

# **Resurrection Dysfunction, or One Hundred Years of Cinematic Attempts at Raising a Stiff (John 11:1-46)**

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## Introduction

Seymour Chatman's structuralist communication model of narrative is foundational to R. A. Culpepper's narrative analysis in *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, and despite the fact that Culpepper cites Chatman's *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* a total of twelve times, Johannine scholars have been slow to dissect cinematic representations of the Fourth Gospel. And this lethargy is not simply the result of belated twentieth century technological developments. Video tapes began to be mass marketed in 1976, and by the early 1980s a number of Jesus films were already available in VHS format. But it took Philip Saville's 2003 "literal" rendering of the Fourth Gospel (*The Gospel of John* [Visual Bible International]) to bring Johannine scholars into serious conversation with visual media. Saville's film was previewed at the 2003 AAR/SBL meeting in Atlanta, and the 2004 AAR/SBL meeting in San Antonio devoted an entire panel discussion to Saville's film.<sup>1</sup> Yet the Fourth Gospel had

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<sup>1</sup> S21-106: Bible in Ancient and Modern Media (Sunday, Nov. 21, 2004). Richard Walsh has also devoted a chapter of his book *Reading the Gospels in the Dark* to an analysis of the relationship between the Fourth Gospel and Stevens's *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (Walsh 2003:147-71). More recently, Philip Esler and Ronald Piper have dealt with the

dominated cinematic portrayals of Jesus for nearly one hundred years. A list of Jesus' miracles portrayed in film reveals that the raising of Lazarus ranks at the top, with nine out of nineteen Jesus films depicting this uniquely Johannine episode (John 11:1-44). The healing of the paralytic (Matt 9:1-8; Mark 2:1-12; Luke 5:17-26) ranks second with eight depictions but, unlike the raising of Lazarus, that story is found in three Gospels instead of just one.<sup>2</sup> Furthermore, Johannine Christology, with its memorable "I AM" sayings, plays a central role in almost every portrayal of Jesus on the silver screen.

OK, I have a confession to make right up front. I still have my original, cloth-bound edition of Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, and I return to it from time to time as though calling on an old friend. But I donated my copy of Seymour Chatman's *Story and Discourse* (1978) to a St. Vincent DePaul Thrift Store a number of years ago, after Powell's Bookstore in Portland, Oregon told me that my copy was too marked up to have any resale value. At the time I was getting rid of books in my library to make room for a growing collection on postcolonial theory. Nevertheless, I can still remember reading Chatman's *Story and Discourse* in graduate school and sitting in one of Chatman's graduate classes at UC Berkeley. At the time I was struck by the fact that

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Lazarus story in Christian art in their book *Lazarus, Mary and Martha: Social-Scientific Approaches to the Gospel of John* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006) esp. 131-145.

<sup>2</sup> In *Jesus, the Gospels, and Cinematic Imagination*, Richard Walsh and I develop a gospel harmony for eighteen Jesus films available on DVD. We only list seven films with the healing of the paralytic, but that is because we omit from our discussion van den Bergh's *The Gospel of Matthew* (2004). Van den Bergh's film is a literal rendering of the entire Gospel of Matthew, and thus includes the healing of the paralytic.

some of his most original and useful insights seemed to emerge from his juxtaposition of narratives in the two media forms of “fiction” and film. But back then I wasn’t interested in film theory. I just wanted to finish a dissertation on the Gospel of John and get on with my life.

The purpose of this essay, then, is to take seriously the *and Film* part of Chatman’s title—to go back and explore the ways in which the raising of Lazarus has been depicted in cinema, comparing those renderings to one another and to the “anatomy” of the story in the Fourth Gospel.<sup>3</sup> My goal is to use these dysections (that is, dissecting the dyad of film and canonical gospel) as a means to uncover the ideologies of the films and to expose the ideological connects and disconnects between the cinematic renderings of the Lazarus story and the canonical version (John 11). At this point in my career I am no longer concerned with whether Culpepper’s *Fourth Gospel* is anatomically correct (see Staley 1995:1-23). And I really am not interested in haruspicy; I find the politics of necromancy more to my liking. I am wondering whether the cinematic attempts to reconfigure the Lazarus story fix the dysfunctional male of the canonical tale and render him alive, erect, and no longer (s)mothered by his sisters’ words and wraps. Or do the cinematic versions kill off the sisters in the process of outing their zombie-like brother? What if moving pictures became serious conversational partners with printed texts? If the Martha of George Stevens’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told* sat down and

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<sup>3</sup> I proposed an anatomically deviant, gendered reading of the raising of Lazarus a number of years ago in my chapter “Designing the Seventh Sign: John 11 and the Resistant Reader” in *Reading with a Passion* (Staley 1995:55-84).

talked with the Fourth Gospel's Martha, could they walk away as friends at the end of the exchange? Would both be enriched by the serendipitous meeting?

The story of Jesus raising Lazarus from the dead has offered film directors one of their most dramatic visual scenes for telling the story of Jesus. And because John 11:3 and 11:5 state that Jesus "loved" Mary, Martha, and Lazarus while Luke 10:38-42 recounts a conversation between Jesus and Martha about her sister Mary (Culpepper 1983:140 note 81; 215), film directors are presented with more than one Gospel tradition from which to construct three of the most fully developed characters in Jesus movies. But despite the possibilities that these stories offer for cinematic characterization, Mary and Martha rarely fare as well in film as they do in the Fourth Gospel itself. Generally, the sisters on film are one-dimensional, flatter and less vocal than they are in the canonical text (Culpepper 1983:102-104, 140-142). They can move across the screen, but they rarely speak. So perhaps my proposed two-way conversation between film and text is doomed from the very outset. And the fact that film technology began silently does not bode well for my little social experiment.

There are three films from the silent era that make use of the Lazarus story: Zecca and Nonquet's *The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ* (1905), Olcott's *From the Manger to the Cross* (1912), and DeMille's *The King of Kings* (1927).<sup>4</sup> Three films from the mid-

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<sup>4</sup> My analysis only deals with those early films available on DVD. And while Adele Reinhartz's *Jesus of Hollywood* (2007) does discuss a number of other Jesus films not available on DVD, her subject index does not have an entry for Lazarus (nor are there entries for his sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany). Thus, I do not know whether other films include the Lazarus story.

1960s to the mid–1980s also include the Lazarus story: Stevens’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965), Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* (1977), and Scorsese’s *The Last Temptation of Christ* (1988). Finally, Lazarus is represented in the late 1990s and the early 2000s by Young’s *Jesus* (1999), Hayes’s *The Miracle Maker* (1999), and Saville’s *The Gospel of John* (2003).

Except for Saville’s literal rendering of the Fourth Gospel, most directors since the silent era have portrayed Jesus’ relationship with Mary, Martha, and Lazarus as a long-term friendship. Young and Hayes borrow heavily from Stevens’s *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965) and from Scorsese (who follows the plot of Kazantzakis’s novel, *The Last Temptation of Christ* [Translated by Kimon Friar. New York: Simon and Schuster, 1960]), for their depictions of the Bethany siblings. As will be seen, Scorsese, Young, Hayes, and Saville also draw upon Stevens’s directing skills for their choreography of Jesus’ prayer before Lazarus’s tomb and for their camera shots of Lazarus coming out of the tomb. To a lesser extent they also find inspiration in Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth*.

In order to compare these nine films to one another and more carefully to the Fourth Gospel, I have divided the Lazarus story into four plot segments based upon the structure of ancient miracle stories.<sup>5</sup> In this schema, the first segment (from the account

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<sup>5</sup> In the analysis that follows, I have slightly modified Edward Hobbs’s three-step miracle story structure: 1) someone suffers from a dreadful condition; 2) the miracle worker enters; (3) the results are shown to be astonishing (Hobbs 1974). In my reading here, Hobbs’s step 2 is expanded into two segments: introduction of the miracle worker, and the actual miracle itself. Although Hobbs’s essay is now over thirty years old, it is one of

of Lazarus's illness/death to when Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb, 11:1-37) introduces the physical problem. The second segment (from when Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb to when Jesus calls forth Lazarus, 11:38-43a) focuses on the miracle worker, and the third segment (from when Jesus calls Lazarus forth to when Lazarus rises, 11:43b-44a) describes the miracle itself. Finally, the fourth segment (from when Lazarus rises to the end of scene, 11:44b-46) relates the audience's response to the miracle.

Besides the obvious cinematic differences of characterization, dialogue, and setting, the amount of time given to each story segment is a natural point of comparison between the films. Gérard Genette, in his *Narrative Discourse* (1980), coined the term "duration" for this phenomenon in literature. But sadly, my well-marked copy of Genette's book also ended up in St. Vincent's used book bin with Chatman's *Story and Discourse*. Now I've had to order both Genette's and Chatman's books through inter-library loan, and like Mary and Martha looking for Jesus, I am anxiously awaiting the books' arrival as the deadline for this essay fast approaches.

Ah, at last the books have come! And just a few days before I need to have this essay wrapped up. I was beginning to fear that my Lazarus essay might never see the light of day. Just as I remembered, Chatman's structuralist analysis of narrative duration

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the few—if not the only—that compares ancient miracle stories to modern television commercials. Hobbs's comparison is helpful for my film analysis, since most modern "miracle working" television commercials are very similar in length to most ancient Gospel miracle stories. Excluding the miracles of John 9 and 11, Gospel miracle stories can be read in less than a minute. Most television commercials are likewise less than a minute in length.

borrowed heavily from Gérard Genette's discussion (cf. Culpepper 1983:250; the original French edition of *Narrative Discourse* [*Discours du récit: essai de méthode*] was published in 1972). But Chatman's definition is more succinct. He describes narrative duration as "the relation of the time it takes to read out the narrative to the time the story—events themselves last" (Chatman 1978:67-68; see also Genette 1980:86-112). For example, the story—events of the Johannine Lazarus story last a little over four days (see John 11:5, 39), but its narrative duration (the time it actually takes to read the narrative) is much shorter, since a normal reading of the story does not take four days to complete (Culpepper 1983:71-73).

There is, of course, no way of knowing precisely how much time an ancient reader of Greek would have taken to recite the entire Lazarus story. And even though New Testament scholars have begun to explore the dynamics and dramatics of ancient reading habits (see Yaghjian 1996 and, more recently, Shiner 2003; Hearon 2006), without having access to first century tape recorders or camcorders, any attempt to reconstruct the real time experience of ancient readings must necessarily remain tentative and provisional.<sup>6</sup> Thus, for the sake of comparing the duration of the Lazarus scene in Jesus films with the canonical account, I have simply counted the Greek words in the Lazarus pericope and then listed the percentages of words in each miracle story segment, using those as imperfect points for comparing "duration" in the Johannine account with duration in the cinematic representations of the Lazarus story.

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<sup>6</sup> Ismail Talib (2007) makes the point that "In a cinematic narrative, the equivalence of *story duration* to *discourse* (or *text*) *duration* in a *scene* is more easily measured than in written narratives (which are affected by different reading times").

In the UBS Greek text, John 11:1-46 is 739 words long, and the breakdown of each miracle story segment is as follows:

- 1) From Lazarus's illness–Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb, 11:1-37 (585 / 79%)
- 2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb–Jesus calls Lazarus forth, 11:38-43a (87 / 12%)
- 3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth–Lazarus rises, 11:43b-44a (6 / 1%)
- 4) Lazarus rises–end of scene, 11:44b-46 (61 / 8%)

A table that indicates the amounts of actual time (the duration of the scene segments measured in seconds) and the percentage of time that each film spends on the four segments (the amount of the time within the entire Lazarus scene that each individual segment occupies) may be found on page \*\*\*. The table also compares these film segments to the percentage of Greek words that the Fourth Gospel devotes to each segment. But most of this essay is devoted to comparing the nine different cinematic settings, the characters and their roles, and the visual and conversational components of the stories. With these formal introductions behind us, it is my hope that the films and the canonical text will spark a dialogue and friendship that spreads beyond this page and tome.

*The Gospel of John* (Saville 2003)

Although Saville's three-hour *Gospel of John* is the most recent cinematic version of the raising of Lazarus, it is useful to begin our analysis with this film since it is a "literal" rendering of the Fourth Gospel story. That is, every word is taken directly from the *TEV* translation and no words are added to the movie script. But Saville does add dramatic pauses to the Lazarus story and assigns some *TEV* words to specific characters

where the gospel itself does not specify the speaker. Saville’s word–for–word rendering of the raising of Lazarus is eight minutes and nineteen seconds long. There is one notable silence in the miracle story—a seventeen second pause<sup>7</sup> between the narrator’s statement that Jesus was “deeply moved” (11:33; following Stevens, Saville’s Jesus manages to squeeze out only one lonely tear) and Jesus’ words, “Where have you laid him?” (11:34).

John 11:1-4 is covered in the first minute of the story, with the camera focused on Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany (following the lead of silent films, Mary is dressed entirely in black while Martha’s robe is trimmed in white). The narrator speaks every word in these verses. The Beloved Disciple is the first character in the scene who speaks (words attributed to all the disciples in John 11:8), with Peter responding to Jesus that “if Lazarus is sleeping, he will recover” (words attributed to all the disciples in John 11:12). By giving these lines to Peter and the Beloved Disciple specifically, Saville prefigures an intra–community competition that does not actually appear in the Johannine plot until John 13:21-31.

The duration of each of Saville’s miracle story segments is as follows.

- 1) Report of Lazarus’s illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb (5:57 / 72%)
- 2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:19 / 16%)
- 3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:18/ 4%)

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<sup>7</sup> Chatman defines a narrative pause as similar to “narrative stretch,” where “the discourse time is longer than the story time,” except that in a narrative pause “story time is zero” (1978:68; cf. Culpepper 1983:70-73).

#### 4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:42/ 8%)

Rather than portraying “some of them [going] to the Pharisees and [telling] them what he had done” (John 11:46), Saville chooses to have his leading Pharisee report the news of Jesus’ miracle to the assembled Sanhedrin (see Staley and Walsh:147). Here Saville follows a long line of directors in attempting to mitigate the anti-Jewish proclivities of the Fourth Gospel while still retaining the Johannine account of the meeting of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin (John 11:47-53; Culpepper 1983:128; cf. DeMille 2004; Stevens 2003; Young 2000; Hayes 2000).

When comparing Saville’s depiction of the miracle with that of the Fourth Gospel itself, it is clear that Saville’s four segments are quite similar in duration to those of the Fourth Gospel. However, in all other cinematic representations, the duration of segment #4 is greatly expanded (Young’s *Jesus* [2000] is the closest to Saville and the Fourth Gospel in this regard). This is in keeping with film tradition’s interest in highlighting the visually dramatic elements of Jesus’ miracles. Of course, what makes the Johannine account of the raising of Lazarus particularly intriguing is precisely the opposite. The Fourth Gospel puts all its emphasis on the events and conversations *leading up to the miracle*, while the miracle itself functions almost as an anticlimactic afterthought.

#### The Raising of Lazarus in the Silent Film Era

Zecca and Nonquet’s *The Life and Passion of Jesus Christ* (1905) reflects a period in the history of cinema dominated by experimentation. In the early twentieth century, directors were not sure if moving pictures would ever be more than simply a curiosity, and so the special effects of the new technology were a major attraction in drawing audiences. Zecca and Nonquet’s portrayal of Jesus thus exploits the

wonderworking power of cinema. Their Lazarus scene is found at the 22:16 mark of the forty–four minute film, just prior to the transfiguration, which is the climax of Jesus’ miraculous ministry and the audience’s visual confirmation of Jesus’ divine nature. The entire Lazarus scene is fifty seconds long and there are no intertitles denoting dialogue. Instead, one intertitle introduces the scene with the words, “The Raising of Lazarus.” The camera is stationary throughout and begins by focusing on a tightly constricted visual frame where all the action takes place.

The scene opens with Mary and Martha weeping at Lazarus’s tomb as Jesus and his disciples approach, followed by a large group of people. Mary and Martha rush to Jesus and kneel at his feet, begging for his help. Jesus does not weep, but simply responds to the sisters’ request by praying and pointing to the tomb in order to have the stone removed from the cliffside cave. After the stone is moved, Jesus gestures to the crowd to stand back. He points to heaven, and then Lazarus rises from the dead. The scene ends when Lazarus comes out of the tomb, unwraps himself, and kneels in prayer at Jesus’ feet. Lazarus is then reunited with his sisters and talks to them as they and the crowd follow behind Jesus, who walks off camera. Like the miracle of cinema itself, Zecca and Nonquet’s rendering of the raising of Lazarus evokes faith from all those characters who witness it. There are no unbelievers in their scene.

The duration of each of Zecca and Nonquet’s miracle story segments is as follows.

- 1) From Lazarus’s illness–Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb (0:12 / 24%)
- 2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb–Jesus calls Lazarus forth (0:14 / 28%)
- 3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth–Lazarus rises (0:02 / 4%)

#### 4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:22 / 44%)

Prefiguring the future of Jesus film storytelling, the duration of Zecca and Nonquet's fourth segment is significantly longer than the same segment in the Fourth Gospel itself and in Saville's literal rendering of the story. Zecca and Nonquet's fourth segment comprises nearly six times the 8% of space that the Gospel itself devotes to the same segment. But if Zecca and Nonquet's portrayal of Jesus is understood as an exploration of the wonderworking effects of cinema, then the emphatic emphasis on the effects of Jesus' miracle is quite logical. Celluloid and Jesus are interchangeable signs of the divine.

Olcott's Lazarus scene is found at the 37:57 mark of his seventy-one minute 1912 film entitled *From the Manger to the Cross*. The entire scene is 3:02 minutes, including the opening intertitle, which lasts 25 seconds. The film was shot on location in Palestine, but it is not clear whether this scene was actually filmed in Bethany near Jerusalem, the traditional site of the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. However, since the scene is followed by Jesus departing from Jericho and healing blind Bartimaeus (Matt 20:29; cf. Mark 10:46), one might surmise that Olcott imagines the entire Lazarus story taking place in Bethany "beyond the Jordan" (John 10:40; cf. 1:28). Olcott's Jericho scenes are then followed by an unnamed woman who anoints Jesus (head and feet) in an unnamed locale (the intertitle references Matt 26:1-12).

Although Olcott's film is episodic in its plot, the fact that Mary and Martha appear just one minute before the raising of Lazarus (in the scene from Luke 10:38) and are named in that scene and in this Lazarus scene, makes it clear that the Mary who sits at the feet of Jesus is also understood to be Lazarus's sister. Interestingly, the scene between

Mary at the feet of Jesus and at the raising of Lazarus depicts Jesus teaching in the temple (John 8:20-58)—but without any reference to the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11).

There are four intertitles connected with the raising of Lazarus, and these simply emphasize the overall plot of the story, quoting John 11:1, 17, 40, and 43. Despite the film's notable emphasis on the role of women in the ministry of Jesus, none of the intertitles quote the words of Mary or Martha, and Jesus' words are only quoted twice: when he reprimands Mary for her lack of faith (cf. 11:40),<sup>8</sup> and when he commands that the stone be removed (11:43).

In Olcott's film it is the dark-veiled Mary who comes to tell Jesus about her brother's death.<sup>9</sup> She points to heaven, apparently recalling Martha's words in John 11:22 ("But even now I know that God will give you whatever you ask of him"), and then kneels, kissing Jesus' legs and feet as her body heaves in deep sobs. Jesus begins to pray, but then breaks down and weeps uncontrollably (John 11:32-33; Culpepper 1983:110). In the background one of Jesus' disciples sways back and forth in prayer or grief. When Jesus and his disciples arrive at the tomb, Mary reacts apprehensively to Jesus' command to remove the stone, but all the mourning, praying (swaying) bystanders listen attentively

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<sup>8</sup> In John 11:40 these words are addressed to Martha. But in the film Jesus is clearly speaking to the black-veiled Mary rather than to the white-veiled Martha who kneels closest to the camera on the right.

<sup>9</sup> Mary's hair is not covered in this scene as it was in the earlier Lukan scene, but her black veil is draped around her neck and shoulders. Interestingly, Young, in his 1999 television miniseries, would also emphasize Mary's role in the story over that of Martha.

to Jesus as he prays (11:41-42). When Lazarus comes out of the tomb he first turns toward a group of men on the left (perhaps “the Jews” of John 11:45) who back away, cowering; then he unbinds himself and falls at the feet of Jesus in worship. When Lazarus stands up his two sisters come forward and embrace him.

Olcott does not follow the Lazarus scene with the Sanhedrin plot to kill Jesus (John 11:46-53). This episode is perhaps alluded to instead at the end of the preceding scene (John 8:20-58), with Jesus’ opponents clenching their hands in an obvious, symbolic gesture of their plans to seize him. Thus, like Zecca and Nonquet before him, Olcott’s rendering of the Lazarus miracle seems to assume that moving pictures can only evoke a response of faith. There are no disbelievers in this post–resurrection, joyous family reunion, despite the Fourth Gospel’s insinuation to the contrary.

DeMille’s *The King of Kings* (1927) broke with earlier Jesus films by presenting viewers with a more integrated plot that revolves around Judas and Mary Magdalene.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Johannine traditions are not well represented in the film until the Passion Week. In the original 1927 version, DeMille’s 6:28 minute Lazarus scene is found at the

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<sup>10</sup> Jeannie MacPherson wrote the screenplay for DeMille’s film, and she seems to have drawn her opening scene, with its love triangle between Jesus, Judas, and Mary, from Paul Heyse’s play *Mary of Magdala*. The theatrical production of Heyse’s work ran on Broadway from November 1902 through February 1903 (see “New Plays Come to Broadway”), with Tyrone Power playing the role of Judas. Paul Heyse would go on to win the 1910 Nobel Prize for literature.

45:37 mark of the two and a half hour film.<sup>11</sup> It is preceded by an invented scene depicting Jesus' interactions with children, where he mends a child's broken doll. The raising of Lazarus is followed by the story of the woman caught in adultery, which functions as Caiaphas's second attempt to trap Jesus and leads directly to the events of Passion Week.

There are seven intertitles in DeMille's rendering of the raising of Lazarus. The first, which introduces the scene's first segment (from Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb, 1:31 / 24%) reads, "Whether with broken dolls or broken hearts, those who loved Him came to Him. So came Martha and Mary of Bethany—mourning their brother Lazarus." The second intertitle is Martha's opening statement of faith, "Lord, if thou hadst been here, my brother had not died. But I know that even now, whatsoever thou wilt ask of God, he will give it to thee!" (John 11:21-22; KJV). Martha, the believer, is dressed like a nun with a white bordered veil, and she kneels in a prayerful pose before Jesus, with Mary standing beside her. The disciples, along with the child Mark (the future author of the second gospel), listen.

The third intertitle is John 11:23 (Thy brother shall rise again!); then, after Martha asks Jesus to follow her, an intertitle of John 11:17 is shown. The screen turns to black, and then Jesus is shown descending steps into the tomb (Segment 2, Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth, 1:50 / 28%). The stone lid of a sarcophagus is lit as the women, the young boy Mark, and the disciples descend into the tomb behind Jesus. As the tomb floods with light, Jesus commands that the stone (the lid of the

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<sup>11</sup> The 1927 version of the film is over thirty minutes longer than the 1928 theatrical release from which the VHS was derived.

sarcophagus) be removed, and Martha seeks to dissuade Jesus from having anyone lift it off. When Matthew and John move forward to remove the lid, the disbelieving opponents of Jesus enter the doorway of the tomb (a scribe, a temple guard, and a Pharisee).

As the two disciples remove the sarcophagus lid, the camera focuses on various people's responses to the revealed corpse of Lazarus. Finally, the camera turns to Martha and Jesus, who stand side by side. Jesus then begins to pray, and the fifth intertitle appears (John 11:25)—without any hint of Martha's testimony. Nor is there any evidence of Jesus being "deeply moved," even though the camera is centered on Jesus. Finally, the camera turns to focus on the reaction of Jesus' opponents/Caiaphas's spies (the disbelieving temple guard, scribe, and Pharisee).

As a penumbra appears around Jesus' head, the sixth intertitle commands Lazarus to "come forth" (John 11:43; Segment 3, Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises, 0:15 / 4%). Lazarus begins to move, like a butterfly slowly emerging from a cocoon, and once more the camera moves around the tomb, exploring the variety of responses of the eyewitnesses (Segment 4, Lazarus rises—end of scene, 2:52 / 44%). Caiaphas's spies leave, and the final intertitle appears (John 11:44, spoken to Martha). Lazarus sits up in the sarcophagus as Martha approaches to unwrap him. When his face is unveiled, Lazarus gazes rapturously at Jesus, looks at his bare arm, and then hugs his sisters. The remaining witnesses in the tomb worship in awe, and Martha turns to worship at the feet of Jesus. Lazarus grasps Jesus' hand, the boy Mark is drawn into Jesus' embrace, and the scene fades to darkness once again. Although three future authors of the Gospels are present in Lazarus's tomb (Matthew, Mark, and John), Caiaphas's spies have disappeared.

Apparently unimpressed, they are missing from the final scene and do not end up believers.<sup>12</sup>

While DeMille's rendering of the miracle is truer to the Fourth Gospel's conclusion than earlier Jesus films ("But some of them went to the Pharisees and told them what he had done," John 11:46), it doubtless also reflects the more jaded reaction of a new generation of Americans who had grown up with cinema. Moviemakers had lost their innate power to overwhelm and convince audiences with a few special effects and spectacles. Cinema viewers—like the variety of witnesses to Jesus' miracles in DeMille's film—were as likely to mock and ridicule film as to trust and believe what they saw onscreen. While the first two of DeMille's miracles happen to children (thus inviting viewers to experience a "childlike" faith), not surprisingly, the most magical miracle in DeMille's film—the coin in the fish's mouth (Matt 17:24-27)—is treated comically. By way of contrast, DeMille's most dramatic special effects miracle is his psychologized version of the casting out of Mary Magdalene's "demons" (Luke 8:2)—a miracle made visible only to the viewing (believing) audience. DeMille's portrayal of the raising of Lazarus, on the other hand, seems to draw more from the emergent horror film genre for its effect (see also Scorsese [2000], below).

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<sup>12</sup> Notably, Caiaphas's spies are nowhere to be seen when DeMille unveils his most dramatic special effects—the casting out of Mary Magdalene's seven deadly sins. Clearly, DeMille intends this miracle (and that of giving sight to the blind girl) to function as a hierophany, evoking awe and faith in the viewing audience.

The Raising of Lazarus from Stevens, *The Greatest Story Ever Told* (1965)  
to Hayes, *The Miracle Maker* (1999)

After DeMille, it would be nearly forty years before another Hollywood director portrayed the raising of Lazarus in film.<sup>13</sup> And when George Stevens finally put Lazarus back on the silver screen in his 1965 epic *The Greatest Story Ever Told*, he developed Mary, Martha, and Lazarus into round characters who have lives outside of the miracle of John 11. For the first time in cinema history, Lazarus is shown prior to his death in a setting where he actually talks. In Stevens's rendering, Jesus meets Lazarus and his sisters by chance, shortly after Jesus has been baptized and after he has chosen his first disciples. In Stevens's imagination, Lazarus is the rich man of Mark 10:17-31 who welcomes Jesus and his disciples into his home (Stevens 2003:1.49:22-1.49:35; 1.50:30-1.50:54; 1.51:55-1.56:03). Jesus teaches while Martha serves those who listen (Luke 10:38-42), and as they talk Lazarus's future tomb can be seen in the background.

Later in the film, an ill Lazarus travels with his sisters to Nazareth in Galilee to warn Jesus against going to Jerusalem (Stevens 2003:1.41:50-1.43:28; 1.45:14-1.45:56). Despite the warning of Lazarus and his sisters, Jesus decides to go to Jerusalem for Passover. While he and his disciples are on the way, Jesus hears that Lazarus is sick and dying. But he puts off the sisters' request for him to come at once (cf. John 11:4), and continues on his journey. In the next scene, reminiscent of John 10:40, Jesus is with his disciples at sunset at the Jordan River. One of the disciples—probably Little James—asks

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<sup>13</sup> The risen Lazarus is portrayed in Dino DeLaurentis's 1961 film *Barabbas*, where the unbelieving Barabbas asks a chalky-white, fresh-from-the-grave Lazarus what death is like.

him, “Master, are men like circles in the water? Do they just float away, and are lost? It was right there—where John the Baptist stood . . . . When the Baptist prayed, I felt good.” Jesus then begins to recite the Lord’s Prayer, and just as he finishes, Nathaniel approaches the disciples to tell them of Lazarus’s death. The scene then cuts to Jesus’ arrival at the home of Mary and Martha in Bethany, omitting all of John 11:5-13.

Stevens’s entire miracle scene is 17:49 minutes long—more than twice the length of any other filmed version. Like the Fourth Gospel itself, the raising of Lazarus is at the halfway point of Stevens’s film, and is followed by an onscreen intermission. The second half of the film opens with a few Jerusalem priests hearing a rumor of “the Galilean” raising someone from the dead, but there is no official meeting of the Sanhedrin. Caiaphas is in the scene, but he says nothing (cf. John 11:47-52). The duration of each miracle story segment and accompanying dialogue is as follows.

1) From Lazarus’s illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb (11:00 / 62%)

Voice off camera: “Peter?”

Voice off camera: “What is it?”

One of the two messengers: “We came as fast as we could. We’ve lost Lazarus.”

One of the two messengers: “Master—Lazarus is dead in Bethany.”

Nathaniel: “You cured many people. Yet you did not help your friend.”

Jesus: “I am glad for your sake that I was not there, Nathaniel. But that you may believe—let us go to Bethany.”

Little James?: “If Lazarus is dead, what need is there to go now? “Why? Why must you go?”

Jesus: “My Father’s work is there.”

2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:56 / 10%)

(Martha approaches Jesus. Mary Magdalene and Mary, Jesus' mother, are near the sisters of Lazarus. There are also many other mourners, representing a wide range of ethnicities. An emotional outburst by Martha.)

Martha: "Have you come to bury the dead? Or have you come to feed the mourners? You made a leper well. You made a cripple walk. Was it too much to ask that you keep my brother from dying? Why do you come now that he is dead? When you could have come while he lived? When he needed you? Why?"

(Mary runs to Martha's side.)

Jesus: "Your brother will rise again."

Martha: "Rise? Yes he will rise. On judgment day. At the resurrection of us all!"

Jesus: "I am the resurrection and the life. He that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live. And whosoever liveth and believeth in me shall never die. Do you believe this Martha?"

(No response.)

Jesus: "Do you believe this, Mary?"

Mary: "If you had only been here, I believe that Lazarus would not have died."

(As the sisters try to stifle sobs, Jesus turns to reveal a single tear trickling down his cheek. Jesus then leaves the crowd and walks up to the tomb alone. The tomb magically and silently opens. The camera shot is from inside looking out, as Jesus' raised arms choreograph his prayer—a prayer that no one but the viewing audience can hear.)

Jesus: "Who is like thee, O Father in heaven? Majestic in holiness terrible in glorious deeds, doing wonders. There is none that can deliver out of thy hand. You wound, and you heal. You kill and you make alive. Come from the four winds O breath, and breathe upon this man, that he may live." (cf. Exod 15:11)

3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:18 / 2%)

Jesus: “Lazarus. Lazarus. Come forth!” (echoes across the canyon)

(Music begins, and Judas begins to walk away, without looking at the tomb. Peter watches pensively—moving from shadows into the light. The healed blind man watches, as does the healed cripple. The camera turns to the two sisters, Mary Magdalene, and other disciples. In a distant camera shot Lazarus appears in the doorway of the tomb, with a clap of thunder.)

#### 4) Lazarus rises-end of scene (4:35 / 26%)

Judas to bystander: “What happened?”  
(Hallelujah music begins)

Bystander: “Did you see? Jesus of Nazareth . . .”

Bystander: “I saw it. I saw it with my own eyes. Lazarus was dead. He is alive!”

(Disciples begin to tell others as they run toward the walls of Jerusalem.)

Bystander: “The messiah has come!”

(Handel’s *Hallelujah Chorus*)

Bystander: “The Messiah has come! A man was dead and now he lives!”

Uriah, the formerly lame man: “I was crippled, and now I walk!”

Aram, the formerly blind man: “I was blind, and now I see!”

A voice from the walls of Jerusalem: “Who has done this?”

Aram, the formerly blind man: “The man called Jesus!”

#### Intermission

Although the raising of Lazarus is one of only four miracles in Stevens’s three and a quarter hour film, it is clearly intended to be the dramatic highlight of Jesus’ public ministry. Furthermore, Stevens’s choreographed prayer of Jesus and Stevens’s camera

shot looking out at Jesus from within the tomb function as the cinematic inspiration for nearly every subsequent director (cf. Zeffirelli 2000; Scorsese 2000; Young 2000; Hayes 2000). Only Saville's directing seems to borrow more from Zeffirelli than from Stevens.

Finally, in Stevens's most dramatic break from the Johannine account, Mary and Martha's conversation with Jesus clearly reflects their *lack* of faith rather than their affirmations of faith. Although Stevens grants considerable dialogue to Martha, her words are not acclamations of trust, but of reproach. Even when she exclaims, "Yes he will rise. On judgment day. At the resurrection of us all!" she is clearly not expecting anything special from Jesus, nor is she affirming any particular Christology. This perspective is confirmed when Jesus states that he is "the resurrection and the life" and that "he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live." For when Jesus asks Martha specifically if she believes this, she does not respond. Jesus then asks Mary the same question.

Martha's silence and Mary's "If you had only been here, I believe that Lazarus would not have died," are what affect Jesus most deeply in the scene. Jesus' solitary, dramatic tear is thus a response to the sisters' lack of faith, not a response to the death of his friend Lazarus (cf. John 11:35-36). And unlike the silent era films, neither Mary nor Martha is seen in the company of their brother immediately following his resurrection. For Stevens, the raising of Lazarus is clearly neither a restoration of a family nor a dramatic affirmation of the sisters' faith; rather it is the joyous acclamation of *men* to the world (and by extension, the viewing audience) that Jesus is the promised Messiah. Notably, it is an anonymous bystander who first announces to the crowds that "the Messiah has come"—this at the very moment Handel's *Hallelujah Chorus* begins to

resound in the background. Thus, on an auditory level, the proclamation of Lazarus's resurrection recalls the opening and closing scenes of the film where the image of Christ as pantocrator is shown in the dome of a Byzantine church (Staley and Walsh: 51, 54, 57). For Stevens, then, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is an expression of the worship experience of the Christian church—rather than being a historical event from Second Temple Judaism. The subsequent question of the four watchmen on Jerusalem's towering walls functions as a confirmatory allusion to the four gospels of the Christian church. To the anonymous bystander's joyous shout "The Messiah has come!" the watchmen respond in unison, "Who has done this?" And Aram, the formerly blind man responds, "The man called Jesus!" After a short intermission, the second half of the film opens similarly to the way the film began—with four trumpeters on Jerusalem's ramparts heralding the dawn of a new day. Handel's Hallelujah Chorus and the four trumpeters will resound their reprises early Easter morning, when Lazarus (without his sisters) is found grieving with the disciples.

After Lazarus is raised and Caiaphas hears of "the Galilean's" latest miracle, Stevens follows the Fourth Gospel by including the anointing of Jesus in the home of Lazarus and his sisters (Stevens 2003:1.47:41-1.59:39; 2.03:35-2.07:40). But while the silhouettes of Lazarus and his sisters appear briefly in the anointing scene, they do not speak, nor will the sisters appear again in the film. Notably, it is Mary *Magdalene* and not Mary of Bethany who understands Jesus' mission and thus anoints him for burial. In Stevens's rendering, neither Mary of Bethany nor Martha have moved beyond the lack of faith they had expressed earlier at their brother's gravesite.

The raising of Lazarus in Zeffirelli's six and a half hour *Jesus of Nazareth* can be found at the 38:10 point of the second DVD, and is 5:44 minutes long. The scene is preceded by Jesus' lengthy trip from Galilee to Jerusalem, where he is accompanied by crowds singing excerpts of the Psalms of Ascent (Ps 120–134). As Jesus and his disciples approach Jerusalem, Peter and Judas reflect on what might happen in the city. Suddenly, a man on horseback gallops through the Jerusalem-bound pilgrims to tell Jesus of Lazarus's illness. Mary and Martha, the sisters of Lazarus, have sent a messenger with the news of their brother's illness. Curiously, there has been no previous hint in the film of Lazarus's existence, nor of Jesus' relationship to Lazarus's sisters.

The duration of each miracle story segment and accompanying dialogue is as follows.

1) From Lazarus's illness–Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (2:45 / 48%)

Unidentified person: "Master, master, the sisters of your friend in Bethany have sent me here to find you. Lazarus is very ill. Near death."

Jesus: "Go. Tell them I'll be there."

(When Jesus arrives in Bethany, the sisters run toward him.)

Mary and Martha: "Master, master!"

John: "Master is coming!"

Martha (hugging Jesus in public view): "Lord. Lord! If you had been—with us, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now whatever you ask of God, God will give it to you because I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who has come into the world to give us eternal life."

Jesus: "Where have you laid him?"

Martha: "Come and see." (She takes Jesus by the hand, and a faint smile lightens her face).

(Then Mary comes.)

Mary: “Lord, Lord, I prayed and prayed for you to arrive. You could have kept Lazarus from dying.” (Jesus holds her hand and looks toward the tomb.)

Jesus: “Take away the stone” (he sheds no tears).

Mary: “But he’s been dead four days, Master! His body must already be decaying.”

Jesus: “Take away the stone.”

Jesus: “Give me a hand” (dramatic music).

(Jesus walks down toward the tomb, where three men remove the stone.)

2) Jesus arrives at the tomb–Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:47 / 31%)

(Jesus continues to walk down to the tomb. The view is from inside looking out [borrowing from Stevens].)

(Shadows of bystanders can be seen. Jesus kneels to pray.)

Jesus: “Father, I thank you for hearing my prayer. Now those that stand around me may believe that I am the resurrection and the life. And those who believe in me shall never die.” (No one is close enough to hear this.)

John: “I went down into the countries underneath the earth; to the peoples of the past, but you lifted my life from the pit; Lord, my God” (Jonah 2:6; the camera zooms into the black void of the tomb).

3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth–Lazarus rises (0:09 / 3%)

Jesus: “Lazarus, come forth!”

(People run forward to Jesus and Lazarus.)

4) Lazarus rises–end of scene (1:03 / 18%)

(Jesus’ shadow, with hands dropping, is beside Lazarus’s shrouded figure.)

Jesus: “He that believes in me but he were dead, yet shall he live”  
(A head shot of Jesus, speaking directly into the camera.)

Interestingly, Zeffirelli’s television miniseries is the only film that comes close to accurately portraying Martha’s faithful response to Jesus. In fact, Martha’s words, “I believe you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who *has come into the world to give us eternal life*” are more representative of Johannine Christology than are the words which the Evangelist actually gives her (“I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world”; John 11:27; Culpepper 1983:141). Moreover, Zeffirelli’s Martha does not make her confession of faith in response to anything Jesus has said. Notably, Jesus’ words “I am the resurrection and the life. And those who believe in me shall never die” (John 11:25-26) are spoken in prayer at Lazarus’s tomb, far removed from the hearing of any mourners and long after Martha has made her bold confession.

Zeffirelli follows the raising of Lazarus with a scene of Jewish pilgrims entering Jerusalem and arguing in the temple over the price of Passover lambs. There is no hint of any witnesses to Lazarus’s resurrection going to the Pharisees and “telling them what he had done” (John 11:46). Nor is there an anointing by Mary in Bethany. In this respect, Zeffirelli’s made-for-television miniseries returns to the early days of silent film. Like Zecca and Nonquet and Olcott before him, and like the meant-to-be-believed commercials that would normally intercut his television miniseries, Zeffirelli’s celluloid miracles are meant for the viewing “faithful.”<sup>14</sup> Like Martha, Zeffirelli’s viewers have

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<sup>14</sup> Although there were no commercial breaks during the first showing of Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* during Holy Week 1977, the numerous fadeouts to black are clearly intended for commercials (Tatum 2004:144-45).

already testified to a conventional (consumerist) Christian faith (Staley and Walsh 2007:81). As a consequence, there are no unbelievers in Zeffirelli's Bethany.

Scorsese's 1988 rendering of the Lazarus story relies heavily on Nikos Kazantzakis's novel *The Last Temptation of Christ*. Like the novel, Scorsese has Jesus meet Mary on his return from his desert temptations (Scorsese 2000:1.01:40-1.04:13), but unlike the novel, there is no evidence at this point that Mary and Martha have a brother. In Scorsese's two hour and three-quarter hour film, the Lazarus scene is preceded by Jesus' rejection in Nazareth and by Jesus' rejection of his mother. But there are no messengers who tell him of Lazarus's illness, and consequently there is no conversation about whether Jesus should go immediately or later to Bethany. The duration of each of Scorsese's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue (beginning at 1.19:22) is as follows.

1) From Lazarus's illness–Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (0)

2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb–Jesus calls Lazarus forth (1:23 / 33%)

(Mourners come forward, then Mary and Martha meet Jesus, kneel, and kiss his hand.)

Jesus: "When was he buried?"

Mary: "Three days ago"

Jesus: "Roll away the stone."

(People hold their noses because of the stench.)

(Jesus walks forward [the camera view is from inside the tomb, looking out, cf. Stevens].)

(Jesus uses powerful hand motions as though he is pulling death itself into his own body.)

3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth–Lazarus rises (1:08 / 27%)

Jesus: "Lazarus. Lazarus! In the name of the prophet, in the name of Jeremiah and my father, in the name of the Most Holy God. I call you here. I call you here! Lazarus."

Jesus kneeling: "Lazarus."

(There is a black screen, then Lazarus's hand thrusts out of the tomb toward Jesus.)

#### 4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (1:42 / 40%)

(Jesus grasps Lazarus's hand as birds begin to chirp. Jesus is nearly pulled completely inside the tomb by Lazarus.)

(Lazarus hugs Jesus.)

Jesus: "Adonai."<sup>15</sup>

Jesus (internal monologue): "God, help me."

In Scorsese's film, the raising of Lazarus from the dead is the penultimate revelation *to Jesus* of his own power and special relationship to God. Scorsese's use of North African Muslim lamentation rituals, coupled with Jesus' Jewish prayer, dramatically undercuts Christian audiences' sense of familiarity with the story and accentuates the otherness of the scene. Although Jesus' hand movements at the tomb of Lazarus are clearly modeled on those of Stevens's Jesus, the differences are significant. Stevens's Jesus moves his arms upward in prayer, but Scorsese's Jesus thrusts his arms straight forward from his mid-section, then pulls them back to his side. He literally sucks Lazarus's death into himself. Thus, the battle to control the revived Lazarus

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<sup>15</sup> For viewers unfamiliar with Hebrew, Jesus' "Adonai" may, on first hearing, sound something like "I don't know how I . . ." That is, it may strike the viewer more like a statement of bewilderment than an affirmation of faith. I am grateful to one of students for this observation.

foreshadows Jesus' own struggle with his imminent death (Culpepper 1983:94). Scorsese's Lazarus is a zombie, and Jesus is very nearly swallowed up by it/him (cf. DeMille). Borrowing from Zeffirelli, Scorsese immediately follows the raising of Lazarus by cutting to the Jerusalem temple with its exploitation of the bloody sacrificial system. But here Scorsese ironically juxtaposes Jewish temple ritual with a statue of the Roman emperor before which clouds of red incense burn.

Following Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth* by ten years, Scorsese's raising of Lazarus is as much a radical departure from the Johannine account as Zeffirelli's rendering was a hyper-Johannized account. Like Zeffirelli, Scorsese has no anointing in Bethany and no consultation with the Sanhedrin (cf. John 11:45-53; 12:1-8). Instead, Scorsese turns the high priest's plan to put Lazarus to death (12:10) into the Zealot Saul's murder of him (2000:1.29:05).<sup>16</sup> Still later, Lazarus's family role is usurped (in Jesus' death-throe vision) by a virile Jesus who fathers a brood of children by the dead man's fertile sisters (Scorsese 2000:2.18:19). In Scorsese's film, Jesus is thus literally the re(s)-erection and the life; he offers the sisters what their brother could not. There is no delayed "parousia" here. Scorsese's coming of Jesus is fecund and lively, producing purely physical (but ultimately phantasmal) offspring.

In Roger Young's *Jesus* (1999), a nearly three hour, made-for-television miniseries, Lazarus and/or his sisters appear in four different scenes (Young 2000:11:24; 25:21; 1.48:56; 1.51:24). The miracle of the raising of Lazarus itself is 6:16 minutes long and is preceded by Jesus' Passover journey to Jerusalem (cf. Zeffirelli). But Young gives

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<sup>16</sup> Lazarus is murdered by the future apostle Paul, who later says to Jesus, "If I have to crucify you I will, and if I have to raise you from the dead, I will do that too."

the journey an inclusive emphasis by placing within it the story of the Canaanite woman's daughter (Matt 15:21-28; Mark 7:24-30) and an extended conversation between Jesus and the ex-prostitute, Mary Magdalene. The raising of Lazarus is followed immediately by Nicodemus's faithful report to Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin regarding his friend Lazarus's resurrection (John 11:45-53).

As in Stevens's and Scorsese's films, Mary, Martha, and their brother Lazarus are introduced early in the film. But in Young's rendering, it is clear from the very beginning that Jesus and his father Joseph have known the Bethany family for a long time. When Jesus and Joseph stop in on Mary, Martha, and Lazarus to do a little carpentry work (Young 2000:11:24), their conversations reveal that the two families are related and that Mary is in love with Jesus. When Jesus visits the family again (Young 2000:25:21) it is at the beginning of his spiritual quest. But here, he sees Mary and Martha before he goes to the desert, not on his return (cf. Scorsese). It is in this setting that he finally tells a bewildered Mary that he cannot marry her. They will not see each other again until they meet in the context of Lazarus's death.

The duration of each of Young's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue is as follows.

1) From Lazarus's illness–Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (4:18 / 68%)

(On the road to Jerusalem [cf. Zeffirelli], a man on horseback rushes up to tell Jesus that Lazarus is dying and that Mary and Martha have sent him to find Jesus.)

Jesus: "Thank you Zerah, thank you for the message. . . . Go ahead . . . go ahead. I'll come when the time is ready."

Zerah: "They said you were their friend!"

Andrew: "You've spoken of Lazarus many times . . ."

Peter: "If you need to go to him, you must!"

(Jesus just continues to walk, without responding.)

Thomas to Judas: “He heals strangers, but does nothing for his friends.”

(There is significant narrative duration before Jesus finally arrives in Bethany and enters the home of Mary and Martha.)

Voice in the crowd: “Lazarus was a good man. Mary . . .”

Mary: “Yes, he was.”

Voice in the crowd: “This is a great loss.”

(Jesus finds Mary, and Mary puts her head on Jesus’ shoulder.)

Jesus: “Your brother will rise again.”

Mary: “Resurrection day?”

Jesus: “I am the resurrection and the life, those who believe in me will live. Do you believe this?”

Mary: “I know who you are now.” (cf. Olcott)

Martha, angrily: “Jesus! If you had been here, Lazarus would not have died.

Jesus: “Where have you laid him?”

2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (0:40 / 10%)

Jesus: “You! Take this stone away.”

Mary: “Jesus, it has been four days!”

Jesus: “Take the stone away!”

(Inside view looking out of the tomb [cf. Stevens])

Jesus: “Father, I thank you for having heard me . . .”

3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (0:32 / 8%)

Martha: “He mocks us with a show.”

Mary: “Trust Jesus, Martha.”

Anonymous bystander: “Someone should stop this. It’s a cruel joke.”

4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:54 / 14%)

Anonymous bystander: “He’s alive!”

Anonymous bystander: “It’s a miracle!”

Jesus: “Unbind him.”

Nicodemus: “God be praised!”

(Thomas unwraps Lazarus, and the two sisters rush forward to hug Lazarus.)

Richard Walsh writes that “Jesus’ miracles are perhaps more important in this movie than in any other. They induce belief in Jesus as ‘The One,’ the Messiah” (Staley and Walsh:204 note 11). It is not insignificant that the two made-for-television movies emphasize the faith-evoking capability of Jesus’ miracles more than any other. Yet Young’s Mary is not quite the equivalent of Zeffirelli’s Martha. Like Zeffirelli’s Martha, Young’s Mary expresses her trust in Jesus prior to the raising of Lazarus, but she does not couch it in hyper-Johannine terms. She merely says, “I know who you are now.” There is no Johannine “confession” (John 11:27). Like the other two Marys in Young’s film (Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene), Mary of Bethany “knows who Jesus is” because of her deep, intimate friendship with Jesus—a friendship that has weathered the crises of normal human relationships. As a result, Young’s Mary of Bethany stands closer to Olcott’s Mary than to any other cinematic character.

Finally, unlike Zeffirelli’s Lazarus scene, Young allows his characters to express doubt and resistance. Mary encourages Martha to trust Jesus despite her anger and

misgivings, and others (an anonymous bystander; Caiaphas) express more radical skepticism. Nevertheless, by giving “doubting Thomas” the honor of unbinding Lazarus (cf. DeMille), Young reasserts a conventional Christian (and television) faith. In this medium, “seeing” *is* believing (Hobbs). Thus, Young’s characters lie on a continuum somewhere between Stevens’s faithless women and Zeffirelli’s models of (consumerist) discipleship.

Derek Hayes’s eighty-seven minute stop–action puppetry and animated film borrows heavily from Stevens and Zeffirelli for its portrayal of Lazarus and his sisters. In many respects, it is a collage of earlier Jesus films. Lazarus appears early in the film, just after Jesus’ baptism (Hayes 2000:13:06; 48:09). He rushes up on a donkey and catches Jesus by surprise (cf. the way that Jesus first hears of Lazarus’s illness in Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth*). Lazarus says that his sisters had seen Jesus at the Jordan. Jesus then visits with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha (cf. Stevens).

Lazarus is not heard from again until a man (Reuben) gallops up to Jesus (cf. Zeffirelli) to say “It’s Lazarus—he’s so sick. Martha and Mary—they’re begging you. Please, if you don’t come now—.”

The raising of Lazarus is then told retrospectively as a flashback, by Asher ben Azarah (Hayes’s invented priestly character), who is recounting the event to the Sanhedrin (John 11:46-47). The miracle is preceded by Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem where he tells the parable of the Good Samaritan to his disciples and a group of pilgrims (cf. Zeffirelli). At the end of Asher ben Azarah’s account, Caiaphas is shown in a pensive posture, contemplating his next move. But before he can say anything (e.g. John 11:49-53), the scene cuts to Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem.

The flashback of the raising of Lazarus is 3:22 minutes long, and the duration of each of Hayes's miracle story segments with accompanying dialogue is as follows.

1) From Lazarus's illness—Jesus arrives at Lazarus's tomb (1:45 / 52%)

Reuben: "Teacher!" (Reuben gallops up on a donkey, all out of breath).

Jesus: "Reuben!"

Reuben: "I've ridden all night. . ."

Jesus: "What's happened?"

Reuben: "It's Lazarus. He's so sick"

Jesus: "Lazarus. . ."

Reuben: "Please! You must come to us. . . . Martha and Mary . . . they're begging you. Please! If you don't come now. . ."

Jesus: "Reuben, tell Martha and Mary I will come. I will come soon."

Reuben: "Please!"

Tamar (Jairus's daughter): "Why didn't you go? Why? If your friend—"

Jesus; "There is a purpose in our grief."

Jesus: "Tamar, everything that's happening will be to the glory of God."

(Cut to the Temple, where Caiaphas the high priest is interrupted. Asher ben Azarah tells the rest of the miracle retrospectively [now in animation] to Caiaphas)

Asher ben Azarah: “My Lord Caiaphas—my Lord, there is danger. I have seen this Jesus. With my own eyes I have seen him.<sup>17</sup> A story you will not credit. I followed him to the grave of some dead friend—outside Jerusalem. The man’s sisters were grieving.”

(Mary and Martha weep—but say nothing coherent except “Lord.”)

Jesus: “Where have you laid him?”

2) Jesus arrives at Lazarus’s tomb—Jesus calls Lazarus forth (:49 / 24%)

Jesus: “Take away the stone.”

Martha: “The stone? Lord there will be a stench—he’s been in the grave for four days.”

Jesus: “Did I not tell you if you would believe you would see the glory of God?”

(Stone is removed)

Jesus: “I thank you father . . .”

Asher ben Azarah: “His father?”

Jesus: “Because you have heard me. I know that you always hear me. But I have said this for all the people here so, so they will believe that you sent me.”

3) Jesus calls Lazarus forth—Lazarus rises (:07 / 4%)

Jesus: “Lazarus! Come!”

(Jesus goes inside the tomb, reaches out his hand and Lazarus takes it.)

4) Lazarus rises—end of scene (0:41 / 20%)

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<sup>17</sup> This is essentially a quote of what Jairus had said earlier in the film when Mary Magdalene washed Jesus’ feet with her tears. Interestingly, Asher ben Azarah was also in that scene.

(Jesus takes the shroud off Lazarus's face)

Lazarus: "Master."

Jesus: "Unbind him, let him go."

(The two sisters do this and hug him.)

Asher ben Azarah: "It was a trick. It must have been some dark deception, but the multitude believed it. Now they are ready to follow their Messiah to the holy city."

Hayes's stop-frame puppetry film reserves animation for flashbacks and inner states of mind (Staley and Walsh:136). Surprisingly, nearly the entire Lazarus story was produced in low-budget animation. Other animated sequences in the film include the temptations of Jesus, Mary Magdalene's demonic possession, Judas' dreams of power, Jesus' parables, and the birth narratives. By recasting the raising of Lazarus as a *remembered* (animated) event, Hayes raises challenging questions about the fundamental nature of this—and perhaps all—Gospel miracle stories. In a film entitled *The Miracle Maker*, Hayes has stitched together a patchwork of scenes from earlier Jesus movies and presented them as the revelation of Jesus' power (Staley and Walsh:137). But in the presentation of Jesus' penultimate miracle, viewers are not confronted with the faithful perspective of Matthew, Mark, and John (DeMille), or of Peter (Stevens), or of a doubting (but now believing) Thomas (Young), or of John the beloved disciple (Saville), or of Martha (Zeffirelli), or of Jesus himself (Scorsese). Instead, viewers are confronted with the perspective of an unbelieving priest and spy (Asher ben Azarah), who relates to Caiaphas (John 11:46) what he believes was a "dark deception." Perhaps because it is Asher ben Azarah's story, neither Mary nor Martha make any confession of faith in Hayes's film. It is ironic that the most troubling cinematic questions regarding the

relationship between religious faith (showing the miracle onscreen) and ideology (relating the miracle through a character's words) are raised in an animated and stop-frame puppetry Jesus film made for children.

### Conclusion

R. A. Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* raised a number of new and important issues for students of New Testament narrative—(t)issues into which many Johannine doctors have barely stuck their scalpels. And surely among the most significant of these issues were Culpepper's discussions of narrative time, narrator and point of view, and the implied reader. My summary analysis of the nine cinematic representations of the raising of Lazarus builds upon Culpepper's *Anatomy* and reveals the following important narrative restructurings of the Johannine account:

1) With respect to narrative time, the comparative chart below reveals that film directors tend to turn the Johannine Lazarus story into a traditional miracle story by greatly extending the duration of the fourth sequence (the audience's response to the miracle) far beyond the 8% of time devoted to this sequence in the Fourth Gospel itself. This change has important implications for issues of point of view and the implied reader.

Segment	John 11	Saville	Zecca	Olcott	DeMille	Stevens	Zeffirelli	Scorsese	Hayes	Young
<b>Segment 1: Lazarus' illness– Jesus' arrival (John 11:1-37)</b>	79%	5:57 72%	0:12 24%	0:35 22%	1:31 24%	11:00 62%	2:45 48%	0 0%	1:45 52%	4:18 68%
<b>Segment 2: Jesus arrives– Jesus calls Laz. (John 11:38-43b)</b>	12%	0:40 16%	0:14 28%	0:55 35%	1:50 28%	1:56 10%	1:47 31%	1:23 33%	0:49 24%	0:40 10%
<b>Segment 3: Jesus calls Laz.– Lazarus rises (John 11:43b-44a)</b>	1%	0:22 4%	0:02 4%	0:14 9%	0:15 4%	0:18 2%	0:09 3%	1:08 27%	:07 4%	:32 8%
<b>Segment 4: Lazarus rises– end of scene (John 11:44b-46)</b>	8%	0:39 8%	0:22 44%	0:53 34%	2:52 44%	4:35 26%	1:03 18%	1:42 40%	:41 20%	:54 14%
<b>Totals (words/minutes)</b>	<b>739</b>	<b>8:19</b>	<b>0:50</b>	<b>3:02*</b>	<b>6:28*</b>	<b>17:49</b>	<b>5:44</b>	<b>4:15</b>	<b>3:22</b>	<b>6:16</b>

\* = elapsed time not counting intertitles

2) With respect to the categories of “point of view” and “implied reader,” Hobbs’s 1974 essay comparing Gospel miracle stories and modern miracle stories (television commercials) raises important questions that can be related to the temporal changes in cinematic representations of John 11. To paraphrase Hobbs’s questions: Are the Hollywood representations of the Lazarus miracle merely literal renderings of the same phenomenon found in Hellenistic miracle stories in general and in the modern TV commercial, where Jesus is substituted for the company or product in today’s pitch? Or is the Fourth Gospel’s account of the raising of Lazarus in fact critical of such use of the miracle story? As I have argued elsewhere (Staley 1995:70-76), I believe the (canonical)

Johannine “signs” are more anti–miracle stories—more multivalent parable—than miracle. If this is correct, then it is truly ironic that in the one hundred-year history of celluloid Lazaruses, only Hayes’s “fifth gospel for children” (Staley and Walsh:141) comes close to depicting the Johannine challenge to Hellenistic (or television, or cinematic) miracle stories. Moreover, the reasons why film versions of the Lazarus story extend the duration of segment #4 can be related directly to the nature of that medium and its “implied reader.” For example, it makes perfectly good sense that the most “believable” renderings of the Lazarus miracle are to be found in made-for-television miniseries (Zeffirelli’s *Jesus of Nazareth* and Young’s *Jesus*), which continually cut into the Jesus story to sell their sponsors’ products. Here, Jesus “sells” (evokes faith) in the same way that Chevrolet and Coke sell (evoke faith).

3) With respect to characterization, the renderings of the Lazarus story in film largely reflect uncritical gender stereotypes of middle–class America. Yet Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1983), Sandra Schneiders (2003), Ingrid Rosa Kitzberger (1998), I myself (Staley 1995), and many others have argued that John 11 is, in fact, a liberating story for women. One can easily argue that the nine films analyzed here confirm these scholars point of view. John 11 portrays women as positive models of faith in contrast to almost all the film versions. The celluloid women of John 11 are nearly voiceless—seen, but rarely heard. And when they do speak, they tend to voice grief, doubt, reproach, and anger rather than strong faith.

Yet, I do not mean to imply by my assessment of one Johannine miracle story that the Fourth Gospel’s voice—or voices—must always be read over against cinematic versions of the Gospel, or that the Fourth Gospel must always have the last word when

carrying on conversations with its cinematic versions; that paper and parchment trump celluloid at every turn. To take up a different issue in the Lazarus story, the canonical Gospel could learn a thing or two about anti-Semitism through extended conversations with Johannine film traditions, which tend to be more nuanced in their portrayals of the aftereffects of Lazarus's resurrection. But I do hope that this essay shows that it is high time the celluloid Marys, Marthas, and Lazaruses gather together at the operating table with their paper counterparts and open up an exploratory conversation on the topic of *The Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*. My dysection of just one Johannine miracle story shows that such a conversation can be revealing—in the best sense of the Johannine word. Perhaps, in the end, Johannine *Anatomy* will morph into cinematic necromancy.