limited to 40 (resulting in the administration of 39 lashes) and the whip was only made of leather. The Roman flogging had no limitation on the number of lashes and the whip was fashioned with "fragments of bone, little balls of lead, and sometimes sharp iron points" (Ray, 2002:331).

naked.³⁴⁵ The whistling of a whip is heard as the first lash meets JESUS' back. Then another follows on his chest.)³⁴⁶

(JESUS screams, clearly in pain. The lashes increase. As his flesh is pierced, blood spatters across the walls and floor of the praetorium. PILATE is standing on the side, overseeing the abuse.)

([2] Two SOLDIERS enter the inside of the praetorium: SOLDIER ONE is carrying a thorn branch, and SOLDIER TWO is carrying a purple robe. The flogging dies down for a moment. SOLDIER ONE begins plaiting something resembling a crown and places it on Jesus' head. SOLDIER TWO mockingly and theatrically drapes the robe around JESUS' bloody and half naked body. Those who were scourging him lean in to press down the crown on his head.)

(JESUS moans.)

SOLDIERS

([3] Mocking JESUS, while continuously³⁴⁷ coming up to him and slapping him in the face.)³⁴⁸

[3] All hail, king of the Jews!

³⁴⁵ As Jesus received a Roman flogging, the audience would witness him being stripped of his clothing (Carson, 1991:597; Tombs, 1999:102).

³⁴⁶ The Roman flogging would include severe scourging, which would be done to both the front and the back of the body (Neyrey, 2009:412). Morris (1995:699) explains that the scourging was so severe that "it could make a pulp of a man's back".

³⁴⁷ The use of the imperfect middle (ῥοχοντο, ῥοχοντο, ἐδίδοσαν) indicates a continuous or repetitive action. For this reason, the insults of the soldiers are also repeated.

³⁴⁸ These blows or beatings could have been administered with the palm of the hand, or with a stick, but considering the probable historical context, it is more convincing that the blows were probably slaps in the face. These slaps were aimed at humiliating the prisoner rather than causing pain (Bruner, 2012:1086).

SOLDIER ONE

Yes! All hail to the king!

SOLDIER TWO

The king of the Jews!

SOLDIERS

All hail!

This bloody and graphic scene does not spare the audience any of the detail: they are first confronted with a brutal flogging known as *verberatio*, the absolute worst scourging in the Greek and Roman world (Kanagaraj, 2013:182).³⁴⁹ To the audience, this physical mutilation is the epitome of the non-divine, since divinity ought to be marked by “freedom from pain and suffering” (Placher, 1994:4). The agonising cries of him who but a while ago spoke of glory creates a devastating paradox. Even though this flogging takes place inside the praetorium, it is anything but a private affair (Neyrey, 2007:298).

While some audience members face the brutal scene, others look away in disgust and agony, since they are aware of the implications of this treatment of Jesus’ body. When the Roman authorities treat a body like this, they are sending a clear message: this body is not worth treating with dignity.³⁵⁰ Moreover, Jesus is not even given a fair trial before being scourged.³⁵¹ Not only is his body exposed to pain and shame, but it is made into an object of abuse with no sense of worth. The audience realises with much grief that “by virtue of being scourged, Jesus ... can no longer become the king that the crowd has twice tried to proclaim him” (Brant, 2011:246).

³⁴⁹ Carson (1991:597) refers to three types of beating or flogging: The first type was *fustigatio*, which was a light beating administered for offenses such as hooliganism. The second, *flagellatio*, was a more brutal flogging administered to criminals with more serious offenses. The third, *verberatio*, was the absolute worst and always accompanied crucifixion. Some scholars (Carson, 1991:597; Köstenberger, 2004:531) are of opinion that the beating inside the praetorium is only *fustigatio*, and that the severe *verberatio* followed somewhere between the sentencing and the crucifixion. However, in order to stay closest to the text, the *verberatio* will be dramatised earlier on.

³⁵⁰ According to Brant (2011:246), the Roman system differentiated between bodies with dignity and those who could be abused. Flogging would therefore be reserved for the lower classes and the flogging of someone by a Roman official would immediately reduce them to a low level of humanity, or even classify them as sub-human.

³⁵¹ Rensberger (2009:353) explains that the scourging of a prisoner usually took place after the sentence.

The audience watches in horror as the shame of the physical degradation of Jesus' body is intensified by the mocking act of dressing him in a purple robe and crown of thorns. Both of these items serve as "mock imitation[s]" of royalty (Carson, 1991:598). Since Jesus' adversaries allege that he claimed kingship, the attitude of the soldiers is spiteful, as if to say: "let him be treated as a king!" (Bruce, 1983:358). To Jesus' enemies, this crown of thorns and royal robe would be absolute comedic genius (Bruner, 2012:1086).³⁵² Barrett (1978:540) describes the crown as "a crude imitation of the radiate crowns worn by supposedly divine oriental and Hellenistic rulers".³⁵³ The audience is well aware of the fact that honour is to be found in the head, eyes, and face of the body (Neyrey, 2009:416). Here, Jesus is dishonoured by the placement of this thorny crown on his bloody head.

The audience would also recognise the purple robe as something to be worn by the Roman military (Ridderbos, 1997:600) or men in high positions (Morris, 1995:700).³⁵⁴ Ironically, Jesus is stripped from his peasant costume, and dressed in a costume of royalty, power, as well as divinity. However, the costume seems rather inappropriate considering the battered and humiliated state of the man on stage. With this, the soldiers send a clear message: this is what your king (and God) looks like.

Not only is Jesus theatrically dressed up, but he is continuously mocked and struck in the face by the soldiers. This abuse is less painful than the beating administered earlier, however, the shame of these slaps and mockery is almost unbearable. The audience, aware of the honour and shame dynamics at play, realise that "the insults, humiliations, and mockery [crushes] the soul as no whip could," and that "there will never be revenge for being slapped in the face" (Neyrey, 2009:302). Jesus is also sarcastically honoured as the king of the Jews.³⁵⁵ The combination of false honouring, and verbal and physical abuse, presents Jesus to the audience as an object of ridicule, which leaves him "utterly humiliated and reduced to zero social worth" (Neyrey,

³⁵² Morris (1995:699) refers to these comedic acts as "crude horseplay".

³⁵³ Neyrey (2007:303) refers to the use of the crown in the portrayal of monarchs and gods on coins in the ancient world.

³⁵⁴ Brown (1994:865) describes the ἰμάτιον πορφυροῦν as a "Macedonian-style *chlamys* or cloak, circular in form and pinned at the right shoulder". The purple dye, usually obtained from shellfish, was of great expense and therefore exclusive. These purple robes were not worn by ordinary soldiers, but were classified as "royal or even imperial attire".

³⁵⁵ While the word χαῖρε (hail –19:3) was commonly used as a greeting, it also functioned as an acclaim to royalty (Morris, 1995:700). In this scene, the latter is probably the implied use. Moreover, this acclaim ironically implied a wish for "long life" (Harris, 2015:309).

2007:307).³⁵⁶ At his stage, there is very little ground left for the audience to associate with the protagonist on the basis of his ethos, since his defeated physical state has turned him into an object of their pity. The director therefore seems to be using the method of pathos to connect the protagonist and audience. However, the feelings of pity stirred among portions of the audience lead to alienation and antipathy, since this portrayal is not in congruence with the audience's foreknowledge of a divine hero.

As the narrator made clear in the prologue, there are characters who will refuse to embrace God's revelation through *ὁ λόγος*. These characters, whom the audience can clearly align with the antagonist, seem to be having the upper hand at this stage. However, the audience is also reminded of the promise that the light will not be mastered by the darkness and that the antagonist will not have the last word. While they are disturbed by the outcome of events, they might still foster a sense of hope at this stage: perhaps Jesus will still be able to break free and avenge himself. This can certainly not be what the promised glory of God looks like.

At this point, Pilate steps in again:

(The outside CROWD has become more and more restless. PILATE realises this and signals the SOLDIERS to stop. He leaves the praetorium to address the CROWD once again.)

CROWD

(Murmuring, with some yelling.)

Where is he?!

What have you done with him?!

PILATE

[4] Behold! I am bringing him out to you so that you may know that I find no cause for guilt in him.

(Calling into the praetorium.)

Bring him out!

³⁵⁶ According to Stibbe (1993:193), this scene resembles a humiliation scene in Euripides' tragedy, *The Bacchae*, where the king Pentheus is clothed in a shameful garment.

(The SOLDIERS pull JESUS by the arms and shove him through the door to the outside. He is still wearing the crown and purple robe on his bloody and bruised head and body. JESUS stumbles forward. As the CROWD sees him, some erupt in contemptuous laughter, while others openly display their offense with him by insulting him.)

PILATE

(Pitiful and condescending.)³⁵⁷

[5] Behold, the man!

CROWD

(Roaring.)

[6] Crucify him! Crucify him!

PILATE

(Pointing to the CROWD.)

Yóu take him and crucify him! I find no cause for guilt in him.

CROWD

[7] Wé have a law and according to the law the ought to die, because he made himself the son of God!

The presentation of Jesus to the outside crowd is all but triumphant. He emerges as “a sorry sight, swollen, bruised, bleeding from those cruel and ridiculous thorns” (Carson, 1991:598), and Pilate utters the dramatic “behold, the man” in a pitiful way (Michaels, 1989:317), as if to say: “Here he is, the poor fellow!” (Bruce, 1983:359). “Here is the man you find so dangerous and threatening: can you not see he is harmless and somewhat ridiculous?” (Carson, 1991:598).³⁵⁸ Pilate’s announcement and parading of Jesus sets out to evoke contempt and make Jesus look wretched (Bruner, 2012:1088), as a man “in all his ludicrous unworthiness” (Ridderbos,

³⁵⁷ Michaels (1989:317).

³⁵⁸ Bruce (1983:359) describes the body of Jesus as “disabled and disfigured” at this point.

1997:600). This pitiful presentation of Jesus is not only aimed at the crowd, but the audience is also confronted with the sorry state of their divine hero.

With the command to “behold” (ἰδοῦ), Pilate would guide the audience to, once again, cast their eyes on Jesus: a man in deep suffering, humiliated, mocked, and used as a political pawn (Lee, 2002:46). Moreover, all eyes on stage would also be on Jesus and the vulnerable state in which he finds himself – he cannot hide it as an honourable man should, since it has become the main attraction of the moment.³⁵⁹

The physical signs of weakness, pain, and exhaustion are clearly evident on his body. All this is taking place amidst the loud mocking, murmuring, and yelling from the outside crowd. Moreover, the audience is reminded of the prologue, where John was introduced as “a man” (ἄνθρωπος). This characterisation stood in sharp contrast to ὁ λόγος and his divine and eternal nature (Morris, 1995:79). At this moment, Pilate’s characterisation of Jesus (ἰδοὺ ὁ ἄνθρωπος – v.5) is precisely the opposite of that of the narrator in the beginning of the Johannine drama. The audience is confronted with these two very different characterisations. Although they have been introduced to Jesus’ eternal and divine nature, it does not sit well with the sorry sight in front of them. Perhaps, at this stage, some audience members find Pilate’s characterisation of Jesus as “the man” more bearable and believable than the characterisation of the narrator in the prologue.³⁶⁰

The only utterance of the narrator that seems to make sense at this stage is the promise of ὁ λόγος becoming σὰρξ (1:14). In this sorry scene, the drama of the Fourth Gospel has delivered what it set out to do with such a characterisation: here, the divine hero has become dramatically and tragically σὰρξ.³⁶¹ This ridiculous costume, and the way in which Jesus is paraded outside of the praetorium, takes the form of a type of acting familiar to Greek and Roman audience members: that of the theatrical mime, who would be dressed ridiculously and paraded in comic plays (Brown, 1994:875). Jesus takes a similar role on “the comic stage” (1994:876) in an unheard-of twist of

³⁵⁹ See §4.4.8 for the importance of keeping one’s vulnerability out of the public eye.

³⁶⁰ Stibbe (1993:193) comments that this humiliation of the supposed hero of the drama is the ultimate suffering, placing the FG in the realm of tragedy, since the failure of recognition (ἀναγνώρισις) of the hero is an absolute “tragic flaw”.

³⁶¹ “The declaration *ho logos sarx egeneto* has become visible in its most extreme consequence” (Bultmann, 1923:659).

characterisation. The protagonist, respected and honoured by the narrator as hero, becomes the object of a farce.

Moreover, Pilate's attempt to pacify the crowd is unsuccessful (Bruce, 1983:359) and, instead of calming down, they seem to become more riled up.³⁶² This crowd clearly does not seem open to reason (Borchert, 1996:216). The audience notices that those urging for Jesus to be crucified are of the temple elite.³⁶³ These individuals know full well that the curse of God rests on the crucified and are therefore invoking more than a punishment, but a curse from God (cf. Dt. 21:23). The one described by the narrator as the closest to God³⁶⁴ seems to be the furthest away from the divine.

Moreover, the irony of Jesus' characterisation in terms of the Jewish religious system is tragic: God's representative and Messiah seems to be not even close to the top of the temple hierarchy as expected. Not only that, but those at the top, who represent those closest to God, are using their power to have Jesus shamed, crucified, and cursed. He seems to be prosecuted by the very system that he was expected to oversee. Moreover, the audience is reminded of the prologue, in which the revelation through ὁ λόγος was described to be superior to the law which came through Moses (1:17). Yet, this does not seem to be the case right now. That very law is condemning the man in front of them, making him inferior to it.

Observing the crowd, the audience realises that there is no supporting character in sight for the protagonist. Where are those who believed in him throughout the drama? Moreover, his disciples are nowhere to be found. Not only has one of them handed him over to be killed, and has another publicly denied him three times, but in this moment of persecution and humiliation he is completely alone. The isolation of Jesus "even from his most intimate followers" emphasises the utter tragedy which befalls him (Carson, 1991:581).

A great deal of dramatic irony is also present as the audience is reminded of the narrator's description of ὁ λόγος being in the "bosom of the Father". The audience knows that "son of God" is a very accurate identification of Jesus. Yet, the crowd is completely blind to this identity and regards it as a blasphemous thought. They are

³⁶² Borchert (1996:216) remarks that the crowd "had tasted blood and wanted more".

³⁶³ Ridderbos (1997:601) remarks that it is the most "aristocratic representatives of the Sanhedrin" who press for Jesus' execution.

³⁶⁴ Ὁ ὢν εἰς τὸν κόλπον τοῦ πατρὸς (1:18).

simply unable to reconcile the “blood-stained Jesus” and the “kingly glory of God” (Kanagaraj, 2013:183).

The argument from the crowd for Jesus to be put to death seems to nudge the drama more strongly in a climatic direction as Jesus’ confrontation with his sentence will probably unfold in his darkest hour.³⁶⁵ Still, how he will respond to this moment, and what possible spark will arise to display the true glory of God, possibly keeps a measure of hope alive among audience members. The interwoven nature of hope and despair is keeping the audience on the edge of their seats. However, they are not the only ones experiencing a rush of uncertainty and tension. The character of Pilate seems to be conflicted and anxious as well:

CROWD

(Chanting.)

Crucify him! Crucify him!

PILATE

(Terrified, to his SOLDIERS.)

Take him back inside!

([8] PILATE gives another upset glance at the CROWD, then turns around and storms back into the praetorium after JESUS.)

[9] Where are you from, Jesus?

JESUS

([9] looks up at PILATE, but does not answer)

PILATE

(Aggressive.)

[10] You won’t speak to me?

³⁶⁵ See Fink (2014:24) for more on the “darkest hour” of the drama. This is discussed in §3.5.2.

(PILATE gives a pause, leans in and addresses JESUS in a softer, yet desperate tone, almost as if he is pleading with him to cooperate.)

[10] Do you not know that I have the authority to release you and the authority to crucify you?

JESUS

(Pauses for another moment.)

[11] You would have no authority over me unless it had been given to you from above. Therefore, the one who delivered me over to you, has a greater sin.

The power dynamics are quite obvious at this stage. Although Pilate is the one governing these Jewish elites, the audience has become aware of the fact that he is not the one with the most power on the Johannine stage. Pilate exudes a tremendous deal of internal conflict as he enters his praetorium again. Although he does not identify himself with the protagonist of the drama, the audience can see that he feels discomfort about condemning Jesus and, while he also has not sided with the antagonist, the crowd's zeal and political pressure to sentence Jesus to death is weighing heavily on him (Ridderbos, 1997:602).³⁶⁶

Desperate to get some information out of Jesus, and, perhaps to cover up his unease with the display of authority (Bruce, 1983:361), he interrogates Jesus by asking him about his origin. Pilate touches on one of the most important aspects of the Johannine drama with this question (Stibbe, 1993:191). At this point, the audience might wonder where Pilate's unease regarding the prosecution of Jesus is coming from. Perhaps his conscience is plagued with the fact that Jesus might be innocent, but why would the death of a peasant Jewish man be such a tragedy to a powerful Roman prefect? Quite the contrary, sentencing this man to death would probably affirm Pilate's political power and give him favour in the eyes of the Jewish elite.

³⁶⁶ Ridderbos (1997:602) describes Pilate's increasing discomfort as he realises that his chances of avoiding Jesus' condemnation are getting slimmer.

The audience cannot help but wonder whether Pilate has grasped something of Jesus' true identity. Perhaps he realises that there is something different about this man.³⁶⁷ Whatever Pilate's reasoning is, his state of mind is probably the easiest for the audience to identify with at this stage. Knowing what they do from the prologue, it is difficult to align with the antagonistic crowd. However, seeing and experiencing what they are at the moment, aligning with the protagonist is also becoming more and more difficult. Pilate's confused demeanour and his neither-here-nor-there characterisation has perhaps become a mirror for most audience members.

The only one who can help Pilate (and the audience) understand is Jesus. However, he does not use this opportunity to reveal anything of himself that could be of use for the Roman prefect or those watching the spectacle. Then again, what could he really say to redeem his characterisation at this moment (Bruce, 1983:361)? After all, the prologue did not promise them that Jesus will explain God and his glory, but that he will enact it and that they (and the characters of the drama) will be spectators of it. If only Jesus would use this opportunity to reveal himself. One can imagine the audience's frustration and urgency: "Say something, do something, Jesus! Reveal your power!" Yet he remains quiet.

Jesus' silence not only frustrates the audience, but unsettles Pilate greatly and, in a desperate tone, he reminds Jesus of the power that he holds.³⁶⁸ Pilate's remark regarding his power is ironic, since the audience is aware of the power dynamics between Pilate and the crowd of Jewish leaders (Neyrey, 2007:304). The audience recognises Pilate as someone who, as expected from an honourable, active, and powerful man, would try "to hide his flaws under shows of stubbornness and brutality" (Carson, 1991:590). While he might have the authority to release Jesus, making such a decision would place him in a very vulnerable position. Sadly, almost tragically, the audience can already begin to see that his decision will directly be determined by his

³⁶⁷ Bruce (1983:361) remarks that a claim to be the son of God would not have been regarded as blasphemous in Greek or Roman terms, but, if this claim was true, it would classify Jesus as a θεός ἄνθρωπος which is a man with divine qualities about him. Jesus' mysterious conduct could have strengthened Pilate's suspicion regarding the possibility of this type of identity. However, since power and dominion were regarded as the most divine characteristics in the Roman thought system (§4.4.11), these suspicions coupled with Jesus' powerlessness and pathetic display, would probably have left Pilate confused.

³⁶⁸ Morris (1995:705) characterises Pilate as someone who is very aware of his power, position, and dignity.

attempt to avoid a shameful situation, which means that he will probably be swayed by the antagonistic crowd.

The audience becomes somewhat hopeful when Jesus refers to the true origin of Pilate's authority, but he leaves it there.³⁶⁹ Moreover, he is not even exploiting Pilate's weakness to free himself. A rhetorically skilled man would use Pilate's sense of unease and guilt to his advantage, yet Jesus essentially assures Pilate that he is not the one with the greater sin in this scenario.³⁷⁰ Jesus' lack of fight complicates his characterisation, as it does not fit the foreknowledge of a divine hero.

Against all odds, and Jesus' passivity notwithstanding, a sudden spark seems to have made its entrance into the Johannine plot, as it seems like Pilate might actually decide to release Jesus:

(PILATE goes outside to address the CROWD.)

PILATE

[12] I do not find this man guilty. He needs to be released!

CROWD

(Militantly.)

[12] If you release this man, you are not a friend of the emperor! Yes, everyone who makes himself a king, opposes the emperor!

(PILATE is clearly upset by the accusation and, suddenly, his whole demeanour changes.)

PILATE

(To his SOLDIERS.)

³⁶⁹ With these words, Jesus is once again affirming that God is a round character, since God has the ability to influence the plot. Jesus might be confident in his assertions regarding the power that his Father has over Pilate, but this "in no way detracts from the reality of Jesus' course of suffering" (Ridderbos, 1997:600).

³⁷⁰ Ridderbos (1997:604) believes that Jesus probably refers to the Jews as the party with the greater sin. The singular participle ὁ παραδούς (the one who delivered over) is therefore interpreted as a "collective singular referring to all Jewish opponents, including Judas" (Kanagaraj, 2013:184).

[13] Bring him out!

(PILATE sits down on the judgement seat.)

Let me make my judgement!

CROWD

(Roaring.)

(Someone yells.)

[14] Hurry up! It is our day of preparation for the Passover!

(JESUS comes out of the praetorium, his legs faltering.)

PILATE

[14] Behold! Your king!

CROWD

(Almost fanatic.)

[15] No! Take him away! Take him away! Crucify him!

PILATE

[15] Shall I crucify your king?

CROWD

[15] We have no king but the emperor!

PILATE

Fine then, take him away!

([16] The SOLDIERS take JESUS forcefully and carry him through the CROWD.³⁷¹ Moving through the people,

³⁷¹ Although the Greek text contains the dative αὐτοῖς, which could give the impression that Pilate handed Jesus over to the Jewish crowd (“so, he handed Jesus over to them”), it is translated as a dative of advantage (“so, for their behalf, he handed Jesus over”), since Jews themselves did not crucify individuals (18:31). Therefore, Pilate’s soldiers probably administered the crucifixion for the sake of the Jewish crowd.

JESUS is shoved, spat on, slapped, and insulted by the members of the CROWD until he is carried off stage. The CROWD follows the SOLDIERS, chanting until they are also off stage.)

CROWD

Crucify him! Crucify him!

(PILATE remains standing, then he turns around and walks away into the praetorium.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

Once again, Pilate's internal conflict becomes clear, and he seems to have made up his mind that he will release Jesus. He is drawn outside by the restlessness of the crowd. They are standing outside the praetorium, but their voices ring so loud, that they "intrude on the interior space" (Brant, 2011:248). Pilate announces his decision to release Jesus, but is thrown a curve ball by the crowd who seems to know him very well and threatens him in the best possible way for a Roman ruler by attacking his alliance and loyalty to the emperor (Ridderbos, 1997:604).³⁷²

The effect of their chant is immediately visible on Pilate's shocked face.³⁷³ They have just played their trump card (Stibbe, 1993:191). Their threat is essentially an accusation of high treason (Bruner, 2012:1090). Moreover, the crowd knows that "Caesar's fiend" (*amicus Caesaris*) is a formal honour title which is very valuable to Pilate and his reputation (Kanagaraj, 2013:184; Ridderbos, 1997:604). Pilate is once again reminded of the fact that he depends on the emperor for "wealth, power, and status" as a client depends on his patron (Neyrey, 2007:304). If this accusation proved to be true, he would suffer tremendous shame and loss, and probably find his political career ruined. If Pilate wishes to preserve his power and dignity, he'd better not release

³⁷² Ray (2002:335) refers to this strategy as "political blackmail".

³⁷³ Köstenberger (2004:525) argues that this moment reflects Pilate's personal vulnerability to the audience.

Jesus.³⁷⁴ The audience is aware of this and is in no way surprised at the effectiveness of the crowd's ploy. In a first-century Mediterranean context, Pilate's response to his vulnerability is a far more virtuous one than that of Jesus. While he acts to preserve his honour, Jesus seems to remain passive while his honour and standing diminishes by the moment.

Once again, Jesus is ushered outside by the soldiers and brought before the crowd of Jewish leaders. The audience realises that things are coming to a point when Pilate goes to sit on his judgement seat.³⁷⁵ The irony of this moment is chilling. Here stands he whom the narrator introduced as God enfleshed, ready to be judged by humans. As before, Pilate introduces Jesus to the crowd. However, this time he refers to him as their king. The crowd makes it clear that their alliance is not with this man, but rather with the emperor. Once again, the audience recognises the motivation behind the crowd's response, as there is no ground for alliance with this character based on ethos. No decent human being would pledge loyalty and kingship to a disgraced and passive victim. The tragedy of this moment is twofold: not only are the Jews giving Jesus up to be crucified, but they disown "their messianic hopes" by referring to Caesar as their only king (Köstenberger, 2009:117).

A crowd member remarks that these happenings are occurring on the day of preparation for the Passover, which makes it the day on which the lambs are slaughtered in the temple (Stibbe, 1993:192).³⁷⁶ This connection rings a bell as the audience is reminded of John's identification of Jesus as the lamb that takes away the sins of the world (1:29, 36). If this is true, the end of this trial does not look very favourable for Jesus.

³⁷⁴ Bruner (2012:1090) even goes so far as to say that "careerism turns out to be Pilate's real god". When considering the unpacking of the first-century Mediterranean world in ch.4, Pilate's protection of his own career, power, and honour seems like the obvious thing to do. Ray (2002:336) puts it as follows: "Possible disgrace is too great a price [for Pilate] to pay for defending the truth." Moreover, Pilate was widely known as a man who "tried to hide his flaws under the shows of stubbornness and brutality" (Carson, 1991:590). The human tendency to avoid vulnerability is thus clear in Pilate's conduct.

³⁷⁵ The Hebrew term *Gabatta* can be translated as "high place" (Kanagaraj, 2013:184). Bruce (1983:363) describes the judgement seat as a "raised platform on which a Roman magistrate sat in the discharge of his judicial functions". Normally, the whole trial would have been conducted from this judgement seat.

³⁷⁶ The crowd member's exclamation regarding the day of preparation for the Passover is somewhat awkward. Nevertheless it is not improbable that such a remark could have come from the crowd as there was haste to get the crucifixion over and done with before the Sabbath of the Passover (cf. 19:31).

Pilate makes a judgement pronouncement without saying a word about Jesus' fate. He only introduces Jesus to the crowd as their king. To the crowd, as well as the audience, Jesus looks anything but royal: this "bedraggled prisoner was the antithesis of all that kingship meant" (Morris, 1995:709). The audience is fully aware of the implications as Jesus is handed over. At this point, the chances of him making an escape are incredibly slim. The dramatic spark of Jesus' probable release has simply died down and the Johannine plot seems to take a dive back into Jesus' darkest hour.

It is at this point where the audience, together with the protagonist, experiences a rapid loss of hope (See Fink, 2014:26). However, as the plotline of the Johannine drama is dipping into the darkest hour, the anticipation of a spark to set the story in a new direction and pull the protagonist back into the fight is still alive (2014:27). Moreover, the drama has not yet reached its point of the most concentrated sense of conflict, where the hero engages in the final battle. While audience members might be divided in terms of their expectation of the hero's fate, the drama is anything but over.

The last thing the audience sees is Jesus being taken away into the crowd by the soldiers (Köstenberger, 2004:541) as Pilate turns his back and walks away. The lights begin to fade, but the insults and mockery, as well as violent handling of Jesus, are still audible long after the stage has been left dark and empty. All is silent and dark after a while. The audience waits with disquiet...

6.3.2. *Jesus is crucified (19:17-30)*

SETTING: The scene begins with bright and warm lights. It is just after noonday.³⁷⁷ The center of the stage is elevated by rostrums representing the last climb and peak of a hill (the rest of the hill is assumed to be off stage). On the top are three wooden poles planted into the ground.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁷ See Jn. 19:14. The sixth hour would normally refer to noon. Therefore, the crucifixion followed this time of day.

³⁷⁸ According to tradition, the crucified only carried the horizontal beam (*patibulum*) to the place of execution, where the vertical beams were already inserted in the ground. After the individual's arms or hands were fastened to the horizontal beam, this piece was attached to the vertical pole by the use of a groove in the wood. Lastly, their legs and feet were attached to the vertical beam (Bruce, 1983:366; Harris, 2015:314; Ray, 2002:342).

AT RISE:

On the top of the hill are two men who are held by four SOLDIERS. They are not well-composed individuals, but rough criminals, cursing, spitting and scratching at the SOLDIERS who are holding them down. Some of the SOLDIERS on the hill are holding hammers and long nails. [17] JESUS staggers onto the scene (on the far left), carrying a heavy wooden beam, surrounded by a group of SOLDIERS and a large CROWD. JESUS is still bloody from the scourging and the audience can see he is severely fatigued as he collapses every now and then. He has been climbing this hill for a while and the heat of the sun seems to be intensifying his discomfort.

(JESUS is stumbling and moaning, struggling to climb the hill.)

SOLDIERS

(Shoving him, some mock him and spit at him.)

Come on! Hurry up!

(Sarcastically.)

[17] We have prepared the perfect spot for you here on Golgotha!³⁷⁹

(As JESUS reaches the top of the hill, he collapses.)

As Jesus' darkest hour is resumed, the Johannine stage opens as a place of complete disorder. It is a scene of overwhelming sights and sounds. From the cursing and crying of the criminals, to the abuse of the soldiers, and the mocking of the crowd, the auditive elements are overwhelming at this stage. Moreover, the stage represents a violent

³⁷⁹ Golgotha can be identified as a "higher place outside Jerusalem" (Kanagaraj, 2013:185).

sight. From where Jesus is walking, to where the criminals are being held, conflict is clearly visible and experienceable. While the physical conflict is overt, the inner conflict of the candidates for crucifixion is also heavily present on stage. Moreover, the spatial setting carries in itself so much gravity. It is named Golgotha, the place of the skull: a “gaunt picture of death” (Bruner, 2012:1099).

The audience recognises some of the faces in the crowd surrounding Jesus as Jewish leaders, as well as Roman soldiers, but also notices some new faces. These characters are clearly not there to make Jesus’ walk of shame easier. While some verbally mock him, others proceed to spit on him. His purple robe is covered in blood and dirt and he collapses every now and then from the loss of blood (Carson, 1991:609). Jesus also enters the scene with a prop: a heavy wooden beam, which he must carry to the place of execution. The audience recognises the beam and what it represents: it is essentially a symbol of execution which weighs heavily on the back of the protagonist (both literally and figuratively).³⁸⁰

At this stage, physical strength, resilience, and perfection³⁸¹ are absent from the characterisation and physical representation of ὁ λόγος. The audience is yet again plagued with a feeling of helplessness as the hero of the drama is struggling in a state of complete abandonment.³⁸² The audience would also recognise this as common practice, since the condemned were normally forced to carry their own cross before their crucifixion, irrespective of their physical degradation (Neyrey, 2009:412).

This physical struggle and shame is anything but a private affair. The audience realises that they are not the only spectators of this scene, but that the crowd on stage have become an audience of their own, who have come to be entertained by this public march to the place of crucifixion (Chapman, 2008:45). The great contrast between the audience on stage and the audience in front of the stage is staggering: to the one, this spectacle is a farce, and to the other, it is a tragedy. Moreover, the overwhelming presence of only antagonistic characters around Jesus is a traumatic thing to witness. The darkness, which the narrator introduced in the prologue, seems to have

³⁸⁰ See Styan (2000:31) for the importance of props as symbols.

³⁸¹ See §4.4.4.

³⁸² Although other Gospels differ from this account by referring to Simon of Cyrene, who carried Jesus’ cross for him, the director of the Johannine drama chooses not to portray this exchange. This emphasises Jesus’ struggle and the abandonment that accompanies it. According to Jervell (1984:55), this is something the director does on purpose in order to stress Jesus’ reality of loneliness.

manifested itself through various characters (the Jewish crowd and Roman soldiers in this scene) and has begun to dominate the stage at this moment, while the light is barely flickering.

(The four SOLDIERS take the two CRIMINALS and hold them down onto two wooden beams on the ground. Starting with one CRIMINAL, a SOLDIER swings a hammer downwards and slashes a nail through his wrist, pinning him to the wooden beam. The screech of the CRIMINAL breaks through all the other sounds on stage and blood gushes from his wrist. This horrendous deed is repeated as his other wrist is fastened to the beam.)

(Terrified, the next CRIMINAL tries desperately to loosen himself from the grip of the SOLDIERS, but he too is slammed to the ground and violently nailed to the wooden beam. With this, they are lifted up and fastened to the poles in the ground, exposing their nude and broken bodies,³⁸³ after which they are also nailed to the poles at their feet.)

(The SOLDIERS then take JESUS and shove him onto a wooden beam, ripping off the blood-stained robe, as well as his undergarment. As with the CRIMINALS before him, his wrists are violently nailed to the wooden beam.)

JESUS

(Releases a cry of pain.)

³⁸³ See Carson (1991:610) and Neyrey (2009:610) on the nudity of the crucified.

([18] With this, JESUS is lifted up and fastened to the vertical pole in the middle of the two CRIMINALS. One soldier takes his hammer and drives in the last nail just above JESUS' ankles. JESUS hangs naked and covered in blood, shivering and moaning from the pain.)

(The SOLDIERS and CROWD erupt in cheer and mockery).

([19, 20] PILATE enters with three signs.³⁸⁴ He fastens one sign above each of the three men's heads. The one above JESUS' head reads, 'Jesus, the Nazarene, the king of the Jews,' in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek.)

(Many members of the Jewish CROWD draw near to read the sign. They are offended by it and the CHIEF PRIESTS confront PILATE.)

CHIEF PRIESTS

[21] Pilate! You should not have written 'The king of the Jews,' but rather: 'This man said, "I am king of the Jews"'. .

PILATE

[22] What I have written, I have written.

(PILATE exits.)

The chaos of earlier has intensified and silence is nowhere to be found as multiple cries fill the stage (and probably the audience as well): pain and anger emulate from the criminals, anguish from Jesus, and humiliating shouts from the soldiers and crowd. The audience studies the three disfigured men on the crosses. From the inscriptions

³⁸⁴ Scholars are of opinion that Pilate most probably did not write the sign or attach it to the cross himself, but rather had it written and attached (Harris, 2015:314; Köstenberger, 2004:544; cf. the flogging in 19:1). Moreover, when considering the entire crucifixion account, there seems to be no sign of Pilate at the site of crucifixion. The exchange between Pilate and the Jews (vv.21-22) seems to have happened at a different location. However, for the sake of the flow of the drama and to avoid portraying this discussion in a new scene, this exchange will take place at the scene of the crucifixion.

above the heads of the two men on Jesus' side, they can be identified as criminals. They would be characterised as men who disrupted "the peace of the empire" (Chapman, 2008:44), probably bandits, slaves, rebels, revolutionaries, or prisoners of war (Neyrey, 2009:412).³⁸⁵ The audience is not at all surprised that these men are being executed. However, despite their criminal status, their explicit abuse and humiliation is shocking, and causes many audience members to cover their ears and eyes as they are pinioned to their crosses. Such degradation, nudity, and gruesome violence is certainly not something this audience envisioned when they were orientated in the prologue.

Together with the horror and shock, the audience does not understand Jesus' lack of struggle to get away before he is nailed to the wooden beam. Unlike the criminals before him, he does not struggle or fight back. The audience is on the edge of their seats, and many are probably finding themselves at a place where they are pleading with their hero to fight back: "Please, Jesus. You cannot let them overcome you like this! Don't you remember the promise that light will not be mastered by darkness?!"

Sadly, it is precisely the opposite that takes place as Jesus is essentially mastered by the soldiers who fasten him to the cross in a most ghastly manner. Each time the hammer comes down on one of the nails, the stage is filled with a cry of pain.³⁸⁶ The theatre is anything but quiet as the audience responds stridently to the explicit nature of that on stage.³⁸⁷ The scene is a crass paradox to the prologue: ὁ λόγος, the eternal one, the one who came to exete God, is hanging utterly helpless,³⁸⁸ broken,

³⁸⁵ Harris (2015:314) argues that these men were probably "freedom fighters like Barabbas".

³⁸⁶ Ray (2002:343) refers to Jesus' probable reaction to the nails being driven into his wrists and ankles as "exquisite anguish". The nails would be driven in where there were various tendons and nerves, causing an intense rush of pain. Moreover, gravity would add tension to the wounds as the nails were keeping Jesus on the cross. Bruner (2012:1103) criticises the portrayal of the crucifixion in some Gnostic gospels as creating the misleading impression of a painless execution. The Gospel of Peter is a prime example of this, stating that Jesus was "silent as having no pain" (4:10).

³⁸⁷ It would not be unrealistic to imagine some wailing from audience members (see Rhoads, 2010:178).

³⁸⁸ There are some scholars who would differ from this view point and argue that the Johannine depiction of the crucifixion, in fact, does not show Jesus to be helpless and truly vulnerable, since God is actually the one orchestrating the whole event (see Ashton, 2007:460-465; Neyrey, 2009:418-419,433; Thatcher, 2011:140) and that his death is indeed a noble one (Neyrey, 2001:275-276). While the Johannine narrator does illustrate the divine control and purpose in the act of Jesus' crucifixion, and, while the FG specifically portrays the crucifixion and death of Jesus as glorious (Neyrey, 2009:418), the fact that he suffers (physically, spiritually, mentally) and dies remains unchanged. Myers (2012:167) phrases this in an excellent way when she states that "the evangelist stresses the divine providence present even in Jesus' most vulnerable moment". The divine providence and even control does not take away from the fact that Jesus in flesh finds himself vulnerable and agonised.

humiliated, violated, naked,³⁸⁹ and alone on a cross among criminals. God, as the audience knows him, is nowhere to be seen.

While this was supposed to be a drama of God's glory, a "perfect expression of God's presence and power" (Harris, 2015:35), the audience is faced with a scandalous περιπέτεια as the drama is turning out to be an obscene play which seems to mock and degrade God to such a level that they cannot stand it.³⁹⁰ This is no moment of ἀναγνώρισις, since Jesus' promised divine identity is unrecognisable to the audience and a sense of antipathy has begun to overwhelm several audience members who do not recognise the one described in the prologue.

This is especially true when a Greek and Roman lens is cast on the event. For those audience members who are well versed in Roman literature, witnessing the protagonist on a Roman cross would denote utter shame and mockery, as Roman literature always portrayed crucifixion in a comedic or satiric way to mock the enemy (Brant, 2011:232). For most of these audience members, it is the first time that they are finding themselves on the side of the crucified and not on the side of the mockers. Their hero has become the joke of the play. Whether this protagonist can, in fact, still be worthy of divine characterisation is a question that each audience member will have to wrestle with for themselves.

Jesus has rightfully predicted that he will be lifted up (3:14; 8:28; 12:32). However, this has not transpired as the audience could have predicted. While Jesus is physically lifted up to hang on a cross, he is anything but exalted. Therefore, while the antagonistic characters' actions are far too vile for the audience to associate with, Jesus' failures at this stage is making it equally as hard for the audience to side with

³⁸⁹ Bruner (2012:1105) and Tombs (1999:104) criticise the fact that Jesus' nakedness is understated when the crucifixion is discussed or portrayed. Both argue that the Gospel writers refrained from mentioning the fact that Jesus was naked in order to spare him the humiliation, but that the nudity in these scenes cannot be denied. Brant (2011:252) argues along the same line by referring to historical interpretation, stating: "Christian apologists have resisted picturing Jesus naked upon the cross because they deem it too humiliating, but this was precisely the soldiers' objective". Tombs (1999:101) even argues that the Roman soldiers sought to emphasise the naked genitals of the crucified to illustrate his emasculation. There are those who argue that, due to the Jewish aversion to nudity, Jesus probably still had some underclothing on (Kanagaraj, 2013:187; cf. Köstenberger, 2009:546). However, the normal Roman custom for crucifixion entailed that the crucified were stripped naked (Kanagaraj, 2013:187; Neyrey, 2007:309; Tombs, 1999:101), and the narrator makes it clear that both Jesus' outer garment and undergarment were in the possession of the soldiers (19:23).

³⁹⁰ Neyrey (2007:302) comments on the shame of the crucifixion: "[B]eing stripped before all and fixed naked to a cross bring shock to the soul long before the body fails. Shame kills."

him. Perhaps this is the moment where some leave the theatre – after all, they were promised a drama of glory.³⁹¹

While some audience members walk out in dismay and disappointment, others remain seated, simply staring at the figure in front of them. His arms are spread wide open, making him immobilised and vulnerable to further abuse.³⁹² He is already “stripped naked and beaten to pulpy weakness” (Carson, 1991:610). Moreover, blood and sweat are not the only bodily fluids on Jesus’ body, but the loss of bodily control results in traces of urine and excrement on his legs and on the cross (Neyrey, 2009:412).³⁹³

The wooden beam, which was merely a prop a few moments ago, has become part of Jesus’ costume and characterisation at this stage. It has gained a life in itself in such a way, that the line between the prop and character has been blurred.³⁹⁴ Jesus essentially becomes one with the cross as he is characterised as *the crucified*. He now appears as a τέρας – a disfigured “monster” (Caspary, 2012:25).³⁹⁵ The stage is filled with laughter and insults as the soldiers proceed to mock Jesus.³⁹⁶ Moreover, other bystanders seem to be amused and entertained by this sorry sight.³⁹⁷ These bystanders are anything but few.

Another puzzling element is the sign above Jesus’ head. All audience members are able to read this sign, as it is in Hebrew, Latin, and Greek. The title is written in “the local vernacular, the official language, and the language of common international communication” (Ridderbos, 1997:609). It is thus set up in such a way that it will gain maximum publicity.³⁹⁸ This sign characterises Jesus as a Nazarene, and then,

³⁹¹ Stibbe (1993:193) uses this probable reaction of shock and disappointment to label the climax of the Johannine drama as an “ironic tragedy”.

³⁹² Jesus’ right arm, which is the symbol for masculine strength, is bound and disabled. Neyrey (2009:418) emphasises that this suggests a powerlessness which is shameful.

³⁹³ Ray (2002:332) criticises the fact that popular images of Jesus on the cross often portray him as “clean and undamaged, when in actuality he was mangled and broken, possibly beyond recognition”.

³⁹⁴ See Styan (2000:31) for the importance of props, and McKinney (2015:127-128) for more on the dramatic blurring of lines between props and their characters.

³⁹⁵ In the ancient Mediterranean context, the disfigured were often referred to as monsters (τέρατα in Greek and *prodigia* in Latin). The presence of such a person would evoke fear and unease, since it was often believed that these humans represented a bad omen for their families and πόλις at large (Caspary, 2012:25).

³⁹⁶ Josephus (1960, 5.451) retold how the Roman soldiers “amused themselves” by alternating the positions in which they crucified criminals.

³⁹⁷ According to Neyrey (2009:413), this was common practice in Roman crucifixions, which often served as a crude way of public entertainment.

³⁹⁸ Part of the public nature of the crucifixion was to serve as a warning to others (Bruce, 1983:369).

surprisingly, as the king of the Jews. The inscription stands in stark contrast to the cross (Bruner, 2012:1094).

On the one hand, the audience is confronted with a royal inscription regarding Jesus (which is in alignment with the narrator's characterisation of him in the prologue),³⁹⁹ and on the other hand, they are witnessing Jesus nailed to the cross in the most un-royal, un-divine, and undignified manner. This Messiah and king does not receive a triumphant throne to sit on, but a shameful cross to hang on (Dauer, 1972:250). This is an absolute oxymoron as "both royalty and criminality are here in one place and in one figure" (Bruner, 2012:1106).⁴⁰⁰ The purpose of this sign is to inform the public regarding the identity and crime of the offender, and to humiliate the crucified (Brant, 2011:251; Bruce, 1983:368).

The audience members are not the only ones to notice the sign, but many of the bystanders react to it. The Jewish leaders are the ones who confront Pilate on the wording of the sign and urge him to change it so that it would seem like Jesus claimed royalty for himself. The audience realises that the proposed inscription from the Jews would not portray the truth. Not once in the Johannine drama has Jesus claimed to be the Jewish king (Neyrey, 2007:306).⁴⁰¹ On the contrary, the audience remembers Jesus resisting being enthroned earlier in the drama (6:14-15). In spite of being false, this accusation of Jesus claiming royal identity is humiliating. It implies that he claimed an honour and ranking for himself that was not recognised by others.⁴⁰² A form of dramatic irony is present as the audience knows that this accusation is untrue, yet so many on stage claim it to be the truth. Jesus does not set the record straight, but hangs helplessly in the face of false accusation and dishonour, with not even one character on stage defending him.

³⁹⁹ Although the prologue does not refer to Jesus as royal or kingly, he is described as divine and the title Χριστός (1:17) includes ideas of royal and political power.

⁴⁰⁰ This oxymoron creates tension, which, according to Brant (2011:13) is characteristic of the drama.

⁴⁰¹ Jesus explicitly denied having an earthly kingdom after being asked by Pilate whether he is the king of the Jews (18:36). He seems to allude to an alternative kingdom in his answer to Pilate ("My kingdom is not of this world"), however, he does not claim the political messianic kingdom known to, and anticipated by Jewish characters and audience members.

⁴⁰² "The religious leadership wants to make Jesus look like a pitiful rebel upstart or a religious megalomaniac" (Bruner, 2012:1101).

The spectacle continues:

(JESUS is hanging on the cross, trembling and moaning. His energy levels seem to be getting lower and lower. [23] The four SOLDIERS pick up his garment and divide it into four pieces - one for each of them. They take his tunic to do the same.)

ONE OF THE SOLDIERS

(Struggling.)

[23] It won't tear - it is seamless.

ANOTHER SOLDIER

[24] Why don't we cast lots for it?

(While the SOLDIERS cast lots, the sounds on stage fade somewhat, and the audience hears JESUS softly saying something.)

JESUS

[24] They divided my garments among them, and for my clothes they cast lots.

(The SOLDIERS pay no attention to JESUS' soft whimpers, nor do the other characters on stage.)

The audience is yet again reminded of Jesus' nudity as the soldiers seek to divide the garment that they have previously stripped Jesus of. Since honour is found in the clothing of an individual (Neyrey, 2009:416), Jesus' nudity represents a "loss of power to cover and defend [his] 'shameful parts'" (Neyrey, 2009:417). Not only was Jesus' clothing removed from his body, but it is now being removed from his possession by the soldiers. The audience is well aware that, according to Roman law, those performing an execution were allowed to confiscate the offender's minor possessions. This would represent the same action as the stripping of the bodies of those who were defeated in battle (Brant, 2011:252). Jesus is therefore looted by the soldiers, which emphasises defeat.

Jesus' words are heard by all audience members, but the Jewish members of the audience recognise it as coming from Psalm 22:19 (MT). In his weakest moment so far, Jesus turns to the recital of a Psalm. To those audience members who are familiar with the Psalm, this recital could perhaps prelude the dramatic spark which lifts Jesus out of his darkest hour and places him back in the battle for victory. They know that the Psalm follows with a plea for YHWH to quickly come and help (v.20), and to deliver the subject from the sword (v.21), sealed with the assurance that YHWH hears the cries of the afflicted (v.25) and that He will rule as king over the nations (v.29). If the Psalm is truly embodied in this scenario, Jesus will not be defeated by his enemies. While this allusion could stir a measure of hope in the hearts of some member of the audience, it does not change the reality of the cross and its humiliation.⁴⁰³

The overwhelming presence of antagonism towards Jesus is somewhat countered by the emergence of some of his loved ones on the Johannine stage:

(On the stage appears a group of four women and a man. The mocking of the bystanders, the crying and cursing of the criminals, and JESUS' moaning is still audible. [25] The five new characters approach JESUS with difficulty and tearful shock. They are JESUS' MOTHER, AUNT, MARY, wife of Clopas, and MARY MAGDALENE. With them is the BELOVED DISCIPLE. As they come close to JESUS, the group begins to weep. JESUS also tears up at the sight of his loved ones.)

MOTHER

(Distraught.)

Oh, my son.

⁴⁰³ This is an important point to emphasise. While the entire FG with its tragic ending is orchestrated by God, meaning that God's sovereignty was not overridden in the happenings, it is important to note that it does not take away from the fact that Jesus undergoes tremendous suffering, abuse, and humiliation. Brant (2011:257) puts it this way: "To say that Jesus does not suffer misses John's point..." Although Jesus asserts that he lays down his life and that it is not taken from him (10:18), his suffering is, according to Ridderbos (1997:578), "not for that reason any less real, and Jesus does not pass through it as if he were inviolable".

JESUS

(To his mother. He is struggling to speak at this stage, as he has to press himself upwards for each uttering.)⁴⁰⁴

[26] Mother... behold... your... son.

(To the BELOVED DISCIPLE.)

[27] Behold... your... mother.

BELOVED DISCIPLE

[27] I will take her into my household.

(The BELOVED DISCIPLE and JESUS' MOTHER embrace and weep together.)

This exchange has drawn the audience's attention away from the soldiers for a brief moment as the four women and disciple are noticed.⁴⁰⁵ The audience recognises Jesus' mother, and Mary Magdalene, as well as the beloved disciple. Two new characters are introduced: Jesus' aunt, and another Mary, the wife of Clopas. The distraught faces of these four women are in direct contrast to the facial expressions of the four soldiers, who are still next to the cross gloating in Jesus' suffering and scavenging on his belongings. The women and beloved disciple stand close enough to Jesus, in order that they may hear him. This act of coming close brings them face to face with his naked, battered, and soiled body.⁴⁰⁶

This is anything but a sentimental scene. Rather, the senses of Jesus' loved ones are overwhelmed with dread: the sight of a shivering mangled and naked body, accompanied by the smell of blood, sweat, and possibly urine and excrement, and the sounds of scorn, swearing, and groans of pain, are unavoidable. Moreover, except for the beloved disciple, those coming through as supporting characters for the

⁴⁰⁴ Bruner (2012:1108); Carson (1991:610).

⁴⁰⁵ Nthuping (2003:198) classifies the women and the disciple whom Jesus loved as background characters in this scene. While they represent important characters in the life of the protagonist, they do not influence the plot or distract from Jesus' dire situation.

⁴⁰⁶ The account of the Synoptic Gospels has these characters standing afar (cf. Mt. 27:55; Mk. 15:40).

protagonist are lowly women: individuals with very little political authority. They pose no threat to the antagonists and can simply stand and watch as the one they love wastes away.

Up to this point, Jesus' vulnerability and shame has been the entertainment of antagonists. Here, in an intensely vulnerable scene, Jesus in all his brokenness and defeat, becomes an object of pathos to those who love him dearly. The audience can relate to the five spectators in a sympathetic, and perhaps empathetic way, since they are confronted with the same sight of the protagonist. Not only is the sight painful for these four bystanders and audience, but the audience can imagine the discomfort on Jesus' behalf as his vulnerability has become the focal point of the scene. However, he does not ask his loved ones to look away, but engages them.

Jesus' words to his mother create a tragic reality and possibly crushes the hope of a dramatic spark for those audience members who are still holding on to it. By placing his mother in the care of the beloved disciple, Jesus is implying that he will not survive this crucifixion. With his allocation of the beloved disciple as his mother's new son, he is not only adding to her a son, but also implying that she will be robbed of the son she loved and raised. The audience realises that, with these words, Jesus is essentially asking her "to relinquish him as son" (Ridderbos, 1997:612). The relationship that Mary and Jesus shared as mother and son will be terminated in the most painful way possible: death.

Jesus' words to his mother and the beloved disciple are brief. This is understandable given the effort required for every utterance (Bruner, 2012:1108). Every time he speaks, the audience watches in anguish as he first has to pull himself up to take a breath (Carson, 1991:610), after which he uses every bit of energy to release each word from his dry mouth and chapped and bruised lips. More than being brief, Jesus' words are carefully chosen. Of all the things he could have uttered to his family, he leaves them with an underlying uncomfortable promise: you will remain vulnerable, needy, and dependent on one another.⁴⁰⁷ Both of you will need care from someone after I have gone. I have not established a rule and reign which will help you escape your need of others.

⁴⁰⁷ This is especially important in the case of Jesus' mother, who now not only finds herself financially vulnerable, but also socially (Neyrey, 2007:309).

The audience's hope for redemption has worn exceptionally thin by now. All the promises of glory, the characterisation of the hero as divine and eternal, and the prospect of him being the Jewish Messiah have come to this: a wrecked and conquered man who is barely alive – his ethos is as unconvincing to the audience as can be.

(JESUS' eyes close and reopen, like someone fighting not to fall asleep.)

JESUS

[28] I... thirst.

SOLDIER

(Derisively.)

Give him some sour wine.

([29] The SOLDIERS dip a sponge on a hyssop branch into sour wine and bring it to JESUS' mouth. He drinks of it. At this stage JESUS' movements are slow and irregular. It is clear that he is barely alive.)

JESUS

[30] It... is... completed

(With this, JESUS' head falls downwards, and he dies. While the SOLDIERS show no particular reaction, the CROWD roars and JESUS' loved ones collapse at his feet and break down in tears.)

(One by one the CROWD begins leaving the stage, followed by the SOLDIERS. In a matter of seconds, the stage is nearly empty. All that remains is JESUS' loved ones crying silently at the feet of his lifeless and naked

body and the two unresponsive
CRIMINALS hanging next to him.)

(The stage gradually darkens, until
only the crucified protagonist is
illuminated. Suddenly all is quiet.)

(BLACKOUT)

(END OF SCENE)

The apparent last scene of Jesus' life is emotion-filled. The audience is presented with various characters on stage: there are those who mock Jesus and take pleasure in his defeat, while there are others who mourn it. Among the audience members, some may find it easier to identify with the beloved disciple, who is witnessing the death of a friend, while others may sympathise or empathise with the mother of Jesus. It is not difficult to notice the helplessness on her face. Perhaps Jesus' words ("I thirst") takes her back to his infancy: a time where the helpless and vulnerable Jesus would cry from thirst and his mother would nourish him. This time around his mother is helpless. She cannot aid her son or relieve his suffering.

Some Jewish audience members recognise Jesus' words as a reference to Psalm 69:22 (MT), which can be classified as a "royal lament psalm" (Eklund, 2015:47), containing pleas for deliverance from foes (69:13, 19-20) and destruction (69:16). However, the psalmist's pleas for deliverance seem to fall on deaf ears, as death overcomes him, and this at the hands of his enemies.

Not only is Jesus lamenting,⁴⁰⁸ but the nature of his lament is profoundly material.⁴⁰⁹ This does not surprise the audience, who have witnessed him being interrogated, beaten, forced to walk a long way with a beam on his back, and, ultimately nailed to it, without being offered a single sip of water.⁴¹⁰ The irony is somewhat painful: Jesus, who has characterised himself as the living water in front of their very eyes (Jn. 4:10;

⁴⁰⁸ Eklund (2015:115) emphasises that the laments of Jesus on the cross be read and understood as "divine cries", which hints at the notion of Godself suffering on the cross.

⁴⁰⁹ Eklund (2015:47) comments that, for a Gospel often accused of docetism, the words uttered by Jesus before he dies are "surprisingly material" and "mundane", and that these words emphasise the humanity and materiality of Jesus' life and death.

⁴¹⁰ Ridderbos (1997:616) mentions thirst as "one of the most terrible torments of death by crucifixion". It was very common for the crucified to become exceptionally thirsty and dehydrated. Ray (2002:343) classifies Jesus' thirst as "burning and raging" after everything he has had to endure up to this moment.

7:37-38), is now subjected to the condition of thirsting, with no water in sight (Brant, 2011:253; Kanagaraj, 2013:188).⁴¹¹ The only relief for his thirst is a sponge of sour wine.⁴¹²

After accepting the wine, Jesus utters his last word(s), indicating that his mission has been completed.⁴¹³ To the audience's surprise, Jesus utters a phrase which seems to imply some accomplishment or success "at what may be considered the lowest point of his life" (Köstenberger, 2004:551). Could it be that Jesus thought this life and death to be one of accomplishment? What then did he accomplish? With this, Jesus bows his head and his body becomes still. The hero of the Johannine drama has succumbed to the ultimate fate of being flesh, as the life leaves his body and he "sleep[s] the sleep of death" (Bruce, 1983:374).⁴¹⁴

To an ancient Mediterranean audience, this death is not heroic nor beneficial, but one of defeat and ultimately dishonour (Neyrey, 2009:24). It is a slow and painful downfall accompanied by "bodily distortions", "loss of bodily control" (2009:413), and nakedness.⁴¹⁵ The action in the scene they just witnessed was centred around that which would "normally be physical humiliation of a prisoner" (Brant, 2011:232). The audience would recognise the crucifixion as "the most pitiable of deaths" (Thackeray & Feldman, 1926:202-203). It would certainly not be something to boast about, but would serve as an embarrassment (Käsemann, 1968:7). Unlike some ancient dramas, nature does not sympathise with the hero (see Stibbe, 1993:27):⁴¹⁶ there are no divine signs, no utterings from heaven, no natural disasters – just "the man" dying a gruesome and lonesome death.⁴¹⁷

⁴¹¹ The audience is confronted with the reality that the enfleshed God, who created everything, is having his needs unmet.

⁴¹² Or "cheap wine", according to Morris (1995:719).

⁴¹³ Morris (1995:720) adds that Jesus possibly accepted the wine to moisten his dry throat, since he is on the verge of speaking again.

⁴¹⁴ The death of a person who has been crucified could have been brought about by various means. While some assert that these individuals eventually died due to suffocation, since the position they were crucified in made it impossible to breathe out, scholars have more recently explored the possibility of death due to shock and trauma (Carter, 2013:93). Heart failure and brain damage have also been explored as possible causes of death on a cross (Köstenberger, 2004:543). For a brief overview of ancient literature on the medical causes of death due to crucifixion, see Cook (2014:430-435).

⁴¹⁵ The humiliation of nakedness and the slow death were institutionalised methods of ensuring that the crucified be robbed of any form of heroic suffering (Brant, 2004:243).

⁴¹⁶ The sympathy of nature with the downfall of the hero or protagonist is referred to as the "pathetic fallacy" (Stibbe, 1993:27).

⁴¹⁷ Cf. Mt. 27:51-52 (Jesus' death accompanied by the splitting of rocks, tearing of the temple curtain and raising of the dead), Mk. 15:38 (tearing of the temple curtain), and Lk. 23:44-45 (darkness and the

In this scenario, Jesus' body is mutilated and denied posthumous honours, as is fitting. Eternal glory [seems] out of the question and his end is unrelieved shame (Neyrey, 2009:16).

From a dramatic point of view, Jesus' death on the cross leaves an auditorium of particularly dissatisfied audience members. This scene has failed to provide a moment of recovery (spark) which would have brought Jesus back into the fight for triumph. Instead, the protagonist's darkest hour just grew darker to the point where the Johannine drama's plot has unravelled into something almost unredeemable. The tension among audience members has been wound too tight and no relief has been given. Moreover, the presence of the protagonist has completely disappeared, and the antagonists seem to reign supreme.

The rejection of the protagonist, which was introduced by the narrator as his Achilles heel, has become his downfall. The Johannine drama contains no observable arc (see Fink, 2014:49), as the protagonist has not progressed in glory and has not made the divine known to its audience. Instead, he has regressed to become nothing more than σάρξ and God seems to be hidden in his defeated and lifeless body. Before the audience hangs the corpse of a man who is deserving only of their pity.

The light has not shone in the darkness but seems to have been mastered by it.

6.4. The drama comes to an end

While the climax of the Johannine drama has not lived up to the expectations created by the narrator in the prologue and a majority of the audience probably find themselves disillusioned at this stage, the final curtain has not yet closed on the Fourth Gospel. The stage lights up again, with Jesus' disfigured corpse still hanging center of stage.

6.4.1. The body is pierced and removed (19:31-41)

A few soldiers enter the scene. They are sent by Pilate to break the legs of the crucified men, so that they could die and be removed from the crosses before the Sabbath.⁴¹⁸ These bodies, which are sights of vulnerability and defeat, are not appropriate

tearing of the temple curtain). Jervell (1984:56) states the reason for the absence of these events in the Johannine drama, is that, in the FG, "the spotlight is always on the person of Jesus". Brant (2004:243) makes a similar argument, stating that, "in the Fourth Gospel, all eyes are upon the body or corpse on the cross, and attention is paid to the signs of suffering that set Jesus apart from others".

⁴¹⁸ The breaking of the legs is commonly referred to as *crucifragium* and was done to hasten the death of the crucified (Schnelle, 1992:208).

attractions on the Sabbath (Ridderbos, 1997:618). They are unholy and un-whole and need to be disposed of to ensure the holiness and wholeness of this special day. When they get to Jesus, they see that he is already dead, and go on to pierce his side, from which blood and water flows. To the audience, there is nothing divine nor glorious about this scene as they are confronted with a body who is fully flesh and fully mortal.⁴¹⁹

After the soldiers leave, a man named Joseph enters the stage to take Jesus' body away. He struggles to get Jesus off the cross, ripping his wounds even further. Once Jesus is off the cross, Joseph picks up the lifeless body, covering himself in all the bodily fluids on Jesus' body, and struggles off to bury him. He meets a man half way, which the audience recognises as Nicodemus. The two men treat the corpse and lay it in a nearby tomb (19:39-41). They use spices to mask the stench (Brant, 2011:255) and myrrh to prevent the desiccation of the body (2011:256).

6.4.2. *The tomb (20:1-17)*

The scene begins with Mary Magdalene approaching the tomb before dawn. When she sees that the tomb is empty, she runs off stage. Moments later she returns with Peter and the beloved disciple. They find the linen with which Jesus' corpse had been wrapped but see no sign of Jesus. With this, the two disciples leave the stage. Mary remains at the tomb, weeping. Upon entering the tomb again, she sees two men inside it and explains to them that someone has taken Jesus' body. Upon turning around, she sees a man standing in the garden. When he says her name, she recognises this man as Jesus, who informs her that he will be ascending to his (and her) Father and God. He commands her to go and tell the others and she immediately runs off to tell the disciples that she has seen him (20:18). Finally, a dramatic spark has occurred, as the protagonist has re-entered the drama in a typical vindication scene often found in Greek and Roman literature (Köstenberger, 2009:113). With this re-entrance, the protagonist's presence reignites hope in the audience's heart: the light has come back to redeem himself in triumphant display!

⁴¹⁹ According to Schnelle (1992:209) the reference to blood and water is intended to emphasise the reality of the death of Jesus. Blood and water were typically seen as elements which constitute a human being and the reference to the fact that these preceded from the body of Jesus emphasises that Jesus died in full human form. The flesh embodied by Jesus is therefore genuine, "because it is mortal" (Lee, 2002:47).

6.4.3. *Jesus appears to the disciples (20:19-25)*

The scene opens with the disciples (except Thomas) gathering in a closed building. Suddenly, Jesus stands among them, saying: “peace to you.” Indeed, Jesus seems to have been raised from the dead – a sure sign of divinity comforting a distraught audience. However, the resurrected body of their hero is sobering. The disciples, as well as the audience, can see Jesus’ wounds, still raw from the painful crucifixion.⁴²⁰ He tells them that he is sending them and breathes on them, giving them the Holy Spirit. To the audience, this divine display fits uneasily into their notions of the divine as they are puzzled by the paradox of a broken and defiled body giving a spirit that is holy and from God. Moreover, God seems to be granting his Spirit to insignificant and powerless people, through a vulnerable body. How can the divine reside in such an un-whole body, and, after overcoming death, why has Jesus not healed himself from his wounds?

6.4.4. *Jesus reveals himself to Thomas (20:26-29)*

The setting repeats itself eight days later. This time Thomas is present with the rest of the disciples. Jesus appears in the exact same way as before, but immediately orders Thomas to come and feel his pierced hands and side. Ironically, upon feeling the tattered body of Jesus, the audience witnesses a moment of ἀναγνώρισις as Thomas refers to him as his Lord and God. Thomas’ confession implies that the broken body of Jesus is still the “carrier” of the presence of God (Ambrus, 2016:143). Thomas aligns himself with the narrator’s perspective of δόξα in the prologue after touching Jesus’ σάρξ.

6.4.5. *The narrator addresses the audience (20:30-31)*

In an interlude, the stage goes dark again as the narrator addresses the audience as narratees in a short monologue similar to the prologue, and reveals the director’s aim of the entire drama. The aim is that they believe that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of God, and that, by believing, they might have the good, abundant, and eternal life. While Jesus has miraculously been revived from death, he has left his opponents unscarred and he does not seem to be making any effort to display his power or redeem his honour in the πόλις. His horrific humiliation and death is still fresh in the

⁴²⁰ In the FG, the fact that his hands and side are marred with wounds is made very explicit (Brant, 2004:244).

memory of the antagonists and he seems to be doing little to erase it as they do not even know that he has risen. The audience is also still very much aware of the fact that his closest friends (apart from the beloved disciple) abandoned him in his darkest hour. His return after his rejection by them is not honourable and glorious. Moreover, his body is still broken and marred indicating that his physical brokenness and shame has not been taken away.

With this, the narrator introduces the final scene of the Johannine drama as one where Jesus will reveal himself to his disciples (21:1). This will be the last scene of the drama (*denouement*), which ought to help the audience “breathe and regroup” after the final battle and serves to illustrate how “the world has changed because of this story” (Fink, 2014:28). Moreover, this scene reflects on the hero’s life after the climax and sets the tone for how things will be after the drama has ended.

6.4.6. *The epilogue (21:2-25)*⁴²¹

The scene begins with the light of day beginning to break. The disciples had been fishing all night in lake Tiberias without catching anything. Jesus appears on the shore (although they do not recognise him) and orders them to cast their net on the other side of the boat. With this, they catch an abundance of fish. When the beloved disciple recognises Jesus, Peter takes off his outer garment, jumps into the water, and rushes towards Jesus on the shore, where a fire is burning. The other disciples bring the boat ashore and they all eat fish and bread together.

After the breakfast, Jesus asks Peter three times whether he loves him, and responds to Peter’s three yesses with the command that Peter care for and feed Jesus’ flock.⁴²² The audience is reminded of Peter’s three denials of Jesus before the crucifixion.⁴²³

⁴²¹ Scholars are divided in their approach to Jn. 21 and whether it was a later addition. See Carson (1991:665-668), who argues for an “originally integral Gospel”, for a thorough discussion of the arguments for and against a later addition. As mentioned earlier, whether the epilogue was added later or not is irrelevant for a drama analysis.

⁴²² The author uses ἀγαπᾷς (21:16-17) for the first two times and φιλεῖς (21:17) for the third time. Although φιλέω is generally regarded as a lesser form of love, these two seem to be used interchangeably throughout the Gospel without special meaning (cf. 5:20; 11:3, 5; 13:23; 14:21; 15:9; 16:27; 19:26; 20:2). Without underestimating the significance of these distinctive terms, it will not be exaggerated in this study.

⁴²³ Resseguie (2013:9) refers to clues within the text which connects various scenes with one another. In this instance, the charcoal fire (ἀνθρακιά, a word only appearing in Jn. 18:18 and 21:9), serves as décor to connect this moment to the scene where Peter denies Jesus, while warming himself at a fire. Not only is the spatial setting reiterated, but the temporal setting of early morning (dawn) is echoed (see 18:27).

Jesus does not punish Peter's earlier acts of rejection, but gives him the opportunity to rectify them by making himself vulnerable to Peter's rejection three more times. Moreover, Jesus orders Peter to make himself vulnerable and to tend to his followers with the metaphor of feeding sheep.⁴²⁴ Although used before by Jesus (Jn. 10:1-18), the metaphor of the Messiah's followers as sheep is profoundly unfortunate. Here the divine hero insinuates that he has not come to lead a powerful army, but a flock of sheep who will need care from the supporting character who denied the protagonist three times.

Jesus affirms that Peter will glorify him, however, before the audience can even form an expectation of triumph and power, Jesus turns the expected legacy of the Messiah on his head by revealing that God will be glorified, not by Peter's power, honour, or independence, but by his death. In this short scene, Peter essentially experiences a *περιπέτεια* of his own as he is revealed as "the character who in his hubris thinks himself strong only to find that he is weak", and whose "power to kill⁴²⁵ has been replaced with a vulnerability to death" (Brant, 2004:198). The audience, in a *here-we-go-again* fashion, realises that the drama of Peter's life, just as Jesus', will not be one of glory as they would define it.

The audience is left to grapple with the manifestation of God in this last scene: while Jesus has provided a miraculous abundance of fish, he has also presented himself as the humble one who serves,⁴²⁶ shares a meal, opens himself up to be wounded by a friend, and promises a kingdom *sans* earthly power.

The lights on the stage begin to fade until only a narrow spotlight is left of the beloved disciple (τὸν μαθητὴν ὃν ἠγάπα ὁ Ἰησοῦς – 21:20, 24). All other characters are paused, and in a pause, the beloved disciple stands up and faces the audience to deliver a monologue.⁴²⁷ In a self-conscious manner he reveals that he is the mysterious narrator.⁴²⁸

⁴²⁴ This is essentially a call "to love in the face of uncertain reciprocation", as "the one who feeds Jesus' sheep extends his hand at his own peril" (Brant, 2004:230).

⁴²⁵ Jn. 18:10.

⁴²⁶ Carson (1991:671) points out that Jesus serves his friends by meeting "their tiredness after a night of toil with a hot breakfast".

⁴²⁷ See §3.5.4. for a discussion of the pause.

⁴²⁸ The audience would recognise this self-conscious style as typical of the Greek theatre. The aim thereof would be to indicate that the play has come to an end, reached its goals, and that the audience ought to applaud (Brant, 2004:65).

This revelation takes the audience by surprise. This is the disciple who journeyed with Jesus through his moments of tension and reward, who saw every act of antagonism towards the protagonist, who leaned back against Jesus at the last supper, saw him betrayed, taken captive and interrogated, and physically degraded. Moreover, this is the only disciple who saw Jesus' bleeding and broken naked body become one with the cross and transform into a corpse before his very eyes (19:26-27). He heard Jesus' painful sobs and smelt the blood, sweat and other bodily fluids on the scene. The revelation of the narrator's identity presents the audience with a shocking paradox: the one who has insisted on Jesus' divinity and glory, the voice whose words in the prologue often seemed out of touch with the happenings in the Johannine drama, is the one who has witnessed Jesus' vulnerability the strongest.

6.5. Conclusion

The process of witnessing the story unfold from the glorious prologue to the flesh-baring climax, has been anything but easy for the culturally-conditioned hypothetical audience. The director has provided the audience with carefully selected information, which has created various expectations regarding the protagonist and plotline from the beginning of the drama (see Keuris, 1996:53). When these expectations come to fulfilment, the audience's viewing experience can be deemed satisfactory. A satisfied audience will thus enjoy a drama which answers and explains various uncertainties and questions that they might have in order to resolve the conflicts on stage and the tension in the auditorium.

However, to the hypothetical audience of the Johannine drama, the story has unfolded in what could only be referred to as a messy tale full of unresolved tension and unanswered questions. It is the drama of God willing to experience being stripped, beaten, humiliated, and defeated, yet, it is God supposedly glorified. It might not be unlikely that a general sense of dissatisfaction may be found among the audience as the Johannine drama confronts them with an anti-climax (see Keuris, 1996:53).⁴²⁹

The director has presented them with a protagonist with whom they find it difficult to associate due to his lack of triumph and his overt vulnerability (See Styan, 1975:228-229). Where it was easy to associate with the protagonist at first, the Johannine climax has evoked strong feelings of alienation and antipathy between the audience and their

⁴²⁹ See §3.5.5. for more on the anti-climax.

hero. Although the protagonist's darkest hour was reversed with a resurrection, it was not redeemed.⁴³⁰ There was no glorious battle, no victory, and seemingly no divine display in the life and death of ὁ λόγος.

While the antagonist (ἡ σκοτία) and protagonist never really faced off, various characters within the drama (such as the crowd, Jewish leaders, Roman soldiers, and Judas) took on the role of antagonists. None of these characters are seen again after they victoriously kill the protagonist, and he does nothing to avenge himself as an honourable man would. Moreover, the *denouement* has not provided closure, leaving the audience with a more open-ended ending (or "open dramatic structure" – Keuris, 1996:54), in which they will have to labour hard to find satisfactory meaning and become the implied or ideal audience.

The Johannine drama has confronted the audience with a hero and plotline displaying vulnerability. Moreover, this hero leaves behind a vulnerable group of followers to whom he provides no promise of a triumphant *ever after*. The narrator also asks the audience to do a very vulnerable thing in placing their faith in this protagonist and his display of God's glory. In order for the hypothetical audience to become the implied or ideal audience, they will need to bring their experience of the drama into conversation with the director's point of view. The next (and final) chapter of this dissertation will seek to explore this struggle among the first-time hypothetical audience, but also among other audiences, including the (vulnerable) Johannine community and contemporary communities.

⁴³⁰ It is important to note that the suffering, humiliation, and death of Jesus is redeemed by its soteriological and eschatological implications, but to an audience which does not yet believe, these implications are not yet known.

6.6 Excursus – John 11:17-45

Although it does not fit the scope of this study to do a thorough exegesis on this scene, it serves the study (and perhaps a further study) to briefly highlight this part of the drama, as it stands out in a dramatic sense and carries forth the theme of vulnerability in a rhetorically powerful way.

The first element to explore is the strange characterisation of Jesus in this part as the director creates an apparent contradiction between Jesus' absence in the moment of distress and his love for Lazarus, Martha, and Mary. In some way, this scene merges together these two paradoxical realities. Moreover, Jesus' reaction to the sorrow of Lazarus' death is surprising, as he promises Martha that Lazarus will be raised from the grave (vv.22-26), but is still "deeply moved in his spirit and greatly troubled" (v.33).

The reference to Lazarus as the one whom Jesus loved (v.3) and Jesus' reference to him as "our friend" (ὁ φίλος ἡμῶν; v.11), identifies Lazarus as a significant supporting character to ὁ λόγος and adds depth to Jesus' pain and suffering. In this moment of grief, Jesus illustrates something profound regarding the reality of loving dearly, and being loved, which opens both individuals up to the heart-breaking reality of loss.⁴³¹ The audience witnesses Jesus being "emotionally affected" (Hakola, 1999:243) as he is confronted with the absolute worst turnout of a loving friendship: the death of the beloved.

Jesus does not only experience the pain of loss but is moved by the pain of others whom he loved. Hakola (1999:235) therefore describes this scene as one filled with "great emotions". Jesus does not rebuke those in grief (Rensberger, 2009:347), but shows empathy and enters into their sadness by weeping alongside them (Voorwinde, 2011:181).

When facing the starkness of the tomb of his friend, and surrounded by the grief of others, Jesus experiences the normal human response to such loss (Coloe, 2007:91).

⁴³¹ Saying this, I am reminded of the many conversations concerning the reality of the departure of loved ones with my promoter and mentor, Prof Elna Mouton. Prof Mouton, in reference to my own marriage (which was also 'birthed' simultaneously with this study), encouraged me to love bravely and deeply, to be present and give myself fully, in spite of the reality that my husband and I's togetherness was, as McHugh (2009:53) states it, "impermanent". To love is indeed a brave choice and to love fully and deeply even more so. This is ultimately vulnerability: to be open to be wounded.

In line with John 1:18, this display of brokenness is profound. The audience is not only presented with a man who weeps, but with a *God who weeps*. In other words, Jesus' response to Lazarus' death not only represents the "normal human response" (Coloe, 2007:91), but illuminates something of the *divine response* in that moment.⁴³² The God of the Johannine drama is a God who loves deeply and vulnerably, and who is moved by sorrow,⁴³³ even while knowing that that sorrow will be turned around. Jesus illustrates that faith, although not being compatible with despair, "is no stranger to tears" (Mussner, 1967:15).

One might believe that the audience would give Jesus a standing ovation at this marvellous act of bringing his friend back to life. But this does not erase the broken and grieving Jesus that they witnessed mere moments ago. Even after Lazarus' resurrection, the signs of brokenness would still be visible on Jesus' face: eyes still red and swollen and cheeks still damp. This is a scene shaped by the conflict between life and death (Thompson, 2008:236). Lincoln (2008:218) rightfully remarks that this scene characterises the divine in a fascinating way. Jesus reveals himself, and God, not only in the triumphant moment of raising Lazarus from the dead, but in every bit of grief and every tear shed for his beloved friend. The God who cries: this is an image the audience ought not to forget.

⁴³² This paints a picture of a God who is complex and multi-dimensional (Voorwinde, 2011:213).

⁴³³ This notion is probably one of the biggest challenges to the God-images of the audience, where ideas were fostered that God could not suffer or be affected by the happenings of this world (§4.4.11).

7. Embracing Vulnerability

How exactly, for example, does the Gospel of John as composition-in-performance not just lead people to believe in Jesus but also evoke in the audience the actual experience of eternal life? (Rhoads, 2006a:131).

7.1. Introduction

In the previous two chapters, we embarked on a journey of experiencing the Johannine drama as a performance in front of a first-time hypothetical audience. The drama analysis paid special attention to the prologue and crucifixion scenes, as these represent crucial moments in the Fourth Gospel when viewed through a lens of drama.⁴³⁴ The audience was introduced to the protagonist and hero of the drama and prepared for his glorious display of the divine. However, the unfolding of this divine display seemed to have been through a life which does not shy away from tragedy, and the climax of the Johannine drama appeared to be painfully contrary to the probable expectations of a divine hero in the imagination of the hypothetical audience. This chapter aims to explore the rhetorical effect(s) of the drama by reflecting on its plot and outcome from the perspective of the hypothetical audience in order to make sense of the director's point of view and move closer to becoming the implied audience.⁴³⁵

7.2. A perplexed audience

In any drama, the satisfaction of the audience is an important element to consider. As discussed in chapter three, the audience's satisfaction largely depends on whether the conflicts in the drama have been resolved or not (Keuris, 1996:53). A drama which provides sufficient closure (usually in the *denouement*), mostly leaves behind a satisfied audience, where dramas with unresolved tension or a protagonist with whom the audience finds it difficult to associate (Styan, 1995:228), leave behind a perplexed audience who need to make sense of the drama for themselves (Keuris, 1996:53).

Considering the above, and taking the drama analysis of the selected scenes into consideration, the Johannine drama leaves its audience wanting. Not only has the

⁴³⁴ See §§5.1.1. & 5.1.2. for the motivation of the focus on these scenes.

⁴³⁵ Rhoads (2009:91-92) identifies the implied rhetoric effect on an audience as the final element to explore in an imagination of a performative event.

hero (seemingly) done nothing to confront the antagonist(s) and avenge himself, but his life is one of paradox and contradiction. After ὁ λόγος is announced as eternal, divine, and honourable, the plotline seems to unravel, creating a reality which is mortal,⁴³⁶ fleshly, and shameful in the culturally conditioned eyes of the hypothetical audience (Nthuping, 2003:192). Not only do many characters fail to recognise ὁ λόγος for who he is,⁴³⁷ but he shows humility, is captured, humiliated, displaced, abandoned, abused, and, ultimately, killed. The audience has become part “of what it otherwise cannot see or, in some cases, cannot normally bear to look at” (Brant, 2004:71), by essentially being confronted with a protagonist from whom they feel alienated due to the imperfections of his fate (see Styan, 1975:228-229).

Despite some warning signs in the prologue, the Johannine climax unfolds as a display of divinity which seems unthinkable to an audience who equates divinity with triumphant display. The culturally conditioned interpretation of the glorious tiding that the darkness will not master the light (1:5) and that ὁ λόγος will embody a good and abundant life which reflects the divine order, seems difficult to reconcile with the fact that Jesus was mastered by his enemies and dies a vulnerable death. Imagining ὁ λόγος through the narrator’s prologue has proven to be far easier than actually *seeing* his life unfold on stage.⁴³⁸

At the climax, where the hero is supposed to engage in triumphant battle, he surrenders in a powerless and shameful manner. It is there where the initial eagerness among the audience to become children of God (see 1:12-13) might fade as God seems somewhat “crossed out by the cross” (Caputo, 2006:42) through Jesus’ “miserable death” (Cook, 2014:418). The various objections by characters to Jesus and his revelation of God within the drama probably mirror very real responses from

⁴³⁶ “Jesus comes in the flesh and as a result *dies* in the flesh” (Brant, 2011:257, my italics).

⁴³⁷ Köstenberger (2009:182) comments on this rejection of the protagonist: “The world should have welcomed its Creator as a familiar friend, indeed, as a hero, Saviour, and Sovereign; instead, it showed itself alien and antagonized.”

⁴³⁸ McCracken (1994:157-158) makes the risky remark that, in the FG, it seems easier for characters and the audience to believe in Jesus when only hearing of him. However, when seeing him, his appearance and conduct become a stumbling block. Compare, for instance, the narrator’s glorious description of ὁ λόγος in the prologue with the event where the audience sees him hanging helplessly on the cross. The reality of Jesus being the light and creator, containing life, and being divine suddenly becomes hard to digest.

audience members (Hakola, 1999:223).⁴³⁹ A paradox ensues as the drama which set out to display the glory of God has unfolded as a tragedy (Bruner, 2012:28).⁴⁴⁰

The audience would recognise a tragedy as a drama which deals with “sorrowful or terrible events” in a serious way (Carver, 2009:20) and focusses on the suffering of a great figure (Sommerstein, 2002:15).⁴⁴¹ The hero of a tragedy usually suffers an unfortunate fate due to their own foolish and immoral actions (Worthen, 2000:8) or boastful pride (*hybris* – Fink, 2014:61). The tragedy therefore served as the παιδεία of the πόλις in the first-century Mediterranean as it was performed with the intent of educating citizens (Croally, 2005:64), using the immoral or foolish behaviour of the hero as an example to bring ethical issues to the fore (Worthen, 2000:13). The rhetorical effect of such a portrayal would be that the audience distances themselves from the protagonist, which leads to the examination of the self and serves to reinforce the opposite behaviour than that of the protagonist (Croally, 2005:67). Those on the side of the antagonist berating Jesus for making himself equal to God (5:18; 10:33; 19:7), labelling him as evil-doer (18:30), handing him over to be killed (18:35), choosing a bandit over him (18:40), flogging and mocking him (9:1, 3), and condemning him to crucifixion (19:6, 15) are thus creating a plausible point of view for the audience to identify with based on Jesus’ performance.

On the other side, the audience is confronted with the incomprehensible point of view of the director of the tragic Johannine drama, as s/he seems to dress the horrific events of the climax in glorious terms and exhorts the audience to make a choice *for* the protagonist (1:12; 20:30-31). Instead of adjusting his/her point of view to that of failure and shame, the director maintains that the glory of God has just been displayed through that which the audience witnessed (1:14; 12:23-25, 27-28; 17:1; see Brant, 2004:234), essentially collapsing the suffering and glorification of Jesus into one another (Loubser, 2013:175). Moreover, the director of the Johannine drama marries glory and tragedy by ironically connecting the revelation of the glory of God more

⁴³⁹ Thompson (1988:122) emphasises this by stating that the issue for the characters and audience is not necessarily the denial of Jesus’ state of flesh, but the failure to see that the enfleshed Jesus fully reveals God.

⁴⁴⁰ Although the pain in a tragedy is felt by the characters on stage, it is shared by the audience and often intensified because it cannot necessarily be explained (Styan, 2000:78).

⁴⁴¹ In terms of modern genres for film and play, the film genre of drama would also be relevant. Dirks (2017) defines plays and films that fall under the genre of drama as “serious, plot-driven presentations, portraying realistic characters, settings, life situations, and stories involving intense character development and interaction”.

strongly to Jesus' death on the cross than to the miraculous signs performed by him (Thompson, 1988:82).⁴⁴² The audience members are therefore caught off guard as the glory promised by the narrator in the prologue, seems to have unfolded as a "crucified glory" (Köstenberger, 2009:186), which finds its ultimate manifestation in the crucifixion scene, where neither fame (κλέος) nor honour (τιμή) are present (see Brant, 2004:262). As Jesus' vulnerability intensifies, the director seems to insist that God's glory not only remains present, but increases (Carson, 1991:609).⁴⁴³

This glory is essentially "oxymoronic because it is attached to [Jesus'] shame, namely his crucifixion" (Neyrey, 2007:45). The Johannine director seems to be redefining the term (Larsson, 2008:84) as the glory of God becomes exegeted in, what Root (2014:111) would describe as the "perishing Jesus". His life and fate have not been congruent with the audience's expectations of God or the promised Messiah (Placher, 1994:10), yet his life and death in the flesh are regarded as a manifestation of the glory of the divine (Ashton, 2007:461). Jesus dies with the knowledge that he has been glorified, and that he will be glorified again (12:28; Brant, 2004:229).

What makes the audience's engagement with the Johannine drama even harder is that the genre does not fit the content. The choice of tragedy for a drama in which God is revealed is inappropriate to say the least – especially in the case where God becomes the object of the tragedy. Moreover, the audience was not adequately prepared for this by the prologue. Where tragedies commonly began with a catastrophic error on the side of the protagonist (Styan, 2000:68), the Johannine prologue paints the protagonist in a virtuous way. One might, therefore, imagine feelings of disappointment, offense, and a sense of trauma from the side of the first-time audience (see Thompson, 1988:14).⁴⁴⁴ If becoming the implied audience involves

⁴⁴² The Johannine director connects ὁ ὥρα (the hour) to Jesus' death (e.g., 12:27; 13:1), while, at the same time, connecting ὁ ὥρα and δόξα (e.g., 12:23, 28; 17:1, 3-4). Nouwen (1990:98) therefore asserts: "Every time Jesus speaks about being glorified and giving glory, he always refers to his humiliation and death. It is through the way of the cross that Jesus gives glory to God, received glory from God, and makes God's glory known to us. The glory of the resurrection can never be separated from the glory of the cross."

⁴⁴³ The Johannine director does not seem to attempt to *prove* that glory is to be found in Jesus' vulnerability, but simply *assumes* it throughout the portrayal of the drama (Thompson, 1988:122). Dunn (1993:210) argues that the manifestation of God becomes clearer when Jesus becomes flesh, and even more when he dies. Thompson (1988:119) makes a similar point when referring to Jesus' "human life and death" as "the place of revelation".

⁴⁴⁴ McCracken (1994:145) refers to the FG as a "narrative of offense" – not only to its characters, but also to its audience (1994:ix). Rhoads (2012:30) emphasises that ancient audiences were very involved in the performances they witnessed and that they would often respond with great emotion.

adapting to the point of view of the director (Lategan, 2009:88; Powell, 2010:242; Tolmie, 1999:8), the audience will have to make sense of the Johannine drama in an alternative way. In order to do this, they will need to reconcile the tragic and vulnerable anti-climax of the Johannine drama with the director's point of view of glory (δόξα), which s/he seems to be gradually massaging in throughout the drama.⁴⁴⁵

7.3. Becoming the implied audience: vulnerability as part of eternal and abundant life

When attempting to make sense of the Johannine drama and its point of view, the rhetorical devices used by the director become important. In his discussion of the necessary elements of the drama, Aristotle (1995, 1450a; 1452b) identifies *περιπέτεια* (reversal) and *ἀναγνώρισις* (recognition; discovery). He also refers to the importance of calamity and suffering in the tragic play. In a tragedy, the reversal of the fate of the protagonist or hero (due to some moral error) results in his suffering, accompanied by the recognition of his true identity, which evokes pity or fear among audience members (1452b). In a counter-cultural sense, the Johannine director portrays the reversal of *ὁ λόγος'* fate amidst no error on his side, resulting in his suffering (while the antagonists remain unharmed), and then exhorts the audience to recognise him as powerful and divine in order to have meaningful and eternal life (20:31).

The director thus uses an unthinkable reversal by implying that Jesus' vulnerable humiliation is ultimately his glorification (Brant, 2004:42-44).⁴⁴⁶ Jesus' suffering and death is never portrayed as a fate gone wrong, but rather a fate fulfilled (19:30). While tragedies are known for their portrayal of the downfall of a character to educate the audience regarding the character's moral misconduct (Halliwell, 2005:395), the Johannine drama omits a negative value-judgement on the character and conduct of Jesus and celebrates him. Unlike the archetypal tragic hero, Jesus does not regret the life he lived and the choices he made (17:4; 19:30; See Brant, 2004:226). He is characterised as the one who adequately comes to reveal God, and the audience is urged to embrace him and believe in him. Moreover, unlike the usual tragic hero, Jesus

⁴⁴⁵ Scenes such as the washing of the disciples' feet (Jn. 13:1-17) gradually reveal this strange, alternative glory.

⁴⁴⁶ Brant (2004:48-49) provides many examples of *περιπέτεια* in the FG. The shift from Jesus being accepted as a divine worker of signs to him being rejected as a sinner and blasphemer counts as a negative instance, where Mary's turn from mourning to rejoicing at the grave of Jesus (20:11-18) serves as a positive instance.

does not try to avoid or run from suffering, but endures it (perhaps even chooses it) as part of the Father's will (12:27).

Therefore, unlike most tragedies, the Johannine drama does not aim to encourage audience members to *distance* themselves from the protagonist and his fate in order to dissociate from their own vulnerabilities (Halliwell, 2005:395), but to make a choice to recognise and embrace God's self-revelation.⁴⁴⁷ The challenge of ἀναγνώρισις (recognition) has therefore not only been presented to the characters within the drama, but has been extended to its very own audience members. Nielsen (2010:354) refers to the set-up of the Fourth Gospel which only makes ἀναγνώρισις possible at the end (the resurrection), and not in the middle, especially climax, of the drama, since the audience would struggle to associate with the protagonist in his darkest hour.⁴⁴⁸ However, the vivid use of glory language in the middle, specifically relating to the climax, challenges the audience to a place of ἀναγνώρισις, in the midst of the darkest hour.

The Johannine drama also portrays moments of ἀναγνώρισις from supporting characters at strange moments, such as Peter's confession of belief in Jesus (6:67-68), which comes at a time when Jesus is rejected (and therefore shamed) by the crowd who was following him. Moreover, while it might be easier for the audience to recognise Jesus as the divine hero after the resurrection, the *denouement* (in typical tragic style – see van Aarde, 2009:387) does not resolve all the tension or answer the audience's questions. The protagonist does not confront the antagonist(s), but appears to his supporting characters in isolated instances without giving much explanation or hope for a future victory. The Johannine characters and audience must choose to put their faith in Jesus amidst the open ending of the Gospel.

The choice that the audience must make also goes beyond how they see Jesus, but confronts how they relate to him. Ὁ λόγος has become the main recipient of their pity since he did not embody a good or abundant life according to first-century Mediterranean standards (MacIntosh, 1996:415). However, the director emphasises

⁴⁴⁷ Hakola (1999:225) argues that the entire Johannine plot revolved around whether Jesus' revelation of God is accepted or rejected.

⁴⁴⁸ Fink (2014:26) reflects on the darkest hour of the hero or protagonist of a drama and exclaims, "how awful if the story were to end there".

that there is no life, nor quality of life without him (1:4; 6:51, 58; 10:10; 17:2-3).⁴⁴⁹ This leaves the audience with a difficult question to answer: if no moral error is to be found with which to explain the suffering and adversity of Jesus, and if he displayed God as he is, then why *did* the drama of God unfold as a tragedy and why did Jesus suffer? If Jesus' vulnerability cannot be pinned on him stepping out of divine character (i.e. sinning or ceasing to be God), then perhaps his vulnerability needs to be *reconciled* with the divine experience and revelation.

It is no mystery to the audience that (like other ancient tragedies – Allan, 2005:76), the Johannine drama exists to say something of the divine (1:18; 14:9; Dunn, 1993:210). The director identifies the audience as partners in the activity of witnessing the δόξα of God (1:14). In other words, they are witnesses of “the radiancy which surrounds God’s person” (Jervell, 1984:59; see Lee, 2002:34). Δόξα represents “God’s reality and his real presence, as it is manifest to humankind” (Smith, 1995:122; see Thompson, 2001:123). Jesus is therefore essentially characterised as God in the Johannine drama (McKnight, 2009:101), meaning that his life was a trustworthy display of who God is (Culpepper, 1983:113; Dunn, 1993:203; Thompson, 2001:7).

Contrary to the expectations of an audience immersed in ancient Mediterranean values, the Johannine drama does not portray a power-hungry God or “unmoved mover” (Thompson, 2001:239), sent to receive sacrifices and who redeems himself by unleashing his “undifferentiated power upon human beings” (Brant, 2004:261), but a humble God who himself *becomes* the sacrifice and chooses to suffer under the misuse of power.⁴⁵⁰ The audience is confronted with a scandalous Jesus who does not live up to the contextual standards of being a hero (McCracken, 1994:ix). Instead of God being exalted as only “macho”, Jesus also enacts him as a “suffering Messiah” (Bruner, 2012:1070). The characterisation of Jesus as a hero who is both glorious and vulnerable, who is introduced in triumphant language, yet becomes the object of pity in a tragedy, reveals something of the director’s point of view on the divine and his

⁴⁴⁹ Styan (1975:109) emphasises the importance of drama analysis to uncover and explore the life that a drama was supposed to give to its audience. Johnson (1999:531) connects the human response to Jesus and the human response to God. When a commitment is made to Jesus, the audience chooses “life, light, and truth – [and] God”.

⁴⁵⁰ McHugh (2009:54) comments that σάργξ is also connected to the notion of sacrifice. “The divine life strides onto the earthly stage and will rescue its entire cast by rewriting their script in a wholly unexpected and self-sacrificial way” (Cummins, 2008:67).

relationship to vulnerability.⁴⁵¹ In a counter-cultural way, the Johannine director seems to imply that vulnerability was part of the glorious life of ὁ λόγος and that, at Jesus' vulnerable moments, he did not cease to perform God (Placher, 1994:15; Wedderburn, 1999:226).⁴⁵²

This essentially implies that the vulnerable life of ὁ λόγος was not only predestined by God,⁴⁵³ but also *experienced* by God.⁴⁵⁴ The Johannine director challenges the audience's understanding of the divine (Harstine, 2013:1414) by portraying a God who willingly experiences a mortal and vulnerable earthly life by entering "into bodily and other kinds of suffering" (Staubli & Schroer, 2001:33), and is glorified in this display.⁴⁵⁵ With this, the Fourth Gospel challenges the audience to embrace a God who is essentially an oxymoron – "an embodiment of Contraries" (McCracken, 1994:109) – as the revelation of God creates the ultimate irony.⁴⁵⁶ As the audience is presented with two interpretations which are constantly in tension with one another, they are forced to work through the tensions in order to become the implied audience (see Vanhoozer, 2010:279).

⁴⁵¹ However, scholars like Culpepper (1983:109-110) and Conway (2015:79) highlight that the FG could also be regarded as the Gospel which characterises Jesus as the least human. Culpepper points out that Jesus is never described as being around children, does not make as much physical contact with others, and seems slightly emotionally aloof at times, where Conway (2015:79) argues that the Johannine drama uses a rhetoric which places Jesus in a position of power in the passion narrative and that it therefore glances over his suffering and agony. Although these arguments need to be noted, they do not disqualify the portrait of vulnerability painted in the FG (Johnson, 1999:531; Thompson, 1988:117). Although the theological interpretation of the death of Jesus turns it into a noble deed (Myers, 2012:171), it is still played out in the form of a "shameful execution", a display of vulnerability, weakness, dependence, and mortality.

⁴⁵² However, Placher (1994:19) warns against the *celebration* of suffering. It is not the suffering of Christ that is celebrated, but his vulnerability, which ultimately opens him up to pain and suffering, but also love and intimacy (1994:116).

⁴⁵³ "He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and as one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not" (Is. 53:3).

⁴⁵⁴ "The giver (God) is present in his gift (Christ) in such a way that he himself is at risk along with that gift" (Weder, 1996:333).

⁴⁵⁵ In spite of being the Gospel with the most elevated language regarding Jesus (Crossley, 2010:76, 78), he "wanders with nowhere to lay his head, washes the feet of his disciples like a servant, and suffers and dies on a cross" in the FG (Placher, 1994:xiii). Eklund (2015:55) adds, "he had no home or fixed income, he was a Jew in an occupied nation under the oppressive domination of the Roman empire, and he was executed as a criminal.

⁴⁵⁶ McRae (1973:89) makes the bold statement that, "in the Fourth Gospel theology *is* irony". Schnelle (1992:164) states that, ironically, it is precisely on the cross, at the most heightened place of suffering, where the incarnation of God becomes perfected. This is where God is seen in vulnerability. Even though the cross does not in any sense affirm a "high anthropology", it does manifest, in a significant way, the glory of God (Hall, 2003:93), so that it is precisely in the "cross of shame" where the glory of God is manifested (Morris, 1995:93). For this reason, Rensberger (2009:339) refers to Johannine Christology not as a "fixed item of dogma, but a paradox that can be expressed only in symbolic and ironic language".

This adds a peculiar dimension to the audience's first-century Mediterranean ideas of God. Not only is God acted out in a counter-cultural way, but the drama seems to bridge the gap between divinity and humanity in a seemingly blasphemous way: instead of elevating humanity to a divine level, the director brings divinity down to the humane level.⁴⁵⁷ A first century audience would recognise death and suffering as a typical tool within drama to level heroes and associate them with ordinary people (Brant, 2004:169). Within the Fourth Gospel, this means that the vulnerability expressed through the character of Jesus serves as a tool to relationally and intimately aid the bridging of the gap between the human experience and the experience of God, by God sharing in "the universal mortality, frailty, and contingency of human life" (Eklund, 2015:52) in order to be known in experience and relationship (Rensberger, 2009:339).⁴⁵⁸

The Johannine drama therefore does something quite unique in that it paints the picture of a God who extends friendship. God's vulnerability serves a purpose: it embraces amidst the very real threat of pain, loss, and rejection. Wedderburn (1999:211) emphasises that God bears in Godself the reality of suffering, something which reflects the human experience.⁴⁵⁹ In the act of "ultimate human degradation", the "ultimate identification and solidarity of the Creator with the creature" can be seen (Hall, 2003:93; see Wannewetsch, 2012:365; Žižek, 2012:156).⁴⁶⁰ Jesus therefore

⁴⁵⁷ As discussed in §4.4.11, references to gods appearing as humans or to human beings who are raised up to the realm of the gods were well known in the ancient Mediterranean, but a god who actually becomes flesh, embodying humanity and mortality, would have been revolutionary (Lindars, 1990:74).

⁴⁵⁸ This was what Luther emphasised in his influential *theologia crucis*, where he proposed that God's revelation of himself to humanity came not solely in glory, but in weakness and suffering (Eklund, 2015:117). Scholars of the twentieth century who thought along the same lines as Luther include Abraham Heschel, Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Kazoh Kitamori, Jürgen Moltmann, and James Cone. These scholars were forced to engage very real situations of human pain, vulnerability, mortality, and suffering, and found the cross to be a symbol of a God who suffers with humanity (Eklund, 2015:118). González (1984:31), building on the thoughts of Luther, therefore deems it necessary that the audience members look beyond their ideas of glory in the re-imagining of the crucifixion.

⁴⁵⁹ Saying this, one also has to take care not to lean too much towards one side of the argument and to paint a picture of a God who is completely powerless to heal or deliver from suffering. It is precisely this binary way of thinking which this study wishes to critique by arguing that triumph and vulnerability are not mutually exclusive. Moreover, this study explores the revelation of God incarnate and reality of being human on this earth without denying the hope and expectation of a perfect reality without brokenness and suffering after the resurrection of those who are children of God.

⁴⁶⁰ Tombs (1999:108-109), in his exploration of ancient crucifixion methods, opens up the discourse to the possibility of sexual humiliation and abuse in the crucifixion of Jesus. He concludes by arguing that, as Jesus possibly received the worst and most degrading human treatment before his death, the drama of Christ becomes a pastoral gift to those who have suffered in these ways.

represents the true image of God, not as the icon of “noble humanity but the Yes of God to real human beings” (Bonhoeffer, 1933:85).

Perhaps it is precisely in this shock value of the inescapable tragedy of a virtuous and divine hero, where the audience can find rest as they allow the Fourth Gospel to interrogate their various societal ideologies (as was also common of drama and tragedy – Croally, 2005:68; see Merenlahti & Hakola, 1999:33-34). As ὁ λόγος becomes σάρξ in the Johannine drama, he makes himself accessible (Coloe, 2001:21) and experience-able to those who are but flesh, since he can relate to their human experiences (Heb. 4:15; Driscoll & Breshears, 2007:44). In short, the Johannine drama portrays a hero who can associate with the audience when they are vulnerable and well aware of it (Root, 2014:107).⁴⁶¹ Perhaps this makes the hero’s life and love (3:16) *more* credible, since he is able to suffer with his audience (see Wedderburn, 1999:225).⁴⁶² The divine vulnerability, therefore, has the potential to produce intimacy and relationality between protagonist and audience (O’Day, 2012:519). This means that the idea that God experiences vulnerability ought not to make him less real to the audience of the Johannine drama, but essentially *more* real.

McCullough (1995:63) makes this point in a powerful way by referring to the statue of Lord Admiral Nelson on top of a tower in London’s Trafalgar Square, which was placed up so high that bystanders were unable to see what the admiral looked like. This led to the placing of an exact replica at eye level, so that people could recognise the great hero. Similarly, in his absolute highness and triumph, God remained invisible to the human eye (1:18a), but when he came low and vulnerable, he was finally seen.

The irony of the divine glory manifested in vulnerability serves not only to say something to its audience, but to *do* something to its audience (O’Day, 1986:30). True to an ancient performance, it has become a means to transform its audience(s) and create among them a certain identity or community (Rhoads, 2012:30). The revelation of the identity of God in the Johannine drama therefore has something to say about the identity of its audience (McKnight, 2009:157). In this way, the irony of the

⁴⁶¹ Volf (1996:22) therefore emphasises that the sufferings of Christ were not simply his own, but they were indeed, as Moltmann (1992:130) beautifully remarks, “the sufferings of the poor and weak, [with] which Jesus shares his own body and in his own soul, in solidarity”.

⁴⁶² Brand (2013:73-74) profoundly remarks that it is precisely the God that Christians worship who, “in unlimited freedom and power, chooses to reach out in love, thereby freely embracing the dependence and vulnerability of friendship – even if that implies the cross.” In the midst of interdependence and vulnerability, intimacy can truly flourish.

Johannine drama becomes *performative* (O'Day, 1986:30). If God is revealed in such vulnerability, perhaps the Johannine drama can tell the audience something about where the good, eternal, and abundant life can be found: “not [merely] in quest of power and wealth and fame but [also] in service, solidarity with the despised and rejected, and the willingness to be vulnerable in love” (Placher, 1994:xiv).

To an audience well versed in the things necessary for a life worth living, the life of a hero representing God would be marked by honour, prestige, physical strength, masculinity, health, resilience, control, good reputation, praise, connections, and purity. However, Jesus' life contains shame, peasant hood, weakness, defeat, woundedness, bad reputation, mockery, and abandonment. Yet, the director holds the perspective that his life is the site of good, eternal, and abundant life. The drama thus serves as a radical challenge to its audience, as the protagonist and hero portrays a life drenched in vulnerability.

While the Johannine drama challenges the first-time hypothetical audience, it has the potential to hold up a mirror to various other audiences, who find themselves in various contexts and times. One such a significant audience to the Fourth Gospel is the (probable) first historical audience, commonly referred to as the Johannine community.

7.4. The vulnerable Johannine community⁴⁶³

The Johannine community is a term used to describe a (probable) group of believers who found themselves in Ephesus in Asia Minor at the end of the first century when the Fourth Gospel was penned down (around AD 90; see Köstenberger, 2009:82-83; Moloney, 1993:14).⁴⁶⁴ The Johannine community did not function as a first-time

⁴⁶³ The hypothesis of a Johannine community was put on the table by Martyn (1979; 2003), who used the threats of synagogue expulsion in 9:22 to suppose a sectarian community who found themselves vulnerable after being expelled from the synagogues. The theory supposes that the FG was written as polemic against mainstream Judaism which intimidated, suppressed and persecuted this small community. This hypothesis has been convincingly criticised by various scholars (see e.g., Köstenberger, 2009 & Carson, 1991) and while this study asks how the FG could have encouraged a vulnerable and ostracised community, it is careful not to suppose that the Gospel was written with coded language as a word of resistance to society at large.

⁴⁶⁴ It is important to take note of the fact that the Johannine community does not simply represent a homogenous and stagnant group, but a vast variety of individuals over a large period. Scholars emphasise the diversity and fluidity of this community (Brown, 1979:22-24; Dodd, 1953:238; Ihenacho, 2001:54-55), which probably developed in stages. Most scholars recognise 3 hypothetical periods of development of this community, namely the early period, the middle period, and the late period (Ashton, 2007:107-108; Martyn, 2003:147-167). The early period refers to the formation of a messianic group within the community of the synagogue (Ashton, 2007:108). The middle period represents the formation of a separate community and is marked by the expulsion from the synagogue and martyrdom (2007:110-113). The late period represents an era where the community became not only shut off from

audience, since they were already acquainted with the story of the Gospel and associated as followers of Christ. The Fourth Gospel thus served a more pastoral function to these individuals as their choice to identify as believers placed them in various difficult positions.⁴⁶⁵ Part of the shock value of the Johannine drama lies not in the fact that the vulnerable life of the protagonist is so foreign to this audience, but precisely in the fact that it is such an accurate reflection of the vulnerable lives they found themselves submerged in (and often sought to avoid!).

For the historical receivers of the Fourth Gospel, vulnerability was all too real. This was a community of largely Torah-observing Jewish origin cut off from their historical and religious roots and heritage by their expulsion from the synagogue (Martyn, 2003:152; Rensberger, 2009:339). Not only were these individuals religiously vulnerable, but economically, socially, and politically, due to the fact that their expulsion from the synagogues left them severely ostracised in the Greek and Roman world (O'Day, 2012:518).⁴⁶⁶ Prosperity, power, connections, and honour were generally out of the question for members of this community, since the expulsion from the synagogue essentially involved being cast out from a group which was accepted by and received privileges from the Roman empire.⁴⁶⁷ This meant that they were completely isolated from any protected religious grouping (Ashton, 1991:172).

Hwang and van der Watt (2007:686) describe the Johannine community as “aliens in a hostile world”. This made the prospect of being put out of the synagogue a fearful one (Brant, 2004:232), since it awakened a universal angst of competing loyalties,

the synagogue, but also, to a large extent, from the outside world (2007:114). Brown (1979:22-24) identifies 4 stages of development within the Johannine group. He identifies the first stage as a pre-Gospel era, which would have been marked by conflict between those who embodied Johannine Christianity and the leaders of the synagogue. The second stage would have been when the Gospel was written (AD 90) and the time of the Johannine group's expulsion from the synagogue. He identifies the third stage as the era where the epistles were written (AD 100). This phase would have been characterised by some internal conflict and division. Finally, the fourth phase would have been the dissolution of the Johannine community. It is important to note that the idea of the Johannine community remains hypothetical, since no clear evidence for them exists in scripture (Ashton, 2007:100; Du Rand, 1993:19; Ihenacho, 2001:55; Köstenberger, 2009:56-59). There is also very little scriptural reason to believe that the Johannine community isolated themselves from society at large.

⁴⁶⁵ Cf. §2.4.

⁴⁶⁶ Although these believers found themselves severely vulnerable, they were not actively killed for their faith (DeSilva, 2000:44).

⁴⁶⁷ O'Day (2012:518) describes the choice that every individual in the Johannine community needed to make: “[T]o stay in the synagogue as a member of a religious group officially recognised by the Roman empire and thereby avoid the empire's fresh scrutiny,” or “to break with the synagogue, worship openly, and take the imperial consequences”. O'Day asserts that, for the author of the FG, the latter was the only real choice.

which often resulted in individuals asserting their loyalty with the groups which made them feel the safest and least vulnerable. To the Johannine community, the temptation to despair or compromise was very immediate.

Even after their expulsion from the synagogue, the Johannine community experienced persecution (Hwang & van der Watt, 2007:686). Moreover, the Jewish members of the audience found themselves displaced and vulnerable due to the “religious vacuum” left by the destruction of the national symbol for the Jewish religion, the second temple, in AD 70 (Köstenberger, 2009:59-61).⁴⁶⁸ This destruction left Jewish believers without a symbol and a place for God to dwell (Draper, 1997:285). The failure of the Johannine Messiah to mightily restore the kingdom to Israel challenges these hopeless and vulnerable individuals to shift their focus from “the physical restoration of Israel” to “something else” (1997:264).

The Johannine community also faced ridicule and antagonism due to the event of the cross, since it weakened the image of the saviour they worshipped, and therefore classified them as feeble (Thompson, 1988:114). Only fools would worship a “crucified man” (Cook, 2014:19). According to ancient Mediterranean societal standards and values, the avoidance of such a reputation and reality would be an essential survival tactic. However, instead of providing audience members with the opportunity to escape their vulnerable realities, the Johannine drama creates a hero who mirrors this very wretched existence and describes it as glorious and divine. Moreover, in addressing his closets followers, Jesus ensures them that they will also not have an easy life (15:18-19, 20; 16:2, 33; 21:18-19). Nevertheless, the promise of ζωή, a life worth living in the here and now, is extended to them amidst a vulnerable existence (6:63; 10:10; 11:25; 14:6; 17:3; 20:31).

The director of the Johannine drama therefore brings together the realities of heaven and earth in the character of Jesus of Nazareth (Mouton, 2016:108). The implications are clear: if not even God avoided a vulnerable earthly existence, why should the audience? Jesus’ painful death essentially initiates him into the Johannine community and their lived realities (Brant, 2004:178). However, typical of ancient drama, the audience of the Fourth Gospel can *choose* whether to identify with ὁ λόγος or not.

⁴⁶⁸ Köstenberger (2015:62) emphasises the massive effect of the destruction of the Jewish temple, describing it as “an earthquake that reverberated powerfully among Jews and proselytes who lived toward the end of the first century AD throughout the Greco-Roman world”.

While some might resist the tragic fate of the hero with feelings of antipathy (alienation or disdain), the director invites the audience to move from a place of sympathy (“feeling alongside” – Powell, 1990:57) to a place of empathy, by “feeling into” the vulnerable life of Jesus (1990:56). While they will be hated and persecuted for it, it is in this embrace where good, eternal and abundant life is found.

This reflection of God’s willingness to embrace vulnerability does not only serve to comfort and encourage the Johannine community, but also to challenge them to a place of radical self-giving love. Choosing the good and eternal life given by ὁ λόγος will necessarily imply an openness to be wounded by the fellow children of God. “Community may risk betrayal. Friendship may demand self-sacrifice” (Brant, 2004:231). The invitation to follow Jesus involves the giving up of safety and invulnerability (2004:323) in exchange for intimacy, community, and family (O’Day, 2012:527).

The Johannine drama thus functions as a double-edged sword: on the one end, it silences the hope of a life worth living by societal standards where vulnerability is a stranger, and paints the picture of an existence where pain, rejection, disappointment, and shame are part and parcel of (even God’s) life on this earth. Yet, on the other hand, the drama instils hope as it portrays this vulnerable life not only as *normal*, but as glorious and divine. In this way, the Johannine drama conveys both good and bad news to the Johannine community (McCracken, 1994:168). To this vulnerable audience, who would have been regarded as “nonpersons” in their society (Malina & Rohrbaugh, 1998:10), the drama of the Fourth Gospel provides a sense of comfort and hope. It emphasises that the God in whom they have found their embrace is no stranger to their lived realities of vulnerability. In this sense, the Johannine drama allows the audience to be re-socialised into a new reality with newly defined social values and identities and to see the world with different eyes.

7.5. Vulnerable contemporary communities

Green (1994:142) reminds us that the survival of a drama has everything to do with its relevance. As long as a drama is relevant to its audience, it will not disappear into obscurity. This is true of the Fourth Gospel, which is not only relevant to an ancient Mediterranean audience, but speaks volumes to contemporary audiences, who might not find themselves in the same honour and shame culture as the ancient audience,

but are still subject to the dynamics of wanting to be (perceived as) valuable within their contexts (DeSilva, 2000:26). The drive to live a life which is considered valuable and desirable often leads to the internalisation of perceptions where vulnerability seems to be the “antithesis of the good life”, while independence and individualism are regarded as the norm for “authentic human living” (Swinton, 2012:518). To this contemporary audience, the life and death of Jesus in the Johannine drama illustrate the irony of this perception:

One of the most astonishing things about Jesus is that as God he actually chose to come into our... painful world and be with us to suffer like us... Meanwhile, we spend most of our time trying to figure out how to avoid the pain and evil of this world... just hoping to get out (Driscoll & Breshears, 2007:44).

O’Day (2012:526) affirms this by emphasising that the dependence modelled by Jesus in the Johannine drama “stands in striking contrast to contemporary Western models of individualism, privatism, and success based on individual accomplishment”. Too often are “autonomy, power and self-importance” falsely associated with the concept of wholeness and human dignity (Brand, 2013:72). These standards are not reflected in the Johannine drama.

The Johannine director seems to portray that Jesus’ vulnerability was not a flaw “detracting from an otherwise pure and complete human nature” (Reynolds, 2013:21), but that he came to associate with the human freedom of being vulnerable, dependent, and interdependent (Nouwen, 1994:33-34).⁴⁶⁹ As Hauerwas (1999:16) so beautifully puts it: “We are creatures. Dependency, not autonomy, is one of the ontological characteristics of our lives.” When we shun vulnerability, we are in actual sense shunning a crucial element of (the good) life (Lawrie, 2010:618; Reynolds, 2013:23).

Ironically, wholeness is not found in the ability to need no one, but in the “acknowledgement of vulnerability that is made concrete in relations of mutual giving to and receiving from others” (Reynolds, 2013:21). The Fourth Gospel leaves behind a dependent audience: upon one another and upon God (1982:80).⁴⁷⁰ This is part of the good, eternal, and abundant life (ζωή) which the Johannine drama promises: it is

⁴⁶⁹ However, Nouwen (1994:33) also refers to the type of dependency which becomes exploited and leads to slavery.

⁴⁷⁰ Thompson (2006:192) speaks of a “relationship of life-giving dependence” on God.

a life of intimate knowing and being intimately known (17:3), and a life of dependence, belonging, and abiding (15:1-11). We *belong* because we are all dependant on the vine and vinedresser. In other words, we are all vulnerable (Vanier, 1998:41). Our vulnerability and neediness give rise to cooperation and the expression of love, which are essential to human flourishing (Hauerwas, 2004:97; Nouwen, 1994:43).

Eklund (2015:55) speaks of a “common vulnerability and anguish”, which is part of a shared experience of being human. This means that human life contains a degree of disorder (Anderson, 1982:30), tragedy, and suffering, which cannot (and should not!) always be understood or explained, but rather needs to be accepted as part of (the good) life (Van Niekerk, 2013:152). When we exclude vulnerability from the human experience of abundant life, we take it out of the equation and place it in an inferior position to *normal* or *ideal* humanity (see Volf, 1996:67). This implies that vulnerability becomes a deviation to be avoided. However, God delves into the world of σάρξ in the Johannine drama, giving himself to a vulnerable life which harboured the sword of rejection, pain, suffering, shame, and death.

Although vulnerability contains the reality of suffering, it also contains the reality of joy. The life that Jesus portrays in the Johannine drama is *also* filled with cheer, hope, love, intimacy, honour, prosperity, and meaning (Lawrie, 2010:618). Jesus, as divine light, comes to shine “in the ambiguity of the human condition” (Moloney, 1993:33). The embrace of vulnerability is therefore not an invitation to pessimism, but rather an invitation to acknowledge and accept complexity.⁴⁷¹ Equally dangerous to the exclusion of vulnerability is the idolisation of it. Experiencing the Johannine drama provides the audience with the opportunity to experience *both* σάρξ and δόξα (see Pascal, 1966:172). Eklund (2015:51) powerfully remarks that Jesus joins in the “lamentation of all humanity” through his life of complexity. “[L]ament is agony, mingled with trust, petition paired with praise, complaint rooted in hope” (2015:24).

The tension between whole and broken, weak and strong, beauty and pain, life and death, which resides in the body of every human being, is the same tension displayed in the body of Jesus. Bultmann (1971:63) refers to this complexity as the paradox which runs through the entire Johannine drama: “The δόξα is not to be seen alongside

⁴⁷¹ “John is concerned that we should miss neither the good news of the incarnation of God, nor the tragedy of the human rejection of God” (Morris, 1995:83).

the σάρξ, nor through the σάρξ as through a window; it is to be seen in the σάρξ.” This paradox serves as a stumbling block to some, who attempt to resolve it (Resseguie, 2013:5), while it has the potential to serve as an existential revelation to others.

To be human is to be caught in a paradox, that is the mystery of our natural being. It is neither an optimism nor a pessimism (Leavy, 1988:66).

It is exactly the portrayal of this paradox which makes the Fourth Gospel so special and powerful when read through a drama-critical lens.⁴⁷² Nipkow (2001:29) refers to this paradox as a “holy mystery”, while Mouton (2016:107) stunningly describes it as “the liminal space between σάρξ and δόξα”. The perplexed reactions of the audience, and the possible attempts to make sense of the drama’s paradoxes, represent a very human tendency.⁴⁷³ However, Oakes (2011:13) emphasises that attempts to solve theological and anthropological paradoxes and complexities often lead one onto heretical pathways. “By domesticating it, ignoring it, or translating it away, we remove the means of seeing and encountering the hero” of the drama (McCracken, 1994:168). Similarly, Caputo (2006:7-8) warns against theology which fails to recognise that the study of God ought to contain discourse of *both* power and vulnerability.⁴⁷⁴ Ignoring the God “who weeps, has compassion, loves the weak and the outcast... and celebrates the meek” (McCracken, 1994:108) does not do God justice (Placher, 1994:xiii).

More than being a beacon of hope and comfort, the Johannine drama leaves its audience with an invitation: to rest from a constant attempt to exclude vulnerability and

⁴⁷² Vernant (1988:120-121) argues that it is precisely a drama that can unite irreconcilable terms in such a way. In the FG, it is in the character of Jesus where opposing elements such as “divine and human, mortal and immortal, collide and converge” (Brant, 2004:104).

⁴⁷³ Leavy (1988:66) refers to this tendency to attempt to simplify the complex and relieve the tragedies of humanity’s fate, however, Rensberger (2009:339) discerns the invitation from the FG to its audience to “live with and in paradox and mystery”.

⁴⁷⁴ However, to my reading, it would seem like the strength, majesty, and honour of God sits somewhat uncomfortably with Caputo, who seems to lean very strongly in the direction of painting a picture of a God who is completely powerless. Even though Caputo does account for the fact that theology has a type of bipolarity to it (2006:8, 56), he seems to be eager to explain away biblical accounts of God’s strength and dominance. When discussing the vulnerability of God, one ought to be careful not to underplay or diminish his majesty and triumph. Although the cross is an image of vulnerability and solidarity with humanity and its suffering, it is also a symbol of triumph and victory over the kingdom of darkness (Thompson, 2006:190; cf. Col 2:15). This study therefore wishes not to take away from the victory on the cross, but to highlight the fact that this victory was dressed in vulnerability.

rather open the arms to include this stranger as part of the good and abundant life.⁴⁷⁵ Volf (1996:20-21) argues that the key to an embracing and accepting environment does not lie in what kind of society needs to be created, but rather in what kind of *sel/ves* need to be created. This emphasises the role of choice, responsibility, and recalibration in the matter.⁴⁷⁶ When we allow others to come closer while we are at our most vulnerable, we allow them to see our brokenness and nakedness. This is precisely what Jesus does by engaging his loved ones while hanging on the cross (Jn. 19:25-27). The terrible sounds, sights, and smells is the price Jesus' loved ones pay to be close to him, while Jesus pays the price of feeling the eyes of his loved ones on his naked and humiliated body. However, the closeness provides both parties with the opportunity to engage one another and care for one another.

Therefore, the risk of vulnerability holds with it a promise of great reward. Placher (1994:19) describes vulnerability as “a perfection of loving freedom”, since it opens us up to the good and the communal aspects of life (see Culp, 2010:2-4). To love is essentially to be vulnerable (Lewis, 1960:169). When vulnerability is embraced, it is welcomed into our state of humanity and acknowledged as something central to all human beings. This creates more than a *feeling for* our neighbour, but a mutual *feeling with* (see Reynolds, 2013:20). Such an embrace has the potential to cultivate faith communities who welcome theological reflection on a God who exists in solidarity with us – faith communities in which the most vulnerable and humble are recognised as representing the glory of God (Brand, 2013:74; see Driscoll & Breshears, 2007:45).

Finally, the invitation to embrace vulnerability contains in itself an invitation to live a life that is whole, joyful, and good in the here and now. This is a life which testifies of God's presence and glory, even amidst great brokenness and imperfection (Aulén,

⁴⁷⁵ McCracken (1994:169) asserts that the Johannine drama demands a response. He classifies this response as either “offense or faith”. In line with the language used in this study, the response will play itself out in either exclusion or embrace.

⁴⁷⁶ Bauman (1995:99) criticises the tendency of society to shift moral responsibilities away from the self and towards “socially constructed and managed supra-individual agencies, or through floating responsibility inside a bureaucratic ‘rule of nobody’”. Embracing one's vulnerability remains the choice of the individual. Similarly, in the drama of the FG, Jesus' willingness is an essential component in his vulnerability. In the arrest scene, he could not be taken without his willing co-operation (Jervell, 1984:56). Vulnerability was not something solely in the will of Jesus' enemies, but in the will of the divine (1984:57). “In the end, it is neither Judas nor the chief priests nor Pilate but Jesus who hands himself over to death” (Brant, 2011:254).

1970:167). It does not wait for the absence of pain, shame, loss, dependence, and mortality, but celebrates life in its complexity and vulnerability as worth living.

The so-called freedom to be the “master of my fate, the captain of my soul” is at bottom joyless and cheerless. For this is a freedom which denies dependence on the other as the source of one’s own personhood (Anderson, 1982:82).

While the case can be made for the point of view on vulnerability in the Gospel of John and its value to a variety of audiences, the question remains whether biblical drama criticism has been an effective methodology for this study and whether it holds any merit. The last section of this chapter will thus serve as an evaluation of the experimental methodology.

7.6. Evaluations of biblical drama criticism

Scholars like Powell (1990:98), Hearon (2006:11-13), and Rhoads (2006b) have long emphasised the need to broaden the hermeneutical spectrum by exploring new and imaginative exegetical methodologies. The methodology of biblical drama criticism utilises this invitation by being fresh and creative. The experimental nature of the methodology has brought many insights regarding its contribution, limitations, and flaws to the fore. Its formulation and appropriation will therefore be evaluated to see whether the methodology has any contribution to make to biblical theology and how it can be improved.

7.6.1. Contributions of biblical drama criticism

The first prominent contribution that a drama analysis has made is the stimulation of the imagination to encounter the experience of a hypothetical audience witnessing the drama. Although this experience is nothing more than an informed guess, it helps the exegete to involve her/himself in the text in a more emotive and experiential way. Moreover, such a hypothetical construction can serve to create various “audience scenarios” (Rhoads, 2009:92) with which to imagine the performative event of the drama of a biblical text. This opens up the interpretational possibility to witness the Johannine drama through the eyes of our own communities, social or cultural groups, embodied experiences, et cetera.

Since drama criticism places more emphasis on the experience and interpretation of its audience, its appropriation widens the meaning potential to explore something of

“the vast panoply of potential responses that real readers [hearers, experiencers] actually bring to texts” (Powell, 2010:254, 270). Interpreters are thus granted the opportunity to better appreciate how texts could resonate with specific contexts and their cultural traditions (Horsley, 2013:303), by becoming more aware of the audience (Rhoads, 2006b:179).

The drama lens also provided a fresh glance at the structure and content of the Fourth Gospel by demarcating the text into scenes according to drama theory. Moreover, the translation of the Johannine drama (and other narrative texts) in script form carries the potential to do more than bear fruit on paper, but also transpire in performance. Horsley (2013:308) expresses a hope that performance criticism of texts will lead to the increase of actual performances of biblical material, which become “domesticated for today’s context” and come alive in an oral manner. This means that the values of biblical texts could infiltrate (and transform) culture in ways that exceed the scholarly realm.⁴⁷⁷ It allows God to speak through story as well as through history, values the poetic witness of the drama, and acknowledges the mobility of biblical texts to speak beyond their specific historical contexts (Lategan, 2009:96).

Dube (2001:3) emphasises the importance of orality and storytelling in the depiction of life and transmission of values and wisdom in African cultures. How different would the nineteenth century’s missional activities of the Glasgow Missionary Society in South Africa have been if, instead of solely focussing on Xhosa translations of the Bible and emphasising the importance of literacy among the Xhosa people (Barber, 2009:151), the missionaries added a *performative* dimension to their evangelism?

Loubser (2013:14) emphasises that the medium of communication influences the interpretation and experience of the message in a significant way. With regards to the story world of the Fourth Gospel, a drama analysis has also been fruitful in bringing various elements to the fore that might have been previously missed or underplayed due to the sometimes-concise nature of the Gospel (Ridderbos, 1997:573).⁴⁷⁸ These

⁴⁷⁷ This does not imply that any and every popular interpretation or portrayal of biblical texts is uplifting or helpful, or that exegesis can be reduced to a casual exercise. Biblical exegesis still ought to be an exercise undertaken with caution while remaining accountable to the nature and purpose of these texts, the discipline of biblical scholarship, as well as the needs of faith communities. Rather, it provides an easier *means* with which people of faith can engage and understand the findings of thorough biblical hermeneutics.

⁴⁷⁸ An example of the conciseness of the FG is the crucifixion in 19:18, which is narrated in one sentence as, “there they crucified him”.

aspects include the presence of conflict and tension experienced by the viewer, the way characters relate to the protagonist, and the possible way(s) in which the audience could have related to the plot and characters. While the experience and reaction from the hypothetical audience was nothing more than that (hypothetical), it introduced the audience into the equation as conversation partners. Brant (2011:13) asserts that modern interpreters often solely focus on what language means, while forgetting that “language often *does things*” (italics added). Introducing the hypothetical audience into the performance has therefore been helpful to illuminate the rhetorical exchange between message and audience.

By becoming aware of the first-time hypothetical audience, a drama analysis can also be helpful to allow the reader to escape their familiarity with the text and experience the Johannine drama in a fresh way. I personally found that events that did not previously shock or surprise me, came to life and the performative world of the Gospel challenged and informed me anew in an existential manner. Moreover, exploring the performative nature of a text and an audience’s continuous interaction with it, has brought another rhetorical dimension to the fore.⁴⁷⁹

Worthen (2000:3) argues that, among various kinds of literature, drama has the potential to be “the most immediately involved in the life of its community”.⁴⁸⁰ The experience of a drama is a communal and existential exercise (Rhoads, 2006b:179).⁴⁸¹ Similarly, drama criticism has the potential to speak to the experience of faith communities who *experience* the drama of the Word *becoming* in their own flesh and bodies. Additionally, the communal nature of the hypothetical audience highlighted that biblical texts were not read and interpreted in isolation, but that various individuals’ biographies functions as a story within a bigger drama.⁴⁸²

Finally, the most profound contribution of the drama analysis appropriated in this study was the fact that it brought the text to life (see Horsley, 2013:307). As interpreter, I

⁴⁷⁹ Rhoads (2012:44) picks up on this when encouraging his readers to deliver their own performances of biblical material within their faith communities, asserting that “there is no better way to embrace the paradigm shift to orality than to perform a text as an act of persuasion before a live audience”.

⁴⁸⁰ Worthen (2000:3) further argues that the drama’s confrontation of an audience in a public and social space such as the theatre, allows them not only to be confronted with themselves, but also with one another.

⁴⁸¹ Barton (2010:34) affirms this by referring to biblical texts as essential components in worship, discipleship, and life within the church. However, he emphasises that “historical skills and sensitivity toward the past” are essential components to take note of in the reading of scripture.

⁴⁸² Powell (1990:89) also makes this argument in line with narrative criticism.

was stimulated to have an experience that was enjoyable, and might I risk saying, entertaining.⁴⁸³ Rhoads (2012:27), who explored the avenue of performance criticism, emphasises that biblical texts were essentially composed for public reading and storytelling, which would have been “animated, emotional, and engaging”.⁴⁸⁴ Stimulating, entertaining, and creative methodologies to biblical studies therefore need not be “a problem for biblical hermeneutics, but its ultimate aim” (Lategan, 1984:17). Kreitzer (1993:20) argues along the same line when he states: “The first conviction is that theological writing should be enjoyable, entertaining, even fun, for the interested reader.”

That being said, the methodology also displayed some serious shortfalls – both in its formulation and appropriation – which will need to be addressed.

7.6.2. Limitations of biblical drama criticism

Hearon (2006:11) emphasises that, in a performance, the audience, as well as performer(s), lend shape to the text by interpreting and inserting various elements. Likewise, the translation of the Fourth Gospel into script, and the imagining of the performance has in no way escaped the dangers of entertaining ideas, thoughts, and interpretations which were not intended by the original author.⁴⁸⁵ In the same vein, similar to narrative criticism, drama analysis could be criticised for underplaying the actual historical world and redactional processes which gave rise to the text (Conway, 2008b:79-80; see Merenlahti & Hakola, 1999:24; Stibbe, 1992:51).⁴⁸⁶ Swanson (2014:185) acknowledges that performance criticism is often criticised for losing some of the “richness of history” through its contemporary performances, since the text is taken out of its “communicative context” (Sternberg, 1985:1).

⁴⁸³ It needs to be emphasised that the enjoyment of scripture in no way undermines its existential importance and seriousness. Dewey (2009:146) makes this point by arguing that “important” and “fun” are not mutually exclusive concepts. Styan (1975:239) argues along the same line when emphasising the power of a drama to challenge and move an audience on an existential level in the name of “recreation and entertainment”.

⁴⁸⁴ Rhoads (2006a:120) argues that performance criticism opens the interpreter up to the “emotive and kinetic” dimensions of a text.

⁴⁸⁵ Loubser (2013:4-5) refers to the danger of reading elements into the story which are not represented in the text by referring to the development of the portrayal of Mary Magdalene in film from a follower of Christ to his “sexual counterpart and fleshly temptation”. While the latter cannot be substantiated by the biblical text, it was probably incorporated for the sake of dramatic effect.

⁴⁸⁶ De Boer (1992:43) was one of the scholars who argued that narrative criticism be regarded as a step backwards for critical exegesis, exclaiming: “Can any avowedly *critical* method... really presuppose coherence, whether thematic or literary, as an unquestionable principle?”

Correspondingly, the drama analysis presented in this study can be accused of being anachronistic, since (similar to narrative criticism – see Powell, 1990:93) it blurs the lines between modern and ancient performative study by using tools from modern drama theory to analyse ancient texts (Rhoads, 2006a:119), and underplays the unique elements of the ancient Greek drama that were germane to the first-century context of the Gospel of John.⁴⁸⁷ While it is not foreign for a modern cast to perform an ancient text, it is essential to realise that the ancient text was not written with the intent of being performed in the modern context. Moreover, there is no evidence that the Fourth Gospel was composed to be performed as a drama. While it can be argued that the Gospel was conveyed in an oral performance, there is no certainty *how* biblical texts were performed and heard in the first century (Hearon, 2006:13). Therefore, the interpretations of tone, attitudes, facial and bodily expressions, et cetera, can surely be subject to anachronistic exaggeration or misunderstanding due to the various barriers of language and culture, which stand between ancient and modern audiences (Barr, 2002:17-18). The construction of an experience of the Johannine drama is thus, at its best, an informed guess.

Various objections also arise when the concept of the hypothetical audience is observed. While this imaginative and tentative audience in no way promises to reconstruct the real audience to the drama, and while it opens up the imagination to explore how different identities could have encountered the Johannine drama, it is problematic for two major reasons. The first is the fact that the audience (as first-time audience) is assumed to have no prior knowledge of the Gospel message. As the Fourth Gospel was only composed at the end of the first century, and since the oral tradition was going around before it was penned down (Du Rand, 1993:20, 29), it is unlikely to assume a group where none of the members can anticipate how the story would end. The second major concern is the simplification of the audience. The construction of the hypothetical audience was lacking in various respects, since it was put together by the use of overarching models and did not sufficiently account for exceptions and diversity.

⁴⁸⁷ Rhoads (2006a:119) asks the question: “How can we distinguish ancient from modern sensibilities in relation to performance?” The accusation of anachronistically using modern methodology (and even technology) to analyse ancient texts is especially valid in this study’s appropriation of drama criticism, as modern elements such as sound and lighting was referenced, where some elements of ancient drama, like choruses and masks, were ignored.

While the methodology of biblical drama criticism (like narrative criticism – see Tovey, 1997:260) aims to allow the biblical text to convey a coherent message, the scope of this study (and the length of the Fourth Gospel) only allowed for three scenes to be evaluated accordingly. Although a read-through was given of the rest of the drama (1:19-18:27; 19:31-21:25), the continuous experience of the audience throughout could have been overshadowed by the chosen scenes. Moreover, while it was valuable to pay attention to the happenings in these portions in order to stimulate the reader's imagination towards the dramatic whole, the summaries were unnecessarily long. Perhaps a more effective way to keep the bigger picture and plotline in mind could have been to provide the reader with a summative mapping of the most important dramatic elements in these un-exegeted scenes (e.g., tension and conflict, characterisation, character association with protagonist and antagonist, audience identification with protagonist, etc.).

Lastly, the influence of the interpreter's perspective in a drama analysis problematises the exercise. As experience is drenched in subjectivity, so is the outcome of a drama analysis. No two individuals will walk out of a theatre performance having come to exactly the same conclusions. Rightfully so, there are scholars who warn that the reading of the Gospel of John through a drama lens could become ideologically driven (Brant, 2004:80), and yield to the interpreter's preconceived convictions and conclusions (Swanson, 2014:185). There are no illusions that this was the case in this study. However, Powell (1990:96) seeks to remind us that any interpretative methodology runs this risk. To quote Loubser (2013:238): "All interpretation is therefore a risk. But it is a risk that no interpreter can avoid taking."

7.7. Conclusion

This study set out to read the Fourth Gospel in a fresh way which takes the performative and dramatic elements of the text into consideration and explores the interaction between the story and audience in order to discover the rhetorical effect of the Johannine point of view on the theme of vulnerability. Through the process of constructing a first-time hypothetical audience to the Johannine drama, it came as no surprise that ancient Mediterranean societies had very little acknowledgement for vulnerability in the concept of what it meant to live a good or abundant life. Witnessing a drama of the divine would therefore evoke certain expectations associated with

honour, strength, power, activeness, wealth, good reputation and connections, and purity.

However, as the Johannine drama unfolds, the life of Jesus seems to miss the mark of the life envisioned for a divine hero, leaving behind a troubled and unsatisfied audience. The director of the Johannine drama portrays a hero who tragically suffers in a life of brokenness and vulnerability, yet holds this life as a convincing display of the glory of the divine on this earth. Moreover, the performance not only confronts the audience with a vulnerable hero, but expects them to make sense of its anti-climax and existentially align themselves with this hero in order to have the good, abundant, and eternal life. The drama thus demands a bold, yet vulnerable, response from its audience. It dramatises a God who embraces vulnerability and invites the audience to do likewise.

Exploring the Johannine Gospel through the lens of drama has thus been a fruitful exercise. While the methodological lens was not free of shortcomings and contradictions, it was a worthwhile experiment appropriating it to the Fourth Gospel, and served as an effective (yet, not unproblematic) tool with which to explore the theme of vulnerability and its challenging effect on an audience.

Good drama does not meet the social need by pouring out medicine; it prescribes a change of air. Dramatic perception is like breathing fresh air, making unaccustomed use of eyes and ears, and stretching the mind (Styan, 1975:241).

8. Appendix A: The stage-play script format

Professor of Radio-TV-Film, Edward Fink (2014:191-194) provides a thorough description of the correct way to present a stage-play in script form. For clarity and better understanding of the format used in the translations of the text in the exegetical chapters (5 & 6), the basic formatting rules for such a script will be summarised below:

Font: Courier New, 12 pt.

Setting: The word “SETTING” features at the beginning of each scene, describing the stage design. It is capitalised and followed by a colon. The description of the setting is in lower case and indented at 4 inches.

At Rise: This capitalised heading is directly under setting (double-spaced), followed by a colon, and is used to describe “the situation and action that is taking place”, which features in lower case and is indented at 4 inches.

Character names: The names of characters are capitalised, 4 inches from the left margin, and double-spaced below the previous line.

Dialogue: All dialogue is single-spaced, featured below the name of the character (which is capitalised), and not indented.

Stage directions: Stage directions are single-spaced, featured below the character name and above the dialogue, in parentheses, and indented 2,75 inches on the left and 2,5 inches on the right. All character names are capitalised in the stage directions.

Ending of a scene: Each scene is ended by the words “CURTAIN” or “BLACKOUT”, indented at 4 inches, followed by “END OF SCENE”, which features under it (double-spaced).

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