

## CHAPTER TWO

### Designing the Seventh Sign: John 11 and the Resistant Reader

"Supposing truth is a woman--what then? . . . What is certain is that she has not allowed herself to be won . . ." Nietzsche

"What would happen if, for once, one were to reverse the ethos of explication and try to be really precise, to rigorously examine every resistance to meaning?"  
de Man

"Taking control of the reading experience means reading the text as it was *not* meant to be read, in fact, reading it against itself." Schweickart

". . . they went after her, assuming that she was going to the tomb. . . ." Jn 11:31

### Stepping Outside the Formalist Framework

The two concluding questions in the preceding chapter are ones that have haunted me from the time that I initially wrote them as part of a Semeia article four years ago. The first question, which asks whether the blindness revealed in my interpretation of the two sabbath miracles can lead to insight, is, of course, an allusion to Paul de Man's deconstructive reading of Jacques Derrida's reading of Rousseau.<sup>1</sup> And to paraphrase de Man once more, my close reading of the stories in John 5 and 9 sought to outdo the closeness of reading that had been held up to the texts in the past, and to show, by reading the texts and the commentaries more closely, that they were not nearly close enough.<sup>2</sup> But except for the conclusion of the chapter where I hint that there may be more "I" in the readings than first meets the eye, the reader I uncovered there was one who seemed to lie passively under the power of text, one who could perhaps be aroused by the text's

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<sup>1</sup>"The Rhetoric of Blindness," in Blindness and Insight, 102-141; esp., 116-117, 139-141.

<sup>2</sup>Paul de Man described contemporary criticism this way, as seeking "to outdo the closeness of reading that had been held up to them and to show, by reading the close readings more closely, that they were not nearly close enough" (quoted in Holub, Crossing Borders, 11; see also Moore, Literary Criticism and the Gospels, 160). Robert Holub astutely recognizes why deconstruction seemed more amenable to the American literary scene in the 1970s than German "reception theory," in that deconstruction's focus on the text cohered nicely with New Criticism's interest in "the text." At the same time, however, deconstruction appeared to contain the more radical critique of New Critical presuppositions (ibid., 11-13, 19-20; 22-36; see above, 3-4).

rhetorical ploys or perhaps moved in response to them, but could never flirtatiously initiate the seductive dance of interpretation.<sup>3</sup>

It is not unusual that of all reader-response critics, we in the biblical realm should find microscopically close readings to be the most amenable to our discipline. When compared with other literary canons, the biblical canon is small. Yet the number of tools that have been developed to analyze that relatively minuscule canon abound. Concordances and lexica, statistical analyses of grammar and syntax, historical and cultural studies, and histories of interpretation are multitudinous, relatively inexpensive, and much more easily available to the scholar than they are in other disciplines. Furthermore, relatively stable interpretive communities have treasured and transmitted for centuries the male, hierarchically-defined biblical commentaries, texts, and interpretive strategies of the pre-print era. So when these chirographic resources and strategies are added to print era tools, and then electronically digitalized for speed and breadth of research, the possibilities for closer and more carefully nuanced readings are magnified a hundredfold.

At another level, however, I cannot help but think that my own personal history makes close readings doubly advantageous. I am naturally nearsighted, and I grew up in a family of readers and in a tradition where the peculiarly close readings of the dispensational Schofield Reference Bible were considered nearly as inspired as the sacred text itself. So perhaps I was born and raised with a natural disposition for the painstakingly slow, microscopic readings that Temma Berg derides.<sup>4</sup>

But despite my continued attention to slow, close readings of Johannine texts, the attentive reader will discover a subtle change in the ends to which the readings are put in the present chapter. In this chapter, my close readings of texts--and their ever-present intertexts<sup>5</sup>--become consciously chosen boundaries and strategies.<sup>6</sup> In the formalist reader criticism of the last chapter, however, my readings were more positivist or essentialist "uncoverings" of texts. They centered on the implicit, print-generated, socio-rhetorical

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<sup>3</sup>See Stephen Moore's description of biblical critics as having "Victorian scruples [that] regulate [their] reading habits" (Mark and Luke in Poststructuralist Perspectives, 150; cf. 157).

<sup>4</sup>"Reading In/to Mark," 188-189; see above, 59-60.

<sup>5</sup>For a helpful definition of intertextuality, with its "dangerous 'feminine' or 'effeminate' overtones," see Michael Worton and Judith Still's "Introduction," in Intertextuality, 30. They write that intertextuality recognizes "a text cannot exist as a hermetic or self-sufficient whole, . . . [since] the writer is a reader of texts before s/he is a creator of texts, and therefore the work of art is inevitably shot through with references, quotations and influences of every kind." Moreover, "a text is available only through some process of reading; what is produced at the moment of reading is due to the cross-fertilisation of the packaged textual material . . . by all the texts which the reader brings to it" (ibid., 1-2). Or as Gary Phillips puts it: "reading . . . intertextually is a different way not only of speaking about the history of [a] . . . text as a history of its readings; it is a way of speaking about our present locus as readers as well" ("What is Written? How Are You Reading?," Gospel, Intertextuality and Doing Lukewise," 290).

<sup>6</sup>In commenting on Iser's sense of narrative 'gaps' (The Implied Reader, 34-40), elements which played a major role in my interpretation of Jn 5 and 9, Patrocino Schweickart notes, "one can argue that the 'gaps' that structure reader's response are not built into the text, but appear (or not) as a result of the particular interpretive strategy employed by the reader ("Reading Ourselves," 530; cf. 541; cf. Freund's and Holub's analyses of the Fish/Iser debate in The Return of the Reader, 148-151; and Crossing Borders, 25-28, respectively).

strategies that real readers must ingest if they are to remain true to the narrative world of the encoded reader.

Although at one time I might have made the claim that my readerly interpretation of John 5 and 9 accurately described how the encoded reader ought to respond to the printed text, today my less than formalist-oriented self would not want to voice such an absolutist claim for my reading of those texts or for the reading of John 11 which follows below. Nevertheless, I am purposefully committed to whatever liberating aims a reader might find in any of my interpretations--regardless of how far short they fall from their intended exegetical goals, and in spite of their tentativeness. Using Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza's liberating hermeneutic, I believe that biblical scholars need "to engage in a disciplined reflection on the public dimensions and ethical implications of our scholarly citizenship," in order to become "significant participant[s] in the global discourse seeking justice and well-being for all."<sup>7</sup> At the same time, however, to the extent that my interpretations bend toward poststructuralism or postmodernism and fail to engage in such issues of critical praxis--to the extent that my interpretations remain mesmerized by the simulacrum of undecidability--they can easily become simply elitist posturings before equally elitist audiences.<sup>8</sup> Thus, the readings I offer can be as paralyzing to the real reader as were the formalist readings they supplant. While the paralyzing effect of formalist reader criticism arises from the totalizing power it grants to texts, making no allowances for readings that resist its own apparent coherence, the paralyzing effect of some poststructuralist and postmodern moves can be traced to texts' bewildering interpretive possibilities. For the uninitiated reader, critical praxis often seems to be precluded in the presence of polyvalency.

It is precisely at this impasse that feminist criticism proffers its proposal. Drawing on the language of "resistance" which was central to Judith Fetterley's groundbreaking feminist reader-response criticism, Patrocinio Schweickart describes her

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<sup>7</sup>"The Ethics of Biblical Interpretation," 17. Linda Hutcheon's warning, however, is worth heeding. She notes that "there is also a very real sense in which the postmodernist notions of difference and positively valorized marginality often reveal the same familiar totalizing strategies of domination [evident in imperialist and patriarchal discourses], though usually masked by the liberating rhetoric of First World critics who appropriate Third World cultures to their own ends" (The Politics of Postmodernism, 38).

<sup>8</sup>See, for example, Holub's concluding chapter where he discusses poststructuralists' defense of de Man's and Heidegger's early associations with German National Socialism ("The Uncomfortable Heritage," in Crossing Borders, 148-201; see also Bauman, Modernity and the Holocaust, 126-128; and DuBois, Torture and Truth, 137-140) and Hutcheon's astute observation that "postmodernism, caught as it is in a certain negativity that may be inherent in any critique of cultural dominants . . . has no theory of positive action on a social level. . . ." (The Politics of Postmodernism, 22; cf. 167-168).

Of course, we modernist and postmodernist New Testament scholars are not without our own "uncomfortable heritage." For example, lurking behind the implied author of an anti-Jewish sounding "Religionsgeschichte" with its fascination with Heideggerian thought, is a real author--Rudolf Bultmann--who cannot be divorced completely from the socio-political world of Hitler's National Socialism. Although Bultmann did, at times, voice opposition to Nazi policies, his diminutive criticisms never seriously jeopardized his professorial chair at Marburg during Hitler's reign of madness (Rubenstein and Roth, Approaches to Auschwitz, 205-206; Bernd, Karl Barth/Rudolf Bultmann Letters 1922-1966, 78-79, 135-139; Johnson, "Power Politics and New Testament Scholarship in the National Socialist Period," 19). I, for one, have not yet fully comprehended the apparent Bultmannian distinction, existentially speaking, between *Historie* and *Geschichte* in the death of one particular Jew under Pax Romana, and *Historie* and *Geschichte* in the death of six million Jews under the Third Reich.

own readerly activity as opposed to strategies of partition and control (i.e., formalism), and opposed to impossibility (i.e., deconstruction), and instead is "grounded in the interest of producing a community of feminist readers and writers, and in the hope that ultimately this community will expand to include everyone."<sup>9</sup> Without using the word resistance, Schüssler Fiorenza has described her own feminist hermeneutical task in the New Testament with a quaternion of like-minded terms ("suspicion," "proclamation," "remembrance," and "creative actualization"), that also reflect similar concerns for the formation of community.<sup>10</sup> Still more recently Willi Braun has picked up the language of resistance in his analysis of John 21, footnoting both Fetterley's and Schüssler Fiorenza's work.<sup>11</sup> However, the implications of his resistant reading for liberation and community formation are not central to his exegetical interests. For all Braun's rhetoric of resistance, his reader is ultimately relegated to a relatively passive role, being invited by the aporia of John 21 to approach the narrative with "critical ambivalence."<sup>12</sup>

Braun's advocacy of critical ambivalence for the Johannine reader may seem as though it is a positive step beyond the totalizing, tranquilizing effect of formalist theory in Culpepper's *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel* and in my own appropriation of reader criticism.<sup>13</sup> But without the final step of what Schüssler Fiorenza calls "creative actualization," the reader's reflective ambivalence can all too quickly lose its critical edge. That kind of ambivalence, no matter how critical or self-conscious, elides its weakened prefix and leaves nothing but an empty vale behind.

And so on to my final troubling question from the last chapter: "Will the bedridden reader ever really walk?" Clearly, I was not contemplating the possibility of a dancing reader when I wrote that.<sup>14</sup> Just to be able to resuscitate a paralyzed, anesthetized, and dissected reader--to be able to resist the inexorable, downward pull of

<sup>9</sup>"Reading Ourselves," 55. Cf. Freedman, Frey, and Zauhar, "Introduction," 1-3 in *The Intimate Critique*; Fetterley, *The Resisting Reader*, vii-x. Susan Durber also utilizes Schweickart's language in her analysis of Lucan parables ("The Female Reader of the Parables of the Lost").

<sup>10</sup>*Bread not Stone*, 15-22; cf. Schneiders, *The Revelatory Text*, 180-186. However, in contrast to Schüssler Fiorenza's and Schneider's approaches (see respectively, *In Memory of Her*, 333; *The Revelatory Text*, 186-188; cf. Brown, *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, 183-198), I do not wish to argue that my interpretations necessarily imply anything about the early Johannine community. With Turid Karlsen Seim, my literary approach will "not presuppose that the roles of women as described in the text correspond to or mirror without reservation a practical function in a specific historical situation" ("Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," 57).

For a helpful summary of feminist biblical criticism, both literary and historical, see Janice Capel Anderson, "Mapping Feminist Biblical Criticism."

<sup>11</sup>"Resisting John." See also Brown, "John and the Resistant Reader."

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 71; cf. Robert Fowler's description of Mark as an "ambivalent narrative" ("Let the Reader Understand", 261-266). In contrast to Willi Braun's "reader," Schuyler Brown's "resistant reader" is much more active and conscious of the text's ethical implications ("John and the Resistant Reader," 256-257).

<sup>13</sup>Although Braun does not mention my application of reader-response criticism to the Fourth Gospel (*The Print's First Kiss*), his criticism of Culpepper would probably also apply to my early work.

<sup>14</sup>For example, Alan Culpepper writes: "Readers dance with the author whether they want to or not, and in the process they adopt his perspective on the story" (*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 233). Picking up this metaphor, Braun argues that Culpepper's reader, "whether the scripted, implied reader or the real reader, either ancient or modern [is] . . . a co-operative, assenting, reader. Culpepper's interpretation does not recognize any wall flowers in the Johannine dance" ("Resisting John," 61-62; cf. Kolodny's use of the dance metaphor, in "Dancing through the Minefield," 5, 7, 17, 22).

gravity--would have been, for me, a minor miracle in itself. Thus it is with a degree of irony (and nagging fear lest I fail in my endeavor) that I now attempt to arouse a more active, lively reader from the foul smelling crypt of Lazarus.

Enough of this hermeneutical shuffle on the borders of Judean Bethany. While I have been busily writing, the position of Lazarus has not changed. The corpse remains undisturbed, Mary and Martha still weep at Jesus' feet, and the male disciples continue to wander about aimlessly. It is time, I think, to try and wake the zombie-reader from his formalist tomb.<sup>15</sup>

### Cracks in the Narrative Foundation

Of all the assured results of twentieth century Johannine scholarship, perhaps the greatest consensus is in regard to the Fourth Gospel's literary structure. The book begins with a clearly defined, concentrically constructed prologue (1:1-18) that is then followed by "The Book of Signs" or "Jesus' Public Ministry" (1:19-12:50). The next major section, comprising 13:1-20:31, is variously designated "The Book of the Passion" or "Jesus' Private Ministry."<sup>16</sup> The work concludes with an "appendix" or "epilogue" (21:1-25) that seems to have been added later. Alan Culpepper's narrative analysis, to date still the most comprehensive literary approach to the book, does not deviate from this norm.<sup>17</sup>

The twofold delineation of Johannine narrative structure as a "Book of Signs" and a "Book of the Passion" focuses on a shift in the book's christological emphasis. The second description, however, which is probably unconsciously based on the same christological observation, ostensibly concentrates on plot movement.<sup>18</sup> But what is the book's plot? Again, the general consensus has been that, whatever its theological and historical origins might be, the prologue accurately summarizes the narrative's basic plot: the one who existed at the beginning of the world enters the world, comes to his own people to reveal something about God, is rejected by them, and returns to God. The revelation of Jesus as the one "sent from the Father," and the crisis of responses ignited by that revelation is what dominates Jesus' public ministry. In this regard, John 11 is viewed by most scholars as the climax of Jesus' public life, but not as the plot's major transition.<sup>19</sup>

However, a small number of scholars working independently of each other have recently argued for a different ordering of the narrative's structure and plot. These studies

<sup>15</sup>Leigh Gilmore writes: "The zombie is an extension of another's will; it rises only to do another's bidding" (*Autobiographics*, 72).

<sup>16</sup>Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel*, 289. Bultmann more idiomatically calls these "The Revelation of the ΔÓΞΑ to the World," and "The Revelation of the ΔÓΞΑ Before the Community" (*The Gospel of John*, 111, 457; see also Thyen, "Die Erzählung von den Bethanischen Geschwestern (Joh 11,1-12,19) als 'Palmpsest' über Synoptischen Texten," 2025-2026; and Lombard and Oliver, "A Working Supper," 359-361).

<sup>17</sup>*Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 88-89, 94.

<sup>18</sup>See Marchadour's excellent summary of the logic behind this division (*Lazare*, 94-110).

<sup>19</sup>*Ibid.*, 99-101. However, F. R. M. Hitchcock, writing in 1923, took exception to this general assessment of the Johannine plot. He argued that the raising of Lazarus had to be the "moral centre" and the "plot centre" of the book, since "[i]t is the true centre, . . . at once [the] highest point and [the] turning point, *apex* and *vertex*" ("Is the Fourth Gospel a Drama?," 16, cf. 20; emphasis his).

by Mathias Rissi, myself, Gunnar Østenstad, and, to a certain extent, by George Mlakuzhyil, each view John 11 both as the structural center of the book and the major turning point of its plot.<sup>20</sup>

It is tempting to argue that our perspectives were each influenced by the formalist narrative critical turn in New Testament studies of the early 1980s which favored plot and narrative cohesiveness over theology and aporiae. But the work of Rissi, Mlakuzhyil, and Østenstad show no evidence of a literary or theoretical interest. For example, Rissi's work focuses entirely upon the symbolic plot structure of Jesus' journeys, finding a narrative pattern that moves from darkness to light, and from territories outside Judea to Jerusalem.<sup>21</sup> His footnotes reflect a knowledge only of standard Johannine scholarship. Somewhat similarly, Mlakuzhyil, Østenstad, and I each worked with slightly different understandings of repetitive concentric structures in the Fourth Gospel and tried to relate these to the book's plot or its theology, or both.<sup>22</sup> But again, except for a few passing references to formalist literary theory in my work, these three studies show no awareness of recent trends in New Testament narrative studies. Nevertheless, I cannot help but think that the "spirit of the age" has provided some of the impetus to all four of our approaches.

Current trends in New Testament narrative studies are most obvious in Fernando Segovia's recent analysis of the gospel's plot. His argument, as outlined in "The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel," works with a historical sense of genre, is well informed by contemporary literary theory regarding plot, and similarly challenges the received tradition. Segovia sees John 11 as significant to the narrative's plot in that John 11 represents "the fourth and final journey of Jesus to the city of Jerusalem, . . . a visit which contains within itself the concluding narrative of death and lasting significance."<sup>23</sup> But for Segovia, chapter 18 represents the more natural narrative dividing point since it seems to fit most closely with the tripartite structure of the ancient biographical genre.<sup>24</sup> While I am not totally convinced by his argument that the threefold division of the ancient biographical genre is more crucial to the explication of Johannine plot than is the fourfold journey motif, nevertheless Segovia's attempt to

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<sup>20</sup>Rissi's "Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums" was published in 1984. My article "The Structure of John's Prologue," was published in 1986 and made reference to Rissi's work, although the basic insights were formed independently of his article. The results of Østenstad's research, formulated in "The Structure of the Fourth Gospel: Can it be Defined Objectively?," were published in 1991 but make no reference to either Rissi's or my work. Finally, Mlakuzhyil's dissertation, entitled The Christocentric Literary Structure of the Fourth Gospel, was published in 1987. Although he mentions Rissi's and my work, Mlakuzhyil also developed his thesis independently of Rissi and me. Somewhat similarly to Bultmann, Mlakuzhyil argues that Jn 11-12 is a compromising "bridge section" hinging the "Book of Jesus' Signs" and "the Book of Jesus' Hour" (ibid., 238-241; cf. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, 392; Byrne, Lazarus, 25-26; Marchadour, Lazare, 94-99, 104-110).

<sup>21</sup>"Der Aufbau des Vierten Evangeliums," 52.

<sup>22</sup>More recently Hartwig Thyen, making reference to both Mlakuzhyil's and Østenstad's work, has also argued for placing the major narrative division of the Fourth Gospel at 10:42 ("Die Erzählung von den Bethanischen Geschwestern (Joh 11,1-12,19) als 'Palmpsest' über Synoptischen Texten," 2026-2028; cf. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 45).

<sup>23</sup>"The Journey(s) of the Word of God: A Reading of the Plot of the Fourth Gospel," 44.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 45; cf. 32-33.

combine these two elements is likewise a literary challenge to the traditional twofold theological division of the book.

All these recent readers of Johannine narrative structure, with inner ears attuned to repetitive phrasing and feet tapping to the rhythm of the plot, unconsciously simulate the totalizing proclivities of formalist literary theory.<sup>25</sup> But when those proclivities are viewed within the interpretive tradition of Johannine studies as conscious attempts to read the gospel text in a different way, against the grain of established exegetical norms, they bear the seeds of a resistant reading of the Lazarus story. And every such seed, regardless of origin, is important in Mary's and Martha's garden plot on the outskirts of Jerusalem.

Although I have no irrefutable evidence to back up my intuitions, the Enlightenment's rejection of the miraculous, coupled with a Lutheran and Reformed emphasis on the preaching of the gospel, were probably just as much responsible for popularizing the division of Johannine narrative between chapters 12 and 13 as were source-critical theories or references to Johannine theology. Bultmann himself recognized that the raising of Lazarus has "decisive consequences for [Jesus'] destiny," since it is this particular story where "his last act leads to the decision of the authorities to kill him, and his last words lead to the final division between faith and unbelief."<sup>26</sup> Furthermore, Bultmann wrote that "the whole [Lazarus narrative] forms the transition to the Passion Narrative, and to the scene of Jesus' departure from his own that precedes it."<sup>27</sup> From the perspective of Johannine narrative structure, one could hardly find a clearer summary of reasons for arguing that the raising of Lazarus is the plot's climax and turning point. The structure of Bultmann's commentary and the subsequent history of Johannine scholarship, however, have left different imprints.

But beyond the formalist machinations of plot and the totalizing effects of Johannine narrative symmetry, there is another significant way in which John 11 marks a major dividing point in the book. With this final sign the implied author introduces a new, personal element to the story, one that is evident in the unusual characteristic of naming the miracle's participants (Mary, Martha, and Lazarus), in the surprising appeal to Jesus' affections ("Lord, he whom you love is ill," 11:3; "See how he loved him," 11:37),<sup>28</sup> and in Jesus' untypical display of distress and grief (11:33, 35, 38).<sup>29</sup>

One can debate whether the references to Jesus' love are simply intended to reflect Jesus' personal affection for the Bethany family or whether they should be understood in more concrete rhetorical terms as a covert request by female clients to their prospective patron, Jesus.<sup>30</sup> Nevertheless, it is the first time in the book that any appeal is made on the

<sup>25</sup>See, for example, Petersen, *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics*, 49-80; Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 32-50.

<sup>26</sup>*The Gospel of John*, 392, 393.

<sup>27</sup>*Ibid.*, 392.

<sup>28</sup>For another description of this change, see my article, "The Structure of John's Prologue," 258-262; cf. Marchadour, *Lazare*, 100-101.

<sup>29</sup>In spite of Beasley-Murray's arguments to the contrary (*John*, 192-194), Lindars is no doubt correct in arguing that the specific context of Jn 11:33-39 demands that "enbrimesato to pneumati" (11:33) be translated as "deeply moved" ("Rebuking the Spirit," 102-104).

<sup>30</sup>Schnackenburg rightly notes: "Implicit in . . . [the message the sisters sent to Jesus] was the plea for a cure" (*The Gospel According to John*, 2:322; cf. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 110-111; Wuellner, "Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and its Reading: The Narrative Rhetoric of John 11 as

basis of love--regardless of its intentions. And Jesus' public display of grief at Lazarus' tomb would seem to point to Jesus' close personal relationship with the family. These responses, therefore, signal a change in tone and emphasis--a change that will continue to evolve throughout the last half of the book. Moreover, the story's repetition of *agapan* and *philein* ([love], 11:3, 5, 11, 36), and the consequent formation of a community in response to the loss of a beloved friend and brother (celebrated by Mary washing Jesus' feet, 12:3), are part of a metaphorical matrix that, a few days later, Jesus himself will draw from when trying to describe his own changing relationship to his disciples (13:2-38; 15:14-15; 20:17).<sup>31</sup>

Nevertheless, the arguments that a more personal tone emerges in John 11 and that the miracle story represents the major turning point of the book's structure and plot must not be separated from the foregrounding of the sisters, Martha and Mary, the two central characters in the miracle. Until their peculiar role in the story is situated within the broader context of the book's plot, the contemporary reader cannot begin to see the actual ideological implications of a reading resistant to standard androcentric interpretations.

In contrast to the synoptic passion narratives, what is unique about the machinations of the Johannine passion plot is precisely this: Lazarus's sisters' desperate cry is the only narrative context for bringing a purposeful Jesus back to Judea and to a saving, community-transforming death (11:8-10; cf. 10:7-18, 26-30). Or more simply: what propels Jesus to his crucifixion in the Fourth Gospel is the calculated risk he takes in expressing his love for two women (11:7-10), and the calculated risk the women take by telling Jesus of their brother's illness.<sup>32</sup> In the synoptic gospels, however, it is not Jesus'

the Narration of Faith," 116; and Koester, "Hearing, Seeing, and Believing in the Gospel of John," 342). By contrast, in Jn 4:46-53 the royal official's gender and social position provided him with the cultural status to sense that he could explicitly request Jesus to "come down before my little boy dies" (4:49).

For a broader discussion of the ancient Mediterranean patronage system and the language of friendship, see Moxnes, "Patron-Client Relations and the New Community in Luke-Acts," 242-250, esp., 244-247; cf. Karris, Jesus and the Marginalized in John's Gospel, 86.

<sup>31</sup>Karlsen Seim hints at this when she writes: "When Jesus washes and wipes the feet of the disciples, he is acting towards them as Mary did towards him. This also implies that she in advance has fulfilled his request to the disciples in 12:14ff" ("Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," 73; contra Bultmann who argues that "[I]ike th[e] enemy [Caiaphas], the woman disciple did more than she realised," The Gospel of John, 416). Likewise when Jesus says, "Whoever serves me must follow me. . . . Whoever serves me the Father will honor," he is describing behavior typified first by Martha (12:26, cf. 12:2; Michaels, "John 12:1-11," 289; and Schüssler Fiorenza, In Memory of Her, 330).

Robert Karris argues that Martha's designation of Jesus as "teacher" (11:28) should also be understood as a positive theological designation and part of the metaphorical language that Jesus adapts for his own purposes, since Jesus will use it later to describe himself (13:13-14; Jesus and the Marginalized in John's Gospel, 89). But Martha is not the first person in the Fourth Gospel to call Jesus *didaskalos* (cf. 1:38; 3:2), and twice Jesus connects *didaskalos* with *kyrios* in the footwashing scene (13:14-15). Karris' argument would thus have been stronger if he had noted that Martha, like the male disciples (11:8, 12), calls Jesus *both* teacher and Lord (as well as Son, Christ, and the Coming One, 11:27-28). Martha's doubled designation and Mary's subsequent anointing of Jesus function, therefore, to confirm these women as disciples--and the only disciples whose actions and words are the matrix for Jesus' own soon-to-be completed mission.

<sup>32</sup>Mary's later act of anointing Jesus' feet (12:1-7) would seem to imply that she has had, like Thomas (11:16), some premonition of what Jesus' return to Judea could cost him. "Unless his body is anointed now, it never will be," says John Crossan (Jesus, 192). Crossan is speaking of the unnamed woman in Mk 11:3-

relationships with people which draw him to Jerusalem. Prior to his entrance into the city the text offers no clue that Jesus even knows anyone there. Instead, Jerusalem seems to act almost as an impersonal, cosmic magnet that pulls Jesus, like a moth circling a flame, ever closer to its deadly clutches. Thus, the synoptics give their readers little context for understanding Jerusalem's hold on Jesus--other than the obvious fact that the chief priests and scribes, those who have the power to condemn him to death, reside there (Mk 10:33; cf. Mt 2:1, 13; 15:21; Lk 13:31-35). But the Fourth Gospel plays the divinely dealt hand differently. In John's story, Jesus has already been to Jerusalem for festivals on a number of occasions (2:13-3:21; 5:1-47; 7:10-10:39), he has met numerous people in Jerusalem, and his words and actions there have sparked much controversy. So although I believe that there are important structural reasons for dividing the Fourth Gospel at chapter 11 rather than at chapter 13, I want to argue here for a deeper narrative logic: a resistant ideology that has gone unnoticed in past androcentric exegesis. For only in this gospel does human need in any way impinge on Jesus' decision to return to Judea and Jerusalem.<sup>33</sup> In this gospel Mary and Martha's premeditated action functions as the key to unlock Jesus' passion.

### **Stacking the Corpses**

Recent work in the New Testament from the perspective of cultural anthropology has emphasized the social significance of kinship and the pivotal values of honor and shame in the ancient Mediterranean world.<sup>34</sup> In that world, the proper sphere of women--woman as the embodiment of shame--was symbolized by the household and those tasks related to its care and upkeep. Under normal circumstances women's status in the wider (male) community was directly proportional to their ability to bear male heirs. Moreover, a woman's access to this wider, public sphere, the sphere of men, depended on her relationship to a man. If a woman was married, that access was mediated by her husband. If she was unmarried or widowed, access to the male sphere (that is, to justice, security, and property) was vouchsafed through her father, her brothers, or her sons.<sup>35</sup> Taking this cultural scenario into account, then, what is immediately apparent in the "family novella"<sup>36</sup>

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9, but the remark fits equally well with Mary's action in Jn 12 (contra Brown, who thinks that the anointing is an "unconscious prophetic act" on Mary's part, *The Gospel According to John*, 1:449, 454). Since Lazarus' sisters must be well aware of the hostile Judean attitude toward Jesus, one can say that the sisters take a "calculated risk" in making their need known to him.

<sup>33</sup>The emphasis in this sentence should be upon the phrase "in any way." Surely Charles Griblin is right in arguing that in the Fourth Gospel, Jesus disassociates himself "from the predominantly human concerns of those who, by merely human standards, would also seem to be rather close to him. . . . He never fails to attend to the situation presented to him, but in doing so he acts radically on his own terms" ("Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St John's Portrayal of Jesus [John 2.1-11.; 4.46-54.; 7.2-14.; 11.1-44.]," 210). I just want to make it clear that the Fourth Gospel is the only gospel where Jesus' decision to go into Judea and the environs of Jerusalem is rooted in another human concern--irrespective of how, when, or for what ultimate reason the Johannine Jesus responds to that concern (cf. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 48).

<sup>34</sup>Malina and Neyrey, "Honor and Shame in Luke-Acts," 25-65.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 44-46. See also Malina, *The New Testament World*, 43-44.

<sup>36</sup>This is Hans Windisch's term ("John's Narrative Style," 37).

of John 11 is that the two sisters,<sup>37</sup> rather than Lazarus's wife, his sons, or Mary's or Martha's husbands or sons, are the characters who fill the story's center position and take the public role of finding the benefactor, Jesus.

Given the social dynamics of the ancient Mediterranean world, however, the sisters' role in the unfolding of the Johannine sign is understandable. As Bruce Malina points out, in the ancient Mediterranean family "the tightest unit of diffuse loyalty [was] the descent group of brothers and sisters. . . . The affection we expect as a mark of the husband and wife relationship [was] normally a mark of the brother-sister and mother-son relationships."<sup>38</sup> So rather than undermining the highly emotional context of the miracle scene, the sisters' presence actually symbolizes the deepest level of family affection and loyalty. The narrator's description of Mary and Martha as Lazarus's sisters further supports my argument that John 11 demarcates a narrative shift away from the less personal tone of the first half of the book (cf. 19:26-27).

But the sisters' central position in the funeral scene raises a more pressing set of issues for the story's culturally sensitive reader. For example, it is unusual that, as the narrator says, the Jerusalem mourners come to visit Martha and Mary "at home" rather than visiting Lazarus's immediate family members at their home (11:19, 20, 31, 45). Since Jewish funeral customs dictated that condolences be expressed at the family home,<sup>39</sup> the culturally attuned, encoded reader can assume either that Lazarus had never been married, or that he was a widower and childless.<sup>40</sup> If he had a spouse and children, the mourners would be found with them, and Mary and Martha probably would be at their house. But here, in lieu of a wife and children, Martha and Mary represent Lazarus's closest living relatives; the only ones to whom condolences are expressed. Furthermore, since both Martha and Mary function as hostesses at the later party in Lazarus's honor (serving food, anointing the guests' feet, 12:1-3; cf. Lk 7:44) the encoded reader can assume that they either live with him or he with them.<sup>41</sup> This is also unusual. Why would two adult women be living with their brother? The most natural cultural scenario is one

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<sup>37</sup>Byrne is correct in noting that there is "no evidence initially [in 11:1] that Lazarus is related to Mary and Martha" (Lazarus, 37).

<sup>38</sup>Malina, The New Testament World, 98; see also 104.

<sup>39</sup>Byron McCane writes: "The first stage of mourning was a week of intense grieving. . . . during which the relatives of the deceased 'stayed away from work, sitting at home upon low couches, heads covered, receiving the condolences of relatives and friends.' For the first three days, family members would leave home only to visit the tomb, either to grieve there or to ensure that their loved one was truly dead" ("Where No One Had Yet Been Laid," 475).

<sup>40</sup>Since Lazarus's cameo appearance in the Fourth Gospel has so many parallels to the life of Jesus (e.g., women play an important role in both of their lives; the chief priests want to kill both men; both men die, are wrapped in linen, and entombed; and both men come back to life again), the culturally encoded reader would naturally assume that Lazarus, like Jesus, is not married. Moreover, using Jesus as a model, it is likely that the encoded reader would presume Lazarus had never been married.

<sup>41</sup>Bultmann states, "Jesus is a guest with the sisters, as in Lk. 10.38-42" (The Gospel of John, 414 n. 7; see also Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 16; Nortjé, "The Role of Women in the Fourth Gospel," 26). But Schnackenburg takes the more traditional exegetical position based upon the Markan parallel (14:1-3-11): "the meal is somewhere in the village, but not in the house of the family with which Jesus is friendly" (The Gospel According to John, 2:366; Haenchen, John, 2:86).

in which the two women have lost spouses.<sup>42</sup> This scenario would explain why Lazarus's sisters take the initiative in making their need known to Jesus and why the guests in mourning come to them: 1) Lazarus has no father or mother, sons, or wife who can make an appeal on his behalf; 2) Mary and Martha have no other brother, and no husbands or sons who can make a public appeal on their behalf; and 3) the naturally close bond of loyalty between sister and brother demands that they take some action. Thus, the sociological scenario that this story suggests is one in which Mary and Martha are widows who have been living with their unmarried brother, Lazarus. As Mary and Martha's next of kin, Lazarus would have been responsible for his sisters' welfare. However, with his death, the sisters lose not only their dearest family member, but also their only voice in the public sphere of justice.<sup>43</sup>

In this scenario--an intertextual reading that foregrounds a concern for ancient Mediterranean social systems and is sensitive to the unwritten cultural elements in the story--the modern reader discovers not only the socio-economic implications of Lazarus's death for the two sisters, but also the unnamed deaths of at least two other people. For Mary and Martha, death is an ever-present reality, a reality slowly sucking their lives and livelihood from them. But it will only be by celebrating the death of a life-giving man (12:1-9) that the sisters will find the courage to live without a man (cf. 20:1-18).<sup>44</sup> In this, the last of the Johannine signs, it is the men who die or are at the edge of death: Lazarus (twice, 11:14; 12:10), Mary and Martha's unmentioned husbands, Jesus (11:8, 51-53), Thomas and his compatriots (11:16), and the entire priestly, patriarchal hierarchy of Judaism (11:47-50).<sup>45</sup> Only the women break out of these manacles of death and, in that process, present Jesus with the familial model he will appropriate to sustain his disciples beyond his departure (13:34-35; 14:18, 21; 15:9-17).

But let me step back for a moment from this reading scenario and add an important qualification to what I have just described. By adopting an ancient Mediterranean cultural intertext I do not intend to exclude other ancient or modern intertextual relationships from the conversation with John 11. Nor am I attempting to establish a hierarchical reading strategy that implies that all readings of the Johannine text must begin at this same intertextual level--namely, ancient Mediterranean culture. So although I am sympathetic to Bruce Malina's concept of "reading scenarios" that "consider the text as setting forth a succession of explicit and implicit mental

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<sup>42</sup>Kitzberger calls these sisters "single women, not defined by a man, either husband or son. And they are autonomous and independent women. . . ." But she does not explain why she thinks they are single women ("Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 27).

<sup>43</sup>My between-the-lines reading of the family relationships in Jn 11 may appear to some as a gross over-reading of the minimally narrated scene. But it is important to remember Malina's description of the Mediterranean world as a "high context" society which "produce[s] sketchy and impressionistic texts, leaving much to the reader's or hearer's imagination. . . . This is because people have been socialized into shared ways of perceiving and acting. Hence, much can be assumed" ("Reading Theory Perspective," 20).

<sup>44</sup>Kitzberger rightly argues that the reader is encouraged to place the story of Mary Magdalene's encounter with Jesus within the context of Mary and Martha's previous encounter with him ("Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 21-22).

<sup>45</sup>Marchadour observes that in the Fourth Gospel, Judea as a whole functions symbolically as the place of death (Lazare, 137-138).

representations of scenes or schemes [and which,] in turn, evoke corresponding scenes or schemes in the mind of the reader,"<sup>46</sup> my broader, less absolutizing sense of intertextuality--coupled with a profound sense of the ideological constraints on interpretation--lead me to reject a simple, historical prioritization of one intertextual reading scenario over another. I give historically and culturally sensitive readings of texts no precedence, a priori, over other kinds of readings, especially when those "historically and culturally sensitive readings" fail to reflect critically upon the ideological interests of the text or the interpreter.

Following Judith Still and Michael Worton, I am more comfortable with arguing that

[b]oth axes of intertextuality, texts entering via authors [which is Malina's historical-cultural concern] . . . and texts entering via readers [which is more specifically my interest], . . . are . . . emotionally and politically charged; the objects of an act of *influence*, whether by a powerful figure (say, a father) or by a social structure (say, the Church), does not receive or perceive that pressure as neutral.<sup>47</sup>

However, those "passionate and power-relations aspects have . . . been neutralized by certain theoreticians who present the acts of writing or reading as formal structures, without attending to the love-hate which motivates the transfer of texts."<sup>48</sup> It is the "emotionally and politically charged" aspects of intertextuality that Malina seeks to defuse with his elaboration of cultural "reading scenarios" and with his appeal to "considerate readers."<sup>49</sup> But it is precisely the real world, "love-hate," liberating potentialities of writing and reading that motivate my conscious selection of ancient and modern intertexts.<sup>50</sup>

### Shattering Time

If a reading scenario posited by the intertextual weave of ancient Mediterranean texts and modern anthropological monographs lays a stack of corpses at the doorstep of Mary and Martha by defining their story's unwritten cultural elements, a much different set of intertextual connections helps delineate the text's temporal signification. Here, formalist reader-response critics' attention to the distinction between "story time" and "discourse time,"<sup>51</sup> and the constantly changing judgments made by readers in the process

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<sup>46</sup>"Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts," 14-15.

<sup>47</sup>"Introduction," in *Intertextuality*, 2; cf. Phillips, "'What is Written? How Are You Reading?,' Gospel, Intertextuality and Doing Lukewise," 286-291.

<sup>48</sup>Still and Worton, "Introduction," in *Intertextuality*, 2.

<sup>49</sup>Malina, "Reading Theory Perspective: Reading Luke-Acts," 16-17, 21.

<sup>50</sup>See below, 99-104. Cf. Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 6, 23; and Schüssler Fiorenza, *Bread not Stone*, 15-22.

<sup>51</sup>The distinction between story and discourse is commonly used by biblical critics who have adapted formalist models of literary theory in their exegetical method (see Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 62-84; Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 27-29, 33-34, 86-87; cf. Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?*, 23; Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 53-70). Because of its Platonist sounding language (does an ideal "story" exist above and beyond all its possible discursive representations?), this distinction has been severely criticized by other narrative theorists (cf. Moore, *Literary Criticism and the Gospels*, 64-68).

of reading through a text, join with biblical form critical analysis of the miracle story structure.

In the previous chapter I looked at the two sabbath day miracles in the Fourth Gospel and noted their deviations from the formal structure of the miracle story. That formal structure, as many have noted, has four basic elements: 1) the statement of the problem; 2) the entrance of the hero or savior figure; 3) the savior figure or hero's solution; and 4) the evidence of the solution.<sup>52</sup> Both healings in John 5 and 9 were narrated quickly and both similarly characterized "the Jews'" responses, but the stories differed significantly in the way they formed their central characters. Moreover, the implied author masterfully manipulated the encoded reader's expectations at step 4, especially in the second sabbath miracle, by narrating in comic and dramatic fashion a variety of responses to the man's changed status and problematical identity. Now in the raising of Lazarus, the final miracle of Jesus' public ministry, the implied author once again exploits the encoded reader's expectations. But here the titillation comes between steps 2 and 3 in the miracle story structure: between the entrance of the hero and the hero's solution.<sup>53</sup>

Typically in miracle stories, the reader must read only a few sentences to move from the entrance of the hero to the occurrence of the miracle. In other words, the miracles themselves take up very little discourse time. For example, with Jesus' first miracle in the Fourth Gospel, the discourse time is marked by the 72 Greek words between the moment when Jesus' mother tells him "They have no wine" (2:3) and the narrator's acknowledgement that a miracle has occurred (2:9).<sup>54</sup> In Jesus' second miracle, it is marked by the 62 words between the narrator's observation that a royal official's son was ill (4:46) and the servants' report that the official's child was alive (4:51). In Jesus' first sabbath miracle, discourse time is marked by the 53 words between the entrance of the hero and the occurrence of the miracle (5:6-9); in the feeding of the 5,000, by the 98 words between these two moments (6:5-11); and in the second sabbath healing, by the 101 words between them (9:1-7).

The raising of Lazarus, however, is the only Johannine miracle in which story time is explicitly marked in the narration. Here, nearly a week transpires between the time when Mary and Martha send their desperate message to Jesus and the time when Lazarus is raised from the dead.<sup>55</sup> Moreover, in terms of discourse time, there are 39 verses, or 641 words between the time that Jesus gets the message of Lazarus's illness and

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However, quite apart from any latent metaphysical connotations, I find the distinction between story and discourse rhetorically useful. It reminds me that the arrangement of narrative episodes and their duration are inventions and thus infinitely malleable.

<sup>52</sup>Bultmann and Dibelius, of course, did much of the initial categorizing of miracle stories. But Bultmann's analysis isolated only three elements (*History of the Synoptic Tradition*, 209-244; cf. Wire, "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and Their Tellers," 83-84, 108-110).

<sup>53</sup>This structural peculiarity of the narrative has led John Painter to categorize it as a "quest story" ("Quest and Rejection Stories in John," 30), rather than a miracle story. But Painter's typology seems to miss the obvious fact that the author of the Fourth Gospel knows the miracle story form very well and is able to manipulate it for his own rhetorical purposes, and in a variety of creative ways. In words that apply as much to the miracle story form as to the Deuteronomic author's manipulation of the cyclical plot of the book of Judges, Sternberg says: "The variations prove no less integral to structure and effect than the uniformities" (*The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 271).

<sup>54</sup>I am counting every definite article, particle, and conjunction. Talk about painstakingly slow reading!

the miraculous event when Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead (11:4-43). So not only is there a dramatic delay in story time, since Jesus remains in Bethany beyond the Jordan two days after hearing of Lazarus's sickness, but there is also a dramatic delay in discourse time. Ironically, the encoded reader is led to expect a miraculous healing by being introduced to the healer in 11:3; but, like Mary and Martha, the encoded reader is forced to wait a significant amount of time for the event to occur (11:44).<sup>56</sup>

There is also an additional irony in the structuring of this final sign. Since the encoded reader already knows that healings can occur from a significant distance (4:47-53), neither Jesus' delay in Bethany beyond the Jordan nor his return to Judea bear any necessary connection to the anticipated miracle. In fact, the sisters' statement, "Lord, he whom you love is ill" (11:3), and Jesus' statement, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory . . ." (11:4), seem to be explicit allusions to the healing of the royal official's son who was, by contrast, at the point of death when the father approached Jesus (4:47, 49).<sup>57</sup> In view of that earlier miracle and the omission of the corresponding imperative "Come down" (4:49), the encoded reader now anticipates another cure from a distance (cf. 4:50; 11:11-12). Moreover, as I have argued elsewhere, even Jesus' command "Let us go to Judea again" (11:7) initially cannot be understood as a turn towards Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Instead, it must be understood as a continuation of Jesus' own unarticulated purpose.<sup>58</sup>

To my knowledge, in no other miracle story from the ancient Mediterranean world is the hero's initial reaction seemingly so unrelated to the eventual miracle, and in no other miracle story is there so much (I hesitate to say the words) patently unnecessary discourse time between the plot elements of the miracle story form.<sup>59</sup> Thus, the reactions of Jesus and the extended discourse time both raise the encoded reader's expectations for a miracle, and both reinforce what that reader has learned from the narrative's previous signs: this miracle worker needs neither additional time nor the proximity of space to effect cures.

Formalist reader-response criticism does have a vested interest in narrative manipulations of readers' expectations through dramatic delays like the one in John 11; however, its interest does not end with the mere observation of the phenomenon.<sup>60</sup> The

<sup>55</sup>This estimate of the number of days is based upon the combination of three factors: the fact that Lazarus was still alive when the sisters sent their message to Jesus, the fact that Jesus stayed two more days in Bethany (beyond the Jordan) before heading for Judea, and the fact that Lazarus' corpse had been in the tomb four days when Jesus finally arrived in Bethany.

<sup>56</sup>Suspense in the miracle story is created through the rhetorical ploy of narrative retardation (cf. Auerbach, *Mimesis*, 4-5; Hägg, *Narrative Techniques in Ancient Greek Romances*, 326-327; and Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative*, 271-272).

<sup>57</sup>These are the only Johannine miracles that are initiated by immediate family members and performed on behalf of another male family member.

<sup>58</sup>This is because the only Bethany that has been mentioned up to this point in the narrative has been "Bethany beyond Jordan" (1:28; 10:40; cf. 11:18; *The Print's First Kiss*, 106).

<sup>59</sup>Wire, "The Structure of the Gospel Miracle Stories and Their Tellers," 101-103.

<sup>60</sup>Wilhelm Wuellner's rhetorically oriented narrative criticism has much in common with reader-response criticism. His analysis of Jn 11 is sensitive to the persuasive force of the story, and he argues correctly that the "subversive effect of [the narrative's] rhetorical coherence . . . gets recognized both *while* reading John 11, as well as *before* reading John 11 . . ." ("Putting Life Back into the Lazarus Story and its Reading," 125). But, strangely, he fails to develop that subversive element as it is expressed in the implied author's

content of the material which prolongs the pause is also crucial to narrative argumentation. For example, in the only Markan miracle story similar to the raising of Lazarus, a woman with a chronic menstrual flow intrudes into the story of Jairus and his daughter, and is healed when she touches Jesus' garments (Mk 5:22-43).<sup>61</sup> As with the raising of Lazarus, the Markan Jesus' decision to interrupt his journey to Jairus's house by publically affirming the woman's trust shows that the Markan Jesus, too, has his own priorities and timetable. And as in John 11, Jesus' delay will make the anticipated miracle more impressive.

But while the Markan intercalation adds a certain element of dramatic tension to the story of Jairus's daughter (Will Jesus get to her before she dies?), insofar as the story merely narrates another miraculous event, it continues to reinforce precisely those qualities of Jesus' authority which will heighten readers' trust in him.<sup>62</sup> In John 11, however, there is no trust-enhancing, intervening miracle that causes Jesus to postpone attending to Mary and Martha's need. In fact, the situation is just the opposite. Here, the initial absence of the miraculous, coupled with Jesus' opaque reasoning for his delay, and the bewildering cacophony of reactions to Lazarus's sickness and death, boldly expand the narrative's discourse time, challenging and undermining the basic intention of this and all miracle stories. Although the raising of Lazarus is essential for the book's plot (11:47-53), the miracle itself occurs almost as an afterthought in the formal structure of the miracle story.<sup>63</sup> Thus, the manipulated miracle story form poses these questions for the encoded reader: In view of the author's ideology, what is the point of the story?: Jesus' power (11:37, 40, 44)? Martha's prevenient trust (11:21-27)? Or Mary's post-resurrection perception (12:1-8)?

As I mentioned above, the miracle story form in John 11 is prolonged by the addition of characters whose various reactions to Lazarus's illness and subsequent death expand the space between the hero's appearance and the actual miracle. For example, the narrative incorporates into its structure 13 different responses of Jesus to Lazarus's death. Jesus begins with the reflection that Lazarus's "illness is not going to lead to death" (11:4), and then tells the disciples an opaque, tenuously related proverb about walking in the daylight (11:9-10). Next, Jesus reveals to his disciples the fact that Lazarus is finally resting (11:11) and then has to correct their misunderstanding by telling them that Lazarus is actually dead (11:14-15). When Jesus arrives in Judean Bethany he talks to Martha about Lazarus's resurrection and his own power over death (11:23, 25-26), responds to Martha's surprise with a rhetorical question (11:40), and prays at the tomb (11:41-42). Moreover, the narrator reports the fact that Jesus remained beyond the Jordan after hearing of Lazarus's illness (11:5-6), Jesus' journey back to Judea and his arrival at the outskirts of Bethany (11:17-20), his distress and tears (11:35-38a), and his arrival at the tomb (11:11:38b).

manipulation of the miracle story form (ibid., 116-117).

<sup>61</sup>Schnackenburg's comparison is particularly useful, although he does not mention the lengthy delay (The Gospel According to St. John, 2:341).

<sup>62</sup>*Pistis*, Bultmann writes, ". . . is a trust in the miracle worker which is his proper due" (History of the Synoptic Tradition, 219).

<sup>63</sup>Byrne describes the tension by speaking of two points of climax in the story: a theological climax which comes with Jesus' "I am" revelation, and a dramatic climax which arrives when Jesus shouts "Lazarus, come out" (Lazarus, 32).

The miracle story also includes ten responses of Mary and Martha to their brother's illness and death, most of which are recorded as direct speech. First, the sisters tell Jesus of Lazarus's illness (11:3). Martha then has two conversations with Jesus which reflect five different reactions to Lazarus's death and which, in a variety of ways, affirm Jesus' power (11:21-27, 39). Mary, on the other hand, has only four responses to Lazarus's death. She falls at Jesus' feet, weeps, and sadly wishes Jesus had come earlier (11:32-33). The fourth response occurs a week later when she anoints those feet which have brought the story's tragic hero back to her, to Martha, to Lazarus, and to the hero's own anticipated death in Jerusalem (11:2; 12:1-8).

"The Jews" have seven different responses to Lazarus's death. The narrator describes them as consoling Martha and Mary (11:19, 31) and weeping (11:33). They point out Lazarus's grave to Jesus (11:34). They seem impressed and surprised at Jesus' reaction to the death (11:36-37). Finally, after Jesus raises Lazarus from the dead, the narrator notes "the Jews'" twofold reaction to the miraculous event (11:45-46).

The disciples have the fewest responses to Lazarus's death. All three responses occur near the beginning of the story, just after Jesus has decided to go back to Judea and to Lazarus. First, the disciples address an incredulous question to Jesus (11:8). Then they misunderstand Jesus' metaphoric allusion to Lazarus's death by responding, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right" (sothesetai, 11:12). In spite of this misconstrual, their prognosis is ironically correct. Lazarus will indeed "be rescued" (sothesetai) from the deep sleep of death. The disciples' final response (11:16) echoes their initial question and marks an *inclusio* around Jesus' decision to return to Judea. Voiced by Thomas, its edge of resignation will grow and cast a shadow of death over the last half of the book.

In view of these multiple responses to Lazarus's sickness and death, and the role of Mary and Martha in the story, it seems strange that the narrator concludes the miracle without offering the encoded reader any immediate insight into the sisters' reaction to receiving back their brother (cf. Mk 5:42). Jesus does not publically restore Lazarus to them (cf. Lk 7:15-16), nor does the narrator make a note of the disciples' reaction (cf. Jn 2:11). Only "the Jews" are given narrative space to respond to the miracle (11:45-46). As David Beck puts it: "What distinguishes [the named characters in John 11] is their lack of recorded faith response. Martha verbally expresses her belief but is challenged to no *act* of faith [my emphasis]. A faith response is not asked of Mary, and Lazarus's response to Jesus' command is not the faith response of a human being but the reanimation of one who has lost his capacity to believe or respond."<sup>64</sup>

Although the story offers only one response to the raising of Lazarus, the implied author amazingly has incorporated 32 different responses into the miracle story structure

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<sup>64</sup>"The Narrative Function of Anonymity in Fourth Gospel Characterization," 153. Mark Stibbe, on the other hand, thinks that "the greatest 'gap' in the story is the narrator's omission of any response from Lazarus." For Stibbe, "[t]he silence of Lazarus is more deafening than the cry of Jesus" ("A Tomb with a View: John 11.1-44 in Narrative-Critical Perspective," 54). But Hans Windisch describes the omissions this way. "The dramatic shape of the conclusion leaves something to be desired from our point of view: there is no description of the immediate impression the resurrection makes, especially the greeting between brother and sisters, a corresponding gesture, or a word from Jesus along the lines of Lk 7.15's 'he gave him back to his mother,' the touching conclusion to the family novella. The scene is broken off prematurely; the creative touch goes lame, or rather the joy of narrating is extinguished after the fact of the miracle has been demonstrated" ("John's Narrative Style," 37).

*prior* to the occurrence of the miracle. Furthermore, the narrator names five different characters along with the two stereotypical character groups (the disciples and "the Jews"), and four different geographical locations. Thus, those real readers who would be culturally attuned to the simple miracle story form are faced with an enormously complicated structure in John 11. Can they wend their way through the labyrinth to a satisfying resolution? Perhaps. In the end, however, it is only the miracle story's function in the overall plot that makes any resolution possible. Real readers can read through the cacophony of disruptions to find the melody, the single tone: Lazarus's resuscitation sets in motion the plot to get rid of Jesus (11:47-51). But can readers hear the dissonant counter-melody that attempts to train their ears to a different pitch, a higher tone?

### **Dividing the Sisters**

The amount of space that recent commentaries and articles have devoted to analyzing Martha's conversation with Jesus and Mary's actions in this final Johannine sign proves that many readers have indeed found in the miracle story a stirring crescendo. Feminist critics, especially, have heard in Martha's carefully nuanced confession (11:27) a tone that shatters both the stereotypical, patriarchal reconstructions of the Johannine community and the ideology that underlies those patriarchal reconstructions.<sup>65</sup> But my purpose is not simply to hum along with those feminist voices by concentrating only on Martha's bold affirmation of Jesus' power. Instead, I want to listen to the subtle rhetorical shifts in the sisters' direct speech statements and show how the deaths of the story's male characters empower these women, freeing them to ever bolder speech and action.

In the miracle story, the first sentence attributed to the sisters is the one Jesus receives through an unnamed intermediary: "Lord, please [Greek, *ide*], he whom you love is ill" (11:3, my translation). It is the only time in the entire account that the women are portrayed as speaking or acting in unison, and the sisters' use of the second person singular verb *phileis* must strike the encoded reader with surprise. This is because, as noted earlier,<sup>66</sup> the encoded reader has previously been given no intimation of Jesus' love for particular characters in the story. And yet now, without actually naming their brother (something which, in fact, the sisters never do), Jesus knows exactly to whom they are referring (11:11).

The sisters do not explicitly request Jesus to come to them, nor do they repeat the royal official's condescending command, "Come down" (4:49). And because of the earlier miracle performed from a distance (4:46-54), the encoded reader could easily

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<sup>65</sup>See, for example, Raymond Brown's *The Community of the Beloved Disciple*, Culpepper's *The Johannine School*, Cullmann's *The Johannine Circle*, and Hengel's *The Johannine Question* (80-135). None of these historical reconstructions of the origins and development of the Johannine community give much place to the role of women in the community. Brown's study went the furthest, but relegated his discussion to an appendix (*ibid.*, 183-198). He never asks how women might have reworked the Jesus tradition which they inherited and transmitted. But compare these studies to the historical investigations of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (*In Memory of Her*, 329-330), Sandra Schneiders ("Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 52-55), and Ingrid Kitzberger ("Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 12-15). All these scholars find important historical, theological, and ecclesiological implications in the Fourth Gospel's portrayal of women.

<sup>66</sup>See above, 68-69.

understand the sisters' initial reticence ("Lord, he whom you love is ill") as evidence of their strong faith.<sup>67</sup> But why are the sisters unable to speak with their own voices and say to Jesus, "Lord, *help us!* Lazarus *our brother*, the one whom *we* love, is ill?" Perhaps this first sentence also expresses the sisters' feeling of powerlessness. Perhaps it is a verbal act of deference, expressing their fear of putting any explicit, public challenge to Jesus (cf. Mk 5:27-28, 32).

Later on, however, when Jesus finally arrives at Judean Bethany, each sister in turn publically reproaches Jesus to his face with the identical words, "Lord, if *you* had been here, *my* brother would not have died" (11:21, 32; my emphasis).<sup>68</sup> At that time they do not allude to Jesus' friendship with Lazarus. They do not simply say, "Your friend has died" (cf. 11:3). Thus, it appears that the death of their brother brings with it the sisters' discovery of their own personal voices. Correspondingly, what the encoded reader at first might have assumed to be an expression of the sisters' strong faith (the absence of the royal official's "Come down"), could now in retrospect appear to have been merely the reader's idealization of the characters. Contrary to the implied author's perspective (14:1-31), and much like the perspective of the earlier royal official (4:46-54), the women have all along presumed that physical presence bears with it the promise of salvation ("Lord, if you had been here . . .," 11:21, 32).

Although initially the sisters had spoken in unison and mouthed what they hoped would be Jesus' concern (11:3), they now speak for themselves, individually, out of their own personal sense of need. Furthermore, the repetition of the sisters' words ("Lord, if you had been here . . .") reemphasizes the mystery of Jesus' decision not to come immediately to their aid, reemphasizes the awful fact of their brother's death, and reemphasizes their own misunderstanding of the meaning of Jesus' presence. But just as importantly, their private meetings with Jesus and their slightly different responses to his arrival have the dramatic effect of separating the sisters from each other.<sup>69</sup> From a narrative standpoint, the death of Lazarus literally puts space between the two female characters.

If, as I argued earlier, the sisters were indeed knowingly taking a calculated risk in covertly asking Jesus to return to Judea and heal their brother, then Jesus' arrival, after Lazarus's death, is doubly poignant for them. The sisters have already lost their brother. And now, without solving their problem, their presumed benefactor has put his own life under the threat of death by belatedly answering their request. Thus, in view of the disciples' question (11:8) and Thomas's statement (11:16), the encoded reader might reasonably hear in the sisters' doubled cry "Lord, if you had been here . . .," the additional anxious, unvoiced question: "And now that you are here, what will happen to you?" In

<sup>67</sup>Gail O'Day puts it this way: "[T]he reader senses that even though the women ask nothing of Jesus, they address him because they expect him to know what to do" (*The Word Disclosed*, 81).

<sup>68</sup>Note, too, that Jesus responds to Martha--not by naming the name Lazarus or by describing a mutual relationship to the deceased ("the one whom we love"), but by saying, "*Your brother* will rise again" (11:23).

<sup>69</sup>Giblin astutely notes that "their statements differ only by the more emotional tone in which Mary expresses her personal loss (the emphatic position of *mou*)," ("Suggestion, Negative Response, and Positive Action in St John's Portrayal of Jesus [John 2.1-11.; 4.46-54.; 7.2-14.; 11.1-44.]," 209; cf. van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*, 193-194). For other examples of the use of emphatic pronouns in the Fourth Gospel, cf. 13:6-9 (*mou*); 18:17, 25-26; 21:15, 17 (*su*); and 18:35 (*ego*).

other words, "What a heroic act for you to come to us! But how foolish, now that our brother is dead! In coming back to Judea 'you have lost your own life and you have not saved his.'"<sup>70</sup>

Indeed, Martha's indecorous act of leaving the house of mourning and going to meet Jesus (11:20), and her private remark to Mary (11:28), may be read as protective acts (cf. 11:54). Since the encoded reader knows that "the Jews" were "just now trying to stone [Jesus]" (11:8), and that "many of the Jews had come to Martha and Mary to console them" (11:19), Martha's encounter with Jesus outside the village and her words to Mary may appear as attempts to keep Jesus from a volatile confrontation with his opponents.<sup>71</sup>

As most scholars have noted, Martha's response to Jesus' question (11:23) is the theological climax of the miracle story. Bultmann and many feminist interpreters after him have argued that "[t]he answer of Martha (v. 27) shows the genuine attitude of faith."<sup>72</sup> But for Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, Martha's statement implies much more. It means that "Martha represents the full apostolic faith of the Johannine community, just as Peter did for the Matthean community. More importantly, her faith confession is repeated at the end of the Gospel in 20:31, where the evangelist expresses the goal of her/his writing of the Gospel. . . ."<sup>73</sup> However, Schnackenburg and others argue that Martha's "'yes' to Jesus' question does not mean that she has understood the meaning of her words. . . . For the evangelist, who holds Jesus' meeting with Martha up to his readers as a mirror of their own faith, Martha's attitude is an example of faith which proves its worth in a critical situation."<sup>74</sup>

Not surprisingly, those scholars who argue that Martha represents the Johannine ideal of Christian commitment concentrate their attention on the dialogue in 11:21-27. Those scholars who argue, on the other hand, that Martha is a less than ideal example of faith focus on the conversation in 11:39-40. But recognition of the temporal nature of narrative and the rhetorical significance of narrative sequence actually allows for both interpretations of Martha's response. The encoded reader initially is given no textual clues from which to conclude that Martha's faith statement might be inadequate. But later on, at the tomb, the tone of Jesus' conversation with Mary leads the reader to reconsider that earlier, positive evaluation.<sup>75</sup>

<sup>70</sup>Lewis, *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, 141.

<sup>71</sup>Bultmann also finds an attitude of expectancy--or perhaps a need for consolation--in Mary's quick movements toward Jesus (11:29; *The Gospel of John*, 405-406).

<sup>72</sup>*The Gospel of John*, 404.

<sup>73</sup>*In Memory of Her*, 329; cf. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 52-53. Sjef van Tilborg calls Martha "the perfect reader model" (*Imaginative Love in John*, 192).

<sup>74</sup>*The Gospel According to St. John*, 332. Byrne puts it slightly differently: "If Martha's faith is perfect at this point, the actual sign (the raising) becomes, at least for her, superfluous. If she still has some way to go in her journey of faith, then the sign is not an anticlimax" (*Lazarus*, 54). In a similar fashion, Kirtzberger initially characterizes Martha as "active and reacting spontaneously" ("Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala--Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative," 12; cf. O'Day, *The Word Disclosed*, 88-90).

<sup>75</sup>In response to Martha's exclamation in Jn 11:39, van Tilborg writes, "Martha's faith must have been defective" (*Imaginative Love in John*, 195; cf. 192). Although the encoded reader's reevaluation of Martha's faith statement is not nearly as dramatic as that elicited by Peter's confession and confusion in Mk 8:29, 32-33 and Mt 16:16-23, it is, nevertheless, similar in effect. Furthermore, as I noted earlier, Schüssler

A major reason why the encoded reader can first respond positively to Martha is simply because her conversation with Jesus ends so abruptly (11:28).<sup>76</sup> Since the encoded reader finds neither Jesus nor the narrator responding negatively to Martha's bold words (11:27; cf. 1:49-51; 3:3-4; 6:67-70), the reader assumes that the implied author must agree wholeheartedly with Martha's confession. But tagging along behind the sudden break in their dialogue is the first of the story's two potential narrative gaps.<sup>77</sup> For curiously, in the place of any confirming statement from Jesus or the narrator (cf. 9:38b-39), the encoded reader finds only Martha's mundane words to Mary: "The Teacher is here and is calling for you" (11:28).

Since the encoded reader has not heard Jesus say anything like, "Go, call Mary," the abrupt end of Martha's theologically-charged conversation dramatically accentuates the narrative gap it creates. Clearly, the implied author has withheld part of Jesus and Martha's dialogue from the reader. Later on, when Jesus asks Martha, "Did I not tell you that if you believed, you would see the glory of God?" (11:40), the encoded reader will discover the second narrative gap in Jesus and Martha's earlier dialogue. For there is no narrative account of Jesus having made this statement to Martha. In point of fact, however, Jesus' question reads like the missing conclusion of their earlier conversation (cf. 1:50-51; 3:10; 5:14; 9:39).<sup>78</sup>

These two examples of reported speech involve previous conversations between Jesus and Martha. And both examples give the encoded reader the feeling that not everything that could have been told has been told; that perhaps only the most crucial elements of their dialogue have been divulged. But what is most perplexing for the encoded reader is the belated discovery that Jesus' earlier confirmation--or correction--of Martha's confession has somehow been misplaced. The encoded reader, who might at first have assumed that Martha's confession was laudatory,<sup>79</sup> was not given any immediate evidence of Jesus' "Yes!" And it is not until after Martha exclaims repulsively "Lord, it stinks" (11:39, my translation), that the encoded reader discovers Martha's earlier words might have said more than she intended.<sup>80</sup>

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Fiorenza correctly observes that in terms of faith statements, Martha is the Johannine equivalent of Matthew's Peter (*In Memory of Her*, 329).

<sup>76</sup>Schnackenburg, *The Gospel According to St. John*, 333. Similar sudden breaks in dialogue occur between Jn 4:26 and 27; 8:58 and 59; and 9:17 and 18.

<sup>77</sup>van Tilborg, *Imaginative Love in John*, 194-195.

<sup>78</sup>Margaret Davies takes a different perspective, arguing that "Jesus' rebuke, 'Did I not tell you that if you would believe you would see God's honor' (11:40), is not quite fair, . . . because Jesus had said no such thing to Martha. His remarks had been directed to the disciples before he set out for Bethany (11:4)" (*Rhetoric and Reference in the Fourth Gospel*, 372). But this is not quite right. Jesus did indeed say something to the disciples about the "glory of God," but it was not tied in with belief (11:4; cf. 11:15). Thus, I think it is still more reasonable to read Jesus' question as the rhetorically significant "misplaced" conclusion to Jesus and Martha's earlier conversation.

<sup>79</sup>Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 329; Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life: History, Theology, and Spirituality in John 11," 52-53.

<sup>80</sup>Sandra Schneiders correctly notes that Martha's "shock at Jesus' order to remove the stone shows that she did not in any way anticipate a resuscitation of Lazarus" ("Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 54). But for Schneiders, "[t]his is not . . . due to lack of faith. She who knows that Lazarus, even though he has died yet lives, has no reason to think the final resurrection will be anticipated in his case" (*ibid.*). However, Schneiders's exegesis fails to wrestle seriously with the subsequent and qualifying question that Jesus puts

Of course, regardless of how real readers initially settle the issue of Martha's confession (Is it full and comprehending, or is it incomplete and unreflective?)--in the end it comes closest to the narrator's image of "having the right stuff" (20:31).

### Critical Resistance

I have tried to make clear in this chapter that any attempt to explicate the design of the Johannine seventh sign must reckon with its own de-signing of itself; its radical reconfiguration of Dasein.<sup>81</sup> For as I have argued, this sign, above all other signs in the Fourth Gospel, is the deathsign of patriarchy and a resigning of Jesus' absence. Unlike Ruth, who, according to Jewish tradition, hatched a desperate plot to continue her lifeline by first anointing herself and then uncovering the feet of Boaz (Ruth 3:3-4), in the Johannine story, Mary celebrates the death of her redeemer--her *go'el*--by anointing his feet with perfume (Jn 12:3-4). Its pungent odor erases the final traces of Lazarus's decaying flesh at the very moment when those outside the house are beginning to plot Jesus' death and her brother's second death (12:9-11).

As a male, I want to be an assenting reader of this story. I want to identify with the feminist readings of Martha's bold confession and Mary's brazen anointing. And, of course, I want to say yes to the resistant reading I have just completed. Yet I find myself resisting any identification with the stinking corpse of Lazarus, the one bound up in linen cloths. For it is only while the male character lies entombed and alone, lost to family and community, that the sisters finally are free to explore their own voices. As long as Lazarus is alive, the sisters must rely upon him. He is the source of their unified voice. He is the origin of their need. But when Lazarus dies, the sisters become separated from each other. Now, in their separate meetings with Jesus, they each speak independently. And even when they use the exact same words to reproach him for his lack of presence in their time of desperate need, the structure of their individually-formed sentences changes ever so slightly. Martha's incredulous outburst at the tomb, coupled with Mary's invisible silence, underscores the sisters' separateness and individuality even more dramatically than Martha's earlier confession.<sup>82</sup>

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to Martha: "*Ouk eipon soi hoti ean pisteuses . . .*" (11:40; Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life," 55).

<sup>81</sup>For example, see Page DuBois's discussion of the Heideggerian concept of Dasein (Torture and Truth, 134-135, 145-146) and Herman Waetjen's analysis of the concept in relation to reader-response criticism ("Social Location and the Hermeneutical Mode of Integration," 75-76, 81, 92).

<sup>82</sup>The narrator's choice of the descriptive epithet, "Martha, the sister of the dead man" (11:39), rather than simply "Martha," or "Martha, the sister of Mary," or "Martha, the sister of Lazarus," emphasizes Martha's perspective that the dead will not rise in this age (11:24), just before she expresses the perspective again with her own voice. But the epithet also betrays the narrator's ideological point of view. As I argued earlier (50-51), epithets such as these are proleptic. So by associating Martha with death instead of life, the narrator may be momentarily distancing himself from her and her sharp response which follows (11:40; O'Day, The Word Disclosed, 94). On the other hand, one might read the epithet as legitimating Martha's new found voice. That is, there is no brother (he is "*dead*") or sister (Martha is "*sister of the dead*," not, "*sister of the living [Mary]*") who can speak for her.

By the time the sisters are reunited with Jesus and their brother (12:1-12), their sisterly bond has moved beyond a unanimity of words and a unanimity of need. And unlike the parallel scene in Luke 10:39-40, neither of the Johannine women needs to appeal to Jesus as an authority figure. As Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza points out, "[i]n John, Mary and Martha are not seen in competition with each other, as is the case in Luke [10:38-42]."<sup>83</sup> Although only Mary recognizes the temporary nature of the family reunion and celebrates it by anointing Jesus' feet, Martha is her equal in ministry.<sup>84</sup> Encircled by dying men, the sisters' purposeful, independent actions reflect a sense of community whose unity is based upon noncompetitive diversity.

In spite of the ideal community that Mary and Martha represent, there is an important sense in which I as a male reader am still a resistant reader. For although I have been reading the miracle story looking for its natural points of resistance to traditional notions of meaning and looking for resistances within the history of interpretation, I now find myself suddenly resisting certain parts of the critically resistant reading that I have just read in the text. What I find doubly disturbing is this: that as a male reader I read through this sign, with its multiple disruptions and designing strategies, as if I were the one become dead, the one without a voice; pretending to experience precisely that which I find impossible to experience--the silence of the zombie-like Lazarus.<sup>85</sup> In this miracle (and what a miracle it is!) the men are the ones who die: Lazarus (twice), Jesus, Thomas and his compatriots, and the Jewish leaders. Only the women live--two women with their pulsating doubts and their fragmentedly formed, tensive trust.

Feminist reader-response criticism has given me a strategy that stirs my blood, but paradoxically the stir is the premonition of my own death; the silencing of my androcentric voice. And so now I begin to resist Mary and Martha's community; a community which seems to have no room for sisters who say "our brother" or "my brother" while any brother is still alive. To be alive in this text as a male is to be a participant in the destructive power of patriarchy and androcentrism. To be alive in this text as a male is to live the death of Lazarus whose death is the means whereby the sisters' verbs are transposed into active voice. To be alive in this text as a male is to have one's death celebrated prematurely; to discover that only the hero's absence can make the women's hearts and minds grow strong.

I scratch again at the surface of Bultmann's classic commentary and fumble with his footnotes (the scholar's attempt to his bottom clean), hoping to bring a Teutonic (two-gin-and-tonic) scent of order back to my reading of John 11. I am afraid that my male attempt at a resistant reading may be only a parody; that my reading cannot and should not be taken seriously by contemporary feminist interpreters of the New Testament.<sup>86</sup> But in Bultmann's commentary I uncover one lightly perfumed note that gives me a whiff of

<sup>83</sup>In Memory of Her, 330.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>As Rosa Braidotti has suggested: "Lacking the historical experience of oppression on the basis of sex [white, male, middle-class intellectuals] paradoxically lack a minus. Lacking the lack, they cannot participate in the great ferment that is shaking up Western culture; it must be very painful indeed to have no option other than being the empirical referent of the historical oppressor of women and being asked to account for his atrocities" ("Envy; or, With My Brains and Your Looks," 235, as quoted in Newton, "Historicisms New and Old," 463).

hope. "Even more fantastic," he writes, "is Grill's exposition . . . [that] Mary and Martha are originally the dawn and dusk of Indian mythology, Lazarus is the moon, and Jesus is Sabazios-Dionysus."<sup>87</sup> Now I feel better. If Bultmann can privilege Julius Grill's fancy with such a note of seriousness, perhaps my reading may be granted similar favor. To be read, noted, and toasted--then resisted and roasted--is at least to have had a voice. I am suddenly grateful for Martha's quick, impassioned rejoinder to Jesus, "Lord, it stinks!"

So bring on the next Johannine death scene. I have barely bloodied my nose in this act of resistant reading. Find me another poker-faced zombie to challenge and raise from this overwrought tome. But this time I want familiar ground to fight on. And I want some formal rules that I can recognize; a foe that I can understand and see. So lead me back again to my reliable Johannine narrator and to his victimized encoded reader.<sup>88</sup> Then let me and the two of them duke it out in the confines of Caiaphas's courtyard, while Peter and his buddies tally up the score. Perhaps this time a healthy dose of textual variants mixed with a shot or two of reception theory and Kentucky whiskey will convince me once again, as I was convinced in the past, that the revenant--I mean the referent--that I am fighting against is really rooted in a text.

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<sup>86</sup>Adrienne Rich writes: "The personae we adopt, the degree to which we use lives already ripped off and violated by our own culture, the problem of racist stereotyping in every white head, the issue of the writer's power, right, obligation to speak for others denied a voice, or the writer's duty to shut up at times or at least to make room for those who can speak with more immediate authority--these are crucial questions for our time" (Rich, *Blood, Bread, and Poetry*, 131). To continue with her words: I guess what this solitary white male needs is "a history that does not simply 'include' peoples of color and white women, but that *shows the process* by which the arrogance of hierarchy and celebration of violence have reached a point of destructiveness almost out of control" (ibid., 144; my emphasis).

<sup>87</sup>Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 395, n. 1. Julius Grill's two-volume work, entitled *Untersuchungen über die Entstehung des vierten Evangeliums*, was published in 1902 and 1923 respectively.

<sup>88</sup>Staley, *The Print's First Kiss*, 95-118.