The Characterization of the Magdalene in the
Gospels according to *John*, *Thomas*, *Philip* and *Mary*

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ABSTRACT

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The recent interest in the figure of Mary Magdalene in pop culture has seemingly generated a fascination in studying the Magdalene academically. As a figure who is negatively and often wrongly characterized as a sinner, a prostitute and sexual partner to Jesus, the Magdalene is also a significant literary character who symbolizes the power of the feminine and the feminine right to salvation. Using both diachronic and synchronic methodologies we can begin to understand the power and influence of the Magdalene in both the canonical gospels and other Christian texts at Nag Hammadi. The character of the Magdalene is examined in the *Gospels according to John*, *Thomas*, *Philip* and *Mary* where her character advances the plot and aids the reader in understanding the theological message of each gospel. Within these selected texts, the relationship that the Magdalene has with Jesus and the competition that exists between Mary and Peter is emphasized. The texts are examined using a gender-critical approach to illustrate the role that gender and sex play in the development, as well as in the reception of the text. Using a combination of diachronic, synchronic as well as a gender-critical approach we are able to understand how the Magdalene highlights the unity in Christ and gives empowerment to female literary characters.

Acknowledgments

Abbreviations

BIS	Biblical Interpretation Series
ConB	Coniectanea Biblica
GBS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship
GBSNTS	Guides to Biblical Scholarship: New Testament Series
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament: Supplement Series
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
NEOT	*Neotestamentica*
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
SAC	Studies in Antiquity and Christianity
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SHR	Studies in the History of Religions (supplements to Numen)
SNTW	Studies of the New Testament and Its World
ST	*Studia theologica*
StPatr	*Studia patristica*
TS	*Theological Studies*
VCSup	Vigiliae Christianae Supplements

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Introduction

1. Statement of the Question

She is known as a female disciple, a prostitute, the lover of Jesus and a symbol of lust and repentance. Mary Magdalene has been a figure of discussion throughout the history of Christianity. She occupies a prominent role not only in the canonical gospels, but also in apocryphal literature, various legends, as well as in visual and dramatic art. The figure of Mary Magdalene has become a central character in modern popular culture inspiring books, articles, and films regarding her sexuality, status and her relationship with Jesus. Many of these modern depictions are not academic in nature, nor do they reflect historical and credible information. Such modern fictions are nonetheless entertaining and have sparked a general interest in the Magdalene.

In *Holy Blood, Holy Grail*[1] and *The Da Vinci Code*,[2] the figure of Mary Magdalene has captured the hearts and intrigued the minds of people around the world. These two books have attempted to place the Magdalene in the Holy Grail tradition.[3] For example, *The Da Vinci Code* portrays Mary as being pregnant with Jesus' child after his crucifixion. The book states that the Magdalene escapes to France where the bloodline of Jesus is secretly protected. After careful analysis of early Christian texts we can conclude

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[1] M. Baigent, R. Leigh, and H. Lincoln, *The Holy Blood, Holy Grail* (New York: Dell Publishing, 1982).

[2] D. Brown, *The Da Vinci Code* (New York/London/Toronto/Sydney/Auckland: Double Day, 2003).

[3] The Holy Grail is commonly perceived as a bowl, plate or cup used by Jesus. It is believed to have been popularized by Chretien de Troyes' unfinished poem "The Story of the Grail," (R. Barber, *The Holy Grail: The History of a Legend* [London: Penguin Books, 2005] 19). Much of what we know today of the Holy Grail can be attributed to Robert de Boron, whose story states that Joseph of Arimathea used the dish of the last supper to collect Jesus' blood (Barber 41). Legends have continued to develop into modern interpretations which also depict the Holy Grail as the secret bloodline of Jesus.

that this fictitious work clearly misrepresents the relationship that existed between Jesus of Nazareth and Mary Magdalene.

Along with the abovementioned best sellers, *The Expected One: A Novel*,[4] by K. McGowan, has also distorted the biblical image of the Magdalene. McGowan recently published a second book in the "Magdalene Line Series" entitled *The Book of Love: A Novel*.[5] In this novel she continues to explore and exaggerate the relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. This modern fascination with Mary Magdalene resulted in people viewing such speculations about her character as historically reliable. These works of fiction use a combination of historical figures, groups, and events framed in a speculative plot of a massive cover-up by the ecclesiastical authorities.

One might wonder if the recent portrayal of the Magdalene in popular culture is related to feminist studies. The role women occupied in the development of Christianity has been the major focus of scholarly work in the last three decades. It is commonly accepted today that Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute, and the fact that she was released from seven demons (Luke 8.3) does not imply that she was a sinful woman. In 1978, Mary Magdalene's sinful identification was officially removed from the Roman Breviary.[6] The sinful image was the result of combining different biblical narratives that involved both Mary Magdalene and other female characters in Mark 14.3-9, Matthew 26.6-13 with John 11.1; 12.1-8 and Luke 7.36-50, John 7.53-8.11.[7] Mary Magdalene today, despite the misconceptions in the reception history of her character, has become a symbol of feminine strength.

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[4] K. McGowan, *The Expected One: A Novel* (New York: Touchstone, 2006).
[5] K. McGowan, *The Book of Love: A Novel* (New York: Touchstone, 2009).
[6] J. Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene: Legends, Apocrypha, and the Christian Testament* (New York: Continuum, 2002), 99.
[7] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 74-75.

Throughout this study, I will focus on the characterization of Mary Magdalene in the *Gospel according to John* and in some other Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi[8] from a feminist and gender studies approach. I will first examine the way she is portrayed in the *Gospel according to John*, by giving special attention to the empty tomb tradition (Jn 20.1-18). In this episode, Mary Magdalene is the recipient of an apparition of Jesus and engages in a conversation with him. The Johannine empty tomb story will also be compared to the one found in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke). This will help me better understand the theological orientation of John's own tradition and appreciate his particular portrayal of the Magdalene. I will then turn my attention to some of the references dealing with Mary Magdalene in other second century Christian texts at Nag Hammadi. I will analyze a selection of passages taken from the *Gospel according to Thomas* (*Gos. Thom.*), the *Gospel according to Philip* (*Gos. Phil.*), and the *Gospel according to Mary* (*Gos. Mary*). I will try to uncover the similarities in the way Mary Magdalene is characterized in the *Gospel according to John* and in other Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi. This will then lead me to my second point: *to formulate a*

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[8] Even if it is not within the scope of this study to enter into the discussion about the classification of the Nag Hammadi Library and the issues surrounding the taxonomy of Gnosticism, a few words need to be said concerning the denomination of the collection and its rapport to Gnosticism. The non-canonical texts that are examined in this study will be referred to as Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi and / or Christian texts at Nag Hammadi. Some scholars have classified these texts as being Gnostic or belonging to the category of Gnosticism. When expressing the views of scholars who classify these gospels as Gnostic, the expression will be referenced in quotation marks: "Gnostic." While the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi which have been selected for this work all place some emphasis on *gnosis*, classifying them as "Gnostic" or under the umbrella term "Gnosticism" is applying to them a modern typological category which tends to separate these texts from the Christian literature of Late Antiquity. Although these texts may stress the importance of *gnosis*, they are still fundamentally Christian in nature; there is therefore no need to categorize the Nag Hammadi collection as "Gnostic" or as the manifestation of what scholars have called "Gnosticism" For more recent scholarship on the use of "Gnostic" and "Gnosticism" see: M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument For Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); K. King, *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); A. Marjanen, *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (Publications of the Finnish Exegetical School 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).

hypothesis as to why Mary Magdalene was given such a prominent place in some of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi, and to provide general reasons for the interest in her character.

Although the Magdalene is found in other texts at Nag Hammadi,[9] the *Gos. John, Gos. Thom.*, *Gos. Phil.* and the *Gos. Mary* were selected for this research as the Magdalene is characterized in the same light within each of these texts. The Magdalene's relationship with the male disciples, the apparent competition with Peter / the male disciples, the Magdalene's resurrection faith, and her favoured / beloved position are all elements which are found within in the selected gospels.

The theological value of such an inquiry is to bring attention on the different ways biblical as well as other Christian texts can be interpreted. As modern readers[10] it is essential to understand that the female characters within these texts are social and literary constructs that do not necessarily reflect real historical women. Whether historical figures or not, the female characters of the gospels have had profound implications on the development of the texts. Female characters tend to be examined through feminist hermeneutics which attempts to uncover the historical women in order to argue for or against women's rights within contemporary Christian communities. Few have acknowledged the significant roles and functions of these female characters as literary aids to the evangelists in illustrating their theological message; therefore, this study will attempt to shed new light on interpreting biblical texts and the theological significance of female characters in early Christian traditions.

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[9] The character of the Magdalene is also found in *Sophia of Jesus Christ, Dialogue of the Saviour,* and the *First Apocalypse of James*. The Magdalene also has a significant role in the *Pistis Sophia*.

[10] A modern reader would be today's reader and is distinct from the implied reader. The implied reader is the reader that the text helps us to reconstruct.

2. Status Quaestionis

In the past few years, there have been a number of studies on the character of Mary Magdalene in John, as well as a great deal of work on the Magdalene in Christian texts at Nag Hammadi. What seems to be lacking, however, is a comparative analysis between both the Johannine and other Christian gospels. Significant similarities in the characterization of this figure calls for a comprehensive comparison between the two sets of texts.

2.1. The Magdalene in the Gospel according to John

The character of Mary Magdalene has usually been analyzed as one among all of the female characters in John. For example, R. A. Culpepper, in his innovative work entitled *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, presents Mary Magdalene as a minor character in just over one page.[11] Culpepper assigns two basic functions to the minor characters as follows:

> (1) to draw out various aspects of Jesus' character successively by providing a series of diverse individuals with whom Jesus can interact, and (2) to represent alternative responses to Jesus so that the reader can see their attendant misunderstandings and consequences.[12]

Culpepper's work is significant in biblical literary criticism but clearly lacks a full development of the female characters within the *Gospel according to John*, and especially when it comes to Mary Magdalene.

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[11] R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), 143-144.
[12] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 145.

The work of T. Seim is also significant for our study of the Magdalene.[13] She undertakes a study on the characterization of the women in John. Seim notes that although Mary Magdalene is not present throughout the majority of the Gospel, she nevertheless has an important role in the narrative. For Seim, it is also possible that the role of Mary Magdalene could indicate the presence of egalitarianism in the Johannine community; if we are to presume that a significant role in the empty tomb/resurrection narrative was "connected with an authoritative and prominent position in the Christian community."[14] It can be argued that her work seems to be more about the "roles and function of women in the Gospel of John"[15] without fully developing the role of the Magdalene.

A. Jasper has written a short but valuable article where she examines the work of M. Bal, R. Brown, M. Scott and F. Segovia, while attempting to provide what she refers to as a "preliminary analysis of John 20:1-18." [16] In her article, Jasper offers an analysis of the empty tomb narrative from the perspective/point of view of Mary Magdalene.[17] Her investigation and conclusions are based on a hermeneutics of suspicion.[18] Although her work is biased and she does not examine the other characters in the text, this study is significant in offering an alternate way of examining the empty tomb narrative.

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[13] T. K. Seim, "Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," in *Aspects on the Johannine Literature (Papers Presented at a conference of Scandinavian NT exegetes at Uppsala, June 1986)* (ConB) (eds. L. Hartman and B. Olson; Uppsala: Almqvist and Wksell, 1987), 56-73.
[14] Seim, "Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," 67.
[15] Seim, "Roles of Women in the Gospel of John," 56.
[16] A. Jasper, "Interpretative Approaches to John 20:1-18: Mary at the Tomb of Jesus," *ST* 47 (1993): 109.
[17] Jasper, "Interpretative Approaches to John 20:1-18," 110.
[18] Jasper, "Interpretative Approaches to John 20:1-18," 115.

I. Kitzberger has also studied female characters in John from what she calls a "re-reading" perspective.[19] The opinions and reflections of more experienced readers greatly differ from those of first-time readers. In her short study, Kitzberger also compares the female characters in John and examines the relationship between a feminist and a theological interpretation. Even if her article does not specifically deal with characterization in the Johannine gospel, Kitzberger still examines the character of Mary Magdalene from a reader-response perspective.

2.1.1. The Magdalene in the Synoptic Gospels

C. Osiek explored the "role and function of the women in the empty tomb narratives of the gospel tradition."[20] This work examines the redactional, social and cultural aspects of each gospel through a hermeneutics of suspicion and of remembrance.[21] Osiek's focus is to understand the place of the female characters that are present in the empty tomb narrative in order to illustrate the role of women within the early Christian communities.[22] Although Mary Magdalene is not the sole focus for Osiek, this work raises interesting questions regarding the presence of the women in the canonical empty tomb narratives.

The role of the Magdalene in the synoptics was also the focus of an article by G. O'Collins and D. Kendall. In their work, they address the issue of the Magdalene as a witness to the tomb/resurrection and question her role in the development of the Easter

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[19] I. Kitzberger, "How Can this Be?" (John 3:9): A Feminist Theological Re-Reading of the Gospel of John," in *"What Is John?" Volume II: Literary and Social Readings of the Fourth Gospel* (SBLSymS 7) (ed. F. F. Segovia; Atlanta: Scholars, 1998), 23.
[20] C. Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb: What Are They Doing There?" *Ex auditu* 9 (1993): 97-107.
[21] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 97-107.
[22] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 106.

tradition.[23] O'Collins and Kendal examine the historical elements of the empty tomb narrative and the role of Mary Magdalene, as well as the other female witnesses. Although Mary Magdalene and the women are the primary focus, O'Collins and Kendall point out that Peter was also a central character. It may be possible to understand the role of the women and Peter as complementing each other.[24]

According to E. de Boer, the image of Mary Magdalene is to be understood as "the incarnation of feminine attractiveness."[25] For de Boer, this image of the Magdalene did not develop until the fifth and sixth centuries.[26] de Boer explores the figure of the Magdalene in art, literature, myth and legend. But it is her study of the Magdalene in the canonical gospels and the *Gos. Mary* that is of particular interest. Mary Magdalene's message, according to de Boer, is different in each gospel. In Matthew she reports to the eleven the message from the angel, while in Luke, the Magdalene reports to the disciples (and others) and her message seems to be misinterpreted.[27] In John, her message is meant for all of those who believe.[28] According to de Boer, the Johannine resurrection narrative leads readers to "… come to the conclusion that Mary Magdalene is one of the beloved disciples of Jesus."[29] While de Boer mentions important elements in the gospels, she does not provide enough analysis. For instance, de Boer states that John is the only canonical

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[23] G. O'Collins and D. Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness to Jesus' Resurrection," *TS* 48 (1987): 631.

[24] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 646.

[25] E. de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth* (1st ed.; trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press Ltd., 1997), x.

[26] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, x.

[27] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 57.

[28] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 57.

[29] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 53.

gospel where Mary Magdalene says "I have seen the Lord!", [30] yet, she does not offer any information regarding the significance of this element in the resurrection narrative.

2.1.2. The Historical Magdalene

In R. Brown's influential work on John's community, Brown briefly discussed the "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel."[31] He centred on developing a way to read difficult biblical passages in which women are characterized in less than desirable ways.[32] Although Brown's short description of Mary Magdalene is not as substantial as those of more recent studies on women in the New Testament and Mary Magdalene, his work on the historical Johannine community has made a major impact in the scholarly world.

E. Schüssler Fiorenza is undoubtedly one of the most influential feminist theologians of the last thirty years. Her work has greatly contributed to the understanding of women in the Bible and in the early Christian communities. Her research has also changed the face of biblical studies and of feminist theology altogether. Although her work further developed feminist theology and hermeneutics, it went beyond this as it examined women in early Christian communities. Similar to Brown, Schüssler Fiorenza also focuses on the Johannine community where she engages in tradition history by comparing the role of Mary Magdalene in the Synoptic Gospels.[33] Schüssler Fiorenza uses both tradition history and historical analysis to understand the Magdalene.

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[30] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 54.
[31] R. E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," in *The Community of the Beloved Disciple: The Life, Loves, and Hates of an Individual Church in New Testament Times* (New York: Paulist Press, 1975), 183-198.
[32] Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel," 183-185.
[33] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983), 332.

M. R. D'Angelo has also played a role in the study of women and female figures in the New Testament. While her work is significant within feminist theology, her focus tends to be more historical-critical, as she endeavours to find indications concerning the historicity of certain women in Early Christianity. In an important article on Mary Magdalene, D'Angelo seeks to uncover traces of the historical Magdalene. Like Brown and Schüssler Fiorenza, D'Angelo also has a concern for the Johannine community.[34] Her work not only centres on the canonical gospels, but it also extends to the *Gos. Mary*.[35] Her conclusions about the Magdalene are often based on comparative readings. For example, in John, D'Angelo suggests that Mary is an apostle of Jesus not because of the Johannine tradition, but according to the "Pauline definition of apostle (1 Cor 9:1, 15:3-8)."[36] D'Angelo claims that Mary Magdalene is to be considered an apostle because she is the first to see the risen Jesus, reporting what she has seen and proclaiming the message of Jesus.[37]

2.1.3. The Women at the Empty Tomb

Since Mary Magdalene is depicted as a major protagonist in John 20, close attention must be given to the empty tomb narrative. In the past, most researchers were concerned with the historicity of the narrative and the absence of Jesus' body. Few scholars have focused on the female characters in the narrative.

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[34] M. R. D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women in the Gospel Literature: The Case of Mary Magdalene," in *Women and Christian Origins*, (eds. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 106.
[35] D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 109-110.
[36] M. R. D'Angelo, "(Re)Presentations of Women in the Gospels: John and Mark," in *Women and Christian Origins* (eds. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 132; also see D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 111.
[37] D'Angelo, "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 111.

O'Collins and Kendall examine the role of the female witnesses at the tomb.[38] They also seek to understand the place of these women in the development of the empty tomb tradition, if it was actually based on female witnesses and on the testimony of Mary Magdalene. O'Collins and Kendall are also concerned with the opposition Early Christianity faced when accused of relying on the account of a 'hysterical female' for belief in the resurrection.[39] They conclude that Mary Magdalene was considered a major witness; which is "one whose testimony is of greatest importance and/or is the most complete."[40] This is what gave the Magdalene the primary role in the New Testament resurrection narratives. Her testimony has the validity of that of a male witness.[41]

In an important article, C. Sezter gives an overview of the women as witnesses to the empty tomb and the resurrection in the four canonical gospels.[42] The primary goal of her study is to compare the way women are characterized in the narratives throughout the gospels, to the way they are characterized in the empty tomb narratives.[43] For Setzer the role that the female witnesses occupied in the empty tomb narratives became an issue within the early Christian communities. According to Setzer it is possible to see the "reluctance to rely on women's testimony"[44] in the canonical and non-canonical gospels. Reducing and limiting the role of the women in the empty tomb and resurrection narratives may suggest that the early communities were beginning to be embarrassed over a tradition which has female witnesses acting as the central characters.[45]

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[38] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 631.
[39] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 631.
[40] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 632.
[41] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 636.
[42] C. Setzer, "Excellent Women: Female Witness to the Resurrection," *JBL* 116 (1997): 259-272.
[43] Setzer, "Excellent Women," 259.
[44] Setzer, "Excellent Women," 271.
[45] Setzer, "Excellent Women," 271-272.

2.2. The Magdalene in Other Christian Texts at Nag Hammadi

M. Malvern published a work at the height of feminist studies in the mid-seventies: *Venus in Sackcloth: The Magdalen's Origin and Metamorphoses.* In her book, she attempts to understand the myths and misconceptions surrounding the Magdalene. Malvern's inquiry focuses on the New Testament Gospels, non-canonical texts and several plays between the twelfth and the twentieth century.[46] In her preface, Malvern claims to examine what no other scholar had done, that is, to study the figure of the Magdalene in the "second century Gnostic writings."[47] Such a claim was refuted by A. Marjanen who pointed out that Malvern was not the first to examine the Magdalene in "Gnostic" writings.[48] In fact, this had been done by Carl Schmidt at the end of the 19th century. He worked on the figure of Mary Magdalene in the *Pistis Sophia* (*PistS*) and the *Gos. Mary*.[49] According to Marjanen, "Malvern's conclusions concerning Mary Magdalene's position are farfetched and do not find support in her texts."[50] Malvern suggests that the relationship between Mary Magdalene and Jesus in John was further developed in the apocryphal writings.

For Malvern the figure of the Magdalene was combined with the images of other women in an attempt by "the early Christians to create a feminine counterpart for their man-god."[51] While Malvern's book was one of the earliest studies published on the Magdalene, she makes it clear that her work is not simply a literary study.[52] Her analysis

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[46] M. Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth. The Magdalen's Origins and Metamorphoses* (Carbondale/ Edwardsville: Southern Illinois University Press, 1992), xi.
[47] Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth*, xi.
[48] A. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents* (NHMS 40) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 6.
[49] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 7.
[50] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 7.
[51] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 30.
[52] Malvern, *Venus in Sackcloth*, xii.

of various plays and works of art add to the way the Magdalene is characterized in the canonical and apocryphal texts. A more comprehensive analysis of the texts would have certainly strengthened Malvern's conclusions.

E. Pagels has also examined Mary Magdalene in non-canonical texts. In her study of "Gnosticism" in *The Gnostic Gospels,* Pagels suggests that Mary Magdalene is used to illustrate the role women had in challenging proto-orthodox leaders.[53] Some Christian texts, including the *Gos. Phil.* "which tells of rivalry between the male disciples and Mary Magdalene [...] described as Jesus' most intimate companion, the symbol of divine wisdom,"[54] illustrate the controversy regarding the involvement of women in the Christian communities.[55] Pagels' work has most certainly been influential in understanding female characters in "Gnostic" literature.

R. M. Price also published a significant article which richly explores the figure of Mary Magdalene in other "Gnostic" texts. After a brief introduction, Price notices that the Magdalene is a female character who receives post-Easter revelations in a variety of "Gnostic" texts. Moreover, Mary represents the "Gnostic" elimination of sexual differences.[56] Price questions scholars, such as Pagels, who claim that Mary Magdalene was simply used as a literary device to highlight how women opposed proto-orthodox leaders.[57] Even if he does not completely deny the literary development of Mary Magdalene's character, Price suggests that the "Gnostic" texts "should be recognized as strong evidence that Mary Magdalene did in fact carry on an apostolic ministry in circles

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[53] E. Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (New York: Random House, 1979), 64.
[54] Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 64.
[55] Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels*, 62, 64.
[56] R. M. Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" *Grail* 6 (1990): 60.
[57] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 61.

receptive to her…"[58] Price also tends to place a greater emphasis on the historical Magdalene rather than exploring the literary dimensions to her character. Price states that "Mary was remembered as a prominent figure by all segments of the Christian movement but in orthodox circles her claims were ignored and the reasons for her obvious prominence were forgotten."[59]

Price pursues his analysis and attempts to highlight the Magdalene's apostolic authority by examining what he calls the "seven basics stages" of Mary's evolution.[60] According to him, the first stage is found in John 20.1, 11-18.[61] Price suggests that the most original version of the Magdalene in the Easter Tradition is found in John. It is from here that the "Gnostic" Christian authors were influenced. The connection that Price establishes between John and the "Gnostic" Christian texts is very significant. It seems strange that Price considers John 20.1,11-18 to be the closest text to the oral tradition, especially since most scholars are of the opinion that traditions found in Mk, Matt, Lk and 1 Cor 15 are earlier than John. For Price, these other non-Johannine texts are evidence of an "increasing denial of Mary Magdalene's claims to apostolic credentials."[62]

S. Haskins is another important scholar in relation to the study of Mary Magdalene. In her 1993 monograph, Haskins labels Mary Magdalene as a figure among the "forgotten history of women."[63] She says that her book "… is for the most part, about the mythical aspects …" of the figure of the Magdalene and what the myths mean.[64] While her research focuses on the figure of the Magdalene in legends, myths and art, her

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[58] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 61.
[59] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 73.
[60] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 66.
[61] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 66.
[62] Price, "Mary Magdalene: The Gnostic Apostle?" 72.
[63] S. Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor* (Hammersmith: Harper Collins, 1993), Preface.
[64] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, xi.

monograph also studies the Magdalene in both canonical and other Christian texts. In a chapter entitled "Companion of the Saviour," she examines Mary Magdalene in texts including the *Gos. Mary* and the *Gos. Phil.* Haskins is quick to notice that these writings do not depict Mary Magdalene as a sinner or a prostitute.[65] Although many "Gnostic" Christian texts offer a more positive representation of women, Haskins maintains that "gender bias still prevailed among the Gnostics in what was still a patriarchal ambience."[66] Haskins also addresses the conflict between the figure of Mary Magdalene and Peter, as Mary receives "preferential treatment from Christ in both the *Gospel of Mary* and the *Gospel of Phillip*."[67] She highlights the superior and significant relationship that Mary Magdalene had with Jesus in the *Gos. Phil.* where Mary Magdalene is mentioned along with Jesus' mother and her sister. But what is of particular importance to Haskins is the reference to Mary Magdalene as the "companion of the saviour"[68] which for Haskins has erotic overtones. For Haskins "the spiritual union between Christ and Mary Magdalen is couched in terms of human sexuality."[69]

Another interesting element of Haskins' research is her understanding of the feminine in "Gnosticism." She suggests that "Gnosticism" contributed to a loss of the feminine through the attempt of eradicating "sexual difference."[70] It is particularly interesting that the Magdalene, a female character, can be a symbol of feminine power, while at the same time, represent an ideal that removes sexual boundaries.[71] It would be beneficial if this section of her book was further developed and expanded. Haskins

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[65] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 38.
[66] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 40.
[67] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 41.
[68] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 40.
[69] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 40.
[70] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 42.
[71] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 43.

suggests that the elements of the "Gnostic" Magdalene are reflections of the historical Magdalene, as well as those of historical women and historical events.[72] While the "Gnostic" Christian texts may offer a glimpse into the historical setting, it is important to understand that texts are literature and do not always contain *bruta facta*. According to Haskins, it is possible that the representation of the Magdalene in "Gnostic" texts could illustrate a political decision made by the proto-orthodox church to reduce the role of women.[73]

E. de Boer is another scholar who examined Mary Magdalene in the canonical gospels, apocryphal texts, and in the myths and legends throughout Christianity.[74] de Boer explores the figure of Magdalene in history as well as the changes and developments of this figure throughout time. This valuable work would have benefited from a more in depth interpretation of the texts. de Boer particularly draws attention to the *Gos. Mary.* After a brief description of the text, she examines, the way Mary Magdalene is viewed by Peter, Andrew, Levi, and even Mary's own self perception.[75] Next, de Boer provides an analysis of Mary's speech in the gospel. For de Boer, the *Gos. Mary* seems to imply that "…Mary Magdalene had followers who saw her and her teaching as an important source of inspiration."[76]

One of the most substantial works concerning the figure of the Magdalene in Christian texts at Nag Hammadi is that of A. Marjanen.[77] In his study of the Magdalene, Marjanen analyzes Christian texts such as the *Gos. Mary,* the *Gos. Phil.,* and the *Gos.*

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[72] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 53-55.
[73] Haskins, *Mary Magdalen: Myth and Metaphor*, 55.
[74] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 2-3.
[75] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 100-105.
[76] de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth* 116.
[77] A. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved: Mary Magdalene in the Nag Hammadi Library and Related Documents* (NHMS 40) (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996).

Thom. He also examines the Magdalene in other texts including the *Gospel of Peter* (*Gos. Pet.*) and the *Epistula Apostolorum.* Marjanen's approach is based on both diachronic and synchronic methods, but focuses solely on non-canonical texts that deal with the figure of the Magdalene.

In another article, Marjanen briefly discusses the similarities and the differences in the *Gos. Mary* and the *Gos. Phil.* concerning Mary Magdalene.[78] He focuses on how Mary is characterized as the 'beloved disciple.' While the work does deal with characterization, most of his research is based on extra-textual elements. Marjanen is also interested in the way the expression 'beloved disciple' would have been understood by the community for which the text was intended.

In a recent study on the Magdalene, feminist scholar J. Schaberg offers a unique approach to the study of the myths, legends and texts related to this fascinating figure. Schaberg begins by looking at the work of Virginia Woolf and then examines the myths and legends of the Magdalene. She also explores the "Gnostic" and apocryphal texts that refer to Mary Magdalene.[79] Like others before her, Schaberg seeks for the historical Magdalene and tries to understand the meaning of being a female Christian in the second century. For Schaberg, the "Gnostic" Magdalene allows readers to comprehend the "narrowness of and puzzling gaps in the canonical depiction of Mary Magdalene."[80] After her examination of "Gnostic" and apocryphal texts, Schaberg explores the canonical gospels and some of the recent scholarship on the figure of the Magdalene.

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[78] A. Marjanen, "Mary Magdalene, a Beloved Disciple," in *Mariam, the Magdalene, and the Mother* (ed. Deirdre Good; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 49-54.
[79] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 9.
[80] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 203.

Schaberg ends her book by stating that Mary Magdalene was a "successor to Jesus"[81] while emphasizing the need to understand the role of women at the crucifixion, burial and the tomb of the man from Nazareth. As Schaberg tries to uncover the historical Magdalene, she engages in the literary analysis of texts. She considers the Magdalene to be a significant and empowering female figure.[82]

K. King has shown the centrality of Mary Magdalene's character through her in-depth study on the *Gos. Mary*. In her work, King provides an English translation of the *Gos. Mary* based on both the Coptic and the Greek versions of the text. She also addresses the social-historical context of this gospel and some of the myths that have surrounded the figure of the Magdalene. King also offers interesting parallels between the *Gos. Mary* and John, with respect to various themes, ideas, and characters. Other second-century texts such as the *Gos. Thom.*, the *First Apocalypse of James* (1 *Apoc. Jas.*), the *Dialogue of the Saviour* (*Dial. Sav.*), the *Sophia of Jesus Christ* (*Soph. Jes. Chr.*), and the *Gos. Phil.* are also analyzed.[83] An interesting component in King's research is her understanding of the development of the *Gos. Mary* and its rapport to the canonical gospels. According to King, there is no literary interrelationship between the *Gos. Mary* and the canonical gospels. Rather, she claims that the similar content can be traced back to the earliest communities and oral tradition.[84] King suggests that the *Gos. Mary* "presents an interpretation of the early Jesus tradition that is independent of any known literary work."[85] According to King, "the historical importance of the *Gospel of Mary* lies

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[81] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 300-356.
[82] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 350.
[83] K. L. King, *The Gospel of Mary of Magdala: Jesus and The First Woman Apostle* (Santa Rosa: Polebridge Press, 2003), 143.
[84] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 115-118.
[85] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 110.

in letting us see the contours of some crucial debates over the authority of apostolic tradition, prophetic experience, and women's leadership."[86]

In a recent study on the *Gos. Mary*, C. Tuckett provides a fresh translation from the Greek and Coptic manuscripts. He then discusses the genre and unity of the text and provides a brief summary of the main characters found in the work.[87] Although Tuckett does summarize the characters in the text, he does not provide an in-depth characterization of any of the personages. Tuckett also compares the *Gos. Mary* with the canonical gospels where he highlights the "clear echoes or allusions"[88] with "less clear parallels" between the "Gnostic" gospels and the New Testament gospels.[89] For Tuckett, there is clearly a direct literary relationship between the *Gos. Mary* and the New Testament gospels. He identifies redactional elements from the canonical tradition leading him to conclude that the *Gos. Mary* is not an independent tradition.[90] In his chapter entitled "How Gnostic is the Gospel of Mary?", Tuckett addresses issues pertaining to the "Gnosticism" in the given text. He mentions how scholars have recently questioned the definition of "Gnosticism," and which gospels are to be considered "Gnostic" or not.[91] One issue that has led scholars to doubt the "Gnostic" character of the *Gos. Mary* is the absence of an "explicit account of a version of the creation myth."[92] But according to Tuckett, "despite the lack of any explicit detailed account of a creation myth, or an explicit reference to the creation of the world by a demiurgical figure, there

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[86] King, *The Gospel of Mary*, *Magdala* 190.
[87] C. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 25.
[88] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 57-66.
[89] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 67-72.
[90] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 74.
[91] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 25.
[92] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 53.

seem to be sufficient correlations with Gnostic themes and motifs…"[93] According to Tuckett this would imply that the *Gos. Mary* is a "Gnostic" text.[94]

2.3. Issues That Need To Be Addressed

There still seems to be a lack of sources that directly compare the Johannine Magdalene to the Magdalene in some of the Christian materials at Nag Hammadi. The relationship between these texts is particularly interesting as at first glance it appears that the Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi may have been influenced by Johannine thought. If such is the case, it is possible that the development of the characters, such as Mary Magdalene, in some of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi can be attributed to the portrayal of characters in John.

As gender studies are still developing, not enough attention has been paid to the relationship that exists between female and male characters within biblical narratives. Thus, an area that needs to be addressed is the relationship between Mary Magdalene and the male characters in the text(s).

Another aspect that needs to be explored is that of characterization. M. A. Powell has defined characters as "the actors in a story, the ones who carry out the various activities that comprise the plot."[95] It is not possible to say for certain whether or not the female figures are perfect reflections of historical women. While feminist studies can be liberating for women, as our contemporary society is able to find examples of female leadership with biblical narratives, this cannot and should not be the primary focus for feminist biblical hermeneutics. The characters in a text, both female and male need to be

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[93] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 54.
[94] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 54.
[95] M. A. Powell, *What Is Narrative Criticism?* (GBSNTS) (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 51.

understood based on their roles and functions in the narrative(s). Each character plays a role in fulfilling the theological motif of the evangelist; thus, female characters need to be recognized as literary constructs that occupy a significant place in the biblical narratives, and in the gospel's overall theological message. Perhaps less focus needs to be paid to the historical figures, and more attention given to the literary function of characters.

3. Epistemology and Methodology:

3.1. Epistemological Considerations

Our knowledge is conditioned by the post-modern paradigm in which we are situated, our gender, our access to information and our personal understanding of history and reality. Feminist epistemology is particularly important to biblical studies as scholars must be aware of the elements such as gender, which influences our thought process in the acquirement of knowledge. Feminist epistemology seeks to understand

> the ways in which gender does and ought to influence our conceptions of knowledge, the knowing subject, and practices of inquiry and justification. It identifies ways in which dominant conceptions and practices of knowledge attribution, acquisitions, and justification systematically disadvantage women and other subordinate groups, and strives to reform these conceptions and practices so that they serve the interests of these groups.[96]

Society, history, post-modernity and gender all have a factor in affecting how individuals read the Bible. Feminist theory and thought, therefore, have a direct influence on the way a text is understood and interpreted.

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[96] E. Anderson, "Feminist Epistemology and Philosophy," *Stanford Encyclopaedia of Philosophy* (Rev. February 5 2009): n.p. Cited July 25, 2009. Online: http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/feminism-epistemology/.

3.1.1. Gender-Critical Approach

In my research I will apply a gender-critical approach to the texts. As there are a variety of different 'feminisms' and different ways to approach a text in relation to women's and or gender studies, it is important to outline my use and understanding of a gender-critical approach.[97] When approaching both canonical and non-canonical texts we first must acknowledge that each reader positions themselves "differently in relation to the text and therefore asks different questions."[98] This shapes one's approach to the text as well as one's interpretations. Through this methodology I will be continuously aware of how gender plays a role in the creation of the text, the "textual argumentation"[99] as well as in the reception of the text. Within this study I will examine the male and female characters in an attempt to understand the power relationships that are created between the sexes, while keeping in mind my current world view and the way gender and sex shape my reading of the text. Although I am not trying to understand the historical figures, the social context in which the text was created in is important to keep in mind as this had an impact on the way both male and female characters were depicted in the final redaction of the text(s).

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[97] Gender can be defined as "the performative aspect of being a 'man' or a 'woman,' the cultural role models one adopts to act as one or the other" and sex can be defined as "the physical aspects of being identified as "male" or "female." (C. Vander Stichele, T. C. Penner, "InterseXions," in *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla*, [London/New York: T & T Clark International, 1999], 4).

[98] G. Aichele, et al. "Feminist and Womanist Criticism," in *The Postmodern Bible: The Bible and Culture Collective* (ed. E. A. Castelli, S. D. Moore, G. A. Phillips and R. M. Schwartz. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 233.

[99] C. Vander Stichele, T. C. Penner, "Introducing a Gender-Critical Approach," in *Contextualizing Gender in Early Christian Discourse: Thinking Beyond Thecla*, (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 1999), 36.

3.1.2. Feminist Theological Studies

Feminist theology has paved the way for the study of women in the Bible, the New Testament and in other non-canonical Christian sources. The role of feminist theology has also opened the door for contemporary work in biblical studies including what has been termed gender studies. Gender studies has been a developing field in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades. Feminist theology undoubtedly brought the concept of gender into the world of biblical studies and can be understood as the foundation from which gender theology has developed.

Few would argue that the most influential and groundbreaking work in feminist theology is Schüssler Fiorenza's 1983 book entitled *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins.*[100] Schüssler Fiorenza highlights that women had a more prominent role in the development of early Christianity than androcentric texts suggest. Her work developed some of the earliest feminist theories from which endless questions regarding women in early Christianity were raised. Marjanen has noted that while this work does not have a lot to say about Mary Magdalene, it has become a base from which other studies on this fascinating character have developed.[101]

While many scholars have taken a feminist approach, it is important to examine works that use both feminist ideologies and literary analysis. For example, A. Fehribach has suggested that women in the Fourth Gospel[102] need to continually be examined from

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[100] E. Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her: A Feminist Theological Reconstruction of Christian Origins* (London: SCM Press, 1983).
[101] Marjanen. *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 6.
[102] As the author of the Fourth Gospel is unknown, Fehribach chooses to refer to the text as the Fourth Gospel. A. Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom: A Feminist Historical-Literary Analysis of The Female Characters in the Fourth Gospel* (Collegeville, Minnesota, 1998), 1.

both feminist and literary perspectives in order to fully appreciate the role of the female characters in the text.[103] Fehribach refers to her work as a "historical-literary approach"[104] as she seeks to understand the way first century readers read the Fourth Gospel.[105] For Fehribach, the use of hermeneutics of suspicion is a key element in interpreting the text and in breaking through "the implied author's patriarchal ideology."[106] In her work Fehribach identifies five components that are part of a first century reader's worldview: "1) the Hebrew Bible; 2) Hellenistic-Jewish writings; 3) popular Greco-Roman literature; 4) the concept of 'honour and shame'…; 5) the history of women in the Greco-Roman world."[107]

While Fehribach is using a literary approach, it is strongly centered on a historical understanding of the text and the characters in the Fourth Gospel. It possibly bases itself too much on the reader-response of an audience we do not really know. While the implied reader can be reconstructed from the text, it is reconstructed from an individual who is shaped and influenced by one's own world, making it impossible to fully understand a first century reader. Reconstructions are thus basically hypothetical. Perhaps the most grounded element of her work is her attempt to understand how female characters were portrayed in a way that went against the cultural norms of the time. Her analysis is based on a historical-literary approach to the roles and functions of female characters in the Fourth Gospel.[108]

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[103] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 6.
[104] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 7.
[105] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 7.
[106] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 6-9.
[107] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 9.
[108] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 20.

3.1.3. Gender Studies and Biblical Studies

Although it is still at its beginnings, gender studies are becoming an important element in biblical studies. M. R. D'Angelo and R. Shepard Kraemer noticed that scholars are not simply concerned with women and feminist theology, but also with the many connections that exist between male and female characters. Gender roles are socially constructed and "the meanings of these categories and the values attached to them are cultural products and not 'given' in any inherent biological nature."[109] When trying to understand both a historical figure and a character, one must uncover the way gender was conceived, understood and constructed in the given text(s).

I. Kitzberger has also brought the issue of gender to the world of biblical studies. After years of focusing on female characters, Kitzberger began to study the relationship between men and women in the Bible.[110] In her inquiry, she appealed to what is called post-feminist hermeneutics, where the voices of women are heard "without the silencing of men."[111] This post-feminist approach takes into account gender as a social construct and goes beyond traditional feminism.

Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism edited by Karen King is a must read for biblical scholars interested in gender studies. Even if the essays are solely concerned with "Gnostic" literature, myths and ideas, they are written from a gender studies perspective. This collective work deals with various questions such as the nature of language,[112] the

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[109] R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo, eds., "Introduction," in *Women and Christian Origins*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999), 3.

[110] Kitzberger, "Synoptic Women in John: Interfigural Readings," in *Transformative Encounters. Jesus and Women Reviewed* (BIS 43) (Leiden: E. J Brill, 2000), 79-80.

[111] Kitzberger, "Synoptic Women in John," fn. 11. 80.

[112] K. King, ed. "Editors Foreword," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (SAC) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 2000), XIII-XV.

gender of the author, gendered images, and "the social function of particular practices."[113]

3.2. Methodology

Diachronic methods focus on the elements of the text that are related to its place through time and are concerned with historical changes and the process in which the text developed. Synchronic methods are concerned with reading and interpreting a text in its final form. In my thesis, I will use a combination of both diachronic and synchronic methods of interpretation in order to have a well rounded understanding of the texts.[114] The diachronic methods that will be used in this work include the following:

3.2.1. Historical Criticism

Historical criticism or the historical-critical method was the focus of biblical exegesis from the middle of the nineteenth century but has recently come under questioning as scholars have shifted to a more text-centered, reader response approach.[115] Historical criticism seeks to answer questions related to the author(s), date, sources, traditions, theological motifs, and redaction of the text(s).[116] Historical criticism will be vital to all of the texts used in this study. Combined with characterization and other literary approaches historical criticism can be very significant for this study in order to achieve a comprehensive conclusion of the character of Mary Magdalene.

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[113] King, "Editors Foreword," XV.
[114] For the most part the conclusions that have been drawn from the diachronic methods within this research were derived from previous studies.
[115] J. Barton, ed., *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 9.
[116] S. E Gillingham, "Historical Approaches to the Bible," in *One Bible Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Study* (London: SPCK, 1998), 157.

3.2.1.1. Translation and Textual Criticism

The first step of this research will be a translation of the texts from their known original languages into English. The empty tomb narrative in John will be translated from the Greek. I will also provide the translation from Coptic to English for selected passages from the *Gos. Thom.*, the *Gos. Phil.* and the *Gos. Mary*.

Once the translation of the texts has been completed the next step is textual criticism. Textual criticism is an important component in this research as it attempts to reconstruct the most archaic and accurate version of the text(s). According to P. K McCarter,

> textual criticism is an enterprise that has as its objective the enhancement of the integrity of a text. The critic compares these copies and attempts to draw conclusions about the divergences between them. The goal is the recovery of an earlier, more authentic — and therefore superior — form of the text.[117]

As we do not have the original texts and there are thousands of variants amongst manuscripts, it is not possible to know the exact content of the original gospel. Textual criticism allows us to be as close as possible to the original text. Scholars, including, J. H. Hayes and C. R. Holladay suggest that the aim of textual criticism is:

> (a) to determine the process by which a text has been transmitted and has come to exist in variant forms: (b) to establish the original wording, when this is judged to be possible or feasible; and (c) to determine the best form and wording of the text that the modern reader should use.[118]

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[117] P. K. McCarter, "The Art and Science of Textual Criticism," in *Textual Criticism. Recovering the Text of the Bible* (GBS) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 11.

[118] J. H. Hayes and C. R Holladay, "Textual Criticism: The Quest for the Original Wording," in *Exegesis: A Beginners Handbook* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 38.

When coming across a variant reading there are many factors to consider, including, the length of the passage, the difficulty of its language, as well as the style and vocabulary of the author.

As textual criticism is essential to scriptural exegesis it is therefore a fundamental component to this study. Since variants can greatly alter the meaning of a text, I will need to use the method of textual criticism wherever possible in order to complement the literary methods that will also be employed in this study.

3.2.1.2. Tradition History

Tradition history is the "attempt to discover the way in which various historical traditions developed in the telling."[119] Tradition history seeks to understand the influence of traditions on the development of the text and assumes that the author "absorbed the thought-world of his day and as, well as borrowing from the forms in which those thoughts were expressed."[120] It is possible that the author relied on oral and or literary sources for the composition of his/her text. Tradition history is particularly significant for this research as the empty tomb tradition is found in all four of the canonical gospels, even if it is not possible to harmonize this tradition. According to D. R. Catchpole the differences in the empty tomb and resurrection narratives could illustrate a "tradition historical-sequence."[121] The differences in the cross and empty tomb narratives in the synoptic gospels and in John will be explored to try and understand the possible development of a tradition.

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[119] Barton, *Cambridge Companion to Biblical Interpretation,* xv.
[120] Gillingham, "Historical Approaches to the Bible," 164.
[121] D. R. Catchpole, "Tradition History," in *New Testament Interpretation: Essays on Principles and Methods* (ed. I. H. Marshall; Grand Rapids: W.B Eerdmans, 1977), 171.

3.2.1.3. Source and Redaction Criticism

Through the use of source criticism exegetes attempt to find and understand the potential sources that were used by the author(s) during the development of the text. According to P. A. Viviano, source criticism is that which:

> analyzes the biblical text in order to determine what sources were used in its formation. Once sources are isolated, the source critic considers issues of authorship, date, style, setting and intent of each source. The primary focus of source criticism is the determination of written sources.[122]

Source criticism is important when working with both the canonical and other Christian texts. Narrowing down the sources is not a simple task. John has many differences with the synoptics and there is no general consensus which source(s) were used. Despite this problem, scholars still endeavour to formulate a hypothesis concerning the potential sources of John and try to understand how these sources were used.

Although the New Testament, as we know it today, did not exist during the composition of the Christian materials at Nag Hammadi, it is likely that the canonical gospels would have been in circulation and would have been well known. As canonical gospels were in circulation, it is important to investigate the potential relationships between the canonical gospels and some of the Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi.[123]

Redaction criticism, from the German *Redaktionsgeschichte*, "is concerned with the composition of new material and the arrangements of redacted or freshly created material into new units and patterns, as well as with the redaction of existing material"[124] and allows one to understand the way an author might have redacted his/her sources. After isolating the redactional traits of an author, one must understand why the author

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[122] P. A. Viviano, "Source Criticism," in *To Each its Own Meaning. An Introduction to Biblical Criticisms and Their Application* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, 1993), 29-30.
[123] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary,* 55.
[124] N. Perrin, *What is Redaction Criticism?* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1969), 61.

chose to change his/her sources in order to appreciate the theology of his/her work. Although John has a great deal of differences with the synoptics, redaction criticism can still be applied if one assumes that John either used one or more of the synoptics as a source or at least had access to the same source(s) as the synoptics.

Although it is more difficult to know which sources were used by the authors of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi, it may be possible to find redactional traits of some of the canonical gospels, and in particular, John. C. Tuckett examines the redactional elements between the *Gos. Mary* and the canonical gospels. According to Tuckett, the author of the *Gos. Mary* may not have used the sources in the same way the authors of the synoptics used them.[125] Tuckett also suggests that the similar content between the *Gos. Mary* and the synoptics could be a result of the author of the *Gos. Mary* being familiar with the canonical gospels, which may have been in circulation.[126]

3.2.1.4. Comparative Analysis

Comparative analysis will be used in the comparison of the canonical Magdalene with that of extra-biblical traditions. This inquiry is also important when focusing on the role of female characters within ancient literature. The writers of both the *Gospel according to John* and the Nag Hammadi texts were influenced by their time and culture, and it is important to compare the canonical and some of the Christian materials at Nag Hammadi with other works from the same time period. This method does not view the biblical narratives as solely historical events, but instead suggests that elements of the

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[125] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary,* 73.
[126] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary,* 73.

narratives may have been influenced by ancient myths.[127] This method is used to compare the canonical gospels with the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi as well as to analyze and compare the latter with each other. Comparative analysis for the figure of the Magdalene is particularly interesting as it is possible to understand the elements of her character that were influenced by the early communities, mythology and the image of the feminine.

3.2.2. Narrative Criticism

Narrative criticism examines the entire text as one literary unit. As literary criticism seeks to explore the meaning of a text in its entirety "the doublets, repetitions, contradictions, gaps and inconsistencies in the translated text are included as part of the whole."[128] M. C. de Boer has recognized the relationship that needs to exist between historical criticism and narrative criticism in Johannine scholarship.[129] For de Boer it is important to use both literary criticism and historical criticism, especially when examining John. According to de Boer:

> reconstructive exercises associated with historical criticism (source criticism, redaction criticism and the history of Johannine Christianity) are not necessarily antithetical to the aim of interpreting the final, finished form of the Gospel, but may serve precisely that aim. Indeed, such efforts may actually also have a legitimate place within the logic of narrative criticism itself.[130]

The use of narrative criticism combined with elements from the historical-critical method will be particularly significant to this study. For the narrative critical aspect of this study, we will particularly focus on characterization and on plot analysis. Both elements will be

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[127] S. E. Gillingham, "Literary Approaches to the Bible," in *One Bible Many Voices: Different Approaches to Biblical Study* (London: SPCK, 1998), 146-147.
[128] Gillingham, "Literary Approaches to the Bible," 179.
[129] M. C. de Boer, "Narrative Criticism, Historical Criticism, and the Gospel of John," *JSNT* 47 (1992): 35-38.
[130] de Boer, "Narrative Criticism, Historical Criticism, and the Gospel of John," 48.

used in our examination of the Magdalene traditions in John and in the selected Christian texts at Nag Hammadi (the *Gos. Mary,* the *Gos. Phil.*, and the *Gos. Thom.*).

3.2.2.1. Characterization

Characterization is the one of the most important aspects of this research. It is defined as "the various means by which an author describes and develops the characters in a literary work."[131] For example, the use of characters by the gospel writers is described by P. Merenlahti as follows:

> Characters in the gospels are only in the process of becoming what they are. Rather than being static elements of design picked by a master author to fill a distinct literary or rhetorical purpose, they are constantly being reshaped by distinct ideological dynamics.[132]

The goal of characterization is to understand the techniques and ways in which an author has created and developed characters in a body of literature.[133] Characterization will allow me to uncover the role and function of various narrative personages by taking into account the inner workings of the text. It will also help me examine how the author portrayed his/her characters, whether they are the perfect reflection of historical individuals or not.[134]

This thesis endeavours to comprehend how Mary Magdalene is depicted in relation to other characters, her purpose in the narrative(s) and her development. In my

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[131] R. Murfin and S. M. Ray, "Character," *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston: Bedford Books, 1997), 43.

[132] P. Merenlahti, "Characters in the Making," in *Poetics for the Gospels: Rethinking Narrative Criticism* (SNTW) (London: T &T Clark, 2002), 77.

[133] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 105.

[134] Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel*, 105.

use of characterization, I will need to pay close attention to the role of the narrator and the position of the implied reader.[135]

3.2.2.2. Plot Analysis

According to K. Egan a "'plot' is seen as the arrangement of incidents, or as the relationship both among incidents and between each incident or the element and the whole" and can be defined as "a set of rules that determines and sequences events to cause a determinate affective response."[136] Thus, if the plot is the relationship between and among incidents, it must be clearly identified in order to recognize the role characters play in the development and the advancement of the plot. The gospels consist of micro-narratives placed together to create a larger macro-narrative. Each micro-narrative has its own meaning and also contributes to the overall significance of the macro-narrative. To appreciate the significance and value of Mary Magdalene's character in the *Gospel according to John* and our selected Christian texts at Nag Hammadi an analysis of a number of micro-narratives will be made. This will help us to better recognize the place of her character in the overall meaning of each macro-narrative.

Now that the methods have been outlined, we can begin to discover the role that the Magdalene plays in the selected gospels. As the *Gospel according to John* likely played a role in the positive development of the Magdalene, we will first begin with investigating the character of the Magdalene in John. In the next chapter the Magdalene's place in the micro and macro narratives will be examined.

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[135] An implied reader "is a 'model' or 'role.' Such a reader is active as well as passive; the text structures his or her responses, but he or she also produces meaning and has the task of 'consistency building.'" J. Cuddon, "Implied Reader," in *Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (4th ed.; rev. by C. E. Pearson; London: Penguin Books, 1999), 416.

[136] Cuddon, "Implied Reader," 470.

Chapter One:
The Magdalene in the *Gospel according to John*

The *Gospel according to John* is possibly the most significant text in understanding the character of Mary Magdalene, in both canonical and non-canonical traditions. It seems likely that the Magdalene in some of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi was inspired by the Johannine Magdalene. Mary Magdalene first appears in John in the cross scene (John 19.25) where she is standing near the cross with Jesus' mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the [wife] of Clopas. While this chapter focuses on the role Mary Magdalene has in the empty tomb narrative (John 20.1-18), it is still important to also briefly touch on the significance of Mary Magdalene at the cross (John 19.25).

1. *Mary at the Cross (John 19.25-37)*

Although the Magdalene is present at the foot of the cross the narrator does not offer a lot of information regarding her character in this pericope (John 19.25-37). The cross scene is a significant component of the passion narrative, derives from an early tradition and has many connections with the synoptics. The first involves the tradition of having female witnesses at the death and crucifixion of Jesus. There have been scholarly debates regarding the number of women present at the cross.[137] The women that are named in John do not correspond to those named in the synoptic gospels.[138] Some have concluded that there are four women at the cross: Jesus' mother, his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas and Mary Magdalene. The debate is whether or not the mother's sister

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[137] E. de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary: Beyond a Gnostic and a Biblical Mary Magdalene* (London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 158.
[138] Mark 15.40; Matt 27.55-56; Luke 23.9.

and Mary the wife of Clopas are different women or if they are in fact the same individual. According to E. A. de Boer the modern consensus is that there are in fact four women, suggesting that Jesus' mother's sister and Mary the wife of Clopas are indeed two different women.[139] The four women at the cross can also be compared to the four mentioned in Mark 15.41, and some have also linked them to the four soldiers in John 19.23.[140] A noteworthy distinction between John and the synoptics is the location of the women. In John they are close enough to the cross to hear the words of Jesus, whereas in Matthew 27.55-56, Mark 15.40-41, and Luke 23.49 the women stood at a distance.

Although the Magdalene does not play a major role at the cross, it is still significant that she is named at the scene, at a place where one finds the concluding portrayal of the Son of Man in John. As there is no specific ascension account in the Fourth gospel, it is on the cross that Jesus is glorified (John 12.31-33). This scene involves the lifting up and the glorification of the Son of Man who must ascend to where he came from (John 6.62). The Son of Man Christology is directly related to Jesus being the Son of God. The Son of God Christology is the main theological motif within this gospel. As the Son of God is illustrated as very temporal and earthly, the Son of Man allows the Son of God to fulfill his mission, to return to the Father to give an account, thus, in this micro-narrative, the narrator is helping the reader to further understand the heavenly identity of Jesus.

The relationship that Mary Magdalene, and the other women, had with Jesus before his death is an important aspect of this narrative and adds value to the overall characterization of the Magdalene. By having her at the cross she becomes a witness to

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[139] de Boer, "Mary Magdalene According to the Gospel of John," 158.
[140] de Boer, "Mary Magdalene According to the Gospel of John," 158.

the crucifixion and death of Jesus, as well as to his glorification. Although Mary Magdalene is a witness to the death of Jesus, it becomes apparent that Mary is filled with misunderstanding. Her actions over the missing body of the Lord in the empty tomb narrative illustrate that she was not aware that Jesus was in control over his death, nor was she aware that his death was done to fulfill the scriptures. While the Magdalene is a witness to Jesus' death, it appears that she does not comprehend the fulfillment of the Son of Man's mission until after Jesus reveals himself (John 20.14-18).

2. *The Empty Tomb (John 20. 1-18)*

The Magdalene plays more of a significant role in the empty tomb narrative (John 20. 1-18). Here is how she is depicted in chapter 20 of the Fourth Gospel:

20.1

Τῇ δὲ μιᾷ τῶν σαββάτων Μαρία[141] ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται πρωῒ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον[142] ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου.

But on the first [day] of the week early in the morning while it was still dark, Mary Magdalene came to the tomb and she saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb.

20.2

τρέχει οὖν καὶ ἔρχεται πρὸς Σίμωνα Πέτρον καὶ πρὸς τὸν ἄλλον μαθητὴν ὃν ἐφίλει ὁ Ἰησοῦς καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς· ἦραν τὸν κύριον ἐκ τοῦ μνημείου καὶ οὐκ οἴδαμεν ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

So she ran and came to Simon Peter and the other disciple, who Jesus loved, and she said to them "they have taken the Lord from the tomb and we do not know where they laid him."

20.3

Ἐξῆλθεν οὖν ὁ Πέτρος καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητὴς[143] καὶ ἤρχοντο εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον.

So Peter and the other disciple went toward the tomb.

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[141] Some manuscripts including, ℵ A L W, have Μαριάμ instead of Μαριά.

[142] Some manuscripts including, ℵ, add "ἀπό τῆς θύρας," (from the door) which would state that the stone had been removed from the door/entrance of the tomb. This seems to be in line with the synoptics, and could therefore reflect a later correction in an attempt to harmonize the stories.

[143] ℵ* only has καὶ ἔτρεχον leaving out ἤρχοντο εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον ἔτρεχον. Removing "went toward the tomb" seems to simplify the verse and is therefore less preferred.

20.4
ἔτρεχον δὲ οἱ δύο ὁμοῦ· καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητὴς[144] προέδραμεν τάχιον τοῦ Πέτρου καὶ ἦλθεν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον,

The two ran together and the other disciple outran Peter and came first to the tomb,

20.5
καὶ παρακύψας βλέπει κείμενα τὰ ὀθόνια, οὐ μέντοι εἰσῆλθεν.

and stooping down to look he saw the linen cloths lying [there], but he did not go in.

20.6
ἔρχεται οὖν καὶ Σίμων Πέτρος ἀκολουθῶν αὐτῷ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὰ ὀθόνια κείμενα,[145]

So Simon Peter came following him and he entered into the tomb, and he saw the linen cloths lying [there],

20.7
καὶ τὸ σουδάριον, ὃ ἦν ἐπὶ τῆς κεφαλῆς αὐτοῦ, οὐ μετὰ τῶν ὀθονίων κείμενον ἀλλὰ χωρὶς ἐντετυλιγμένον εἰς ἕνα τόπον.

and the (face) cloth, which was on his head, was not lying with the linen cloths but it was rolled in a place by itself.

20.8
τότε οὖν εἰσῆλθεν καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητὴς ὁ ἐλθὼν πρῶτος εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον καὶ εἶδεν καὶ ἐπίστευσεν·[146]

So then the other disciple, who had come to the tomb first, entered and he saw and believed;

20.9
οὐδέπω γὰρ ᾔδεισαν τὴν γραφὴν ὅτι δεῖ αὐτὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναστῆναι.

(for as yet they did not know the scripture, that he must rise up from the dead).

20.10
ἀπῆλθον οὖν πάλιν πρὸς αὐτοὺς οἱ μαθηταί.

Then the disciples went away again toward their [homes].

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[144] καὶ ὁ ἄλλος μαθητὴς is omitted by ℵ*. This omission is particularly interesting as it may suggest that Peter came to the tomb first.

[145] οὐ μέντοι εἰσῆλθεν. ἔρχεται οὖν καὶ Σίμων Πέτρος ἀκολουθῶν αὐτῷ καὶ εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, καὶ θεωρεῖ τὰ ὀθόνια κείμενα is ommited by ℵ*. This omission is also very interesting since it suggests that Peter did not go into the tomb first. It is significant that in John, Peter enters the tomb yet does not come to a resurrection faith; however, when the Beloved Disciple enters the tomb, he understands what has taken place and is the first to understand Jesus' resurrection. This contrast between Peter and the Beloved Disciple seems to fit in with the rest of John and it is likely that this omission was not part of the earliest tradition.

[146] πιστεύω in John is used to express a belief in Jesus; therefore, in this verse πιστεύω relates to the Beloved Disciple coming to resurrection faith.

20.11

Μαρία[147] δὲ εἱστήκει πρὸς τῷ μνημείῳ ἔξω κλαίουσα. ὡς οὖν ἔκλαιεν, παρέκυψεν εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον

But Mary stood outside the tomb weeping. As she wept she stooped down to look into the tomb;

20.12

καὶ θεωρεῖ δύο[148] ἀγγέλους ἐν λευκοῖς καθεζομένους, ἕνα πρὸς τῇ κεφαλῇ καὶ ἕνα πρὸς τοῖς ποσίν, ὅπου ἔκειτο τὸ σῶμα τοῦ Ἰησοῦ.

and she saw two angels in white sitting one at the head and one at the feet where the body of Jesus had laid.

20.13

καὶ λέγουσιν αὐτῇ ἐκεῖνοι· γύναι, τί κλαίεις;[149] λέγει αὐτοῖς ὅτι ἦραν τὸν κύριόν μου, καὶ οὐκ οἶδα ποῦ ἔθηκαν αὐτόν.

And they said to her "woman are you weeping?" She said to them, "because they have taken away my Lord and I do not know where they placed him."

20.14

ταῦτα εἰποῦσα ἐστράφη εἰς τὰ ὀπίσω καὶ θεωρεῖ τὸν Ἰησοῦν ἑστῶτα καὶ οὐκ ᾔδει ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν.

When she had said this she turned around and she saw Jesus standing [there] but she did not know that it was Jesus.

20.15

λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· γύναι, τί κλαίεις; τίνα ζητεῖς; ἐκείνη δοκοῦσα ὅτι ὁ κηπουρός ἐστιν λέγει αὐτῷ· κύριε, εἰ σὺ ἐβάστασας αὐτόν, εἰπέ μοι ποῦ ἔθηκας αὐτόν, κἀγὼ αὐτὸν ἀρῶ.

Jesus said to her "woman why are you weeping? Who are you seeking?" Supposing him for the gardener she said to him "sir if you removed him tell me where you placed him and I will take him away."

20.16

λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· Μαριάμ.[150] στραφεῖσα[151] ἐκείνη λέγει αὐτῷ Ἑβραϊστί· ραββουνι (ὃ λέγεται διδάσκαλε).[152]

He said to her "Mary!" Having turned she said to him in Hebrew "Rabbouni!" (that which means teacher)

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[147] Some manuscripts, including, 𝔓^66c ℵ Ψ 050 *f*^1, have Μαριάμ.

[148] ℵ* and e have omitted δύο. Only having one angel would be more comparable to Matthew 28.2-7 and Mark 16.5-7, where the women only encounter one angel/man at the tomb.

[149] τίνα ζητεῖς is inserted A* D 579.1424 *pc* sy^s

[150] ℵ B L N W 050. 1. 33. 565 read Μαριάμ however, A D Θ Ψ 0250 *f*^13 𝔐 read Μαριά.

[151] στραφεῖσα is an aorist passive participle. Literally, Mary is turned toward the entrance of the tomb by the sound of the voice calling her name.

[152] Some manuscripts, including ℵ^1 Θ Ψ (*f*^13) *pc* vg^mss sy ^(s).h add καὶ προσέδραμεν ἅψασθαι αὐτοῦ after the explicit commentary by the narrator. This translates as "and she ran to embrace him." It would explain Jesus' command to not touch him; however, it seems to be harmonizing the text and therefore implies that this is part of a later edition.

20.17

λέγει αὐτῇ Ἰησοῦς· μή μου ἅπτου,οὔπω γὰρ ἀναβέβηκα πρὸς τὸν πατέρα· πορεύου δὲ πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφούς μου καὶ εἰπὲ αὐτοῖς· ἀναβαίνω πρὸς τὸν πατέρα μου καὶ πατέρα ὑμῶν καὶ θεόν μου καὶ θεὸν ὑμῶν.

Jesus said to her "do not hold onto me for I have yet to ascend to the Father; but go to my brothers and say to them 'I am ascending to my Father and your Father and [to] my God and your God.'"

20.18

ἔρχεται Μαριὰμ[153] ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀγγέλλουσα τοῖς μαθηταῖς ὅτι ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον, καὶ ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῇ.[154]

Mary Magdalene went to the disciples reporting "I have seen the Lord" and these things he had spoken to her.

2.1. Source and Redaction

Before we begin examining Mary Magdalene as a character, we need to understand some elements of the text itself. When studying John, it is difficult to know which sources the evangelist used. The empty tomb narrative has some parallels with the synoptic gospels while also encompassing independent theological motifs. Some scholars are of the opinion that the Fourth Gospel contains clear redactional elements. According to Mary D'Angelo "the Gospel of *John* seems to have undergone a long development independent of *Mark, Matthew,* and *Luke,* but also to have had some contact either with these gospels or with their sources."[155]

Some have suggested that the empty tomb narrative in John is older than what is found in the synoptics.[156] Other scholars claim that the original narrative consisted of

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[153] 𝔓⁶⁶ ℵ L 1. 33. 565. *l* 844 *pc* have Μαριάμ while A D W Θ Ψ 0250 *f*¹³ 𝔐 pbo bo have Μαριά.

[154] Instead of ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῃ some manuscripts, lat sa ac² bo^mss, read "ταῦτα εἶπεν μοι" (these things he had spoken to me) while other manuscripts, D (c e) sy^s, read "ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῃ ἐμήνυσεν αὐτοῖς" (revealed to them these things he had spoken to her).

[155] M. R. D'Angelo, " 'I Have Seen the Lord': Mary Magdalene as Visionary, Early Christian Prophecy, and the Context of John 20.14-18," in *Mariam, the Magdalen, and the Mother* (ed. D. Good; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2005), 99.

[156] G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (Word Biblical Commentary; 2nd ed.; Vol. 36.) (eds. L. A. Losie and R. P. Martin; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1999), 368; P. Benoît, "Marie Madeleine et les disciples au

Mary and Peter at the tomb and that the evangelist redacted the tradition, and added the Beloved Disciple into the story.[157] It has also been suggested that the addition of the Beloved Disciple replaced a tradition that is similar to Luke 24.14.

According to G. Beasley-Murray the empty tomb narratives in the "the Fourth Gospel reflect earlier accounts in a pre-Johannine tradition, as well as the Evangelist's revision of them in accordance with his own knowledge and theological understanding."[158] As noted by Beasly-Murray, P. Benoît's source criticism has been very influential, acting as a starting point from where many scholars further developed and / or refined their hypotheses.[159] In his commentary Beasley-Murray refers to Benoît's conclusions, that there was a parallel tradition in vv. 1-2 with Luke 24.12, and that the Lukan reference is potentially based on "early pre-Johannine tradition."[160] Benoît also concludes that the original appearance narrative of Mary Magdalene at the tomb probably consisted of v. 11a followed by vv. 14b-18, with corresponding synoptic traditions (Matt 28.9-10), and vv. 11b-14a is based on a similar tradition with the synoptics, which speaks about women at the tomb who experience an angelic appearance.[161]

G. Hartmann presents another theory which states that the narrative originated from one story, but was adapted and redacted by the Fourth Evangelist. For Hartmann, the evangelist added the character of the Beloved Disciple into v. 8, which changed the verse from being about the misunderstanding of Mary Magdalene and Peter, to that of the

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Tombeau selon Joh 20, 1-18," in *Judentum, Urchristentum, Kirche. Festschrift für J. Jeremias.* (Berlin: Töpelmann, 1960), 141-49.
[157] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368.
[158] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 367.
[159] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368.
[160] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368; Benoît, "Marie Magdeleine et les disciples au Tombeau," 141-49.
[161] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368; Benoît, "Marie Magdeleine et les disciples au Tombeau," 141-49.

Beloved Disciple being the first to come to resurrection faith.[162] Hartmann also believes that vv. 11b-14a were added by a redactor, v. 17 belongs to the evangelist, while vv. 14b-16 belong to the original tradition.[163]

R. E. Brown proposes that there are three stories that make up the Johannine empty tomb narrative. In his hypothesis he states that vv. 1-2 and vv. 11-13 belong to the same tradition but are simply two different versions, which include the visit to the tomb by Mary Magdalene and the other women. The second story deals with the disciples, including Peter's visit to the empty tomb (vv. 3-10), and the third story includes the appearance to Mary Magdalene in vv. 14-18. For Brown, the angelophany of vv. 11-13 was added, but vv. 14-18 belong to evangelist.[164]

While there are many different conclusions regarding the possible sources and redactions in the text, one thing is certain, the text was finalized for a reason, and that reason clearly has theological value for its implied readers.

3. The Development of the Empty Tomb Tradition

Although we are not sure which sources were used in the composition of John, we know that the narrative developed out of a strong tradition surrounding the empty tomb. It is not surprising that the empty tomb tradition is completely different in John as compared to the synoptic gospels. The significance of the narrative is exemplified as the tradition is found in the four canonical gospels and in other non-canonical gospels, such as the *Gos.*

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[162] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368; G. Hartmann, "Die Vorlage der Osterberichte in Joh 20," *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 55 (1964): 197-209.

[163] Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368; Hartmann, "Die Vorlage der Osterberichte in Joh 20," 197-209.

[164] R. E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John, XIII-XXI* (The Anchor Bible 29A; New York: Doubleday, 1970), 998-1004; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 368-69.

Pet.,[165] the *Gospel of Nicodemus* (*Gos. Nic.*) / *Acts of Pilate* (*Acts. Pil.*)[166] and the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew the Apostle* (*Gos. Bart.*).[167]

The narrative in John begins with Mary Magdalene going to the tomb alone (John 20.1). In the synoptics, Mary is in the presence of other women (Matt 27.55-56; Mark 15.40-41; Luke 23.49). Although Mary is the only female mentioned in John 20.2, she tells Peter and the others that "we" could not find the body, suggesting that she was not alone. Another difference is that it is still dark outside (John 20.1), whereas Mark and Luke simply mention that it was early on the first day (Mark 16.2; Luke 24.1). The time that is given is the first day of the week. This differs from the reference concerning the third day in the *kerygma* of 1 Corinthians 15.3-4.

In the Johannine episode, as soon as Mary Magdalene sees the stone rolled away, she runs to tell the disciples (John 20.1-2). In Mark and Luke the stone has been removed before the women arrive, and in Matthew there is an earthquake with an angel descending from heaven removing the stone from the entrance of the tomb.[168] Matthew, Mark and Luke do not depict the women as running to tell Peter and the disciples right away; instead, they enter the tomb and meet a young man / two young men or an angel (Matthew

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[165] J. K. Elliott, "The Gospel of Peter," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 150-158. Cited March 16, 2011. Online: Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press. http://0-dx.doi.org.mercury.concordia.ca/10.1093/0198261829.001.0001. For further reading see: P. Foster, *The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary.* Vol. 4; Texts and Editions for New Testament Study (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

[166] J. K. Elliott, "The Gospel of Nicodemus" and "The Acts of Pilate," *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 164-185. Cited March 16, 2011. Online: Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press. http://0-dx.doi.org.mercury.concordia.ca/10.1093/0198261829.001.0001.

[167] J. K. Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993), 652-672. Cited March 16, 2011. Online: Oxford Scholarship Online. Oxford University Press. http://0-dx.doi.org.mercury.concordia.ca/10.1093/0198261829.001.0001.

[168] For more details regarding the removal of the stone see Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* 982.

28.1-8; Mark 16.1-7; Luke 24.1-10). Luke and John both depict Mary's report of the empty tomb to Peter and the rest of the disciples or to Peter and the Beloved Disciple (Luke 24.9-10; John 20.2).

In John, Peter and the Beloved Disciple run together towards the tomb, and the Beloved Disciple gets to the tomb first (John 20.3-4). The Beloved Disciple looks in first and finds the linens (John 20.5), then Peter looks in and finds the linens and the cloth from Jesus' head (John 20.6-7). The only similarity with the synoptics is the fact that Peter looks into the tomb as he does in Luke 24.12. In Luke's account, however, Peter is alone and then goes home amazed. The words of the man / men or angel given in the synoptic gospels (Matt 28.2-7; Mark, 16.5-7; Luke, 24.4-7) are absent from John. Instead, the reference to Jesus rising from the dead is noted by the narrator as he tells the reader that the disciples had not yet believed what had been previously said (John 20.9).

Although the earliest accounts of Jesus' apparitions do not mention the empty tomb, it is clear that the story did become an essential component of the resurrection narrative for the gospel writers. For feminist scholars like C. Osiek, it is possible to suggest that "the authority of Mary Magdalene's testimony could not be so easily repressed in the memory of the early church."[169] The fact that Mary Magdalene is found in the empty tomb narratives of all four canonical gospels suggests that the memory of her was not easily set aside.[170] To further this idea, Mary Magdalene is also represented in non-canonical gospels, which could have repressed her role if it had not such a prominent role in the formation and development of the tradition.

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[169] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 105-106.
[170] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 106.

According to E. Schüssler Fiorenza, Patristic Christianity did not encourage the role of female discipleship and central female characters, such as Mary Magdalene. Instead, the early Fathers of the Church pushed forth Peter and Paul as central characters.[171] Schüssler Fiorenza goes on to claim that there was a competition between the characters of Mary Magdalene and Peter.[172] As we will see in the subsequent chapters of this thesis, this rivalry is further expressed in other Christian texts, such as in *Gos. Mary* 17.16-19.5, *Gos. Thom*. 114, and *PistS* 36; 72.

François Bovon is of the opinion that since Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the resurrection narratives, it proves that the early community valued her role in the development of the church.[173] Bovon also suggests that the early community wanted to associate Mary Magdalene with the story of the empty tomb; therefore, directly linking her with Easter as an "Eastertime witness."[174] In their article, O'Collins and Kendall wonder why there is no mention of Mary Magdalene in the resurrection or appearance accounts by Paul, if she was always associated with Easter.[175] Bovon answers this question by saying that the names mentioned by Paul in 1 Cor 15.5-8 "represent a compromise between the Judaeo-Christianity of Jerusalem (presented by Peter and James) and that of the Hellenistic world (represented by Paul himself)."[176] The fact that Mary Magdalene is mentioned in the four canonical gospels, as well as in non-canonical

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[171] Schüssler Fiorenza*, In Memory of Her*, 304.

[172] Schüssler Fiorenza, *In Memory of Her*, 304.

[173] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 639; F. Bovon, "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," *NTS* 30 (1984): 50-62.

[174] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 639; F. Bovon, "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," 50-62.

[175] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 639; F. Bovon, "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," 50-62.

[176] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 639; F. Bovon, "Le privilège pascal de Marie-Madeleine," 50-62.

gospels, highlights a tradition that was not able to write out her existence and her prominent role in the narrative of the empty tomb, despite potential efforts to do so.

Although we know that the tradition contained its basic elements by the time Mark was written, there has been considerable debate over when the tradition developed. The empty tomb tradition should not be examined as part of the passion narrative, but this does not suggest that it cannot be understood as an early tradition. There are certain elements of the narrative that are part of the pre-Pauline *kerygma*.[177] The components of the narrative that mention the resurrection and appearances most certainly stem from a primitive tradition.[178]

When comparing the empty tomb stories which are found within the different gospels, it is not possible to harmonize the narrative. It is often hard to understand what aspects of the story belong to the tradition or are simply the redaction of the evangelist.[179] P. Perkins has pointed out that some scholars believe that the tradition of the empty tomb "developed out of the practice of early Christian worship at the site;"[180] however, Perkins suggests that while the tomb speaks of a particular location, if there was this cultic practice that took place at the tomb, particularly at Easter time, there most likely would have been more uniformity between the different sources.[181] The fact that there are so many variations of this short narrative could indicate the development of a tradition that is not necessarily based on a historical event.

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[177] J. A. Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV* (Anchor Bible 28A; Garden City: Doubleday, 1985), 1533.
[178] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV*, 1533.
[179] P. Perkins, *Resurrection: New Testament Witness and Contemporary Reflection* (New York: Doubleday, 1984), 93.
[180] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 93.
[181] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 93-94.

If the story and tradition of the empty tomb was not entirely composed by Mark, it would seem possible to say that the tradition pre-dates Mark. W. L. Craig suggests, as other scholars have also concluded, that the empty tomb story / tradition is most likely rooted in the pre-Marcan Passion story.[182] This idea is also presented by J. A. Engelbrecht, who states that Mark was not typically inclined to change pre-Marcan material.[183] Craig offers a series of interesting questions related to the empty tomb and the historicity of the story.[184] According to Craig, the Markan use of the "first day of the week," instead of referring to the third day, is a clue to the historicity / dating of the tradition. The concept of the third day is considered a very early tradition, as it is found in 1 Corinthians 15.4.

Another aspect which suggests that the empty tomb tradition is primitive is seen through a comparison between Luke 24.12 and John 20.2-10, where both texts deal with Peter's (along with the Beloved Disciple in John) visit to the tomb. In the two gospels, Peter seems to validate Mary's testimony. Peter's role in the narratives could suggest that his presence in the story is part of an early tradition. The fact that both Luke and John, two potentially independent sources, have similar components implies that it was at least an important element of the tradition.[185] This could also be the combination of the two traditions; Luke and John may have been aware of the two traditions and combined them in their narratives.

One argument that speaks of the empty tomb as being a fairly early tradition is given by Perkins. The fact that the tomb traditions of the canonical gospels do not go into

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[182] W. L. Craig, "Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," *NTS* 31 (1985): 51; The idea of a pre-Marcan tradition is also found in C. S. Mann, *Mark* (Anchor Bible 27; Garden City: Doubleday, 1986), 660.
[183] J. A. Engelbrecht, "The Empty Tomb (Lk 24.1-12) in Historical Perspective," *Neot* 23 (1989): 245.
[184] Craig, "Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," 51-52.
[185] Engelbrecht, "The Empty Tomb (Lk 24.1-12) in Historical Perspective," 243, 247.

extravagant details of miraculous activities and that they do not resemble Old Testament passages can mean that the story was part of a very early tradition.[186] It could be due to the fact that the narrative was so well known that it would have been harder to redact certain elements of the story. In later empty tomb traditions, there are more details and the actual resurrection of Jesus is narrated.[187]

In trying to understand the tradition of the empty tomb, C. Osiek presents a very interesting hypothesis. She points out that some scholars have come to believe that it is possible that the story of the empty tomb may have flourished and developed in women's circles or at least survived within women's groups.[188] Osiek also suggests that there could have been two early interpretations of the appearance and tomb stories: a private and a public narrative. The empty tomb tradition in which women are the central characters could imply that this tradition evolved in the "'private' version from the world of women,"[189] while the story of 1 Corinthians speaks of the "'public' version of appearances to the male disciples."[190] With the implication of 'private' and 'public' accounts, it is possible that the empty tomb tradition was as early as Paul's list of the appearances of Jesus. The more primitive version would have been known in private women's groups only.[191]

Osiek claims that the empty tomb is not as essential as the appearances and this could help explain the fact that it was not mentioned earlier than Mark. For Osiek, it is possible that the empty tomb narrative was an old tradition, but that Paul and *Acts* do not

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[186] Perkins, *Resurrection*, 94.
[187] See Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 669-670.
[188] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 103.
[189] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 103.
[190] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 103.
[191] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 103.

mention the story because of the prominent role of women. Her explanation is that the women would not have been seen as creditable witnesses to the resurrection, because of their gender.[192] The appearances of Jesus to the women in Matthew (Matthew 28.9-10) and John (John 20.11-18) are found within the empty tomb narrative, and without these accounts, the apparitions are made only to men. Even in Acts 1.2-3, when the account of Jesus as appearing to his apostles is recalled, there is no specific mention of the women.[193]

A. Fehribach has also suggested that one reason why the author of John has included two male characters, Peter and the Beloved Disciple, in the empty tomb narrative, was because "Jewish law demanded the witness of two men (*Deut* 19.15)."[194] There are particular elements within the empty tomb story that are thought to belong to a very early tradition.[195] The resurrection, which is mentioned in 1 Thess 1.10; 1 Cor 15.4; Rom 4.24-25; 10.8-9, and the appearance of Jesus in 1 Cor 15.5-7, are examples of early traditional elements found within the empty tomb story.[196] There is also the issue of a pre-gospel tradition about the exaltation of Jesus, without specifically referring to the resurrection (eg. Phil 2.8-11, Heb 9.12. 24-26).[197] These can also be viewed as being primitive traditional elements.

While the story of the empty tomb may be considered to have developed fairly early, there are elements which suggest that the tradition was formulated at a later date. The fact that the women were not mentioned as witnesses by Paul in 1 Corinthians can be

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[192] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 103.
[193] B. E. Reid, *Choosing the Better Part? Women in the Gospel of Luke* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 1996), 201.
[194] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of Bridegroom*, 151.
[195] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV*, 1533.
[196] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV*, 1533.
[197] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV*, 1534.

an indication of this.[198] If the tomb tradition developed later, this could suggest a need to further explain the resurrection as being part of a tradition that was separate from the appearances. M. M. W. Waterman claimed that some scholars, such as Martin Dibelius, stated that the physical aspect of the resurrection in the empty tomb indicates that this story would have been very important in the early community, even more so than the appearances.[199] If the actual act of resurrection was important for the early community, this would give reason for the development of the tomb tradition in the gospels.

The idea that the empty tomb narratives were developed after the appearance stories or at least were further expanded later on, suggests that there are two traditions. First is the appearance of Jesus with no mention of the empty tomb (1 Corinthians 15.3-8), and second is the empty tomb with no witnesses to the appearance of Jesus (Mark 16.1-8). It can also be that Matthew, Luke and John knew both traditions and were trying to harmonize the two, which is why there are elements of both traditions in their narratives.[200]

If Mark was unaware of the tradition of the women informing the disciples about what they had witnessed, then it could be that this element of the tradition developed later in an attempt to include the male disciples in the narrative. If the story was also understood as complementing the appearance traditions and perhaps even strengthening them, this could be used to explain the reason why the tradition found in Mark was given additional details by Luke and Matthew.

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[198] Osiek, "The Women at the Tomb," 105.

[199] M. M. W. Waterman, *The Empty Tomb Tradition of Mark. Text History and Theological Struggles* (Los Angeles: Agathos Press, 2006), 91.

[200] Waterman, *The Empty Tomb Tradition of Mark*, 91.

To understand the tradition that lies behind the empty tomb episode, it is important to look at what was said by Paul. In his article on the historicity of the empty tomb, W. L. Craig asks whether or not Paul knew of and / or believed in the tradition of the empty tomb.[201] According to Craig, some scholars have concluded that Paul must have believed that the tomb was empty, since he writes that Jesus died, was buried and was raised from the dead.[202] Even though Paul may favour such an idea, it does not mean that the apostle believed that there was an empty tomb or that he was aware of such a tradition – this could explain why 1 Corinthians does not mention the empty tomb (1 Corinthians 15.5-7). Craig has also stated that the empty tomb would have provided a sound argument against those who did not believe in the bodily resurrection.[203] If the tradition would have strengthened Paul's perspective, it seems; therefore, out of place to omit any reference to the vacuity of the tomb, especially if he was aware of the story.

There are elements within the empty tomb narrative which suggest that it may have developed fairly early and was simply not mentioned by Paul, either intentionally or because he himself was not aware of the tradition. There are also, however, elements which indicate that the empty tomb could have developed later than the appearance stories. Dating this tradition is important since it presents women as key players in a prominent biblical episode.

3.1. Angelophany and Christophany

Another common element of the empty tomb tradition found in the canonical gospels is the character(s) of a heavenly figure relating a message to the women. In each

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[201] Craig, "Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," 40.
[202] Craig, "Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," 40.
[203] Craig, "Historicity of the Empty Tomb of Jesus," 40.

of the gospels, the message received by the women is different. Not only do Matthew and John include an appearance by a heavenly being(s), they also include an appearance of Jesus.

According to J. A. Engelbrecht, the story of the empty tomb should be divided into two sections. In the first section, the women discover that the tomb is empty; in the second section, the angel tells them that Jesus has been raised.[204] The angelophany in each of the canonical gospels is presented differently. According to Engelbrecht, "the role of the angel(s) is therefore seen as a technical literary device used to express the idea that the meaning of something cannot be understood by man and therefore God has to reveal it through an angel."[205]

Mark is interesting because there is a young man, dressed in white — which implies that this young man is an angel — who informs the women of what has happened with the body and instructs them to tell the disciples to go ahead to Galilee where they will meet Jesus (Mark 16.5-7). The women's reaction to the angelophany in Mark is almost a response to the Messianic secret,[206] in the sense that they are struck with fear and amazement and do not tell anyone (Mark 16.8). In Luke, the reaction of the women is the opposite: they go out and tell the disciples without even being instructed to do so (Luke 24.9-10).

The Markan angelophany encourages the women to go tell Peter and the disciples that Jesus will be ahead of them in Galilee, emphasizing Galilee as the place where the Jesus movement began. Mark's empty tomb story most probably served as a basis for Luke's own version, and it is not surprising that the Lukan author chose to redact the

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[204] Engelbrecht, "The Empty Tomb (Lk 24.1-12) in Historical Perspective," 246.
[205] Engelbrecht, "The Empty Tomb (Lk 24.1-12) in Historical Perspective," 246.
[206] R. H. Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives* (New York: Collier-Macmillan, 1971), 98.

angelophany to fit in with his own theological agenda. Contrary to Mark (16.7) and Matthew (27.7, 10), Luke intentionally omits the instruction to the women concerning Jesus' appearance in Galilee. The women are only told to remember the words that Jesus spoke while in Galilee. While Luke does not mention any appearances as happening outside of Jerusalem,[207] the fact that he still mentions Galilee in his narrative illustrates that this was a feature of the tradition that could not be completely eliminated. The angelophany in Luke is clearly about remembering the words Jesus spoke so that the women, the male disciples and the implied reader can come to believe in what had happened.

Matthew's gospel is even more interesting as it has both an angelophany and christophany. Therein, the angel reminds the women of the words of Jesus and instructs them to go tell the rest that Jesus will be ahead of them in Galilee. When the women leave the tomb, Jesus appears to them and repeats what the angel had already told them about going to Galilee (Matt 28.5-10). This has very interesting historical and theological implications. Matthew wishes to convey the idea that the earliest followers of Jesus came out of Galilee. The emphasis placed on the origin of the Jesus movement, might even have served as a way to counter the negative views which circulated regarding this region. Matthew did not change the important function of Galilee, as Luke did, but he went a step further by validating Galilee through the words of Jesus.

John also has both an angelophany and christophany. The difference is that the angels in John do not directly reveal anything to Mary Magdalene or to the implied reader; instead, they seem to evoke suspense and highlight the fact that she is weeping over the body of Christ (John 20.11-13). The christophany is also different in John, and

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[207] Fitzmyer, *The Gospel According to Luke, X-XXIV*, 1545.

Jesus only appears to Mary Magdalene. While she is to tell the brothers and sisters what she has seen and heard, there is no mention of Galilee or of any other city (John 20.14-17).

The addition of the christophanies in Matthew and John suggest that there was a new connection between the appearances in Galilee and the empty tomb tradition, which likely were originally separate traditions.[208] The fact that there are two independent stories (Matthew and John) that talk about the christophany to Mary Magdalene and the women, implies that there was a fairly primitive tradition regarding appearances to women and appearances in Jerusalem.

Although the angelophanies and the christophanies may be focusing on the location from which the early mission / community is understood to have developed its foundational roots, it is still significant to note that the central characters are the women. This perhaps means that the original message was to be delivered to both men and women.

3.2. Women as Witnesses: Tradition History

Whether or not the role of the women can suggest that the tradition was formed either early or late, does not take away from the fact that in the final form of the narrative, the women play a major role that is central to the resurrection and appearances of Jesus. It is in this context that the roles of the women will be examined.

The role of the women at the tomb and within the narrative is primarily that of witnesses. O'Collins and Kendall, "define witness as someone who has firsthand knowledge of facts or events. A major witness is one whose testimony is of greatest

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[208] Fuller, *The Formation of the Resurrection Narratives*, 78.

importance and / or is the most complete."[209] They claim that the very fact that women, and in particular Mary Magdalene, were considered to be the first witnesses to the empty tomb would have been a very difficult and challenging idea to accept.[210]

In the synoptic gospels, the women are witnesses to the death, burial and empty tomb (Mk 15.40, 47; 16.1; Matt 27.55, 61; 28.1; Lk 23.49, 55; 24.10).[211] The fact that they are present resolves any doubts which would assume that they ignored the tomb where Jesus was buried.[212] This idea could suggest that during the development of the empty tomb tradition there were people who may have questioned if the right tomb was inspected. But having women – who were witnesses to his ministry, death, and burial – discover the empty tomb, would help to ease any tensions.

Perhaps it can be said that the women in Matthew have the most interesting and important role, as they are the first to see the risen Jesus. This is very interesting and suggests that Matthew did not have an issue with the women being witnesses to the tomb. The appearance to the women is very different from that in Mark (where there is no appearance story) and Luke (where Jesus appears only to the male disciples; 24.13-51), and implies that there was a definite change in the tradition.

After examining the narratives, it is possible to conclude that despite the differences amongst the gospels, this tradition was highly valued within the early community. Women are also central characters signifying that in the early stages of the tradition, it seemed appropriate to have the women as the witnesses to the empty tomb. The fact that Luke does not have any appearances to the women and includes Peter as an

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[209] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 632.
[210] O'Collins and Kendall, "Mary Magdalene as Major Witness," 631.
[211] Setzer, "Excellent Women," 261.
[212] Setzer, "Excellent Women," 261.

important figure in his narrative, could point to the idea that there was an early competition between the figures of Mary Magdalene and Peter. The role of the female characters in Luke indicates that this may have started to become an issue, at least within the Lukan community. Fiorenza's hypothesis of an early competition between Peter and Mary Magdalene is extremely interesting and could help further explain Peter's role in Luke's narrative.

4. Comparative Analysis

4.1. The Empty Tomb in Some Apocryphal Gospels

It is also important to understand the way in which the empty tomb narrative was depicted in non-canonical texts. A significant apocryphal writing which needs to be examined is the *Gos. Pet.*, a mid second century text.[213] It is important because of its early composition and content. The *Gos. Pet.* also has a resurrection and empty tomb narrative; however, the story has noticeable differences with that of the canonical gospels. The most significant of distinctions is the mention of witnesses at the resurrection and at the cross, as the cross actually has dialogue (*Gos. Pet.* 10.39.42).[214] These differences are important as the witnesses validate the actual act of resurrection, and giving dialogue to the cross emphasizes the power in the cross.

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[213] C. Maurer and W. Schneemelcher, "VII. The Gospel of Peter," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Volume One: Gospels and Related Writings* (rev. ed.; ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. McLachlan Wilson; Louisville: Westminster John KnoxPress/London: James Clark and Co. 1991), 221.
[214] H. J. Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," *Apocryphal Gospels. An Introduction* (trans. B. McNeil; London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 86.

Another interesting aspect of the *Gos. Pet.* is the story of the women at the tomb.[215] The scene begins with Mary Magdalene, who is mentioned as being a disciple of the Lord, going to the tomb early in the morning on the Lord's day (*Gos. Pet.* 12.50). She took some unnamed women friends with her to do what is expected when someone dies (*Gos. Pet.* 12.50-51). This is very similar to what one reads in Matthew 28.1; Mark 16.1 and Luke 24.1 (it is also comparable to John 20.1, although there is no mention of other women). They were going to the tomb not to anoint him but to weep (*Gos. Pet.* 12.52). This is interesting because in Mark 16.1 the women were going to the tomb to anoint Jesus and in and Luke 23.56 the women prepared spices and ointments; however, in John there is the recurring theme of weeping at the tomb (John 20.11, 13, 15). There is also a question regarding the removal of stone (*Gos. Pet.* 12.53), similar to that of Mark 16.3. If the stone is still there, the women will have to place what they brought as a memorial outside, weep and then leave (*Gos. Pet.* 12.54). In the *Gos. Pet.* 13.55, it is told that they find the tomb open, stoop down and see a "young man" clothed in a bright shining robe. The young man asks the women who they seek and then explains that the one who was crucified is not there because "he has risen and gone" (*Gos. Pet.* 13.56). He tells the women that they can look in and see that the body is not there (different from Luke 24.3 which states that the women noticed that the body was gone before they saw the men, but similar to Mathew 28.6 and Mark 16.6). The women in *Peter* are afraid and they flee (*Gos. Pet.* 13.57), which is analogous to Mark's conclusion (Mark 16.8).

Despite a few differences it seems that the *Gos. Pet.* recounts a very similar empty tomb tradition of that of Mark and Matthew. The *Gos. Pet.* highlights the elements in the

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[215] Translation of the Gospel of Peter by Christian Maurer based on the Akhmin Fragment, in Maurer and Schneemelcher, "VII. The Gospel of Peter," 223-226.

tradition that remained the same, including Mary Magdalene, and other women at the tomb and the appearance of a male figure who informs them that the body is gone. This clearly suggests that these components are of great value and importance.

Although some apocryphal texts may have been composed later than the canonical gospels, it is interesting to see how the tradition of the empty tomb developed over time. Another significant apocryphal gospel where this tradition is even further developed is the *Gospel according to Nicodemus* (*Acts of Pil.* or *Gos. Nic.*). This gospel contains the passion and resurrection narratives.[216] The text has been seemingly difficult to date as there are certain elements of the gospel that were composed in different periods of time.[217] According to J. K. Elliot there are sections of the work that date to the fifth and sixth centuries.[218] The text most probably went through various additions and revision perhaps even into the medieval period.[219]

The scene at the tomb begins in the *Gos. Nic.* 13.1-2.[220] In 13.1, the guards are struck with fear and act dead during an earthquake. They then see an angel appear who rolls away the stone (this answers the question about how the stone will be moved in Mark 16.3 and is compared to the earthquake and guards presented in Matthew 28.2-4). The angel speaks to the unnamed women who had been waiting at the tomb and tells them that he knows that they are seeking Jesus, but he has risen. The angel invites them to see

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[216] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 88-98. Also see F. Scheidweiler, "The Gospel of Nicodemus Acts of Pilate and Christ's Decent into Hell," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writing*s (Vol. 1. rev. ed.; ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. M. Wilson; Louisville/London: James Clark and Co. 1991), 501-536.

[217] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 89-91; J. K. Elliott, "The Gospel of Nicodemus,"164.

[218] Elliott, "The Gospel of Nicodemus," 165.

[219] For more details on the compositional and editorial history of the *Gos. Nic.*, see R. Gounelle and Z. Izydorczyk, *L'Évangile de Nicodème* (Apocryphes 9; Turnhout: Brepols, 1997), 86-101.

[220] Elliott, "The Acts of Pilate," 178-179; Scheidweiler, "The Gospel of Nicodemus Acts of Pilate and Christ's Decent into Hell," 514-515.

where the body had been laid (Mark 16.6; Matthew 28.6) and then orders them to go tell

the disciples that Jesus has gone ahead to Galilee (Mark 16.7; Matthew 28.7).

The *Gos. Bar.* is a Coptic text, which may have been referred to by Jerome in his

Commentary on Matthew and the *Gelasian Decree*; however, it is likely that the work

which Jerome mentions is not the same text we currently have.[221] *The Questions of*

Bartholomew and the Coptic *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew*

the Apostle are two works that have circulated under the name of Bartholomew.[222]

Scholars have noted that there is no literary relationship between these two works.[223] The

Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew the Apostle is of particular

interest because of the mention of the women at the grave of Jesus. It is believed that the

book "took on its present basic form in the fifth or sixth century."[224] Hans-Josef Klauck

mentions that the prominence of the character of Bartholomew originated in John 1.47, 50

where it was said that he will "see greater things."[225] This text attributed to Bartholomew

claims that on the first day of the week[226] the following women went to the tomb: Mary

Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, Salome, Mary and her sister Martha, Susanna

(some manuscripts read Joanna instead), Berenice, and Leah, and the woman who had

been forgiven of her sins.[227] The story then continues with Mary the mother of the Lord

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[221] Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 652.

[222] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 99; also see F. Scheidweiler and W. Schneemelcher, "The Gospel of Bartholomew," in *New Testament Apocrypha: Gospels and Related Writing*s (Vol. 1. rev. ed.; ed. W. Schneemelcher; trans. R. M. Wilson; Louisville/London: James Clark and Co. 1991), 537-538.

[223] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 99.

[224] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 99; Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 652.

[225] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 99.

[226] Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 669.

[227] Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 669; Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 102-103.

having a conversation with Philogenes, the gardener, (this tradition is similar to the one in John 20.15). The gardener explains the event that happened the night before, where a fiery chariot and angels came down with God the father who woke his Son from the dead. Once Philogenes is done recounting the story, Jesus appears and tells his mother to go share the message to the disciples.[228] It is clear that as time progressed, the empty tomb tradition took on a different form. In the *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, by Bartholomew the Apostle,* even if the basic elements of the text are similar to the tradition of the empty tomb, miraculous motifs such as the Chariot of God were later interpolated.

In these three non-canonical texts, there seems to be a common feature regarding female witness, the resurrection of Jesus (although not always described) and the presence of some form of a heavenly being(s). The differences can help to understand the social context of the writers and the message conveyed to their intended audience. The role of the women and the role of the angelophanies / christophanies – which in some cases are expressed through theophanies – reflect the theological concerns of each author. The fact that the gospels all recount such different elements leads to the conclusion that there were multiple empty tomb stories.

4.2. The Greek Love-Novel Genre

While there is no clear identifiable genre in the empty tomb narrative, Adeline Fehribach suggests that there is a parallel with Greek Love-Novels.[229] Fehribach compares the empty tomb narrative in John with two aspects of such love novels. The first is the "visitation to an empty tomb," and the second element is the "recognition of a

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[228] Klauck, "Gospels About Jesus' Death and Resurrection," 103; Elliott, "The Questions of Bartholomew and the Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew the Apostle," 669-670.

[229] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 146-47.

spouse thought to be lost."[230] Fehribach compares Mary Magdalene's experience at the empty tomb and her encounter with Jesus to the experiences of the spouses of the Greek Love-Novels.

Characteristically, the Greek Love-Novel involves a romantic relationship between two personages. While there is no romantic relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene in John, there are similarities, which according to Fehribach, "indicate that the implied author of the Fourth Gospel may have drawn on these conventional scenes from popular Greek literature."[231] Fehribach focuses on two types of Greek Love-Novels, which can be referred to as "sophisticated" and "pre-sophisticated" Love-Novels.[232] John is considered to belong to the "pre-sophisticated" form of writing. Fehribach compares the empty tomb narrative to the visitation scene in *An Ephesian Tale* and *Chaereas and Callirhoe*.[233] These Greek Love-Novels are clearly about the intimate relationship between a male and a female character and undoubtedly parallel the New Testament empty tomb narratives.

The similarities that are drawn between John and the Greek Love-Novels include Mary Magdalene as the spouse going to the tomb in search of the body of her loved one who is apparently dead. In *An Ephesian Tale*, Habrocomes searches for his wife Anthia's tomb. In *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Chaereas searches for Callirhoe, after her tomb is found disturbed and her body apparently removed.[234] This has striking similarities with Mary Magdalene's apparent mania with finding the body of Jesus.[235] Another correspondence

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[230] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 146.
[231] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 147.
[232] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 147.
[233] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 147-167.
[234] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 148-49.
[235] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 150.

can be seen with the Johannine empty tomb narrative in *An Ephesian Tale* when Habrocomes sets out to find Anthia's body, after being told that she was removed from the tomb.[236] This corresponds to Mary's search for the body of Jesus. For Habrocomes and Mary Magdalene,

> the tomb symbolizes both an apparent death and a real separation from the beloved. The need to see the tomb / body of the beloved and the willingness to face great obstacles in the quest for the tomb / body symbolizes a love that survives death.[237]

While Fehribach parallels Mary Magdalene with the female characters in Greek Love-Novels in relation to their grieving and their discovery of the empty tomb, Mary Magdalene can also be compared to the personages in the recognition scenes of the same novels. According to Aristotle, recognition is "the shift from ignorance to knowledge, the moment at which characters understand their predicament fully for the first time, the moment that the world becomes intelligible."[238] This is what happens to Mary in John 20.16. In *An Ephesian Tale,* Habrocomes' servants do not recognize Anthia, and in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Callirhoe does not recognize Chaereas until she hears his voice.[239] This is very similar to how Mary reacts, as she does not recognize Jesus until he calls her by name.

Another interesting feature in the Greek Love-Novels is the embrace that takes place after both lovers find each other. Such an action is contrasted with what is found in John, as Jesus specifically tells Mary to not hold on to him (John 20.17).

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[236] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 147-48.
[237] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 148.
[238] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 155.
[239] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 156-57.

Overall, there are striking similarities between the Greek Love-Novels and the empty tomb narrative in John. The connections suggest that there are particular elements that the fourth evangelist might have been familiar with during the composition of this narrative.

5. Narrative-Critical Analysis of the Empty Tomb Episode

Now that we have a sense of the development of John's empty tomb narrative from a historical-critical perspective, we can now look at the text from a literary point of view. This next section will focus on the final form of the text and seek to understand the characters and their roles in the micro and macro-narratives of John.

5.1. Narrator

Understanding the role of the narrator and his techniques is essential to narrative criticism. "Telling" is a device used by the narrator where "a mode of expression in which the narrator says rather than shows, and uses indirect style for spoken words."[240] In the narrative of the empty tomb, "telling" is used in a limited way, as "showing"[241] is the predominant narrative mode. The example of "telling" is found in John 20.1a, where the narrator gives the reader the setting which was "early on the first day of the week, while it was still dark" (John 20.1a). Examples of internal focalization in John 20.14b, 15b, 16b also belong to the narrative mode of "telling."

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[240] D. Marguerat and Y. Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories: An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (trans. J. Bowden; London: SCM Press, 1999), 178.

[241] "Showing" is defined as "a mode of presentation in which the narrator shows events rather than describing them, or gives a direct transcription of the spoken words." (Marguerat and Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 177).

Unlike "telling," "showing" is frequently used within this micro-narrative. In John 20.1b-8, "showing" is used to describe the scene and conversations between Mary Magdalene, Peter and the Beloved Disciple. The scene is interrupted with an explicit commentary by the narrator in John 20.9. There, the narrator tells the readers that the disciples did not yet understand the scripture. After this brief commentary by the narrator, the narrative switches back to the mode of "showing" from vv. 20.10-18 with exceptions of internal focalization in John 20.14b, 15b, 16b. "Showing" is a narrative mode which uses language that involves actions and goes beyond simple description, allowing the reader to become engaged in the narrative.

Explicit commentary from the narrator is also present in the narrative. In the empty tomb story there are three examples of explicit commentary. The first example is in John 20.9 which reads, "… for as yet they did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." The faith of the Beloved Disciple is in the words of the scriptures (John 20.9), and is related to what Jesus and the narrator had previously said (John 2.20-22). Despite the fact that the Beloved Disciple understood the scriptures, the others, including Mary Magdalene and Simon Peter, did not.

Another example of explicit commentary is found in John 20.14b, which states that Mary Magdalene "did not know that it was Jesus." This is also an example of internal focalization as the reader is made aware of the internal thoughts of the Magdalene. This commentary creates a sense of irony and contributes to the development of the character of Mary, as she progresses from a state of misunderstanding to that of complete awareness.

The last example of explicit commentary is in John 20.16b, when the narrator explains the meaning of the title "Rabbouni." The need to explain this expression could suggest that the narrator was aware that the implied readers did not know the Hebrew language. This passage is similar to John 1.38 where the disciples call Jesus "Rabbi." The narrator also inserts an explicit commentary to explain that this title is translated as "teacher" (John 1.38).

While there may only be a few examples of explicit commentary in the empty tomb narrative, there are more examples of implicit commentary. The first time an implicit commentary is used within this narrative is in John 20.2b. This verse is seen as a misunderstanding of what happened to the body of Jesus, as Mary Magdalene suggests that the body was stolen. Another misunderstanding is found in John 20.14-15. Therein, Mary Magdalene misunderstands who she is talking to, as she believes Jesus to be the gardener (John 20.15b).

Another example of implicit commentary, which is referred to as intratexuality, is found in John 20.9. This verse is perhaps one of the most significant passages within this narrative. This passage focuses on the Beloved Disciple as being the first to come to resurrection faith. He comes to faith after seeing the tomb empty for a second time (John 20.8). As the Beloved Disciple saw and believed, it can be presumed that the narrator was not including him in the previous use of the third person pronoun 'they' (John 20.9). These are the ones who "did not understand the scripture, that he must rise from the dead." This passage is considered to be an example of intratextuality, as it is related to John 2.20-21, where Jesus speaks about the building of the temple in three days. The fact that Jesus was raised after three days can also be compared to the resurrection of Lazarus

(John 11.28-44). The raising of Lazarus after four days is really a post-Easter narrative, as resurrection was not possible before the elevation of the Son of Man. In John 2.22, there is an example of a proleptic prediction where the narrator informs the reader that after Jesus' death, the disciples will remember the words of their master. It is the Beloved Disciple that fulfills this proleptic prediction (John 20.8).

"Irony" is another form of implicit commentary found in the empty tomb narrative. When Jesus asks Mary Magdalene who she is looking for (John 20.15a), she does not yet know that it is Jesus and responds with a plea that if he has taken him (the body of Jesus) to return him. There is more than misunderstanding and irony taking place in this verse. This is also another example of intratexuality, as Jesus' question, "whom are you looking for?" resonates with John 1.38, where Jesus asks the disciples "what are you looking for?" In both scenes, the characters respond by calling Jesus "teacher" (Rabbi; Rabbouni). In John 1.38, the scene is about the first disciples of Jesus; thus, there could be a connection with Mary Magdalene being viewed and understood as a disciple.

Another instance of intratexuality is related to the resurrection of Lazarus when Jesus asks "where have you laid him?" (John 11.34). Within the empty tomb narrative, it is Mary Magdalene who asks this question (John 20.15). This serves as a way to establish a connection between the death of Lazarus and the death of Jesus.

The use of linens also has some kind of intertextual value. According to R. Hakola, the linens are meant to help the Beloved Disciple come to resurrection belief. The careful placement of the linens proves that the body was not stolen.[242] The fact that the head wrapping was placed separately, alerts the implied reader to the resurrection of

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[242] R. Hakola, "A Character Resurrected: Lazarus in the Fourth Gospel and Afterwards," in *Characterization in the Gospels. Reconceiving Narrative Criticism* (JSNTSup 184) (eds. D. Rhoads and K. Syrenni; Sheffield; Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 233.

Lazarus, when he was still in the burial linens and needed to be removed from them (John 11.44). This is contrasted with Jesus who was able to free himself.[243] The resurrection of Lazarus foreshadows the resurrection of Jesus.

Implicit commentary is also seen through the symbolism of John 20.17a, where Jesus tells Mary to not touch him. One could well interpret this verse literally, as Jesus does not want Mary Magdalene to physically touch or cling to him. A more symbolic meaning, however, would be that Jesus does not want Mary Magdalene to continue her weeping, sorrow and grief over his death / missing body. She needs to let go and understand why his death took place and what happened to his body. Although Jesus says that he is ascending to the Father (John 20.17), his ascension has in fact already taken place, as the Son of Man returns to the Father on the cross (John 12.32-33). Rather, John 20.17 must be understood as an analepsis of the event which took place at the cross.

The weeping of Mary Magdalene can also be seen as an intratextual reference. In John 20.13a and 20.15a, the angels and Jesus both ask Mary why she is weeping. This question is significant because the implied reader learns that she is not weeping over Jesus' death, but over his missing body. A form of the word weep (κλαίω) is found in John 20.11a, 11b, 13, 15. The weeping of Mary Magdalene can be understood as fulfilling the proleptic prediction of John 16.20a. Therein, Jesus is speaking about the mourning and weeping that will be experienced by the disciples, when they will no longer be able to see him. It is interesting to note that John 16.20a speaks of the disciples, but that the one who experiences the mourning and weeping is Mary Magdalene. The prediction made to the disciples is fulfilled by the Magdalene, a female character. This leads one to conclude that

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[243] Hakola, "A Character Resurrected," 233.

she can be considered a disciple, as she is the one who will accomplish what the disciples are supposed to experience.

Another intratexual connection can be made between the narrative of Lazarus and the empty tomb story. At Lazarus' tomb Jesus is said to have shed tears (ἐδάκρυσεν) for Lazarus (John 11.35). This can be compared to Mary's weeping over the loss of Jesus (John 20.11a, 11b, 13, 15). The other element that can be compared between these two narratives is that at the empty tomb, Mary faces the crypt of Jesus and calls out his name, similar to the way Jesus called out to Lazarus.

An interesting implicit commentary within the empty tomb narrative speaks of the disciples returning to their homes (John 20.10). This is significant because of the proleptic prediction in John 16.32 which states that they will scatter to their homes. There is no other reference in the Johannine gospel to the disciples leaving and scattering to their homes. It might be possible then to conclude that the disciples' return to their homes (John 20.10) is based on the proleptic prediction of John 16.32.

There is another possible proleptic prediction in John 14.21, where Jesus says that he will show himself to those who love him. His appearance to Mary Magdalene highlights the love that she has for Jesus and his love for her.[244] The words of Jesus in 14.21 can be seen as a prolepsis fulfilled in the empty tomb narrative, as Jesus says that he "will reveal" himself to those that love him, and this is exactly what he does (John 20.14-17).

Implicit commentary can also be found in the relationship between Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene. Although Mary of Bethany and Mary Magdalene do not

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[244] R. Bauckham, *Gospel Women: Studies of the Named Women in the Gospels* (New York: B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 2002), 284.

appear together within the same narrative, it is still possible to compare these two female characters. The intentional parallel between these personages is known as intrafigurality, and has been examined by I. Kitzberger. The first element of comparison is that both are dealing with situations relating to death. Mary of Bethany first meets Jesus after the death of Lazarus, while Mary Magdalene meets Jesus after his death.[245] Both women were weeping when they meet Jesus (John 11.31; 20.15, 13), and in both stories, Jesus is referred to as "teacher" (John 11.28; 20.16).[246]

A last occurrence of implicit commentary can be understood as examples of both intratextuality and intertextuality. In John, Mary Magdalene does not recognize Jesus when he first appears to her (John 20.14-15). The fact that she finally recognizes him after he called her by name (John 20.16a) is significant, because it is similar to when a shepherd calls his sheep. This can be connected to John 10.3, 14. In this passage, the Good Shepherd calls his sheep by name.[247] The calling by name might also signify Mary Magdalene's role as a disciple of Jesus.[248] According to Fehribach, this means that the Magdalene was a representative of the entire faith community.[249] This passage can also be compared to Isaiah 43.1 where it says, "Fear, not for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine."[250] A final intratextual connection can be established with John 14.18-24. In this text, Jesus tells his followers that those who love him will see him again. Jesus refers to his followers as orphans. He promises to not leave them and that they will see him again.

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[245] I. Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala - Two Female Characters in the Johannine Passion Narrative: A Feminist, Narrative-Critical Reader Response," *NTS* 4 (1995): 584.

[246] Kitzberger, "Mary of Bethany and Mary of Magdala," 584

[247] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 144, 159.

[248] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, 144, 159.

[249] Fehribach, *The Women in the Life of the Bridegroom*, fn. 63.159*;* Brown, *The Gospel according to John,* 1009.

[250] Brown, *The Gospel according to John*, 1010.

5.2. Characters

After looking at some of the narrative techniques that were used in this narrative, an examination of the characters is now in order. The following diagram is an actantial scheme which illustrates the connection of the main characters within the narrative. These characters are referred to as "actants" and they help develop the transforming action of the narrative.[251] Mary Magdalene's relationships with other characters are central to her characterization, but also contribute to the progression of the plot. All characters – even those who play minor roles – are effective in developing the narrative, and in ensuring that the message of the macro-narrative is effectively communicated. In the empty tomb narrative, Mary Magdalene is the "subject" who has been sent by the death of Jesus to the tomb. Here, "death" functions as the "dispatcher." Upon realizing that the tomb is empty, the body of Jesus becomes the "object." The "opposer" is "Jesus' resurrection" since the body is no longer in the tomb, which leaves Mary confused. The "empty tomb" and "Jesus" are the "helpers." It is through the words of Jesus, while looking into the empty tomb, that Mary understands what has happened to the body. The "receivers" are the "Magdalene," the "disciples" and the "implied reader," as Mary reports to the disciples what she has seen. The "implied reader" is also a "receiver" because through this narrative, one understands the significance of the death of Jesus and also learns why his body is not in the tomb.

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[251] Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 62.

Actantial Scheme (20.1-18)

Opposer
The Resurrection of Jesus

Dispatcher
Death

Receiver
Mary Magdalene,
the disciples, the reader

Subject
Mary Magdalene

Object
the body of Jesus

Helper
Jesus, the empty tomb
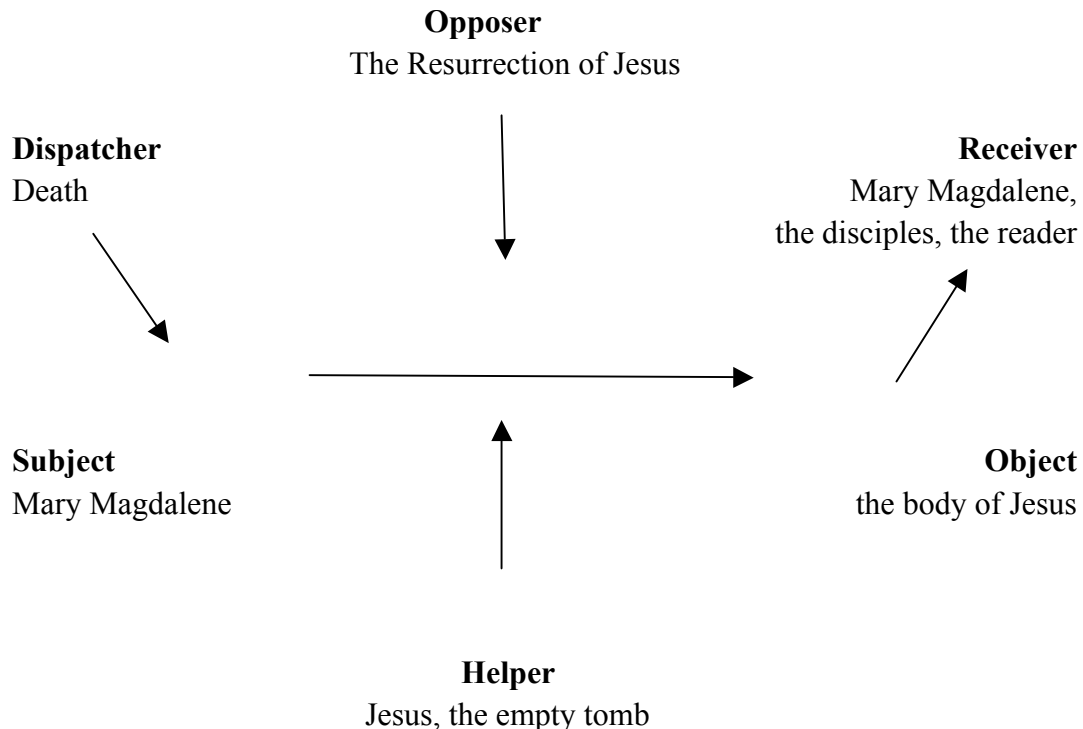
Throughout most of the narrative, the implied reader and the characters are aware of the actions taking place, this is expressed through focalization. Internal focalization is not as present in the empty tomb narrative as external focalization.[252] When it is present in the text, however, the comment expressed by the narrator is of great significance. In John 20.8b, the narrator knows the thoughts of the Beloved Disciple, as it is stated that when he entered the tomb "... he saw and *believed*." This is a central statement both within the micro and the macro-narratives. This passage gives the identity of the first character to come to resurrection faith. In John 20.14b, the omniscient narrator knows that Mary Magdalene was not aware that it was Jesus speaking to her. The narrator also knew the

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[252] Internal focalization is "a narrative mode by which the narrator associates the readers with the inner feelings of a character (narrative with a limited scope)," (Marguerat and Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 174).

inner thoughts of Mary Magdalene when she mistook Jesus to be the gardener (John 20.15b).

5.2.1. Mary Magdalene

The empty tomb narrative opens with Mary Magdalene discovering "that the stone had been removed from the tomb" (John 20.1a), which causes her to run to Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple (John 20.2a). Mary Magdalene then engages in a dialogue with both of them, indicating that the tomb is empty (John 20.2b). When Mary Magdalene says "they have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid him" (John 20.2), the implied reader is informed not only about the removed stone, but that the tomb is also empty. Suspense is created and the implied reader can be left to wonder: who did Mary Magdalene accuse of stealing / removing the body; who are "they"? One might also wonder where "they" would have brought the body.

In John 20.11, the text reads, "… but Mary stood weeping outside the tomb." The conjunction 'but' can suggest that Mary Magdalene was more concerned than the disciples, who simply returned to their homes. In contrast to what Peter and the Beloved Disciple saw when they looked into and entered the tomb (the linens), Mary Magdalene "saw two angels in white" (John 20.12). Not only does she see these angels, "one at the head and the other at the feet" (John 20.12), but Mary Magdalene also engages in a conversation with them (John 20.13). They ask her why she is weeping (John 20.13a), and she responds by saying "they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid him." It is interesting that here Mary Magdalene responds with "*I* do not know..." This contrasts what she says to Peter and the Beloved Disciple in John 20.2, "*we*

do not know where they laid him." The questions of the two angels help to create suspense, but they do not advance the plot.

After meeting the angels, Mary encounters Jesus. It is at this precise moment that she is enlightened regarding his death, resurrection and return to the Father. The return to the Father is expressed through an analepsis (John 20.17), as her encounter and conversation with the risen Lord recounts an event that has already taken place at the cross. Mary Magdalene is a protagonist within this micro-narrative. Her character is dynamic and changes as she progresses from being confused, to knowing the truth, to being commissioned.

5.3. Mary's Relationship with the Male Characters

5.3.1. Mary and Peter

The second character that is introduced in the empty tomb narrative is Simon Peter. Along with the Beloved Disciple, he receives the news from Mary Magdalene that Jesus' body was missing (John 20.2). Peter and the Beloved Disciple go to the tomb (John 20.3) and Peter is outrun by the Beloved Disciple (John 20.4). Peter then comes following "him" (assumed to be the Beloved Disciple) and goes into the tomb and sees the "linen wrappings lying there" (John 20.6). It is reported that Peter saw the wrapping that was on Jesus' head rolled up and lying on its own (John 20.7). Although his name is not specifically mentioned, it is assumed that Peter is to be included in the plural pronoun "they" (John 20.9), as being part of those who did not understand the scriptures. The others that would be categorized in the collective "they" could be Mary Magdalene and perhaps the other disciples. Again in John 20.10, Peter is not specifically named, but it is

implied that he and the Beloved Disciple are the "disciples" who returned home. Peter is also with the disciples when Mary Magdalene reports to them in John 20.18.

Within this micro-narrative, Peter is a "flat" agent.[253] It is possible to understand his characterization as being a "flat" agent because his contributions in the progression of the plot are limited and he does not possess more than one character trait throughout the micro narrative. Despite his limited role in this narrative, it is important to remember that he has a recurring and significant role in the macro-narrative, especially in relation to the superior position of the Beloved Disciple.

Although Mary Magdalene and Peter do not interact very much in the narrative, Peter's role is important with respect to the characterization of the Magdalene. It is paradoxical that, on the one hand, Peter stands for the patriarchal elements in the text, while on the other hand, he serves to elevate the status of the Magdalene. Peter enters the tomb and leaves, without understanding what has taken place. Like him, Mary does not come to resurrection faith after seeing the empty tomb, but she remains at the tomb where she encounters the resurrected Jesus. This is really what sets her apart from Peter.

5.3.2. Mary and the Beloved Disciple

Along with Mary Magdalene, the Beloved Disciple plays a very significant role within this narrative. With Simon Peter, he receives the news from Mary Magdalene that Jesus' body is missing (John 20.2). At the tomb he "bent down to look and saw the linen wrappings lying there," but he did not enter the tomb (John 20.5). In John 20.8, he went in the tomb and "he saw and believed." It is assumed that he is to be counted as one of the

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[253] An agent is "a simple character, playing a minor (or single) role in the development of the plot." (Marguerat and Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 70).

"disciples" who returned home (John 20.10). He is also a part of the group who hears the report and testimony of Mary Magdalene (John 20.18).

Within the micro-narrative, the Beloved Disciple is a "round" agent since his character offers significant information regarding resurrection faith. His character is "round" as he changes from seeing the linens and not noticing anything, to seeing the empty tomb and being the first to believe in the resurrection. In the macro-narrative, the Beloved Disciple is clearly a protagonist, and this scene is fundamental in understanding his character.

The relationship between Mary Magdalene and the Beloved Disciple seems to modify itself throughout the narrative. As the Beloved Disciple comes to resurrection faith, Mary does not, leaving the Beloved Disciple in a superior position over Mary.

Although not as apparent in English, there is a progression regarding the meaning of the verbs of perception in the narrative. The first time the verb "saw" is introduced within the narrative (John 20.1), Mary Magdalene "sees" that the stone had been removed at the tomb. The verb "to see" (βλέπω)[254] is in reference to the physical act of seeing, which can be compared to the verb that is used in John 20.5 when the Beloved Disciple bends to look into the tomb and he simply sees (βλέπει) the linens. The first two times the verb is used, there is no meaning beyond the physical act of seeing. The following occurrences the verb, however, has a deeper meaning. The verb "to see" (θεωρέω)[255] found in John 20.6, 12 and 20.14 is slightly different, as it can imply contemplation; thus, when Simon Peter "sees" the linens, and when Mary Magdalene "sees" the angels and

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[254] W. Bauer, "βλέπω," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature* (2nd ed.; trans. by W. F. Arndt and F. W Gingrich. Rev. and Augmented by F. W. Gingrich and F. W. Danker; Chicago/London: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 143.

[255] Bauer, "θεωρέω," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 360.

Jesus (whom she mistook for the gardener), the implied reader has the sense that these characters are contemplating what they are seeing. The Greek verb that is used in regards to what the Beloved Disciple "saw" (ὁράω / εἶδεν)[256] in John 20.8b, implies more than just seeing, it also means perceiving and understanding.

The progression of the verb "saw" is important to this narrative, because it indicates what is actually taking place. The Beloved Disciple does not simply see an empty tomb, but instead he sees and understands. The Beloved Disciple is juxtaposed with Mary Magdalene and Peter. Mary Magdalene and Peter both see into the tomb, yet it is the Beloved Disciple who "sees and believes" (John 10.8). Verbs of "perception" are used six times in this micro-narrative, suggesting that sight, seeing, and understanding what one sees is significant to the narrative, and in the development of the characters. Later in the narrative, when Mary Magdalene tells the disciples that she has seen (ἑώρακα) the Lord (John 20.18), it is not simply her stating that she physically saw Jesus, but it also expresses perception and understanding.

Other than Mary's report to Peter and the Beloved Disciple at the beginning of the narrative, the two characters do not engage in any other dialogue; however, the role of the Beloved Disciple is central to the characterization of the Magdalene. Once the Beloved Disciple becomes aware of what happened, he does not tell Mary. As a result, Mary remains at the tomb where she partakes in a dialogue with two angels, and most importantly, where she engages in a dialogue with the risen Jesus. The silence of the Beloved Disciple is therefore central to Mary's discussion with the resurrected Jesus.

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[256] Bauer, "ὁράω," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 577-578; Bauer, "εἶδεν," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 220-221.

5.3.3. Mary and Jesus

Perhaps the most significant relationship in this narrative is that of Jesus and Mary Magdalene. Jesus is undoubtedly a "round" character and is the protagonist in both the micro and macro-narratives. His point of view is superior to both the characters and to the implied reader.

At the beginning of the episode, Mary Magdalene and Jesus are disconnected. At the time when Jesus enters the scene, Mary does not recognize him and is once again filled with misunderstanding. When Mary realizes that she is seeing and speaking with Jesus, she also knows that she is experiencing the risen Lord. Jesus also gives Mary a command to go forth and tell the disciples what she experienced, and Mary will precisely do just that. The relationship allows her to understand Jesus' resurrection and to fulfill the role of a devoted disciple. Through the relationship of Mary and Jesus, the implied reader is in better position to be able to appreciate the narrator's message regarding the resurrection.

5.3.4. Mary and Other Characters

In John 20.2b and 20.13b, Mary Magdalene refers to those who have taken the body of the Lord simply as "they." Although it is not clear who "they" are, it is possible that Mary Magdalene is referring to the soldiers (John 19.25, 32-34), but it is not explicitly stated. It is also possible that "they" could refer to the general opposers of Jesus or the Jews. In John 20.13b, there is a reference made to the same "they" as in 20.2. Even if this collective character does not actually exist (as the reader finds out at the end of the narrative, upon the realization that the body has not been stolen), "they" create suspense and enrich the story for first times readers.

Another collective character present in the empty tomb narrative can be referred to as "we" (John 20.2b). In Mary Magdalene's dialogue with Simon Peter and the Beloved Disciple, she says to them, "*we* do not know where they have laid him." This is significant because there is no mention of anyone else being present with Mary when she discovers the removed stone at the tomb (John 20.1). One can only assume that she was in the presence of other women, possibly those who were with her near the cross (John 19.25b). This "we" does not have a major role in the narrative. It is clear that the main character of this group of individuals was Mary Magdalene. In the case of John 20.2b, this could have been the narrator's way of including the implied reader in the narrative, as Mary is speaking on behalf of the reader who also does not know where the Lord has gone.

The disciples as a collective group are also mentioned in John 20.9. It is not explicitly clear, however, whether or not this is a reference to all of the disciples. In John 20.10, the word "disciples" is used but it is most likely only referring to Peter and the Beloved Disciple, as they were returning to their homes. The disciples as a collective character receive the report of Mary Magdalene at the end of the micro-narrative (John 20.18). The disciples are also referred to as Jesus' brothers by their master (John 20.17b). The brothers act as the collective identity for the disciples including the Beloved Disciple. In John 20.18, when they hear the testimony of Mary Magdalene, they have an equal point of view. The disciples (excluding the Beloved Disciple) are "flat" characters in the empty tomb narrative. Mary's relationship with the disciples is centered on her responsibility to convey the message of the risen Lord; thus, the disciples play a role in fulfilling Mary's mission.

5.4. Evaluative point of view

The evaluative point of view of the narrator is significant in understanding the message of the narrative.[257] One of the first aspects to take into consideration is that the text was most likely written from a male point of view. This shapes the way female characters are created, developed and understood. It is possible that the narrator wants to ensure that Mary Magdalene, a female character, is not the first to make the connection regarding the missing body of Jesus. The narrator has male characters (Peter and the Beloved Disciple) confirm that the tomb is empty. By stating that the Beloved Disciple believed before Mary Magdalene, this could have been done to guarantee that a male character came to believe first. Although the text may need male characters to confirm the empty tomb, the presence of the Beloved Disciple is more than that. His role is significant throughout John. Placing him in the empty tomb narrative shows how this character is significant for the implied author. Although the Beloved Disciple is very important and is more than a male character, it can be argued that part of the evaluative point of view is to have the empty tomb confirmed by male characters, and to also have the reader connect and identify with Mary Magdalene. One might feel lost, sad and confused not only with the fact that Jesus has been crucified and died, but even more so to learn that the body is missing. One is relieved, however, when they learn that his body is not missing, nor has it been stolen. By the end of the narrative, one can begin to understand the true identity of Jesus. The reader might also connect and empathize with the Beloved Disciple, as he is the first to come to resurrection faith.

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[257] The evaluative point of view is "a judgment by the narrator, affecting his presentation of characters or things, as a function of his value system and world-view." (Marguerat and Bourguin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 70).

5.5. Plot

The characterization of these personages is essential to the plot of the narrative. A close examination of the plot will also contribute to a better appreciation of the role of all the characters in the story.

Narrative time is a component of the plot. The event of the empty tomb narrative takes place "on the first [day] of the week early in the morning while it was still dark" (John 20.1). The rest of the account seems to happen on the same day. The fact that Mary Magdalene and the disciples ran (John 20.2, 4) implies that these events all happened close in time to each other. After the empty tomb narrative, the reader finds out that these events actually did take place on the same day before evening (John 20.19).

The setting and the places in which the event happens are also important. The narrative opens just outside the tomb (John 20.1), which is in a garden (John 19.41-42). The scene then shifts to an unknown place where Mary Magdalene meets Peter and the Beloved Disciple (John 20.2). After Mary Magdalene's discussion with Peter and the Beloved Disciple, the scene returns to the entrance of the tomb (John 20.4-5). The disciples briefly enter the tomb (John 20.6-8) and then return to their homes (John 20.10). Once the disciples leave, the scene returns to the entrance of the tomb (John 20.11-17). After Mary Magdalene is commissioned by Jesus, the narrative moves to an unknown place where Mary Magdalene again meets the disciples to tell them what she has experienced (John 20.18).

Another feature of the plot is the development of a sense of urgency. This is expressed in several instances such as in John 20.2a with the words "so she ran," in John 20.3 where one reads, "Peter and the other disciple set out," and finally in John 20.4 with

the following statement, "the two were running together, but the other disciple outran Peter." The language used could evoke a sense of urgency in the reader who can be curious to find out what has happened to Jesus, the protagonist of the macro-narrative.

Along with this sense of urgency, there is also suspense. Suspense is created within the opening words of the narrative when Mary Magdalene wonders where the body of Jesus is, and suggests that it may have been stolen (John 20.2, 13b, 15b). Within the first half of the narrative, the reader will be waiting in a state of suspense, as one does not know where the body is or what has happened to it. The reader might ask, "Who took the body (John 20.2, 13b)?" "Why were the linens still there?" And if the body was in fact stolen, "Why would they leave his clothes behind (John 20.6-7)?" Another verse that can create a feeling of suspense is John 20.8b. One might ask, "What exactly did the Beloved Disciple see?"

Along with identifying the different features that make up the plot, recognizing the form of the plot is one of the most important elements in understanding the characters within the narrative. If the reader does not perceive what is happening, it will be difficult to appreciate the role of the characters. The following diagram is known as the quinary scheme. This scheme maps out the plot from the initial situation, through the narrative tension and to the final situation.

Quinary Scheme (20.1-18)

Transforming action
Mary Magdalene understands that it is Jesus
(John 20.16)

Complication
Mary Magdalene does not understand where the body of Jesus has gone. She thinks that the body of Jesus has been taken. When Mary Magdalene first sees Jesus she does not recognize him.
(John 20.2b-15)

Denouement/Resolution
Mary Magdalene understands that Jesus is alive and he is ascending to the Father (John 20.17)

Initial Situation
Mary Magdalene finds that the stone had been removed from the tomb and runs to Peter and the Beloved Disciple (John 20.1-2a)

Final Situation
Mary Magdalene informs the disciples that she has seen Jesus and informs them that he is ascending to the father (John 20.18)

The plot of the empty tomb is very interesting as it clearly follows the flow of a typical plot in which there is an opening scene (Mary Magdalene sees the empty tomb), a complication/problem (Mary Magdalene does not know where the body of Jesus is), a problem is solved (when Jesus appears to Mary Magdalene and she recognizes him), a resolution (Mary Magdalene understanding what has happened) and a final/closing scene (Mary Magdalene tells the disciples what happened).

6. Implied Reader

6.1. Mary Magdalene a Disciple?

After Jesus appears to Mary, he will show himself three other times to his disciples (John 20.19-23, 26-29; 21.1-13). In John 21.14, the narrator notes that the last apparition was the third time Jesus appeared to his disciples, thus, we have to conclude that the narrator does not consider Mary to be a disciple; otherwise the narrator would have stated that Jesus had appeared to his disciples four times. If Mary's encounter with the risen Lord does not count as an appearance to a disciple, is she to be considered a disciple? The role of Mary Magdalene as a disciple in John is very difficult to categorize. She is not mentioned in the same light as the women in Luke 8.2, and there is no specific reference to her as being a follower of Jesus throughout the Fourth Gospel. Despite the fact that she does not appear until the cross scene, her role at the cross scene is particularly important. The fact that the implied author puts her at Golgotha means that she must be a significant character, for there are only a limited number of individuals at the cross.

It is also of significance that Mary Magdalene refers to Jesus as "Rabbouni." This can suggest that she is a disciple of his. In John, Jesus makes reference to the idea that the disciples are his own[258] and he calls Mary by her name, which can be viewed as an act of calling one's own. Another component which may imply that Mary is a disciple is that Jesus commissions her to go forth and tell the others what she has seen and heard.

In relation to Mary Magdalene and discipleship, it is also worth noting that in John 1.38, Jesus asks the disciples what they are looking for. In the empty tomb narrative, Jesus

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[258] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 177.

asks Mary Magdalene who she is looking for (John 20.15). In both passages the disciples and Mary Magdalene refer to Jesus as a teacher. What is interesting about these texts is that Jesus asks the question at the beginning of his ministry, and at the beginning of the ministry of the apostles, both references serve as an inclusion. The link that can be drawn between these two occurrences is that the question asked by Jesus is directed to those who will be the first to follow him. Although the narrator does not explicitly refer to Mary Magdalene as a disciple, her role, her actions and her interaction with Jesus suggest that the Magdalene had a close and significant relationship with both Jesus and the male disciples.

6.2. Character appreciation

Character appreciation and the way one might feel towards a particular personage may be different with each reader. It is still possible, however, to understand the way in which the narrative was developed in order to evoke certain emotions. Within the empty tomb tradition, the reader feels empathy with Mary Magdalene, as one will most certainly also question where the body is, and might experience sadness regarding the missing body. A first time reader might also identify with the confusion Mary Magdalene is experiencing, as there is no indication of where the body is to be found.

While the reader feels empathy and identifies with Mary Magdalene in the beginning of the narrative, this might change to sympathy towards the Magdalene in John 20.14-15. In those two verses of chapter 20, Mary Magdalene is speaking with Jesus, but does not recognize him. It is possible that the reader might also still feel empathy as they might question whether or not they would have recognized Jesus. The reader might also

feel empathy and identify with Mary Magdalene after she recognizes Jesus, hears his words, and is commissioned to tell others what she has experienced (John 20.16b-18).

6.3. The role of Mary Magdalene in the Macro-Narrative

A close reading of the abovementioned passages has contributed to a better understanding of the character of Mary Magdalene and the significance of her role within the macro-narrative. Although Mary Magdalene is not frequently present in John, she plays a vital part in advancing the theological program of the entire Fourth Gospel. The reader comes to know the identity of Jesus by reading the gospel from beginning to end. The character of the Magdalene is directly and significantly related to the conclusion of the macro-narrative as her character helps in allowing the reader to become aware that Jesus is the Son of God.

In order to fully understand who the Son of God is in John, one must also understand the Son of Man. The Son of Man represents Jesus as coming from above. But the Son of Man must also ascend back to the Father (John 6.62). In John, the death of Jesus on the cross is the moment of his glorification (John 12.31-34). Mary Magdalene witnesses the ascension and the glorification of Jesus, even if she does not know or understand the events that take place. As we have seen, Jesus tells Mary Magdalene that he is "ascending" to the Father (John 20.17). Mary sees the elevation of Jesus on the cross, where he is lifted up, although she does not fully understand this as being the ascension. Mary not only witnesses the glorification of Jesus on the cross, but Jesus also directly tells her that he is returning to the Father. As previously mentioned, John 20.17 is an analepsis since Jesus had in fact already returned to the Father, through his elevation

on the cross (John 12.31-33). This flashback is significant as it allows the reader to fully understand the role of the Son of Man.

What is interesting is that Jesus is not speaking about his return to the Father in the future; he tells Mary that he is ascending in the present. In both scenes where Mary Magdalene is found, she is a witness to the fulfillment of what was spoken about the Son of Man (John 12.31-36). Mary witnesses the lifting up and glorification of Jesus on the cross (John 19.30) and Jesus tells her that he is ascending to the Father (John 20.17). The Son of Man must return from where he came (John 6.62).

There must have been a close relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene. This is illustrated by the fact that she was near the cross with the other women (John 19.25b). The reader knows that Mary Magdalene, the other women and the Beloved Disciple were witnesses to the crucifixion of Jesus. It is also significant that these women and the Beloved Disciple are mentioned while the rest of the disciples are not. If Mary Magdalene already knew Jesus and had a close relationship with him, it is possible that the opposers of Jesus would have known that she was one of his followers. This being said, she was still present at the cross, perhaps indicating that the character of the Magdalene was strong and courageous.

The pronoun "we" (John 20.2b) is very significant in understanding the role of Mary Magdalene in the Fourth Gospel. If the "we" indicates the presence of other women at the discovery of the empty tomb, the fact that Mary Magdalene is the only one named, and that the story developed around her encounter with the risen Jesus, highlights the significance of her character. If we look at the synoptic gospels, identifying the pronoun "we" would be easily answered, as Mary Magdalene is not alone at the empty tomb

(Matthew 18.1-10; Mark 16.1-8; Luke 24.1-12). The fact that Mary Magdalene is not alone in the synoptics strengthens her character in John, where she is singled out and becomes the only woman to witness the risen Jesus.

The conclusion which can be drawn from this analysis is that the character of the Magdalene is fundamental to the macro-narrative. While the Magdalene is a female character, it is possible to place her alongside the male characters. Mary Magdalene most likely would have been with the male disciples, as she fulfills the proleptic predictions made to the disciples, considers Jesus to be her teacher, and is called by name and commissioned by him. Mary Magdalene is a dynamic character that changes and develops in the narrative, encouraging the reader to identify with her. The fact that Mary Magdalene, a female character, witnesses Jesus' death, discovers the empty tomb, brings the Beloved Disciple to resurrection faith, is the first to see the risen Jesus, and is the first to spread the message, leads one to conclude that John would not be the same without her. Through the development of characters such as Mary Magdalene, the reader is able to understand Jesus as both the Son of Man and Son of God.

Mary Magdalene is central to the theological message of John as she is positively depicted. This positive depiction may have been the source behind some of the Christian traditions at Nag Hammadi which also depict Mary Magdalene as a prominent figure. In the next chapter, which focuses on the *Gospel according to Thomas*, we will understand the valuable role that Mary Magdalene has in aiding the reader to understand the place women occupy in the community as well as their part in salvation.

Chapter Two:
The Magdalene in the *Gospel according to Thomas*

The *Gospel according to Thomas* is considered by some to be a "Gnostic" gospel, while others understand it to be a mystical gospel containing "Gnostic" elements.[259] M. Meyer stated that the *Gos. Thom.* "may most appropriately be considered a sayings gospel with an incipient Gnostic perspective."[260] But the question of whether the *Gos. Thom.* is "Gnostic" or not, depends on one's definition of "Gnosticism."[261] Despite recent debates regarding the categories under which the *Gos. Thom.* should be placed, this gospel offers an interesting non-canonical Christian portrayal of Mary Magdalene. The Thomasine gospel consists of 114 sayings that are connected through catchwords and themes.[262] The text was most probably in circulation in Egypt in the second century.[263]

In the *Gos. Thom.*, Mary Magdalene is among the six disciples who are named, and one of the five who speak (Simon Peter, *logia* 13, 114; Matthew, *logion* 13; Thomas,

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[259] Scholars who suggest that the *Gos. Thom.* is "Gnostic" include R. M. Grant and D. N. Freeman, *The Secret Sayings of Jesus* (London: Collins, 1960); R. McL. Wilson, *Studies in the Gospel of Thomas* (trans, E. J. Sharpe; London, Collins, 1961); H. Koester, trans. T. O. Lambdin, "The Gospel of Thomas (11, 2)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume.* (3rd ed.; ed. J. M. Robinson; New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 124-126; Scholars who claim that the *Gos. Thom.* is not Gnostic include, K. Grobel, "How Gnostic is the Gospel of Thomas?" in *NTS* 8 (1961-62): 367-73; S. L. Davies, *The Gospel of Thomas and Christian Wisdom* (New York: The Seabury Press, 1983); B. Layton, *The Gnostic Scriptures* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1987); A. Marjanen, "The Mother of Jesus or the Magdalene? The Identity of Mary in the so-Called Gnostic Christian Texts," in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* (ed. F. Stanley Jones; SBL: Brill, 2003), fn. 3. 32; A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas: With a Commentary and New English Translation of the Complete Gospel* (London/New York: T & T International, 2006).
[260] M. Meyer. "The Gospel of Thomas with the Greek Gospel of Thomas," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures* (The International Edition; ed. M. Meyer; New York: HarperOne, 2007), 133.
[261] For a recent definition of the problems concerning the definition of "Gnosticism" see M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument For Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996); B. A. Pearson, "What is Gnosticism" *Ancient Gnosticism*: *Traditions and Literature* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 7-24; K. King, *What is Gnosticism* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); A. Marjanen, *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (Publications of the Finnish Exegetical School 87; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005).
[262] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 32.
[263] Koester, "The Gospel of Thomas (11, 2)," 124.

logion 13; Salome, *logion* 61).[264] There are two sayings in which we find the character

Mary, *logia* 21 and 114. In neither saying is the figure of Mary actually referred to as the

Magdalene, leaving it difficult to say for certain if the character named ⲘⲀⲢⲒϨⲀⲘ

(Mariam/Mary) is in fact Mary Magdalene. Despite a certain level of ambiguity regarding

the identity of this figure, it seems clear that the ⲘⲀⲢⲒϨⲀⲘ of *logion* 21 is the same as

that of *logion* 114.[265] A. Marjanen notes that ⲘⲀⲢⲒϨⲀⲘ is most likely Mary Magdalene

because of the spelling of the name. According to Marjanen, ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ is the spelling used

in reference to the mother of Jesus in Coptic texts, whereas ⲘⲀⲢⲒ(Ϩ)ⲀⲘ(ⲘⲎ) denotes

Mary Magdalene.[266] Shoemaker argues against Marjanen's conclusions and states that the

spelling of the name offers no clue to the identity of the character. Shoemaker asserts that

in the Greek New Testament, the name of Jesus' mother is often referred to as Μαριάμ,

while Mary Magdalene is read Μαριά (the opposite of Marjanen's conclusion).[267]

Shoemaker argues that there does not seem to be any consistency with the spelling of the

names in the Greek and Coptic New Testament, the Coptic Apocrypha and in some

Coptic Homilies.[268] The fact that the spelling seems to be interchangeable makes it

difficult for one to distinguish between Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Jesus

solely based on the morphology of the name.[269]

Perhaps Mary's question on discipleship in *logion* 21 is a way of identifying this

character with the Magdalene. In other texts, it is not unusual to see Mary Magdalene

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[264] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 130.
[265] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 39.
[266] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 63-64.
[267] S. J. Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity?: Naming the Gnostic Mary?" in *Which Mary? The Marys of Early Christian Tradition* (SBLSymS 19) (ed. F. Stanley Jones; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2002), 12.
[268] Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity?" 16.
[269] See Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity?" 5-30, for a more in depth survey regarding the difficulties there is with discerning which Mary the texts are referring to.

depicted as a follower and as having a close relationship with the disciples.[270] Another indication that the figure in *logia* 21 and 114 is Mary Magdalene is based on the conflict between Mary and Peter, a situation which is also seen in other texts, most prominently in the *Gos. Mary*.[271] Identifying the character of Mary in the *Gos. Thom.* appears to be reliant on her role in other texts.

1. *Logion* 21a

Mary Magdalene's first appearance in the *Gos. Thom.* is in the first half of *logion* 21. The saying portrays Mary Magdalene questioning Jesus about discipleship.[272]

ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙ ⲛⲓⲥ ϫⲉ ⲉⲛⲉⲕⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲉⲓⲛⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲓⲙ

Mariam said to Jesus, "To whom do your (sg) disciples resemble?"

The *logion* could suggest that she is not considered a disciple and is therefore seeking to understand the role of discipleship. Mary's question may also illustrate how she along with Salome (*Gos. Thom.* 61) are in fact female disciples seeking to have a greater understanding, allowing them to reach a new "stage of discipleship."[273] Although it appears that the women are deficient in knowledge, Jesus' answer is also addressed to all the other disciples, suggesting they too lacked complete understanding.[274] An important part of understanding *logion* 21 lies in its intratextual relation with *logion* 61:

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[270] Mark 15:40-41; Matthew 27:55; Luke 8.2; 24:1-12; *Gos. Phil.* 59. 6-11; *Gos. Mary* 9.5-10, 16; 17.7-19.5; *PistS* (here Mary acts as a spokesperson on behalf of the disciples, as well as explains to them the things that they are not able to perceive).
[271] The conflict between Mary and Peter is also found in the *Gos. Mary* (Mary 16.16-17.22) and in the *PistS* (*PistS* 36; 72).
[272] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 41.
[273] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 42.
[274] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 42.

ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲥⲁⲗⲱⲙⲏ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲕ ⲛⲓⲙ ⲡⲣⲱⲙⲉ ϩⲱⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲟⲩⲁ
ⲁⲕⲧⲉⲗⲟ ⲉⲝⲙ̄ ⲡⲁⲃⲗⲟϭ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲕ ⲟⲩⲱⲛ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄
ⲧⲁⲧⲣⲁⲡⲉⲍⲁ ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲥ ϫⲉ ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ
ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲉⲧ ϣⲏϣ   ⲁⲩ† ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲛ̄ ⲛⲁ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ <...> ⲁⲛⲟⲕ
ⲧⲉⲕ ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ <...> ⲉⲧⲃⲉ ⲡⲁⲉⲓ †ϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ
ⲉϥϣⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉϥϣⲏϥ ϥⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲟⲩⲟⲉⲓⲛ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲇⲉ
ⲉϥϣⲁⲛϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲉϥⲡⲏϣ ϥⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩϩ ⲛ̄ⲕⲁⲕⲉ

Salome said, "Who are you, man that you have come up on my couch and eaten from my table?" Jesus said to her, "I am he who exits from he who is equal. I was given some of the things of my father." <...>[275] I am your disciple <...>[276] therefore I say this: When he becomes destroyed, he shall be filled with light, but when he becomes divided, he shall be filled with darkness.

It is possible that the dialogue between Jesus and Mary (*logion* 21) and that of Jesus and Salome (*logion* 61) implies that the author/compiler wanted to illustrate the relationship that the master had with his female followers/disciples. Some scholars, including J. Buckley, have pointed out that the *Gos. Thom.* 21 has parallels with *logion* 61, as they both discuss female discipleship.[277] In these *logia*, Mary and Salome are both characterized as in need of more profound instruction on discipleship. Marjanen points out that both Salome and Mary are to be viewed as disciples, but not as ones devoid of understanding, rather, simply as ones searching deeper knowledge.[278] It is interesting to notice that Mary is found alongside the male disciples. Can this mean that she is not inferior but rather equal to them?

When examining this particular *logion*, the modern reader must keep in mind that Mary is the character who asks the question. According to U. K. Plisch, if the text is referring to the figure of Mary Magdalene, she must be included as belonging to the

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[275] Although it is not certain the text probably had "Salome said"

[276] Although it is not certain the text probably had "Jesus said [to her]

[277] J. J. Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114 in *The Gnostic Gospel of Thomas*," *NovT XXVII* 3 (1985), 246.

[278] A. Marjanen, "Women Disciples in the *Gospel of Thomas*," *Thomas at the Crossroads. Essays on the Gospel of Thomas* (SNTW) (ed. R. Uro; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), 92.

group of disciples, and her question concerns herself as well as the other disciples. Plisch backs up this statement by pointing to *logion* 114 where Peter is hostile to Mary and her inclusion in the group of disciples. Classifying Mary as a disciple is difficult; however, we do know that Mary and other women are also noted as being followers of Jesus in the synoptic gospels (Mark 15.40-41; Matt 27.55-56; Luke 8.2-3), and also by the role that Mary occupies as a disciple in the *Dial. Sav.* 53,60-69 and the *Gos. Phil.* 55b.[279] It is also possible to include Mary among the disciples based on her role as a leader among the disciples in the *Gos. Mary.* It appears that in order to conclude that Mary Magdalene is a disciple, her role in other texts needs to be taken into consideration. It is challenging to consider Mary Magdalene a disciple based solely on a literary analysis of the *Gos. Thom.*

The idea that Mary is acting on behalf of the male disciples can be compared to her role in *PistS*. Therein, Mary is praised for her superior insight and understanding, and she is presented as one who asks questions on behalf of the disciples (*PistS* 201.8-25; 296.7-12; 311.17-24). The similarities between the portrayals of Mary in the *Gos. Thom.* and *PistS*, implies that the author/compiler chose her to be a spokesperson for the group, even if such a choice places her in competition with Peter.

In *logion* 21, Jesus does not respond to Mary by name, nor is there any indication of her entering the scene. It appears that Mary had been present amongst the disciples the entire time. Overall, her role is significant because she is named, enters into a dialogue with Jesus, and can be understood as belonging to the group of disciples. Mary is introduced by the narrator, directly asks Jesus a question, and is answered. Her role in *logion* 21 is significant as she "helps to concentrate the reader's attention on Jesus' words

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[279] W. K. Plisch, *The Gospel of Thomas: Original Text with Commentary* (trans. G. S. Robinson; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2008), 81.

and to prepare him for leaving this world."[280] Her character also guides the reader in understanding the roles and responsibilities of discipleship; therefore, Mary is an important component in the interpretation of the saying. Placing Mary in this saying illustrates the value that she had within the circle of disciples and her presence demonstrates that she was clearly significant to the author/compiler of the gospel.

2. *Logion* 114

Mary is also present in *logion* 114. This passage is significant in the development of Mary's character and for understanding gender and salvation in the *Gos. Thom.*:

ΠΕΧΕ ϹΙΜⲰΝ ΠΕΤΡΟϹ ΝΑΥ ΧΕ ΜΑⲢΕ ΜΑⲢΙϨΑΜ ΕΙ ΕΒΟⲖ Ⲛ̄ϨΗⲦⲚ̄ ΧΕ
Ⲛ̄ϹϨΙΟΜΕ Ⲙ̄ΠϢΑ ΑΝ Ⲙ̄ΠⲰΝϨ ΠΕΧΕ ῙϹ̄ ΧΕ ΕΙϹϨΗΗⲦΕ ΑΝΟΚ ϮΝΑϹⲰΚ
Ⲙ̄ΜΟϹ[281] ΧΕΚΑΑϹ ΕΕΙΝΑΑϹ Ⲛ̄ϨΟΟΥⲦ ϢΙΝΑ ΕϹΝΑϢⲰΠΕ ϨⲰⲰϹ
Ⲛ̄ΟΥΠⲚ̄Ⲁ̄ ΕϤΟΝϨ ΕϤΕΙΝΕ Ⲙ̄ΜⲰⲦⲚ̄ Ⲛ̄ϨΟΟΥⲦ ΧΕ ϹϨΙΜΕ ΝΙΜ ΕϹΝΑΑϹ
Ⲛ̄ϨΟΟΥⲦ ϹΝΑΒⲰΚ ΕϨΟΥΝ ΕΤⲘⲚ̄Ⲧ̄ΕΡΟ ΝⲘ̄ΠΗΥΕ

Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us for women [are] not worthy of life. Jesus said, "Behold, I myself (I) will lead her so that I shall make her male, so she will also become a living spirit resembling you (pl) males, for every woman who will make her(self) male (she) will enter the kingdom of the heavens.

In this *logion*, Peter suggests that Mary, and in fact all women, are not worthy of life. The response of Jesus, however, illustrates the equality in salvation. This saying is significant in understanding the position of female believers, and in understanding the valued role that the Magdalene occupies in some of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi.

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[280] P. Porkorný, *A Commentary on the Gospel of Thomas: From Interpretation to Interpretation* (London: T & T Clark Jewish and Christian Texts Series, 2009), 65.

[281] ϮΝΑϹⲰΚ Ⲙ̄ΜΟϹ "I will draw her." This is a difficult translation. According April DeConick the phrase is most likely the result of a translation error, which in Syriac can mean 'to lead' and 'to draw.' A. DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas,* 297.

2.1. Redaction and Source Criticism

Source and redaction criticism is not an easy task when it comes to the *Gos. Thom*. There is still the unresolved issue concerning the dependence or independence of the *Gos. Thom.* on the synoptic tradition. We must admit it is difficult to know exactly which sources were used during the compilation of this gospel. Clearly, there are similarities between the Thomasine tradition with the synoptic gospels, but in some cases, the reader encounters sayings which might be more primitive or derive from an independent source.[282] Despite the uncertainty surrounding the sources, there has been a fair amount of research done on *logion* 114 and its place in the gospel. Many scholars have concluded that the final version of the *Gos. Thom.* was most likely completed by the middle of the second century.[283] It appears that *logion* 114 may have been added at a later date, possibly in the latter half of the second century.[284]

One reason for suggesting a subsequent addition of *logion* 114 to the collection is that it has been understood to be in direct contradiction to *logion* 22.[285] *Logion* 114 is also the only saying that begins with Peter (a male disciple) directly speaking to the other disciples. Another feature that might suggest that *logion* 114 was added at a later date is the fact that *logion* 113 forms an inclusion with *logion* 3 and could possibly work as the conclusion of the gospel.[286] Others are of the opinion that the saying was added at a later date because the concept of "making oneself male" is related to apocryphal texts of the

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[282] H. Koester, "The Gospel of Thomas (11, 2)," 125.

[283] Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 267; Koester, "The Gospel of Thomas (11, 2)," 125; H. J. Klauck, "Gospels from Nag Hammadi," *Apocryphal Gospels. An Introduction* (trans. B. McNeil; London/New York: T & T Clark International, 2003), 108.

[284] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 38.

[285] This point will be discussed further in the chapter.

[286] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 51.

third century, and also with the Valentinian and Naassene texts nearing the end of second century.[287]

What is of great interest in the *Gos. Thom.* 114 is the possible attempt to exclude Mary Magdalene from the circle of discipleship. It appears that in both *logia* 21 and 61 two female characters, Mary Magdalene and Salome, occupy a place amongst the disciples. If *logion* 114 was a subsequent addition it may suggest that this was done at a time when the leadership role of women was questioned.[288] The language that is used in *logion* 114 appears to express a negative attitude toward women, but as we will see in a subsequent section of this chapter, that is not necessarily the case.

2.2. Comparative analysis

When comparing the content of *logion* 114 to other sources, especially the idea of "making oneself male," it becomes evident that a denial of the feminine was a concept that was circling in the early Christian communities. The notion of the female "being made / becoming male" by abandoning feminine duties, including marriage and child rearing, is found in apocryphal writings. The *Acts of Paul and Thecla* (*Acts Paul*)*,* the *Acts of Thomas* (*Acts Thom.*), the *Acts of Philip* (*Acts Phil.*) and the *Acts of Andrew* (*Acts Andr.*).[289] There are also instances where women acted as men. In the *Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas,* Perpetua is depicted as a visionary who defeats her enemies in the body of a male (*The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas,* 10).[290]

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[287] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 52.
[288] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 52.
[289] *Acts of Paul and Thecla, 25, 40; Acts Thom.,*114*; Acts Phil.*, 44; *Acts Andr.*, 9. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 48; E. Castelli, " 'I Will Make Mary Male': Pieties of the Body and Gender Transformation of Christian Women in Late Antiquity," in *Body Guards: The Cultural Politics of Gender Ambiguity* (eds. J. Epstein and K. Straub; London/New York: Routledge, 1991), 44.
[290] Castelli, " 'I Will Make Mary Male,' " 37; 40-41.

The concept of "making oneself male" can also be found in other ancient mythological narratives as well. In the ancient Egyptian Isis myths, the goddess Isis was able to transform herself into a man. Buckley and Rengstorf suggest that the Isis mythology was influential in the development of the *Gos. Thom.* In this myth, it is said that the goddess gives birth to a son, Horus, after her husband Osiris dies; thus, suggesting that she acted as both male and female during the act of conception.[291] The myth has similar elements with the Jesus tradition, as the rising of Osiris from the dead is paralleled with Jesus' own resurrection, and the image of Isis is paralleled with Mary Magdalene. A main difference between the Magdalene and Isis is that the goddess is the one who makes herself male. In the *Gos. Thom.*, both Jesus and Mary are involved in the transformation from the feminine to the masculine. Jesus guides and instructs Mary to become male. Another difference between Mary Magdalene and Isis, as pointed out by Buckley, is the fact that Isis is a mythical goddess while Mary Magdalene is not at all depicted in such terms.[292]

Along with the above mentioned comparisons it is also worth noting the concept of "female becoming male." The feminine acting as both male and female during the act of conception is recorded in the myth of Sophia (*Ap. John* 11 10, 1-5). The idea of

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[291] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 249; Rengstorf, K. H "Urchistliches Kerygma und 'gnostische' Interpretation in einigen Sprüchen des Thomasevangeliums" in *Le Origini dello Gnosticismo. Colloquio di Messina 13-18 Aprile. Testi e* Discussiono (SHR 12) (ed. Ugo Bianch; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1967), 563-74.

[292] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 249; S. Arai, has concluded that the idea of female becoming male is more likely to be compared to Mahayana-Buddhism which speaks of a "transformation of female into male" in order to allow women to also become a Buddha. S. Arai "'To Make her Male': An Interpretation of Logion 114 in the Gospel of Thomas," *StPatr* Vol. XXIV (Papers Presented at the Eleventh International Conference on Patristic Studies held in Oxford 1991; Historica Theologica et Philosophica, Gnostica) (ed. E. A. Livingston; Leuven: Peeters, 1993), 376. Arai compares the transformation in *logion* 114 to the transformation in *The Lotus Sutra,* of a girl who becomes male in order that she may reach enlightenment.

conceiving without a consort is also similar to what is found in Greek mythology when Hera births Hephaestus as an act of revenge against her husband Zeus.

It seems possible that in regards to gender, *logion* 114 falls in line with some of the contemporary opinions of the time.[293] Theodotus, a Valentinian teacher, claimed that when a female becomes a male "'no longer is it weak and subjected to the cosmic (powers).'"[294] The 1 *Apoc. Jas.* (41,15-18) and *Zostrianos* (VIII 130,14) also speak of the negative attributes of the feminine.[295] On the topic of the transformation from female to male or of the rejection of the feminine, *logion* 114 can be linked with Hippolytus' *Refutation of All Heresies* 5.8.44; *First Revelation of James* 41; the *Second Treatise of the Great Seth* 65;[296] Philo of Alexandria's *Questions and Answers in Exodus* 1.8 and *Genesis* 2.49.[297]

Another idea that is present in *logion* 114 is that of androgyny. We also see an example of androgyny in the *Gos. Mary* 9.20. The difference with the *Gos. Thom.* 114 is that Jesus refers to making women "male," but at the same time he makes both human-being (ⲢⲰⲞⲘⲈ).[298] In *Thomas*, the word that is used is ϨⲞⲞⲨⲦ, which is translated as

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[293] An ancient story in which a female is recorded as being transformed into a male includes the myth of Iphis where Iphis was raised as a boy because her father would have killed her if he knew that she was in fact a girl.

[294] M. Meyer, "Making Mary Male: Categories of 'Male' and 'Female' in The Gospel of Thomas," in *Secret Gospels: Essays on Thomas and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (ed. M. Meyer; Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003), 91; Clement of Alexandria, *Excerpts from Theodotus,* (intro. A. Criddle). Cited March 12, 2011. Online: http://www.hypotyposeis.org/papers/theodotus.htm, 79.1.

[295] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 91.

[296] Meyer, "The Gospel of Thomas with the Greek Gospel of Thomas," 153.

[297] DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas,* 297.

[298] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 51.

"male" and does not have the same value as ⲣⲱⲟⲙⲉ, which can be translated as man, person, human etc.[299]

2.3. Analysis of Logion 114

The meaning and inclusion of *logion* 114 in the *Gos. Thom.* has been highly debated in recent studies. For some, the passage raises concerns with the modern reader, and in particular the feminist reader, as it appears to denigrate women and their path to salvation. Others, on the contrary, have argued that this *logion* does not devalue women, but it is rather a liberating text,[300] especially if the social *milieu* is taken into consideration. The saying is seen as liberating because in the end, women are offered the same salvation experience as men. *Logion* 114 appears to be misogynist as it can be interpreted in a way that suggests that males have an automatic path to salvation; however, when a more in depth analysis of the *logion* is conducted, one quickly realizes that this is not the case.

The debate about androgyny in the *Gos. Thom.* still continues. Scholars, including Arai, expand Buckley's conclusions by stating that the male, in the earthly sense, does not automatically become a living spirit in the Thomasine gospel. For Arai the male must become the single one, a ⲙⲟⲛⲁⲭⲟⲥ, in order to become the living spirit and enter the kingdom.[301] Arai suggests that the process of the female becoming male is comparable to that which is undertaken by males when they become a "solitary one." For Arai the text is saying; "to be saved a female must first become male and then become a

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[299] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 51; J. Azevedo, ed., "ⲥⲛⲁⲩ" *A Simplified Coptic Dictionary (Sahidic Dialect)* (Centro de Pesquisa de Literatura Biblica 1; Seminario Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, 2001), "ⲣⲱⲙⲉ," 81, "ϩⲟⲟⲩⲧ," 160.

[300] Arai "'To Make her Male,'" 373.

[301] Arai, "'To Make her Male,'" 374, Arai's conclusions are based on his interpretation of *logia* 49 and 75.

living spirit, the male to be saved must become a solitary one and then become a living spirit."[302]

In order to comprehend the meaning of "becoming male," it is important to compare *logion* 114 with other *logia*. According to Buckley there is a connection between the words that Jesus speaks to Salome in *logion* 61 with the words spoken about Mary in *logion* 114.[303] For Buckley *logia* 61 and 114 deal directly "with the salvation of the female disciples."[304] The role that Mary plays is similar to that of Salome, as she (Salome) also seeks to understand who Jesus is. Both female characters are named, and both ask Jesus a question which he will answer. Peter's disdain for Mary in *logion* 114 allows Jesus to explain the place women have as followers and their share in salvation. According to Buckley, the saying illustrates the transformation that women undertook to be "restored to the lost unity of Adam."[305] The gospel speaks not only of the transformation of the female into a male-living spirit, but also of the transformation of male into a living spirit as the path to salvation. According to Meyer, this transformation can also be viewed as what must be done in order to understand the hidden message of the *logia*.[306]

The idea of "becoming male" in *logion* 114 has also been discussed by several scholars. Buckley has suggested that the female followers of Jesus need to "attain maleness"[307] before they are able to be living spirits. Males, however, are not automatically living spirits. Buckley concludes that there seems to be a hierarchy. The

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[302] Arai, "'To Make her Male,'" 375.
[303] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 269.
[304] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 271.
[305] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 271.
[306] M. Meyer, "Gospel of Thomas: Saying 114 Revisited," in *Secret Gospels: Essays on Thomas and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003), 104.
[307] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 246.

feminine is at the bottom, the masculine is in the middle and the 'living spirit' is at the top of the hierarchy.[308] This idea has been linked with the creation story of Genesis. Buckley's conclusion would suggest that there appears to be a form of a reverse creation[309] where the female returns back to the male.

According to McGuire the reason as to why Mary / women need to make such a transformation can be understood through the "three-stage myth of creation and redemption":[310]

> (1) a state of perfection in which the Spirit/primordial Adam existed as Light in perfect unity with the divine; (2) a moment of corruption or loss in which the light Adam is cast into darkness / the body / the Cosmos; (3) a salvific restoration or return to the beginning in which the primordial human being of Gen 1:26-27 is recovered, and the individual receptively transformed.[311]

McGuire sees *logion* 114 as a saying that illustrates the transformation that women need to undertake because the "redeemed human being is imaged as a male."[312] This perhaps suggests that while women are not denied salvation or being like the spirit, there is a different process that they must go through. Does this mean that the redactor was implying that women should literally become like men and turn away from their feminine roles in society? Although some may have understood this saying in such a way, it seems that this *logion* is to be interpreted more metaphorically than literally.

When examining the *Gos. Thom.* 114 it is important to look at *logion* 22 which speaks of making the male and female as "one" (ⲟⲩⲁ ⲟⲩⲱⲧ)·

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[308] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 246.
[309] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 246.
[310] A. McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," in *Women and Christian Origins* (ed. R. S. Kraemer and M. R. D'Angelo; New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 280.
[311] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 280.
[312] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 281.

ⲁⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲁ̅ϩⲛ̅ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲩ ⲭⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲉ ⲡⲉ ⲭⲁϥ ⲛⲛⲉϥⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲭⲉ
ⲛ̅ⲉⲉⲓⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲉⲧ ⲭⲓ ⲉⲣⲱⲧⲉ ⲉⲩⲧ̅ⲛ̅ⲧ ⲱ̅ⲛ ⲁⲛⲉⲧⲃⲏⲕ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲟ
ⲡⲉ ⲭⲁⲩ ⲛⲁϥ ⲭⲉ ⲉⲉⲓⲉⲛⲟ ⲛ̅ⲕⲟⲩⲉⲓ ⲧⲛ̅ⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲧⲙ̅ⲛ̅ⲧⲉⲣⲟ ⲡⲉⲭⲉ
ⲓ̅ⲏ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲭⲉ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ϣⲁ̅ⲣ̅ ⲡⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲟⲩⲁ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ϣⲁⲣ̅ ⲡ ⲥⲁ
ⲛϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛⲃⲟⲗ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲥⲁ ⲛϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲁⲩⲱ
ⲡ ⲥⲁ(ⲛ) ⲧⲡⲉ ⲛ̅ⲑⲉ ⲙ̅ⲡⲥⲁ ⲙ̅ⲡⲓⲧ̅ⲛ̅ ⲁⲩⲱ ϣⲓⲛⲁ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲙ̅ⲫⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲙ̅ⲛ̅
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ⲣ̅ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ϩⲟⲧⲁⲛ ⲉⲧⲉⲧⲛ̅ϣⲁⲉⲓⲣⲉ ⲛ̅ϩⲛ̅ⲃⲁⲗ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛⲟⲩⲃⲁⲗ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩ ⲃⲓ ⲭ
ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ⲛⲟⲩⲃⲓⲭ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲟⲩ ⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ ⲛ̅ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱⲛ ⲉⲡⲙⲁ
ⲛ̅ⲟⲩϩⲓⲕⲱ(ⲛ) ⲧⲟⲧⲉ ⲧⲉⲧⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉ[ⲧ]ⲙⲛ̅[ⲧⲉⲣ]ⲟ

> Jesus saw little ones being suckled. He said to his disciples, "These little ones who are being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom." They said to him, "Shall we then enter the kingdom by being little?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, in order that you shall make the male and the female into a single one, so that the male shall not be male nor the female be female. When you make eyes in place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and an image in place of an image; then you shall enter into [the kingdom]

While there are a variety of different opinions regarding this saying, it can be stated that making the male and female united as one, "involves the female returning, as rib, into the male, who thereby becomes 'whole,' and 'autonomously male.'"[313] If the idea of "the two becoming one" is in reference to Genesis, we still have that basic misogynistic creation element in which the female must return to the masculine. The feminine is therefore still perceived negatively.

According to McGuire, the issues of gender that are present in *logia* 22 and 114 have clear parallels. As previously mentioned *logion* 22 tends to focus on the role of male and female becoming one and united, whereas *logion* 114 highlights the "gendered image of salvation."[314] Not only does there seem to be a connection between the two sayings but there is also a contradiction between the sayings. One explanation for the contradiction is

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[313] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 255.
[314] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 278.

to suggest that the *Gos. Thom*. 114 is part of a later redaction. *Logion* 22 presents male and female in an almost equal state, while *logion* 114 appears to illustrate the "salvific transformation"[315] that women must undergo.

For some scholars, including Meyer and Castelli, *logion* 114 can only be understood in the context of Philo's exegesis.[316] If one takes into account Philo's concept of male and female, *logion* 114 seems to be speaking of the superiority of the male who is in need of women to reach salvation. An interesting point raised by McGuire is that according to Philo both males and females have the "female elements of the soul."[317] If this is the correct understanding of male and female, does it then suggest that the males, such as Peter and the other disciples, have to give up the female elements of their soul?[318] It seems interesting that Mary and women have to partake in a gender transformation, yet male disciples do not.

Philo of Alexandria's concept of the male and female clearly illustrates the cultural acceptance of the transformation from imperfect female to the perfect male.[319] The female was compared to the "fertility goddess, the earth mother, characterized, according to the Gnostics, by passion, lust, and flesh."[320] If this was the common understanding of the feminine it does not seem surprising that some Christian

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[315] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 279.

[316] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 279, Castelli, " 'I Will Make Mary Male,' " 32-33; DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas,* 297; Philo of Alexandria, *Questions and Answers in Genesis* (Supplement I) (trans. R. Marcus; Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: William Heinemann LTD, 1953), 11.49; Philo of Alexandria, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (Supplement II) (trans. R. Marcus; Cambridge: Harvard University Press/London: William Heinemann LTD, 1953), 1.8. See R. A. Baer "The Categories Male and Female in Relationship to Soteriology and Prophetic Inspiration," in *Philo's Use of the Categories Male and Female* (Leiden: E. J. Brill), 45-64.

[317] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 279.

[318] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 279.

[319] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 87; Philo, *Questions and Answers on Exodus* (Supplement II). 1.7

[320] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 88.

communities would want to denounce the feminine.[321] With the feminine being connected with such evils and characterized in such negative ways, it is also not surprising that the masculine was regarded differently. Masculinity was positively assessed and often associated with the spiritual, the heavenly, and even the perfect. For Meyer the way that male and female are used in *logion* 114 is different from the rest of the gospel, but it nevertheless falls in line with the worldview of the day.[322] This hypothesis would then suggest that the transition from female to male can be understood as moving from "that which is physical and earthly to that which is spiritual and heavenly."[323]

Marjanen offers possible explanations to the meaning of being made / making oneself male. The first explanation is that the women were making themselves more masculine by physically changing their feminine features. This would mean cutting of their hair and dressing in male clothing. When women partook in these actions it also would have meant that they were refraining from marriage and child rearing. According to Marjanen, these actions clearly illustrate "a denial of all sexual life."[324] This concept is common to other apocryphal writings including the *Acts of Paul and Thecla,* the *Acts Thom.,* the *Acts of Phil.* and the *Acts of Andr.*[325] DeConick's hypothesis agrees with Marjanen as she implies that this *logion* suggests the "gender refashioning for women

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[321] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 89.
[322] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 90-91. For a more in depth comparative study on texts which speak of female to male transformations and "Gnostic" texts which speak of negative aspects of the feminine see Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 76-95.
[323] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 50.
[324] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 48.
[325] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 48.

would have stressed encratic[326] behaviour, particularity celibacy and their refusal to bear children."[327]

The second explanation that is offered by Marjanen is to understand this transformation based on the "Platonic myth of the androgyne (Plato, *Symposium* 189 de)." In this context it would seem that it is a return to the "pristine state of the androgynous prelapsarian man."[328] While *logion* 22 is related to the state of a pre-gender differentiation and *logion* 114 refers to female becoming male, there seems to be an underlying theme in both these *logia*. It is the idea of returning to the androgynous being.

While Marjanen offers these possible interpretations, he also clearly indicates the flaws with the hypotheses. *Logia* 22 and 114 may have similar themes, but they are not entirely equivalent and it is very difficult to analyze them in such a way. The difference in these sayings is that *logion* 22 speaks of the elimination of sexual difference while *logion* 114 speaks of female merging into male. The disturbing element of the *Gos. Thom.* 114 is its clear social value. This saying does not simply do away with gender identity, but it appears to make the male sex the ideal, through which femininity and the female sex is devalued.[329]

Another criteria to take into account is the connection that *logion* 114 has with the book of Genesis. It seems possible that with the Thomasine understanding of Gen 1.27, *logia* 22 and 114 do in fact fit well together, as they both deal with asexuality, at least to an extent. It is possible that the Thomasine community understood Genesis in a

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[326] Encratism relates to individuals who practiced ascetic behaviour, and those who "rejected alcohol meat and especially marriage." *The Oxford Dictionary of World Religions* (ed. Bowker: Oxford/New York: New York University Press, 1997), 313.
[327] DeConick, *The Original Gospel of Thomas*, 297.
[328] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 49.
[329] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 50-51.

traditional sense, where Adam was created first and then Eve was created out of his rib
(Gen 2.22). Although the first man / Adam is perceived as masculine, the fact that women
/ Eve came out of him may suggest that the first man / Adam consisted of both genders.
Based on this understanding, scholars such as DeConick, have concluded that while the
first man was neither male nor female, the image is masculine; therefore, when *logion* 22
speaks of being "neither male nor female," this can actually be equated to being made
male.[330] Buckley states that *logion* 114 might refer to a rejection of gender differences as
it suggests a return to the Adamic state before male and female were separated, thus, a
return to the spiritual Adam and Eve that consists of one asexual entity.[331] If *logion* 22
can be interpreted this way, the connections with *logion* 114 become ever so clear. "The
'male' of 114 is on its way to become the 'one' of logion 22,"[332] thus it seems like
sayings 22 and 114 speak of a similar idea.

An additional approach for interpreting *logion* 114 is that of Meyer. Despite its
misogynistic overtones for the modern reader, saying 114 has value through a symbolic
interpretation. For Meyer, both females and males become symbolically male. Mary
Magdalene and women make the transformation to become male; thus, the "physical and
earthly is transformed into what is spiritual and heavenly."[333] This interpretation falls in
line with those who understand the *Gos. Thom.* 114 to be associated with creation and
androgyny myths, rather than an actual physical act of transformation or one which

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[330] A. D. DeConick, *Seek to See Him Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (VCSup 33)
(Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 19-20. Paul's gendered concept in relation to the 'baptismal formula' in Gal 3:28
also illustrates the social changes that were taking place in the early Christian communities. Castelli implies
that Paul's understanding of gender is that both male and female will become one in Christ. Other antiquity
gender theories are related to *logion* 114, but tend to deal with the historical context of female becoming
male, and go beyond the scope of this study. (E. Castelli, " 'I Will Make Mary Male', " 30; Meyer also
connects *logion* 22 with Gal 3:27-28, Meyer "Making Mary male," 83).
[331] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 245-72.
[332] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 256.
[333] Meyer, "Gospel of Thomas: Saying 114 Revisited," 103-104.

requires the renunciation of feminine social roles. In *logia* 22 and 114 the individual of the "unified state is not seen as androgynous, or supersexual, but instead asexual."[334] While noticing that the *Gos. Thom.* 114 has the potential to make the modern reader feel uncomfortable, Meyer also believes that this saying has a connection with the rest of the gospel, as it does not necessarily mean the rejection of the feminine.[335]

While Mary and other women need to undergo a different type of transformation, Peter and the male disciples also need to be redeemed. In the end both female and male will end up in the same place and the same state of being.[336] Both female and male are transformed to the redeemed state, with the difference being the male disciples already possessing the male qualities (as the redeemed image is male).

Logion 114 presents some kind of collaboration between Jesus and Mary. Both are agents of Mary's salvation (and ultimately the salvation of all female believers).[337] In this *logion*, Mary is characterized in a similar way to Salome. Both of these female characters have been given promises that they will become living spirits (*Gos. Thom.* 61, 114).[338] Despite the fact that Mary symbolizes the equality between female and male, the androcentric language of the text and the male image of redemption are hard to overlook.[339] In *logion* 114, salvation for women is obtained when the female becomes male, not necessarily through the union of male and female. The saying illustrates the strong solidarity between Jesus, Mary and all women in general. This relationship is the

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[334] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 84.
[335] Meyer, "Making Mary Male," 85.
[336] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 281.
[337] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 270.
[338] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 269.
[339] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 282.

central component of salvation, as Mary / women and Jesus become united in the transformation from female to the Spirit.

3. Mary's relationship with the male disciples

In order to understand the role Mary occupies in this gospel, one must also uncover the relationship she has with the male characters. Mary speaks to Jesus and asks him a question concerning discipleship (*logion* 21). In *logion* 114, the Magdalene is scrutinized on her gender by Peter. Despite the apostle's negative attitude towards Mary (and other women), Jesus is quick to defend her. The negative comment Peter makes towards Mary and women in general, bears a clear misogynistic tone. This negative treatment of the Magdalene is found in other texts, including the *Gos. Mary* (18.6-21), but what is different in the *Gos. Thom.* is the reaction and response of Jesus.[340] The fact that Jesus defends Mary is very significant. She is a female follower who has come under the attack of Peter, a very prominent individual among the disciples. The relationship that Mary has with Jesus remains positive throughout the text, as he guides her in *logion* 21 and defends her in *logion* 114.

4. Characterization and Conclusion

Following the analysis of *logia* 21 and 114, what can we say about the character of the Magdalene? Even if she is not specifically named "Mary Magdalene," the mention of her relationship with Jesus, the disciples, and Peter, forces us to conclude that the character called ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲋⲁⲙ is most likely Mary Magdalene. Her place in the *Gos. Thom.*

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[340] Mary Magdalene receives negative attitude from Peter and Andrew in the *Gos. Mary*, and in *Luke*. The male disciples question her after she returns from witnessing the empty tomb. Mary is also scrutinized by disciples in the *Gos. Phil.* because Jesus loves her more than them.

does not only have significant value in the individual *logia* in which she is present, but her character is also important for understanding the theological value of the entire gospel. If the implied reader is to find knowledge and obtain eternal life through the correct interpretation of the Thomasine *logia*, it could be argued that all characters, even those who are classified as minor, play significant roles in providing the necessary tools in the quest for the correct interpretation of the text. It is also worth noting that Peter and Mary (besides Jesus and Judas Thomas) are the only two characters whose names appear twice within the *Gos. Thom.*[341]

It remains difficult to know whether or not Mary Magdalene belongs to the group of disciples in *logion* 21 and if she is speaking on their behalf or simply speaking on behalf of herself. What the reader does know is that she is a female character who is directly conversing with Jesus. Through Mary's misunderstanding, the reader is made aware of the roles of discipleship. It is important to note that if Mary Magdalene is to be considered as part of the disciples and is acting on behalf of the collective group it is also possible to see her as a leader, since she seems to be the spokesperson of the group.[342] If Mary is not to be understood as a prominent figure among the disciples, why did the author / compiler include her in the text?[343] It seems likely that she was not only viewed as a very prominent female follower, but also had a place among the male disciples, thus giving her the privilege of being named and where her character speaks within this gospel.

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[341] G. A. Brock, "Competition Between Peter and Mary Magdalene in Other Texts," in *Mary Magdalene, the First Apostle: The Struggle for Authority* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2002), 76.

[342] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 143; it should also be noted that Salome is also given this privilege in *logion* 61.

[343] Marjanen asks a similar question, but does not seem to provide any answers. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 43.

It appears that Mary Magdalene's personage is dynamic, as her role changes and develops. Whether or not she is considered to be a disciple, she is characterized as one who has yet to reach a full understanding of discipleship. In *logion* 114, the Magdalene is immediately criticized by Peter who claims that she is not worthy of life. Jesus responds to Peter's comment by suggesting the exact opposite. In *logion* 21 and the beginning of *logion* 114 it seems that Mary Magdalene is not at the same level as Peter and the other disciples, and perhaps she is not even worthy to be at such a stage. But by the end of *logion* 114 the situation has changed. The reader learns that Peter misunderstands the fact that Mary Magdalene is also worthy of life. When it comes to reaching salvation, she is to be considered equal with the male disciples. Thus the character of the Magdalene goes from one who does not yet understand, to one who is equal with the male disciples.

As Peter does not consider Mary Magdalene and other women worthy of life (*logion* 114), a female reader's evaluative point of view is to feel sympathy for the Magdalene. In fact, for a modern North American female reader, the initial response to Peter's statement might be one of anger. When one reads the entire *logion*, she may react positively as Jesus clearly corrects the apostle's statement. A female reader might even empathize with Mary. Through the potential denial of life and salvation based on gender, the modern reader is able to identify with the character of the Magdalene. Thus the character of Mary becomes a key component to understanding the gendered process of salvation which both males and females are to experience.

Mary Magdalene not only seems to be defended by Jesus in *logion* 114 but she also seems to have a very close relationship with him, one that will directly lead her on

the path to salvation. In *logion* 114, Mary and Jesus are united.[344] This unity is made as Jesus leads Mary to becoming male, yet at the same time, she is to make herself male. Both, Jesus and Mary, actively partake in her transformation and therefore, her salvation.[345] This is significantly interesting as it highlights the role that Jesus has in an individual's salvation and in particular the salvation of female followers.

In the *Gos. Thom.*, Mary Magdalene is acting on behalf of not only the female characters in this text, but also on behalf of all female readers. Her role in this gospel stresses the value of women in the Early Christian communities. It is uncertain whether or not *logion* 114 reflects a historical tension regarding female believers; however, the meaning of this saying clearly expresses a positive attitude toward women. The Magdalene in the *Gos. Thom.* is a symbol of the feminine and the equality that exists between male and female in the transformation process that leads to salvation. Along with the *Gos. Thom.* we can also understand the unity in Christ by exploring the role of Mary Magdalene in the *Gospel according to Philip*. In the following chapter Mary Magdalene, her relationship with Jesus, the disciples, and her connection with Sophia will be examined.

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[344] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 270.
[345] Buckley, "An Interpretation of Logion 114," 270.

Chapter Three:
The Magdalene in the *Gospel according to Philip*

The *Gospel according to Philip*[346] is another Christian text at Nag Hammadi in which the figure of the Magdalene occupies a unique and significant role. The *Gos. Phil.* 56.6-11 and 63.30-64.9 are two passages where Mary Magdalene is mentioned. Along with the other texts examined in this thesis, the passages found in *Philip* are very important for understanding the characterization of the Magdalene at Nag Hammadi. Unlike other texts which do not specifically name Mary as Mary Magdalene, such as the *Gos. Thom.* and the *Gos. Mary,* the *Gos. Phil.* does refer to her as the ⲘⲀⲅⲆⲀⲗⲎⲚⲎ.[347]

Although *Philip* is labelled as being a "gospel," it is not such in the traditional sense. Rather it is "a collection of theological statements concerning sacraments and ethics."[348] According to B. A. Pearson, the *Gos. Phil.* is a collection of sayings, similar to, but not completely the same as the *Gos. Thom.*[349] and contains seventeen sayings that are attributed to Jesus.[350] It appears that the gospel "is a collection or anthology of disparate sentences or paragraphs on various subjects, drawn from different sources and reflecting different genres and orientations."[351] While this gospel is made up of sayings,

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[346] For further reading see: M. L. Turner, *The Gospel according to Philip: The Sources and Coherence of an Early Christian Collection* (NHMS 38) (Leiden/New York/Köln: E.J. Brill, 1996); J. E. Ménard, *L'Evangile selon Philippe*: *Introduction, texte, traduction, commentaire* (Strasbourg, 1967); R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip: Translated from the Coptic Text, with an Introduction and Commentary* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1962),

[347] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 147.

[348] W.W. Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip" in *Nag Hammadi Codex 11, 2-7 Together with XII, 2*, Brit. Lib. Or. 4926 (1), and P. Oxy 1, 654, 655. Volume one: Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel According to Philip, Hypostasis of the Archons, and Indexes.* (The Coptic Gnostic Library edited with English Translation, Introduction and Notes published under the auspices of the Institute for Antiquity and Christianity; NHS 20) (ed. B. Layton; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1989), 132.

[349] Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 176.

[350] W. W. Isenberg, "Gospel of Philip (11.3)," in *The Nag Hammadi Library: The Definitive Translation of the Gnostic Scriptures Complete in One Volume*. (3rd ed.; ed. J. M. Robinson; New York: HarperCollins, 1990), 139.

[351] Pearson, *Ancient Gnosticism*, 176.

they do not always have a literary connection to each other.[352] Despite the lack of literary unity, A. Marjanen claims that "the content and style of the work betray enough coherence that it still seems to reflect theological interests and religious language, even literary devices."[353] The gospel is categorized as Valentinian and dates between the second half of the second century and the second half of the third century, and may have been written in Syria.

While it is hard to determine exactly what sources were used in the development of this gospel, it seems possible that the author/compiler used some kind of "Christian Gnostic sacramental catechesis."[354] W. W. Isenberg has suggested that it is possible that the compiler of the *Gos. Phil.* used a "Gnostic" gospel as a source, and that the compiler may have been influenced by orthodox Christian catecheses.[355]

1. "There were Three" (59.6-11)

The first reference concerning Mary Magdalene is found in the *Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11. This saying does not involve interaction between characters as it is simply the narrator telling the readers about the characters present in the text.

ⲚⲈ ⲞⲨⲚ̄ ϢⲞⲘⲦⲈ ⲘⲞⲞϢⲈ ⲘⲚ̄ ⲠⲬⲞⲈⲒⲤ ⲞⲨⲞⲈⲒϢ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ ⲦⲈϥⲘⲀⲀⲨ
ⲀⲨⲰ ⲦⲈⲤⲤⲰⲚⲈ ⲀⲨⲰ ⲘⲀⲄⲆⲀⲖⲎⲚⲎ ⲦⲀⲈⲒ ⲈⲦⲞⲨⲘⲞⲨⲦⲈ ⲈⲢⲞⲤ ⲬⲈ
ⲦⲈϥⲔⲞⲒⲚⲰⲚⲞⲤ ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ ⲄⲀⲢ ⲦⲈ ⲦⲈϥⲤⲰⲚⲈ ⲀⲨⲰ ⲦⲈϥⲘⲀⲀⲨ ⲦⲈ ⲀⲨⲰ
ⲦⲈϥϨⲰⲦⲢⲈ ⲦⲈ[356]

[352] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 148

[353] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved,* 148-149.

[354] Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 134.

[355] Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 134.

[356] Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 158.

> There were three[357] [women] who always walked with the Lord: Mary his mother and her sister and (the) Magdalene who they call (her) his companion. For Mary is his sister, and his mother and his companion.[358]

Although this passage can be read together as one saying, it is also possible to divide it into two sections: 59.6-6-9 and 59.10-11. The first section focuses on three female followers of Jesus, Mary his mother, her sister and the Magdalene. This is similar to other texts, including the canonical gospels which also mention the presence of other women alongside Mary Magdalene (Mark 15.40-41, 16.1-8; Matt 27.55-56, 28.1-10; Luke 8.2-3, 24.1-11; John 19.25). This passage can also be compared to Mark which speaks about women who provided for and followed Jesus (Mark 15.41).[359] John also mentions Mary Magdalene as being beside the mother of Jesus and his mother's sister (John 19.25b).[360] The representation of the Magdalene in this passage of the *Gos. Phil.* has clear parallels with New Testament traditions.

The women that are mentioned include, "Mary, his mother, and her sister and the Magdalene…" (*Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11). This is significant because in other texts, when Mary Magdalene is present, she is the first character named.[361] Even though the Magdalene is not named first in this text, the fact that she is named and identified is significant.[362] Another interesting point is that the narrator makes a reference to the women as always walking with the Lord (*Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11). This signifies that Mary Magdalene and the

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[357] Marjanen notes that ϢⲞⲘⲦⲈ is a feminine word, thus it is possible to add women into the translation. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150.

[358] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Marjanen's translation, Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150. The text could also be translated as, "His sister and his mother and his companion were each a Mary," (Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 159).

[359] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, fn. 16. 150.

[360] In this passage it is unclear if Mary the wife of Clopas is the same figure as Mary, the sister of Jesus' mother.

[361] In the canonical gospels every narrative in which Mary Magdalene is present, she is mentioned first with the exception of John 19:25b.

[362] For further information regarding the named women of the Bible and the significance see C. Meyers et al. *Women in Scripture: A Dictionary of Named and Unnamed Women in the Hebrew Bible, the Apocryphal/Deuterocanonical Books, and the New Testament* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2000).

three other women were understood as having a close relationship with Jesus and were important personages in his ministry.

Although this passage states that the women were always present with Jesus, it does not necessarily imply that they occupied a greater position among the other followers, including the disciples.[363] Referring to Mary Magdalene as "the one who was called his companion" (*Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11), indicates a more prominent position not only amongst the two women that are mentioned, but it also signifies that Mary has a more prominent position amongst the male disciples as well.

J. Schaberg raises a very interesting point by stating that it is possible to view the character of Mary Magdalene in the *Gos. Phil.* as a visionary.[364] It is through Mary's communication with Jesus that she is able to relay his message to others. According to Schaberg, the expression used concerning Mary Magdalene and the other Marys, (they "walked with Jesus"), can be compared to Enoch and Noah who were said to have "walked with God." Enoch and Noah became visionaries, and it is possible that the author had this in mind when describing Mary Magdalene as walking with the Lord.[365]

The second half of the passage is also very intriguing. Marjanen has translated this portion as: "for Mary is his sister, his mother and his companion."[366] Isenberg has translated it differently: "His sister and his mother and his companion were each a Mary."[367] Based on the construction of the sentence, where ⲧⲉ is the subject and the antecedent is Mary, Marjanen's translation would seem to be the best suited

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[363] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150.
[364] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 146-147.
[365] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene,* 147.
[366] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150.
[367] Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 159; Marjanen also identifies the difference in translations, Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150.

translation.[368] There are clear issues with the translation of this text, leaving one to question the characters involved and the meaning of the passage.[369] How can Mary be the mother, sister and companion of the Lord? Some scholars, including Marjanen and Buckley, are of the opinion that the three Marys are in fact one figure who acts as the mother, the sister and the companion of the Lord. This figure would then not be understood as an actual representation of a historical woman / women.[370] For Buckley, the "three Marys" are a symbol of Jesus' syzygos.[371]

Understanding Mary Magdalene as the companion to Jesus is challenging. There are many explanations that have been offered regarding this difficult reference. According to Marjanen, no other known text refers to the Magdalene as the companion of the Lord. This title is not only unique when speaking about Mary, but in Early Christian writings no other disciple is given this title.[372] One of the challenging aspects of this title is the translation of the word ⲔⲞⲒⲚⲰⲚⲞⲤ which is the Greek loan word κοινωνός.[373] This noun can mean "association," "communion," "fellowship," "close relationship" and in some instances "marriage."[374] Marjanen claims that in *Malachi* 2.14 and *3 Maccabees* 4.6 the word is used in reference to marriage and that in *Philemon* 17 and the *Interpretation of Knowledge* 9.31-32, it is used to denote a "companion in faith."[375]

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[368] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 160.

[369] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 150-151.

[370] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 160-61; Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity? Naming the Gnostic Mary," n. 8. 8.

[371] The syzygos is understood as a partner, consort or spiritual twin; see J. J. Buckley, "The Holy Spirit is a Double Name" in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (ed. K. L. King; Philadelphia: Fortress Press), 215.

[372] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 151; It is possible that Sophia is also given this title (*Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9).

[373] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 151.

[374] Bauer, "κοινωνός," *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 438.

[375] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 151.

The word also appears in the New Testament and is used to designate a "co-worker in proclaiming the gospel in 2 Cor 8.23 or a business associate (Luke 5.10)."[376] ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ is not frequently used in the *Gos. Phil.* as it only appears twice (*Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11; 63.32-33). While the text does not specifically state the meaning of this title, we are, nevertheless, provided with the necessary tools for understanding what is meant by this expression attributed to the Magdalene.[377] According to Marjanen, the word ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ can have a meaning that expresses the "literal pairing of man and woman in marital (and sexual) relationship."[378] While this understanding of the word is correct, the context of the *Gos. Phil.* needs to be taken into consideration before assessing its meaning in this gospel.

Marjanen states that of the two ways to interpret ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ in the *Gos. Phil.* 59.9, one includes viewing Mary Magdalene as the wife of Jesus.[379] Although it is possible to interpret ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ as wife, Marjanen and others have concluded that it is not likely that this would be a correct interpretation. Throughout the *Gos. Phil.* the author uses the noun ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ in reference to "wife" instead of ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ (*Gos. Phil.* 65.20; 79.19; 76.7; 82.1).[380] This would simply mean that Mary Magdalene and Jesus had a close and special relationship, not one that reflects a relationship between husband and wife. An alternative interpretation that is presented by Marjanen, which is also the

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[376] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 151.
[377] For further information regarding the translation of ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ see Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved,* 152-153.
[378] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 153.
[379] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 153-154.
[380] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 154.

interpretation that he favours, is that ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ designates the Magdalene "…as the earthly partner of Jesus with whom he forms a spiritual partnership."[381]

Along with analyzing the Magdalene as the companion, another question comes to mind: "Is Mary Magdalene's character directly related to Sophia?"[382] K. King's interpretation of the *Gos. Phil.* 59.30-60.1 associates Mary Magdalene to the figure of Sophia. King also translates 59.6-11, ⲙⲁⲣⲓⲁ ⲅⲁⲣ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲉϥⲥⲱⲛⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲉϥⲙⲁⲁⲩ ⲧⲉ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲧⲉϥϩⲱⲧⲣⲉ ⲧⲉ to read, "For Mary is his sister and his mother and his companion."[383] She suggests that there is only one Mary who encompasses all three personas. According to King, Mary's role as companion can be directly compared to that of Sophia. For King, Mary is able to represent all three personas because she is the companion of the Lord, Jesus loves her more than the rest, and that she is "his spiritual sister."[384] When she is kissed by Jesus, she is able to give birth to spiritual truths, thus acting as the mother.[385] The Magdalene's ability to give birth to spiritual truths is compared to Sophia who is no longer barren as she becomes fruitful through the Holy Spirit. King goes as far as to suggest that Mary can be "understood as Wisdom."[386]

It then seems that the relationship between the Magdalene and Jesus is used as a symbolic image to represent "the syzigies... of Sophia and the Savior."[387] Here the Magdalene is more than a female follower of Jesus, she is also the feminine counterpart to Jesus, just as Sophia is the syzygos of the Saviour. Here the image of the Magdalene and the representation of the three Marys is used to illustrate the union in Christ. Thus

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[381] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 154.
[382] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 145.
[383] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 144-145.
[384] King, notes that the texts refers to Wisdom as the companion, but based on Jesus' love for Mary, Mary can be considered his companion, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 145-146.
[385] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 145-146.
[386] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 145-146.
[387] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 162.

Mary Magdalene as the historical figure or as the follower of Jesus as depicted in 63.30-64.9 is not present in this saying. Mary Magdalene acts as all three because the author was illustrating the triple manifestation of Christ's syzygos. [388]

2. The Kiss of Jesus (*Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9)

The *Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9 is another passage which must be taken into consideration when examining the character of the Magdalene. If Mary Magdalene has a special relationship with Jesus, it is also important to understand the relationship she has with the disciples. Not all scholars agree that Jesus' response to the disciple's question regarding his love for Mary (*Gos. Phil.* 64.4-9) was part of the original manuscript. Some suggest that the *Gos. Phil.* 64.5-9 does not fit in with Jesus' response and should not be taken into account in the study of the relationship between Mary Magdalene and the other disciples.[389] Some scholars divide the passage because of the similarities between 63.5-11 and 64.5-9. The parallels suggest these two passages could naturally fit together. According to Marjanen, the text must be read as a single unit, because the erotapokritic style (questions-and-answers) is found throughout the gospel and it seems unlikely that the disciples question would be left unanswered.[390]

Whether or not the text was added at a later time, one must appreciate this gospel in its final form. A key passage that needs to be examined is the *Gos. Phil.* 63.34-37. This text speaks about Jesus loving Mary and kissing her. Because of the poor quality of the

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[388] E. Pagels, "Pursuing the Spiritual Eve: Imagery and Hermeneutics in the *Hypostasis of the Archons* and in the *Gospel of Philip*," in *Images of the Feminine in Gnosticism* (SAC) (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988), 202.

[389] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 163-164.

[390] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 164. Marjanen does point out that there are two instances in the *Gos. Phil.* which end with an unanswered question (75.13-14; 77.6-7), but in both cases the question seems to be more rhetorical.

manuscripts, the text is very difficult to interpret. Based on the manuscript available to us, it is possible to translate the text as follows:

ⲚⲈⲢⲈ ⲡ.[.....ⲘⲈ] Ⲙ̅ⲘⲞ[Ⲥ Ⲛ̅]Ⲕ̅ⲞⲨⲞ ⲀⲘ̅ⲘⲀⲐⲎⲦ[ⲎⲤ ⲦⲎⲢⲞⲨ ⲀⲨⲰ ⲚⲈϥ] ⲀⲤⲠⲀⲌⲈ Ⲙ̅ⲘⲞⲤ ⲀⲦⲈϥ [..... Ⲛ̅ⲅⲀϩ] Ⲛ̅ⲤⲞⲠ

[… loved] more than [all] the disciples [and used to] kiss her [often] on her […].[391]

At first it may seem that this text would strengthen the argument that is made regarding Jesus and Mary Magdalene as being in a marital and perhaps even a sexual relationship. The modern reader must take into account the way the terminology is used in other gospels such as the *Gos. Mary* 18.14-15. Therein, we find no mention of a marital or sexual relationship between Jesus and Mary. In the *Gos. Mary*, Levi's statement regarding the distinctive relationship of Mary Magdalene and Jesus does not hint to any marital or sexual union between them. Rather, it seems to suggest that the relationship was comparable to one between a teacher and a most worthy pupil.[392]

Another text that helps shed light on this passage is the *Second Apocalypse of James* (*2 Apoc. Jas.*) In this text, Jesus kisses James and calls him his beloved disciple. The kiss symbolizes the transfer of the secret knowledge to James (*2 Apoc. Jas.* 56.14-16).[393] As in the *2 Apoc. Jas.*, the fact that Jesus kisses Mary Magdalene can be best understood as signifying the relationship that Mary Magdalene had with her master, as

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[391] The translation is adopted, adapted and verified from Marjanen's translation. Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 163; Isenberg, "Tractate 3: The Gospel According to Philip," 167-168.
[392] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 157.
[393] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 159.

she occupied a special position amongst the disciples. The kiss can be the means through which Mary Magdalene received "a special spiritual power."[394]

Some scholars have viewed the kiss as having erotic overtones. M. R. D'Angelo argues that ⲔⲞⲒⲚⲰⲚⲞⲤ is to be translated as "comrade" or the English word "companion." For D'Angelo, who believes that the companion of the Lord is Mary Magdalene, both comrade and companion imply a sexual partnership,[395] and that the kiss is clearly a reference to an erotic relationship (*Gos. Phil.* 63.34-35). She notes that the kiss could have simply been between a teacher and a student, one who has shown knowledge and understanding. But she concludes that in the case of the *Gos. Phil.*, "their kiss undoubtedly has erotic overtones."[396] Her conclusions partially derive from the research of A. McGuire, who understands the role of Mary Magdalene as one that creates a partnership with Jesus. The Magdalene is the "female part of a symbol of salvific union."[397] The kiss is then understood as fulfilling the perfect spiritual conception, which therefore illustrates the erotic element to such an act.

The issue with this passage lies in the concept of the kiss. The question of where Jesus kissed Mary Magdalene is one that has raised many heated debates, and has become an intriguing element in popular fiction, in works such as Dan Brown's the *Da Vinci Code*,[398] and has often been misinterpreted. Does the kiss simply reflect the relationship between a master and a disciple (either male or female), or does it suggest something more intimate and of sexual nature? There is another reference to a kiss in the

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[394] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 160.
[395] D'Angelo "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 119.
[396] D'Angelo "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 120.
[397] McGuire, "Women, Gender, and Gnosis in Gnostic Texts and Traditions," 275; D'Angelo "Reconstructing 'Real' Women," 120.
[398] Brown, *The Da Vinci Code*, 246.

Gos. Phil (58.30-59.6). In this context, there is no sexual connotation and the kiss simply represents spiritual growth and renewal. Based on the recurring concept of the bridal chamber, as well as the notion of defilement throughout the *Gos. Phil.*, it seems more likely that the kiss is to be understood as a symbol of Mary's spiritual growth.

The fact that the text is fragmented leaves room for a variety of different interpretations. It is therefore important for one to take into account the context of the entire gospel in the interpretation of this passage. The text seems to present Mary Magdalene as being loved more than the other disciple. Some speculate on the content of the two lacunae in this fragment and assume that she was loved more than the others, and that Jesus used to kiss her on her mouth.[399]

One of the most interesting possibilities regarding the place of the kiss is the mouth (ⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ). This is interesting because it has the potential of suggesting an intimate relationship between Jesus and Mary Magdalene, which might also explain why he loved her more than the other disciples. Although some readers might interpret the kiss as intimate, if one takes the context of the gospel into consideration, the conclusion is that it is highly unlikely that the author / compiler would have had that in mind. The marriage and bridal chamber in *Philip* are simply symbolic and spiritual and there are elements throughout the text that imply a negative attitude towards sexual relations and physical companionship.[400] The context thus suggests that a physical relationship between Jesus

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[399] [ⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ ⲛ̄ϩⲁϩ]. Some have claimed that Jesus would have kissed Mary either on her mouth (ⲧⲁⲡⲣⲟ), her forehead (ⲧⲉϩⲛⲉ), her cheek (ⲟⲩⲟⲟϭⲉ), or her foot (ⲟⲩⲉⲣⲏⲧⲉ).

[400] This is expressed through the concept of the defiled women, who is defiled though sexual relationships including earthly/physical marriages (*Gos. Phil.* 81.34-82.10) and the positive attitude towards virgins, who are also characterized as freeman (opposite of enslaved men) (*Gos. Phil.* 77.15-18).

and Mary Magdalene would have resulted in defilement, on both the part of Jesus and Mary Magdalene.[401]

Despite the possibility of having a sexual meaning, it still seems likely that the kiss took place on the lips. This is possible because in the biblical tradition a kiss was a common act that did not necessarily have any sexual connotation.[402] The kiss in the *Gos. Phil.* 58.30-59.10 speaks about the spiritual nourishment that is received through the mouth of Jesus. The kiss is then to be understood as a way in which one receives secret and special revelation. As with the case in the *Gos. Mary*, the act simply serves as a way to highlight the Magdalene's spiritual perfection.

The most interesting aspect of this passage is the way Mary is characterized with the male disciples. The male disciples are understood as being blind and unable to see even when the light comes, while Mary is able to see when there is no light (*Gos. Phil.* 64.4-9). For Marjanen, the disciples are negatively characterized in this passage.[403] It is surprising that despite the fact that the Magdalene is positively characterized, she will not be mentioned again in the rest of the gospel.

In the *Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9, Mary Magdalene seems to have some kind of pre-resurrection insight, an understanding the other disciples do not have.[404] This is a significant idea when compared to *logion* 21 of the *Gos. Thom.* In *Thomas*, Mary is presented as a follower who is in the process of learning, but who does not yet fully understand. In the *Gos. Phil.*, the Magdalene is painted in a positive pre-resurrection

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[401] Pagels and others claim that the *Gos. Phil.* addresses issues regarding sexual relationships and celibacy. E. Pagels, "The 'Mystery of Marriage' in the *Gospel of Philip*" in *The Future of Early Christianity: Essays in Honor of Helmut Koester* (ed. B. A. Pearson et al.; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 442-54.

[402] The act of a non-sexual kiss can be found in 1 Cor. 16.20; 2 Cor. 13.12; Rom 16.16; 1 Pet. 5.14.

[403] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 165-166.

[404] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 168.

light, while the other disciples are characterized negatively. After Jesus' resurrection, there is no longer any reference to Mary's privileged status amongst the disciples. According to Marjanen, "the spiritual superiority Mary Magdalene exhibits over the rest of the disciples during the earthly ministry of Jesus does not result in elevating her to the spiritual authority."[405] This is interesting since it implies that both Mary and the male disciples eventually become equal in Christ.

Another significant question in relation to how one translates this passage is figuring out who is the companion of the saviour. While some translations make Mary Magdalene to be the companion of the Lord[406], it is possible to understand the companion of the Lord to be Sophia. One can translate the text as follows:

ⲦⲤⲟⲫⲓⲁ ⲉⲧⲟⲩⲙⲟⲩⲧ[ⲉ ⲉⲣⲟ]ⲥ ⲭⲉ ⲧⲥⲧⲓⲣⲁ ⲛⲧⲟⲥ ⲧⲉ ⲧⲙⲁⲁ[ⲩ ⲛⲛⲁⲅ]-
ⲅⲉⲗⲟⲥ ⲁⲩⲱ [ⲧ]ⲕⲟⲓⲛⲱⲛⲟⲥ ⲙ̄ⲡⲥ[... ⲙⲁ]ⲣⲓⲁ ⲧⲙⲁⲅ[ⲇⲁ]ⲗⲏⲛⲏ ⲛⲉⲣⲉ ⲡ
.[..... ⲙⲉ] ⲙ̄ⲙⲟ[ⲥ ⲛ̄] ϩⲟⲩⲟ ⲁ̄ⲙⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧ[ⲏⲥ

"…concerning Sophia who is called the barren she is the mother [of the] angels and the companion of the [Saviour]. [Ma]ry Magdalene was [loved] more than [all] the disciples…"[407]

While this translation states that Mary Magdalene is not the companion, she still remains [loved] more than the other disciples. Sophia acts at the syzygos (Christ's heavenly / spiritual partner) to Christ. In *Philip*, the concept of partnership is prevalent and often expressed though the bridal chamber (ⲛⲩⲙⲫⲱⲛ / ⲡⲁⲥⲧⲟⲥ) motif. The bridal chamber

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[405] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 169.

[406] Isenberg, seems to prefer this translation, "Tractate 3: The Gospel according to Philip," 167-168; R. McL. Wilson, *The Gospel of Philip: Translated from the Coptic Text, with an Introduction and Commentary* (London: A. R. Mowbray & Co. Limited, 1962), 115; E. De Boer, *The Gospel of Mary,* 133.

[407] King translates the text to read "As for Wisdom who is called the barren, she is the mother [of the angels] and the companion of the S[aviour. Ma]ria …" thus for King, Sophia is considered to be the companion, not the Magdalene. King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 145.

is central in understanding the sacraments in the *Gos. Phil.*[408] According to Klauck, this

motif is very important as it illustrates the concept of pairing:

> "… [a] mythical construction of pairs in the heavenly world which lies beyond this earth… the bridal chamber offers a rite which allows the believers on earth to imitate and share in the mythical event, so that they too many experience even now the longed union with their heavenly counterpart."[409]

The sacrament of the bridal chamber represents the return to a state of androgyny, and

corrects the separation of male and female and restores unity. Through Christ one is able

to enter into the bridal chamber as male and female are unified.

Even if the title of "companion of the Lord" is to be attributed to Sophia, Mary

Magdalene still has a very significant and prominent role as a female follower / disciple

of Jesus. In the *Gos. Phil.*, the Magdalene is characterized similarly to the Beloved

Disciple in John. She is also the favoured disciple as in the *Gos. Mary*. In relation to this,

Marjanen states that "the status of Mary as the beloved disciple of Jesus is recognized by

her envious male colleagues, who demand that he explain why she has gained this special

position among the disciples (63, 30-64, 9)."[410] She acts as the Johannine "beloved

disciple" since she is able to see and understand what the others do not perceive,[411] and is

offered a special position amongst the female followers and the rest of the disciples. The

narrator wants the reader to view the Magdalene as a privileged disciple and as a

symbolic representation of the unity in Christ.

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[408] Klauck, "Gospels From Nag Hammadi," 132. The sacraments in the *Gos. Phil.* include baptism, chrism, eucharist, redemption, and bridal chamber (*Gos. Phil.* 67.28-30).
[409] Klauck, "Gospels From Nag Hammadi," 133.
[410] Marjanen, "Mary Magdalene, a Beloved Disciple," 49.
[411] Marjanen, "Mary Magdalene, a Beloved Disciple," 58.

The Magdalene is defended by Jesus in a similar way to that of *logion* 114 of the *Gos. Thom.* Her leadership role and special relationship with Jesus is also defended by Levi in the *Gos. Mary* 18.6-21. In the *Gos. Phil.*, Mary's defence means that she had much consideration from the Valentinian community and the implied author. Perhaps this provides a glimpse into the social *milieu* and the struggles that existed between various Christian communities. This was mostly due to the prominent place they granted to the Magdalene; it was especially true for those communities which placed a greater emphasis on her prominence over Peter.

3. Gender in the *Gos. Phil.*

Along with understanding the privileged position given to the Magdalene, it is also worth examining gender in the *Gos. Phil.* Gender is an issue that arises mostly through the bridal chamber motif. It appears that the spiritual marriage represents a union between male and female and therefore relates to a state of androgyny, where there is no longer a separation between male and female.[412] It is through Christ that male and female will no longer be separated.[413] The separation of male and female was caused by the fall of Eve, and is also related to the chaos that was brought about by Sophia when she conceived by herself. Here is what one reads in the *Gos. Phil.* 70.9-17:

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Ⲛⲉ ⲙ ⲡⲉ ⲧ ⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲉϥⲟⲟⲩⲧ ⲛⲉⲥⲛⲁⲙⲟⲩ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲫⲟⲟⲩⲧ
ⲡⲉϥⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϥ ⲱϣⲡⲉ ⲛ̄ⲁⲣⲭⲏ ⲙ̄ⲡⲙⲟⲩ ⲇⲓⲁ ⲧⲟⲩⲧⲟ ⲁⲡⲉⲭⲣ̄ⲥ̄ ⲉⲓ
ⲭⲉⲕⲁⲁⲥ ⲡⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁϩϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲭⲓⲛ ϣⲟⲣⲡ ⲉϥⲛⲁⲥⲉϩⲱϥ ⲉⲣⲁⲧϥ
ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ϥϩⲟⲧⲟⲣⲟⲩ ⲙ̄ⲡⲁⲥⲛⲁⲩ ⲁⲩⲱ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁϩⲙⲟⲩ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲉϥⲛⲁϯ
ⲛⲁⲩ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟⲩⲱⲛϩ ⲛ̄ϥϩⲟⲧⲣⲟⲩ ϣⲁⲣⲉ ⲧⲥϩⲓⲙⲉ ⲇⲉ ϩⲱⲧⲣ̄ ⲁⲡⲉⲥϩⲁⲉⲓ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈
ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲡⲁⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲛⲉⲛⲧⲁϩⲧⲣ̄ ⲇⲉ ϩⲙ̄ ⲡⲡⲁⲥⲧⲟⲥ ⲟⲩⲕⲉⲧⲓ ⲥⲉⲛⲁⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲇⲓⲁ
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[412] M. Scopello, "The Gospel of Philip," in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The Revised and Updated Translation of Sacred Gnostic Tests Complete in One Volume* (ed. M. Meyer, intro. E. Pagels; HarperOne, New York, 2007), 159.

[413] M. Scopello, "The Gospel of Philip," 159.

ⲦⲞⲨⲦⲞ ⲁⲉⲨⲍⲁ ⲡⲱⲣⲭ ⲁⲁⲇⲁⲙ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲧⲁⲥϩⲱⲧⲣ̄ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲁⲛ ϩⲙ̄
ⲡⲡⲁⲥ[ⲧⲟ]ⲥ

> If the female had not separated from the male, she would not die with the male.
> His separation became the beginning of the death. Because of this Christ came to
> repair to himself the separation which was from the beginning and again join the
> two, and he will give to those who died, because of the separation, their lives by
> joining them, but the wife is joined to her husband in the bridal chamber. Indeed
> those who have joined in the bridal chamber will no longer be separated. Eve
> separated from Adam because she did not join with him in the bridal chamber.[414]

Although the *Gos. Phil.* speaks of androgyny, it does so through the use of androcentric

ideology and language. It relates to the Genesis creation story where "death" was created

when Eve separated from Adam. In order to be restored Eve must return to Adam, the

female must return to the male. It then suggests that it is the female who has to go

through some kind of transformation. Although male and female will be united, it is the

fall of the female (Eve and Sophia) that needs to be corrected (68.23-27; 70.9-17), as it is

specifically indicated in the *Gos. Phil* 68.23-27:

> ⲛϩⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲉⲣⲉ ⲉⲩϩⲁ [ϩ]ⲛ̄ ⲁ[ⲇ]ⲁⲙ ⲛⲉ ⲙⲛ̄ ⲙⲟⲩ ϣⲟⲟⲡ ⲛⲧⲁⲣⲉⲥⲡⲱⲣⲭ
> [ⲉⲣ]ⲟϥ ⲁⲡⲙⲟⲩ ϣⲱⲡⲉ ⲡⲁⲗⲓⲛ ⲉϥϣⲁⲃⲱ[ⲕ ⲉϩ]ⲟⲩⲛ ⲛϥⲭⲓⲧϥ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲙⲛ̄
> ⲙⲟⲩ ⲛⲁϣⲱⲡⲉ

> In the days when Eve was within Adam death did not exist. When she was
> separated from him death came into being. If [she] again enters into him [and] he
> receives [her] death will no longer exist.[415]

If death was caused by Eve's fall, this means that it was ultimately the consequence of a

female's action. According to the *Gos. Phil.*, the bridal chamber corrects Eve's fall. This

clearly illustrates the androcentric mindset of the implied author and most of the intended

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[414] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Isenberg's translation. Isenberg "Tractate 3: The
Gospel According to Philip," 183.
[415] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Isenberg's translation. Isenberg "Tractate 3: The
Gospel According to Philip," 179.

audience. While androgyny typically speaks of gender equality, the language that is used to express this idea does not always do so. The *Gos. Phil.* is a clear example of this. The fact that the feminine is not specifically elevated in this gospel might provide an answer as to why Mary Magdalene is no longer mentioned in the text after 63.30-64.9.

4. Characterization and Conclusion

As the *Gos. Phil.* is a collection of sayings it lacks fully developed narratives making it sometimes difficult to interpret from a narrative critical perspective. It is still possible, however, to appreciate the value of Mary Magdalene as a character within this gospel. Although she is named twice in *Philip*, the Magdalene does not perform actions or engage in dialogue. Despite this, it is still possible to decipher aspects of her character in the two sayings where she appears. She is characterized through the titles given to her by the narrator, and through the words of Jesus.

In the first saying (*Gos. Phil.* 59.6-11), Mary is characterized through the narrative technique of "telling." This first part of this saying simply mentions Mary Magdalene, the mother, and her sister as followers of Jesus. Nothing is said about their character traits and none of them engage in a dialogue or interact with other personages. The second portion of this saying identifies Mary as being the feminine consort to Jesus and exemplifies unity and birth in Christ. She symbolically represents the mother, sister and consort of the earthly Jesus and is paralleled with Sophia, the heavenly consort of the Saviour.

The second saying that mentions Mary is slightly different (*Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9). Here she still does not engage in dialogue, nor does she interact with other

characters; however, she is characterized by the narrator, Jesus and the male disciples. It is not explicitly stated whether or not Mary Magdalene is actually present in this scene. The implied reader needs to fill in the gap and either assume that she is present when the disciples ask Jesus why he loves her (Mary) more or that she simply is absent from the scene.

In this passage, the narrator "tells" the narratee that Wisdom / Sophia is called "the barren" (ⲦⲤⲦⲒⲢⲀ) and that she is the companion of the Lord. He continues by indicating that the Magdalene is loved more than the other disciples and that Jesus used to kiss her often. This information about Mary and her relationship with Jesus is provided by the narrator. The disciples' question about her relationship to Jesus allows for the Lord to explain his love for Mary. Jesus' response characterizes Mary as knowing more and able to see what the others cannot.

In reading this passage, a modern female reader might identify and feel empathy with the Magdalene, a female disciple. The evaluative point of view of the narrator might also serve as a way to have the reader connect and feel empathy towards the Magdalene and antipathy towards the male disciples who question her role and relationship with Jesus. It is also possible for a reader to feel empathy with the disciples, as the reader him / herself can also question the relationship Mary has with Jesus. He / she might ask why Jesus has such a special relationship with Mary. The way the narrator characterizes Mary Magdalene shows how significant she is as a follower of Jesus, and that she perhaps had a privileged position above the male disciples.

As we have seen, both passages speak of companionship. In the first text (*Gos. Phil.*59.6-11), the meaning of (ⲔⲞⲒⲚⲰⲚⲞⲤ and ϨⲰⲦⲢⲈ) it is more symbolic. The

Magdalene is used to illustrate the manifestations of the spiritual syzygos of Christ. On the one hand, the implied reader can understand her to be a follower of Jesus, but on the other hand, the passage clearly has a polysemic meaning. In this context, the Magdalene is not to be taken as a historical figure, but as a representation of the feminine image of Sophia. In the second passage (*Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.9), the reference to "companion" (ⲔⲞⲒⲚⲰⲚⲞⲤ) is not given to Mary, but refers to Sophia.

In conclusion, the figure of Mary Magdalene in the *Gos. Phil.* is depicted as being among the women who walked with Jesus and had a privileged pre-resurrection position. After the resurrection, it appears that Mary no longer occupies this superior place among the male disciples, as male and female return to an androgynous and equal state in Christ. This gospel is not structured in a narrative way, and Mary Magdalene does not speak with Jesus or any other characters, nor does she perform any actions. Even if the *Gos. Phil.* is not constructed as a narrative, the implied reader can still understand Mary to be a follower of Jesus. She is paralleled with Sophia and is able to comprehend when others are filled with misunderstanding. Mary Magdalene is a recipient of spiritual revelation through the act of a kiss. She receives a great privilege as Jesus openly defends her and ultimately illustrates the true significance of unity in Christ.

The final text that we will examine is perhaps the most interesting, as it is a gospel that is titled after Mary Magdalene and a gospel where she is the protagonist. In the following chapter, a character analysis of Mary Magdalene in the *Gospel according to Mary* will illustrate the significance of Mary Magdalene within various early Christian communities.

Chapter Four:
The Magdalene in the *Gospel according to Mary*

The Coptic manuscript of the *Gos. Mary* was discovered in January 1986 in a Cairo marketplace.[416] There are three different manuscripts that contain portions of the *Gos. Mary*. The most substantial one is a Coptic manuscript referred to as Papyrus Berolinensis (BG) 8502 (Berlin Codex).[417] The *Gos. Mary* is found on the first eighteen and a quarter pages out of roughly one hundred and fifty two pages of the Berlin Codex,[418] which dates to the fifth century.[419]

1. Date and Composition

There are two other manuscripts that contain portions of this gospel. These are small Greek fragments known as the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus (POxy) 3525 and the Rylands Papyrus (PRyl) 463.[420] Although the largest manuscript that we now have is in Coptic (the BG 8502), it is believed that the original text was written in Greek. The two Greek fragments date to the second and third centuries. Because of the ideas and themes that are presented in the texts, along with evidence that these were copied on numerous occasions, C. Tuckett believes that the gospel was most likely written sometime in the second century.[421] The Greek fragments do not present substantial differences than what is found in the Coptic manuscript, although they contain a few interesting variant readings.[422] As with most ancient manuscripts, it is hard to determine the location where the text was

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[416] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 7.
[417] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 4-5.
[418] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 9.
[419] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 11.
[420] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 7-8.
[421] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 11.
[422] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala,* 9.

originally produced. Some scholars such as A. Pasquier have placed the origin of the text in Egypt,[423] while others speculate that the text would have originated in Syria.[424]

While some may classify this text as "Gnostic," other scholars, including K. King and A. Marjanen, have questioned the "Gnostic" elements of the *Gos. Mary*.[425]According to E. de Boer it seems that the *Gos. Mary* reflects Stoicism[426] more than it reflects "Gnosticism." She points out that this gospel does not have a creation myth, no mention of an evil demiurge and there is no "radical transcendence of God."[427] de Boer would argue that rather than illustrating platonic ideals, the *Gos. Mary* reflects many characteristics found in Stoic ideology. While there are problems with classifying the *Gos. Mary*,[428] as well as other texts, as being "Gnostic" C. Tuckett dedicates a section of his monograph to illustrating the "Gnostic" elements of the *Gos. Mary*.[429]

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[423] K. King, "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," in *Searching the Scriptures* (Vol. 2 of *A Feminist Commentary*; ed. E. Schüssler Fiorenza; New York: Cross Road, 1994), 628; A. Pasquier, *L'Évangile selon Marie* (Bibliothèque copte de Nag Hammadi. Section "Textes" 10) (rev. ed.; Quebec: Les Presses de l'Université Laval, 2007), fn. 55. 13.

[424] King, "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," 628.

[425] King, *The Gospel of Mary Magdala*, 171. In his monograph dedicated to the study of the figure of the Magdalene, Marjanen claimed that the *Gos. Mary* was in fact a "Gnostic" gospel (Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, fn. 1. 94), but in a more recent study, he has since retracted his previous conclusions. Marjanen no longer classifies the *Gos. Mary,* the *Gos. Thom.* and the *Dial. Sav.* as "Gnostic" texts because they "do not contain the idea of a cosmic world created by an evil and/or ignorant demiurge." Marjanen, "The Mother of Jesus or the Magdalene?" fn. 3. 32.

[426] Stoicism is a Greek philosophical school that believes that pain and death are not real and that "all human beings posses the divine spark of reason and must be treated accordingly and that it is our duty to promote a rational world order." J. Z. Smith, *The HarperCollins Dictionary of Religion* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1995), 1026.

[427] E. de Boer, "A Gnostic Mary in the Gospel of Mary?" *Coptic Studies on the Threshold of a New Millennium: Proceedings of the Seventh International Congress of Coptic Studies, August 27-September 2, 2000* (International Congress of Coptic Studies). (eds. M. Immerzeel and J. Van der Vliet; Leuven: Uitgeverij Peeters en Dep Oosterse Studies, 2004), 695, 699-708.

[428] The question of "Gnostic" elements in the *Gos. Mary* is partially rooted in recent scholarship where there is a question of "Gnosticism" itself and the texts that can be classified as such. For further information see A. Marjanen, *Was There a Gnostic Religion?* (Publications of the Finnish Exegetical School 87) (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2005). K. L. King, *What is Gnosticism?* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2003); M. A. Williams, *Rethinking "Gnosticism": An Argument For Dismantling a Dubious Category* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1996.

[429] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 42-54.

2. Is Mary really the Magdalene?

The colophon mentions this text as the *Gos. Mary.* Tuckett has addressed the issue with identifying which Mary this gospel is associated with, as the text does not refer to Mary as the Magdalene. Despite the fact that there are multiple "Marys" who had a close and significant relationship with Jesus – in particular Mary the mother of Jesus – most would conclude that the *Gos. Mary* can be identified with Mary Magdalene.[430] Some scholars have noted that "Mary the mother of Jesus is usually spelled Μαρία in Greek and ⲘⲀⲢⲒⲀ in Coptic."[431] In the *Gos. Mary*, and also in the colophon, the spelling is Μαριάμμη in Greek and ⲘⲀⲢⲒⳌⲀⲘ / ⲘⲀⲢⲒⳌⲀⲘⲘ in Coptic.[432] According to Shoemaker, there are problems with assuming that the text is about Mary Magdalene strictly because of the spelling of the name. There are examples in the canonical gospels where the opposite is true.[433]

Besides the spelling of the name "Mary," one of the main reasons why scholars have suggested that this gospel is related to the figure of the Magdalene is based on the language used to characterize Mary, and the relationship that she has with Peter. The conflict between Mary Magdalene and Peter found in other texts can surely contribute in identifying the "Mary" of this gospel.[434] As pointed out by Tuckett, the conflict between Mary and Peter truly becomes evident after the response given by Levi, who claims that there is a special relationship between Jesus and Mary. As we have seen, this is also found in the *Gos. Phil.*, where the disciples clearly state that Jesus and Mary Magdalene have a

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[430] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 15.
[431] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 63-64, 94-95; Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 15.
[432] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 15.
[433] Shoemaker, "A Case of Mistaken Identity," 11-12; Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 16. For further information see King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*," 56-57; de Boer, "The Gospel of Mary," 16-18; Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 14-18.
[434] *Gos. Thom.* 114; *Gos. Phil.* 63.30-64.10; *PistS* 36; 72.

unique relationship (*Gos. Phil.* 63.37-64.2). Tuckett has mentioned the similarities between the words of Levi in the *Gos. Mary* 18.14-15, which states that the saviour "loved her more than us," and those of the *Gos. Phil.* 63.34-5, where in reference to Mary Magdalene, it says that Jesus "Loved [her] more than (all) the disciples."[435] According to Marjanen, the similar idea that is expressed in these two passages suggests that the author of the *Gos. Mary* would have been familiar with the tradition found in the *Gos. Phil.*[436] Other elements suggesting that Mary is to be identified as the Magdalene in the *Gos. Mary* are the similarities with the Magdalene in John.

3. Comparative Analysis

There are elements in the *Gos. Mary* that can be compared to other texts. These comparisons show how some of these ideas were so much engrained in the early communities, that they made their way into a variety of texts. While there seems to be many parallels with the *Gos. Mary* and the New Testament, in this study we will only focus on the development of the tradition which involves the character of the Magdalene.[437]

Before delving into a character analysis of Mary, it is first important to take into consideration how the *Gos. Mary* expands on the New Testament tradition. Mary and her character traits in this gospel are not entirely unique as a comparison with the New Testament gospels will show. In the *Gos. Mary*, the Magdalene says she has seen the Lord (*Gos. Mary* 10.11). This is very similar to John 20.14-15 where Mary Magdalene is the

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[435] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 16.
[436] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 95.
[437] For further information of the parallels between the New Testament and the *Gospel according to Mary* see Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 55-74.

first disciple to see the risen Jesus. The difference between John and the *Gos. Mary* lies in the recognition of the Lord. In the Johannine gospel, Mary does not recognize the Lord (John 20.14-15). This is a contrast to what we find in the *Gos. Mary* where there is no longer an element of misunderstanding, as the Magdalene is clearly able to identify the Lord (*Gos. Mary* 10.12-13). In both gospels, however, Mary reports to the disciples that she has seen the Lord (*Gos. Mary* 10.11; John 20.18). It is also worth noting that in both gospels, Mary refers to Jesus as Lord (John 20.2, 18; *Gos. Mary* 10.11,12, 17). The fact that she refers to Jesus as the Lord in the gospel attributed to her name is particularly interesting, because elsewhere in this text, Jesus is referred to as the Saviour. It therefore seems to be a clear echo of what is found in John.

 In both narratives, Mary sees the risen Lord and has a conversation with him. There, he reveals to her information which she is to pass onto the other disciples (John 20.14-17; *Gos. Mary* 10.1-17.9). As we can see, this post-resurrection encounter between Mary and Jesus seems to have made its way into various Christian traditions.

Another connection between the two texts is Mary's weeping. Her action (*Gos. Mary* 18.1) can be paralleled with John 20.11-13a, where she is also characterized as weeping.[438] The weeping of the disciples in the *Gos. Mary* 9.5 can also be compared to the weeping of Mary in John 20.11-13a. In the Johannine tradition, Mary is weeping because she is unstable and does not yet understand what has happened to Jesus. In the *Gos. Mary* the disciples are weeping because they are unstable and do not know what to do now that the Saviour has left them. In both these gospels, Mary is depicted as weeping; however, there seems to be a progression. In John, Mary is weeping because she misunderstands what has happened to the body of the Lord, but in the *Gos. Mary,* she is

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[438] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 17-18.

weeping because she is being attacked and is saddened that Peter and Andrew do not understand the message that she has revealed. It then appears that the motif of Mary's weeping developed from a negative perspective to a more positive one as she has now reached a higher understanding.

There is another connection with John: Mary also receives private instruction from Jesus.[439] In the Johannine tradition, Jesus asks Mary to go forth and tell the disciples what she has seen and heard (John 20.17). While there is no explicit comparison in the *Gos. Mary*, the command by the Saviour is implicitly mentioned. Mary is able to turn the hearts of the disciples to the "Good" (*Gos. Mary* 9.21), and she states that what she is about to tell the disciples is hidden (*Gos. Mary* 10.8). Mary also reveals the message received and her close relationship with the Saviour is mentioned on three occasions (*Gos. Mary* 10.2-3; 17.22; 18.13-15a). This then implies that the Saviour revealed his message to Mary so that she would pass it onto the other disciples. This is quite similar to her role in John.[440]

Another interesting comparison that can be made between the *Gos. Mary* and the New Testament lies in the hostility of Peter and Andrew towards Mary (*Gos. Mary* 17.14-20). Andrew claims that Mary is lying and Peter also questions the reliability of what she has revealed. This seems to be similar to what we find in Luke (Luke 24.11-12). Here the disciples do not believe Mary and the other women's account of the empty tomb, leaving Peter to go to the tomb to see for himself. In John, Peter and the Beloved Disciple do not doubt Mary, but they rush to the tomb to validate what she had reported to them (John 20.3). In the *Gos. Mary*, the male disciples (Peter and Andrew) do not validate Mary's

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[439] John 20.15-17; *Gos. Mary* 10.8-17.7a.
[440] For a comparison between the portrayal of Mary in the New Testament compared to the *Gos. Mary*, see de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 191-99.

revelation; however, her revelation is still authenticated by a male character, as Levi defends Mary by reinstating what she had said (*Gos. Mary* 18.6-15a).

The statements made by Peter and Levi regarding the special relationship that Mary has with Jesus, claiming that she is loved more (*Gos. Mary* 10.1-2; 18.14-15), have close connections with the *Gos. Phil.*, which also emphasizes Jesus' love for her (*Gos. Philip* 63.30-64.9). As previously stated, being loved more than the others does not have any sexual connotation, and in both gospels it seems to illustrate the significant role which Mary occupied amongst the disciples. Along with the *Gos. Phil.*, the tradition which shows that Jesus had a favourite disciple seems to have close parallels with the Beloved Disciple motif.[441] Like the Beloved Disciple in John, Mary, in the gospel attributed to her, is the one who correctly receives the message and passes it on.[442]

The hostility that exists between Mary and Peter in the *Gos. Mary* is also found in other texts such as the *PistS* (36; 72)[443] and the *Gos. Thom.* (*logion* 114). In *PistS*, Mary is actually frightened by Peter (*PistS* 72) and in the *Gos. Thom.*, Peter does not believe that Mary and women are worthy of life (*logion* 114). In the *Gos. Mary*, Peter also suggests that she is lying and does not believe that the Saviour would reveal a message to a woman. With these texts being written and in circulation by the second and third centuries, it becomes apparent that characterizing Mary and Peter as being in conflict with each other was a well known tradition.

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[441] John13.23; 19.26; 20.2-10; 21.7, 20-4.
[442] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 192; Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 116; de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 183-90.
[443] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 18.

4. Source and Redaction Criticism

Even if we will never be able to know exactly which sources the author / compiler used, it is important to understand as best as possible, the similarities and differences between the *Gos. Mary* and the New Testament. According to Tuckett, there are many parallels that suggest a dependency on the canonical gospels. These parallels include themes, language, and the teachings of Jesus.[444] Marjanen has noted that the "complicated structure and contents of the writing have raised doubts about its literary coherence."[445] Marjanen points to the works of Till and Puech[446] who have both concluded that the fact that Mary is not present in the beginning of the narrative, might suggest that the gospel originally consisted of two works that were fused together by a later redactor.[447] According to this theory, the first section (*Gos. Mary* 7.1-9, 5) may have been part of a dialogue with Jesus and his disciples, while the second section was a "revelation discourse of Mary in which she informs the male disciples of a vision during which she received a secret teaching from the Saviour (10,1ff)."[448] If this is the case, it seems that the redactor connected the two sections by placing the figure of Mary Magdalene at the end of the first section.[449]

Although Till and Puech's arguments are valuable, they are not without fault and Marjanen is quick to criticize their conclusions. He states that there are two main issues

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[444] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 55-74.
[445] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 100.
[446] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, fn. 29, 30. 100; W. C. Till, *Die gnostischen Schriften des koptischen Papyrus Berolinensis 8502* (TU 60; Berlin: Alademie-Verlag), 25-26; H.-Ch. Puech, "Gnostiche Evangelien und verwandte Dokumente," in *Neutestamentliche Apokryphen in deutscher Überestzung* I Band: Evangelien 3; völlig neubarbeitet Auflage; (eds E. Hennecke and W. Schneemelcher; Tübingen; J. C. B. Mohr [Paul Siebcek] 1959), 251-255.
[447] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 100; de Boer, *Mary Magdalen: Beyond the Myth*, 93.
[448] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 100.
[449] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 101.

that need to be addressed. The first issue concerns the time when Mary enters the narrative. The fact that she is not previously mentioned and is only now recorded as standing up and addressing the disciples (*Gos. Mary* 9.12-14), is not sufficient to assume that she was not already present amongst the group of disciples in the previous passages. We can argue that this is simply the first time that the narrative has explicitly mentioned her.[450] The idea that Mary Magdalene is present in the text without being explicitly mentioned can also be seen in the *PistS* 38.15-17. Marjanen has pointed out that Mary's speech in the *PistS* is very similar to the one found in the *Gos. Mary* and "does not by any means indicate that Mary was not present in the narrative before that moment."[451] One must also take into consideration the missing pages of the gospel, making it very possible that Mary was mentioned in an earlier section of the text.

Another interesting approach to understanding the literary unity of the *Gos. Mary* is taken up by A. Pasquier.[452] According to her, the literary unity of the text can be understood from examining the relationship that exists between Mary Magdalene and Peter. According to Pasquier the hostility that exists between these two characters (*Gos. Mary* 17.16-22) is not evident in the beginning of the gospel (*Gos. Mary* 10.1-6). For Pasquier, Mary's speech regarding the Saviour in 9.22 is related to the hostility of Peter in 17.16-22; it is thus a secondary edition to the text.[453] According to Marjanen, Pasquier states that "in the pre-redactional version of the gospel, it is the theme of the androgynous unity as the goal of salvation (9.19-20) which provokes Peter's negative reaction to

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[450] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 101-102.
[451] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, fn. 35. 102.
[452] Pasquier, *L'Évangile selon Marie*, 7-10; 96-101; Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 102.
[453] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 102-103; Pasquier *L'Évangile selon Marie*, 7-10; 96-101. Also See de Boer, *Mary Magdalene: Beyond the Myth*, 87-89.

Mary's words."[454] Although Pasquier's hypothesis seems plausible, there are clear problems with her conclusion. Marjanen disagrees with Pasquier's theory that 9.14-20 is connected with 17.16-22. Instead, Peter's comments are better suited for Mary's discourse in 10.8.[455] For Marjanen, these theories are not conducive enough to suggest an entire redactional theory.[456]

Marjanen's analysis which understands the hostility of the two characters as being an element of plot development, seems to be a more logical and likely solution rather than providing a redactional explanation. This is explicated by claiming that Peter and Andrew's attack on Mary is caused by the apparent challenge to the authority of the male disciples, as it appears that Jesus has a greater love for Mary than for the others, male or female.[457]

5. *Gos. Mary* 9.5-10.23; 15.1-17.22

Gos. Mary 9.5-24

This section of the gospel is significant as it sets the stage for Mary Magdalene. In this scene the Saviour departs and has left the disciples in a state of confusion and despair as they fear they will suffer the same brutal outcome as the Saviour. It is in this scene that Mary Magdalene is introduced and rises to the occasion as a comforter and leader to the disciples. Once the Magdalene comforts the disciples she is then approached by Peter to share with them what she knows about the Saviour.

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[454] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 103.
[455] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, fn. 38. 103; Pasquier, *L'Evangile selon Marie*, 7-10; 96-101; de Boer "The Gospel of Mary," 94.
[456] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 103.
[457] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 104. Also see Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 178.

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ⲈⲨϪⲰ ⲘⲘⲞⲤ ϪⲈ ⲚⲚⲀϢ ⲚⲞ̄ϨⲈ ⲈⲚⲚⲀⲂⲰⲔ ϢⲀ ⲚϨⲈⲐⲚⲞⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲚ̄ⲦⲀϢⲈⲞⲈⲒϢ
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ⲀⲨⲢ̄ⲀⲢⲬⲈ [ⲤⲐⲀⲒ] Ⲛ̄ⲢⲄⲨⲘ[Ⲛ]ⲀⲌⲈ ϨⲀ ⲠⲢⲀ ⲚⲚ̄ϢⲀ[462] [ϪⲈ] Ⲙ̄Ⲡ̄[ⲤⲰⲢ]

When he had said this, he departed. But they were grieved, and they wept greatly saying, "How will we go to the Gentiles and how will we proclaim the Gospel of the kingdom of the Son of Man? If they did not spare him, how will they spare us?" Then Mary arose, greeted[463] all of them and said to her brothers "do not weep and do not grieve and may your hearts not be divided (or double) for his grace will be with you wholly and will protect you. But rather let us praise his greatness, for he prepared us and made us human beings.' When Mary said these things, she turned their hearts toward the good and they began to argue about the words of the Saviour.[464]

Gos. Mary 10.1-15

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ⲚⲀ·Ï·ⲀⲦⲈ ϪⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈⲔⲒⲘ ⲀⲚ ⲈⲢⲈⲚⲀⲨ ⲈⲢⲞⲈⲒ

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[458] POxy 3525 has "κατεφιλησε" (kissed). According to Luhrmann and Tuckett the Greek line most likely originally had ασπαζομεν αυτουσ καταφιλησε, meaning greeted and kissed (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 121), although this does not seem to change the meaning.

[459] This can be literally translated as "having two hearts", "or double minded." POxy 3525 reads διστaζεἰ, which means "doubtful."

[460] It should be noted that the Greek verb that is used is συνηρτηκεν, which means "to untie" (POxy 3535 line 12) (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 121).

[461] ⲢⲰⲘⲈ is literally translated as "man", but in the gospel there is a sense of inclusion and Mary is likely including herself in this statement, therefore, it is possible to translate it as "human beings."

[462] POxy 3525 reads αποφθεγματων which is an easier reading, and most likely represents a more original reading (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 122).

[463] ⲀⲤⲠⲀⲌⲈ can also be translated as kiss, therefore it is possible to translate it as: Then Mary rose and kissed all of the….

[464] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Tuckett's translation. (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 91).

[465] In the Coptic Mary states that she will reveal what is hidden, in the Greek she says that she will reveal what is unknown (λανθαει)

> Peter said to Mary "Sister we know that the Saviour loved you more than the rest of women. Tell us the words of the Saviour which you remember, those that you know but we do not, and that we have not heard." Mary said "that which is hidden from you, I will tell you" and she began to speak to them these words "I" she said, "I saw the Lord in a vision and I said to him Lord I saw you in a vision today. He answered and said to me: "Blessed you are for you did not waver when you saw me.[466]

In this section of the gospel, the disciples do not seem to understand the words of the Saviour and become so deeply concerned that they weep (*Gos. Mary* 9.6). The disciples are weeping and distressed because they do not know how they are going to be able to preach the gospel message to the Gentiles, without being harmed or killed (*Gos. Mary* 9.7-12) and ultimately suffering the same fate as the Saviour. After the narrative mentions the weeping disciples, Mary Magdalene enters the scene, she stands up / arises (ⲧⲱⲟⲩⲛ), and greets (or kisses) them all (ⲁⲥⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ ⲙⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ; *Gos. Mary* 9.12-22). The fact that the first six pages of the gospel are missing makes it very hard to determine the exact moment when Mary enters the scene. Using the manuscripts that we have, we can conclude that Mary was with the disciples when the Saviour spoke before he departed, even if she is not explicitly mentioned.

Mary speaks to the disciples in an attempt to calm them, as well as to ensure that they understand what is being asked of them by the Saviour (*Gos. Mary* 9.13-20). She asks the disciples not to weep, not to grieve, and not to be irresolute "ⲙ̄ⲡⲣ̄ⲣ̄ ⳩ⲏⲧ̣ ⲥⲛⲁⲩ" (having two hearts, double minded, to be doubtful;[467] *Gos. Mary* 9.15-16). While the male disciples might be viewed as being less spiritually conscious (as they are weeping for not understanding what has been asked of them), Mary Magdalene is depicted as one who is

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[466] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Tuckett's translation. (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 93).

[467] J. Azevedo, ed., "ⲥⲛⲁⲩ," *A Simplified Coptic Dictionary (Sahidic Dialect)* (Centro de Pesquisa de Literatura Biblica 1; Seminario Adventista Latino-Americano de Teologia, 2001), 89; "⳩ⲏⲧ,"151-152.

able to make the disciples understand. She is more spiritually stable, since she is not weeping.

In this section of the gospel, Mary tells the disciples how Jesus has prepared them and made them human beings (*Gos. Mary* 9.20). After Mary addresses the disciples, their hearts are turned to the "Good" and the disciples begin to discuss (or argue about) the words of the Saviour, bearing in mind the words of Mary (*Gos. Mary* 9.21-22). In this passage, Mary Magdalene's goal is to guide the disciples in finding the new path.[468] The fact that she says they have all been made human beings (ⲚⲢⲰⲘⲈ, *Gos. Mary* 9.20) is particularly interesting, since she includes herself in this statement. This implies that she is equal to the male disciples and that women do not have to become men in order to reach salvation.[469]

After the disciple's hearts are turned, they begin to discuss (or argue) amongst themselves and re-evaluate the words of the Saviour (*Gos. Mary* 9.23-24). It is important to note that there does not seem to be any hostility towards Mary at this point. Peter then invites Mary to speak and calls her "sister" (ⲤⲰⲚⲈ; *Gos. Mary* 10.1-6). This title suggests that Peter considers her to be a believer, even a disciple. He definitely considers her as part of the group. Peter's invitation also suggests that there is no hostility between him and Mary and that thus far, he believes in what she has to say. It is interesting to note that Peter claims that Mary is loved more than the other women, not that she is loved more than the male disciples (*Gos. Mary* 10.6). Although Peter might not believe that Mary was loved more than the male disciples, he asks her to reveal what has been spoken

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[468] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 111.
[469] This appears to contrast what is found in *Gos. Thom.* 114.

to her and not the others. Peter's invitation for her to speak (*Gos. Mary*10.2-3) may be an attempt to validate the discourse by a female character.

After this, Mary tells the disciples that which is unknown to them. She will reveal what has been hidden from them (*Gos. Mary* 10.7-8). This suggests that she probably had private and intimate conversations with the Saviour. Mary's revelation to the disciples concerns a vision she had of the Saviour. Unfortunately, we are missing four pages of this revelation, leaving the full content of the vision unknown.

Mary begins the revelation by explaining that she saw the Saviour in a vision. This is significant because she recognizes the Saviour right away and refers to him as Lord (*Gos. Mary* 1010-13). As mentioned previously, this is similar to John 20.14-15 where Mary sees the Lord, but does not recognize him. In her vision, Mary does not waver (ⲚⲦⲈⲔⲒⲘ ⲀⲚ)[470] when she sees him (*Gos. Mary* 10.13-15). This is why Mary is praised by the Saviour and is called blessed (*Gos. Mary* 10.14). Being called "blessed" is interesting because the narrator also refers to the Saviour as the Blessed one (*Gos. Mary* 10.12). Mary's lack of movement can be contrasted with the instability of the disciples who weep when the Saviour leaves.[471]

At the end of her revelation, the narrator says that Mary fell silent (ⲀⲤⲔⲀ; *Gos. Mary* 17.7-8). There is a significant amount of debate as to what this silence means. Some have suggested that Mary fell silent because she was finished revealing all that had been shown to her. Others suggest that the soul's final act is silence, and thus Mary is

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[470] For a more in-depth analysis of Mary's lack of wavering see de Boer, *Gospel of Mary*, 75-6.
[471] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 77.

mimicking the soul's final act.[472] The latter would suggest that Mary truly is at a higher level of understanding than the rest of the disciples. Whichever way the narrator's statement is to be interpreted, Mary is positively characterized. Mary is either characterized as revealing to the disciples what the Saviour had told her or she is characterized as not only revealing the Saviour's message, but as understanding the content of the revelation and the soul's act of silence.

From this scene we can conclude that the disciples are unstable, Peter considers Mary to be a fellow disciple or at least a part of the group, and values her enough by asking her to speak about the knowledge that she possesses. Mary is calm and stable and the author explicitly states that she is able to calm/turn the hearts of the disciples when they are weeping. Mary is praised by the Saviour and is called blessed. She also takes on the role of revealer, as she tells the disciples what has been hidden (ⲡⲉⲑⲏⲡ). By the end of this scene, Mary is positively characterized and her position as a leader and an authority figure is clearly stated.

Gos. Mary 17.7-22

In this section of the gospel, Peter and Andrew respond to Mary's vision. It is in this passage that Mary's reliability is questioned.

ⲛⲧⲉⲣⲉⲙⲁⲣⲓⲍⲁⲙ ⲭⲉ ⲛⲁⲓ ⲁⲥⲕⲁ ⲣⲱⲥ ϩⲱⲥⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲧⲁⲡ̄ⲥⲱ̄ⲣ ⲱⲁⲭⲉ ⲛⲙ̄ⲙⲁⲥ[473] ⲱⲁ ⲡⲉⲉⲓⲙⲁ ⲁϥⲟⲩⲱⲱⲃ̄ ⲇⲉ ⲛ̄ϭⲓ ⲁⲛⲇⲣⲉⲁⲥ[474] ⲡⲉⲭⲁϥ

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[472] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 185; K. King, "The Gospel of Mary with the Greek Gospel of Mary," *The Nag Hammadi Library in English* (3rd ed.; ed. M. Meyer; San Francisco: Harper and Row, 2007), fn. 38. 744.

[473] Tuckett suggests that it is possible that the Greek (PRyl 463) might suggest that the Saviour was speaking through Mary instead of with her (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 124). PRyl 463 (21.4-5) reads ως του σωτηνρος μερχι ωδε ειρηκοτος which can be translated as "since the Saviour up to now had spoken." The Coptic ⲛⲙⲙⲁⲥ translates "with her" (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 124).

ⲚⲚⲈⲤⲚⲎⲨ[475] ϪⲈ ⲀϪⲒ ⲠⲈⲦⲈⲦⲚ̄ϪⲰ ⲘⲘⲞϥ ϨⲀ ⲠⲢⲀ Ⲛ̄ⲚⲈⲚⲦⲀⲤϪ[Ⲟ]ⲞⲨ
ⲀⲚⲞⲔ ⲘⲈⲚ ⲦⲠ̄ⲠⲒⲤⲦⲈⲨⲈ ⲀⲚ ϪⲈ ⲀⲠⲤⲰ̄Ⲣ ϪⲈ ⲚⲀⲒ ⲈϢϪⲈ ⲚⲒⲤⲂⲞⲞⲨⲈ ⲄⲀⲢ
ϨⲚⲔⲈⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ ⲚⲈ ⲀϥⲞⲨⲰ[476] ϢⲂ̄ Ⲛ̄Ϭ ⲠⲈⲦⲢⲞⲤ[477] ⲠⲈϪⲀϥ ϨⲀ ⲠⲢⲀ
ⲚⲚⲈⲈⲒϨⲂⲎⲨⲈ ⲚⲦⲈⲈⲒⲘⲒⲚⲈ ⲀϥϪⲚⲞⲨⲞⲨ ⲈⲦⲂⲈ ⲠⲤⲰ̄Ⲣ ϪⲈ ⲘⲎⲦⲒ ⲀϥϢⲀϪⲈ
ⲘⲚ̄ ⲞⲨⲤϨⲒⲘⲈ Ⲛ̄ϪⲒⲞⲨⲈ ⲈⲢⲞⲚ ϨⲚ <ⲞⲨ> ⲞⲨⲰⲚϨ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ⲀⲚ ⲈⲚⲚⲀ ⲔⲦⲞⲚ
ϨⲰⲰⲚ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲚ̄ⲤⲰⲦⲘ̄ ⲦⲎⲢⲚ̄ ⲚⲤⲰⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲀϥⲤⲞⲦⲠⲤ Ⲛ̄ϨⲞⲨⲞ ⲈⲢⲞⲚ

After Mary had said this, she fell silent; this is how the Saviour had spoken with her up until then. But Andrew answered and said to his brothers "Speak up," what do you think about what she has said? I myself do not believe that the Saviour said this, for it seems, that these teachings are different in thought." Peter answered and spoke of these sorts of things He asked them about the Saviour. "Did he speak with a woman without our knowing and not openly? Shall we turn around and all listen to her? Did he choose her in preference to us?"[478]

After Mary reports her vision to the disciples, she is faced with some harsh comments by

Peter and Andrew. Andrew claims that Mary's "teachings are different in thought"

(ⲚⲒⲤⲂⲞⲞⲨⲈ ⲄⲀⲢ ϨⲚⲔⲈⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ ⲚⲈ ⲀϥⲞⲨⲰ) and accuses her of lying (*Gos. Mary*

17.14-15). It can be assumed that Andrew believes that the teachings of the Magdalene

are strange when compared to the teachings of the Saviour – which were most likely at the

beginning of the gospel; however, the document is too fragmented to make a

"comprehensive comparison between Jesus' and Mary's teaching."[479] While Andrew does

not agree with or fully understands Mary's revelation, Peter's response to Mary is all

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[474] PRyl 463 (21.5-6) reads τι υμειν δοκει which translates "what do you think?" This is different from the Coptic, although it does not completely change the meaning of the passage (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 124).

[475] PRyl 463 (21.5) reads αδελφοι instead of **ⲠⲈϪϪⲀϥ ⲚⲚⲈⲤⲚⲎⲨ**. In the Greek the address to the brothers is spoken by Andrew himself, in the Coptic (BG 17.11) the narrator is telling the reader that Andrew was addressing the brothers.

[476] There is an interesting variant reading in lines 13-15. The Greek says 'views that differ from his [Saviour's] thought' (PRyl 463 lines 9-11). This is interesting because it is more direct than the Coptic where the reader has to assume that Andrew is speaking about the Saviour's teachings. Tuckett mentions that διανοια is not complete in the manuscript as only νοια is legible; however, the preferred reading is διανοια (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, fn. 16 125).

[477] In PRyl 463 (21.11) Peter is not mentioned in the narrative instead it is Andrew who continues speaking. The Coptic text is considered to be closer to the original as Levi's response is addressed to Peter in both the Coptic and PRyl 463 (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 126).

[478] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Tuckett's translation. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 99

[479] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 113.

together different from Andrew. In the text it appears that Peter is not really concerned with her teaching but more with the fact that Mary, a woman, received the revelation (*Gos. Mary* 17.20).[480] As we recall, Peter did not have an issue with Mary at the beginning, when he invited her to speak (*Gos. Mary* 10.5). But at this point in the narrative, Peter views her as a woman who should not have the privilege of knowing the hidden message of the Saviour, especially one that was revealed privately.[481]

At the end of Mary's discourse, Peter's frustration is revealed when he realizes why she was chosen to be the sole female individual to receive the revelation of the Saviour.[482] It is because the Saviour loved her more than him and the others. This realization suggests that Mary Magdalene is not simply the favourite amongst the women (*Gos. Mary* 10.1-3) but that she is the favourite amongst the female and the male disciples. Mary's gender, wisdom and leadership are evident. Peter seems to be disagreeing with Mary because of her privileged status. The fact is that Peter's gender status is lowered because of a woman. By questioning her gender, this suggests that Peter might have believed the revelation if it had come from one of the male disciples. A modern female reader might hope for a strong verbal defence on the part of Mary. Rather, there seems to be power in Mary's silence. She does not defend herself, knowing that gender is not the real issue. The problem lies with Peter and Andrew's apparent lack of understanding.

Peter's question about the Saviour's preference for Mary shows that Jesus and the Magdalene did have a close relationship. If Mary were lying, she would be turning away

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[480] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 114. Also see King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*" 61.
[481] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 114; Tuckett, 168.
[482] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 114; King states that Peter was jealous and could not see beyond Mary's physical body, King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*," 61.

from the "Good." This would counteract her actions at the beginning of the gospel where she is given the ability to turn the disciple's hearts to the "Good" (*Gos. Mary* 9.21-22).

Peter's reaction is sharply contrasted with what was presented earlier in the gospel. If Peter and Andrew's hearts were turned at the beginning, here, their opposition to Mary would suggest the opposite.[483] Some have seen this change of heart as redactional, while others understand this to be part of plot development. Peter's reactions and attitude may be the result of jealousy and fear over Mary replacing him and be given his position of authority.[484]

6. *Gos. Mary* 18.1-22

This section of the gospel is significant as it is in this scene that Mary is defended by Levi and where the reader understands the value of Mary's words as well as her role within the macro narrative.

ⲦⲞⲦⲈ ⲁ[Ⲙ]ⲀⲢⲒϨⲀⲘ ⲢⲒⲘⲈ ⲠⲈⲬⲀⲤ Ⲙ̄ ⲠⲈⲦⲢⲞⲤ ⲠⲀⲤⲞⲚ ⲠⲈⲦⲢⲈ ϨⲒⲈ
ⲈⲔⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ ⲈⲞⲨ ⲈⲔⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ ⲬⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲀⲒ̈ⲘⲈⲈⲨⲈ ⲈⲢⲞⲞⲨ ⲘⲀⲨⲀⲀⲦ ϨⲘ̄ ⲠⲀϨⲎⲦ
Ⲏ ⲈⲈⲒϪⲒ ⲂⲞⲖ ⲈⲠⲤⲱⲢ ⲀϤⲞⲨⲰϢⲂ̄ Ⲛ̄ϬⲒ ⲖⲈⲄⲈⲒ ⲠⲈⲬⲀϤ ⲘⲠⲈⲦⲢⲞ'Ⲥ' ⲬⲈ
ⲠⲈⲦⲢⲈ ϪⲒⲚ ⲈⲚⲈϨ ⲔϢⲞⲠ Ⲛ̄ⲢⲈϤⲚⲞⲨϬⲤ †ⲚⲀⲨ ⲈⲢⲞⲔ ⲦⲈⲚⲞⲨ
ⲈⲔⲢ̄ⲄⲨⲘⲚⲀⲌⲈ ⲈϨⲚ ⲦⲈⲤϨⲒ̈ⲘⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲐⲈ Ⲛ̄ ⲚⲒⲀⲚⲦⲒⲔⲈⲒⲘⲈⲚⲞⲤ ⲈϢϪⲈ ⲀⲠⲤⲰⲦⲎⲢ
ⲆⲈ ⲀⲀⲤ ⲚⲀⲌ̄ⲒⲞⲤ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲔ ⲚⲒⲘ ⲆⲈ ϨⲰⲰⲔ ⲈⲚⲞϪⲤ ⲈⲂⲞⲖ ⲠⲀⲚⲦⲰ'Ⲥ'
ⲈⲢⲈⲠⲤⲰⲦⲎⲢ ⲤⲞⲞⲨⲚ Ⲙ̄ⲘⲞⲤ ⲀⲤⲪⲀⲖⲰⲤ ⲈⲦⲂⲈ ⲠⲀⲒ̈ ⲀϤⲞⲨⲞϢϤ̄[485] Ⲛ̄ϨⲞⲨⲞ
ⲈⲢⲞⲚ ⲘⲀⲖⲖⲞⲚ ⲘⲀⲢⲚ̄ϢⲒⲠⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲚ̄† ϨⲒⲰⲰⲚ ⲘⲠⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲚⲦⲈⲖⲒⲞⲤ
ⲚⲦⲚ̄ϪⲠⲞϤ ⲚⲀⲚ ⲔⲀⲦⲀ ⲐⲈ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲀϤϨⲰⲚ ⲈⲦⲞⲞⲦⲚ̄ Ⲛ̄ⲦⲚ̄ⲦⲀϢⲈⲞⲈⲒϢ
ⲘⲠⲈⲨⲀⲄⲄⲈⲖⲒⲞⲚ ⲈⲚⲔⲰ ⲀⲚ ⲈϨⲢⲀⲒ̈ ⲚⲔⲈϨⲞⲢⲞⲤ ⲞⲨⲆⲈ Ⲕ̲ⲈⲚⲞⲘⲞⲤ ⲠⲀⲢⲀ
ⲠⲈⲚⲦⲀⲠ̄Ⲥ̄Ⲱ̄Ⲣ ϪⲞⲞϤ [Ⲛ̄ⲦⲈⲢⲈ][486]

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[483] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 168.

[484] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 115.

[485] The Greek simply reads "he loved her." (PRyl 7-8) The Coptic may be more original as it is related to Peter's statement earlier in the Gospel (10.1-3)

[486] This passage is interesting because in the Greek, Levi states that no rules or laws shall be laid down (PRyl 463 22.13-14) but in the Coptic there is a sense that some laws will be laid down, but only the same ones that the Saviour established (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 130-132). It is hard to determine which may reflect an earlier tradition. It is possible that the Greek is more difficult and maybe earlier but it is very difficult to say for certain (Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, fn. 23. 130-132; King, "The Gospel of Mary Magdalene," 617).

> Then Mary wept. She said to Peter "My brother Peter, what then are you thinking? Do you think that I thought this up in my own heart or that I am lying about the Saviour?" Levi answered and said to Peter "Peter, you are always a wrathful person. Now I see you are arguing with the woman like the adversaries. But if the Saviour made her worthy, who are you to be against her? The Saviour knows her unswervingly. That is why he loved her more than us. Let us rather be ashamed and put on (or, cloth) the perfect man and beget him (or, bring him forth) for ourselves as he commanded us, and proclaim the gospel not laying down any rule or law beyond what the Saviour said.[487]

An interesting aspect of this passage is the way Mary responds to Peter and Andrew (*Gos. Mary* 18.2-5). Marjanen claims that Mary does not understand why "her integrity and reliability as a witness can be questioned in such a way as is done by Andrew and Peter."[488] Perhaps Mary's weeping is to be contrasted with the male disciples who wept over the loss of Jesus, since it is possible that her weeping is caused by the disciples' apparent misunderstanding. Maybe Mary fears that they will not know the truths that she knows. Or perhaps her weeping illustrates that she is not perfect and she is not to be perceived as such.[489] Mary responds by asking Peter if he thinks she fabricated such a story and lied about the Saviour (*Gos. Mary* 18.1-5). It is important to note Mary's speech, because it illustrates that even after being attacked by two male disciples, she speaks instead of falling silent. There are usually very few speeches attributed to women in biblical narratives. Her words demonstrate the value the author has for Mary and her role in this gospel.

Despite the way Peter and Andrew react to Mary and her revelation, Levi responds in a completely different manner. It seems that Levi accepts Mary's revelation. He clearly says that her worthiness (ⲚⲀⲌⲒⲞⲤ; *Gos. Mary* 18.11) is the reason why Jesus loves her

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[487] The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Tuckett's translation. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 100.

[488] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 115.

[489] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 189.

more than the rest. Levi not only disagrees with Peter and Andrew, but he defends Mary by calling Peter "a wrathful person" (ⲚⲢⲉϥⲚⲞⲨϬⲤ) and accuses him of acting like the adversaries.[490] King believes the reason why Peter was chosen as a character is because he was known as being "full of bluster and misunderstanding."[491] The defence given by Levi clearly illustrates that he does not have an issue with Mary's gender.

7. Summary of the characterization of Mary

Now that we have examined the narratives in which Mary is present, what can we conclude about her? We can first say that she is the protagonist of the narrative. She is the central character who fulfills the plot and ensures the message reaches the disciples and the readers. Secondly, we can conclude that she has a relationship with the male characters that aid in plot development, throughout the macro-narrative. At certain points in the narrative the reader feels empathy with Mary as he / she connects with her, and at other times the reader may feel sympathy for her, when she is being attacked by Peter and Andrew. Mary and the narrator both hold a superior point of view to that of the reader and the disciples, since they know the content of her revelation and its meaning, before the reader is fully convinced.

Mary is characterized as being loved more than any other woman (*Gos. Mary* 10.2-3). Levi sees Mary as being loved more than the others, as she has been made worthy. Peter also questions if she was preferred more than the rest. Mary is also a revealer (*Gos. Mary* 10.7-23; 15.1-17.7). She reveals what has been hidden or unknown to the disciples. This can be contrasted to the *Gos. Thom.* 21. Therein, Mary is characterized as not having

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[490] Referring to Peter as a wrathful person / hot tempered can be compared to Mk 8:31-3; 14:29-31, 66-72, MT 14.28-31. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 19.
[491] King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*," 71-72.

a full understanding of discipleship. While she is defended in the *Gos. Thom.* as well as the *Gos. Mary*, it is clear that she occupies a more positive role in the gospel under her name.

The narrator characterizes Mary as being able to turn the disciple's hearts, as being blessed and as weeping, when they (Peter and Andrew) do not believe her. He explicitly mentions that the content of Mary's revelation comes from the Saviour (*Gos. Mary* 9.1). Mary encourages the disciples and also reminds them of the Saviour's teachings (*Gos. Mary* 9.14-20). She belongs to the group of disciples as she is called "sister" by Peter (*Gos. Mary* 10.1) and considers herself a part of the group, as she refers to Peter as her brother (*Gos. Mary* 18.2). Mary is also not addressed in a way that relates her to a man (comparable to Mary the mother of the Lord, Mary sister of Clopas, etc.).

Some scholars, including E. de Boer, have suggested that Mary takes on the role of the Saviour. As de Boer translates ⲁⲥⲡⲁⲍⲉ to mean embrace, thus both the Saviour and Mary embrace the disciples (*Gos. Mary* 8.12-13; 9.13).[492] For de Boer, the act of embracing the disciples is the narrator's way of showing the readers how Mary is taking on the role of the departed Saviour. The term "blessed" (ⲙⲁⲕⲁⲣⲓⲟⲥ) is used to describe both Mary and the Saviour. The Saviour is called the Blessed one (*Gos. Mary* 8.12) and Mary is referred to as blessed by the Saviour (*Gos. Mary* 10.14). According to de Boer this can also be seen as reinforcement to the idea that Mary is taking on the role of the Saviour.[493] Another element in the narrative that illustrates Mary's new role is the fact that she falls silent. Mary's silence can be understood as a mimicked action of the soul's

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[492] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 89.
[493] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 89.

silence.[494] It does seem likely that the author was trying to make a strong connection between Mary and the Saviour, as she takes on the role of leader, teacher and comforter.

Although for the most part Mary is positively characterized at the end of the gospel, it appears that she is being presented (or depicted) in a negative light since she is said to be a liar (*Gos. Mary* 17.14-15). Her reliability is questioned by Peter and Andrew and is not the evaluative point of view of the narrator. Her weeping can also be understood negatively as it would appear that she is no longer stable. The attentive reader realizes, however, that it is Peter and Andrew who evoke these emotions and negative attitudes, not the narrator. By the end of the narrative, Peter and Andrew are negatively characterized for questioning the authority and integrity of Mary. Overall Mary can be seen as a comforter, revealer and sister. She belongs to the group who go out to preach and proclaim and also spreads the gospel message.

7.1. Mary's Relationships with the other Characters

Actantial Scheme (Gos. Mary 9.5-10.15, 17.7-19.2)

The actantial scheme illustrates the relationships that exist in the macro-narrative. In the gospel, the subject is Mary Magdalene and the object is the message / revelation. The message is sent / given by the Saviour who is the dispatcher. The opposers include Peter and Andrew as they try to discredit Mary by calling her a liar, and stating that her gender hinders her ability to experience a vision in which a revelation was given in secret. The receivers in the narrative are the disciples and the reader, and Levi acts as the helper.

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[494] de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 89.

Actantial Scheme (9.5-10.15, 17.7-19.2)

Opposer
Peter and Andrew

Dispatcher
The Saviour

Receiver
The disciples

Subject
Mary Magdalene

Object
The message and
revelation of the Saviour

Helper
Levi[:495]
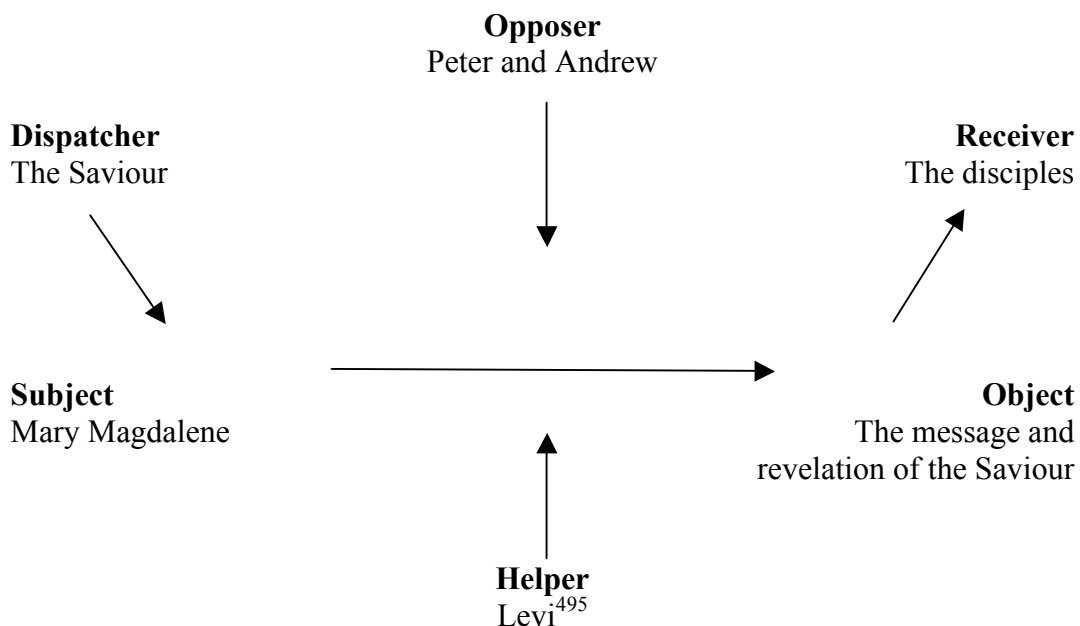
7.2 Mary and the Disciples

Throughout the gospel, Mary has five different relationships with characters, the collective group of the disciples, Peter, the Saviour, Andrew and Levi. Throughout the narrative the relationships that Mary has with Peter and Andrew change, as the disciples go from listening to Mary to openly opposing her. In the gospel, Peter clearly misunderstands[496] the message that Mary has revealed. When Mary is first faced with this hostility, the reader might feel confused and begin to question her reliability, as he / she is not yet aware of Peter's misunderstanding. The relationship that Mary has with Peter and Andrew is central to the macro-narrative as it modifies, develops and evokes emotions in the reader causing his / her character appreciation to change and modify as well.

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[495] H. Koivunen, *The Woman Who Understood Completely: A Semiotic Analysis of the Mary Magdalene Myth in the Gnostic Gospel of Mary* (Acta Semiotica Fennica; Imatra: International Semiotics Institute, 1994), 219.
[496] Misunderstanding is often used as a narrative technique in which a character misunderstands another character, or a particular idea that is presented in the narrative, Marguerat and Bourquin, *How to Read Bible Stories*, 175. Here Peter misunderstands the message revealed by Mary; however, the reader is not certain of this misunderstanding until Levi's defence.

Another relationship that Mary has in the gospel is with the Saviour. Mary's role is clearly outlined by her relationship with the Saviour, her purpose is to reveal his message to ensure that the disciples go out to preach and proclaim, thus, this relationship is vital in the macro-narrative of the gospel.

Perhaps the most interesting relationship that exists in this text is that of Mary and Levi. The defence of Mary, by Levi, illustrates that the relationship between both of them remains positive throughout the gospel. The reader might feel empathy with Levi, as he / she would also defend the position of Mary. The reader also has an inferior position to Levi, as this character is aware of the true meaning of Mary's revelation before the reader and the male disciples do. Levi also claims that the reason why May has received such a revelation was because the Saviour loved her more than the rest, thus she is worthy (*Gos. Mary* 18.11-15).[497] This is significant because not only is Levi defending Mary but he also characterizes her as being loved more than the other disciples.[498]

As Levi is the last character to speak, he is also the last one to remind the readers of the words / message of the Saviour.[499] Although Levi defended Mary, it is troubling that the last words in the gospel belong to a male and not to Mary. Another interesting feature with the conclusion of the gospel lies in a variant reading between the Coptic and the Greek manuscripts. The Greek states that only Levi goes out to preach (PRyl 463,

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[497] In the Coptic text, Levi states that the Saviour loved Mary more than them (in the Greek it simply states that the Saviour loved Mary more; PRyl 7-8). The Coptic plays well with Peter's earlier statement that the Saviour loved Mary more than the women. Here Levi is stating that she was not only loved more than the women but more than the disciples.

[498] *Gos. Phil.* 63.37-64.2.

[499] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 195.

22.15) excluding even Peter and Mary.[500] As the Coptic text refers to "they" it is possible that the Coptic was redacted in an attempt to include Mary.[501]

Ultimately Mary's relationships with the male characters differ throughout the narrative as she is both opposed and defended by male characters. Mary's relationships with these characters help to understand the way she was characterized, as well as present the evaluative point of view of the narrator. Without Levi, the reader would be left questioning the reliability of Mary and the message would not have been delivered to the disciples. Despite Levi's defence of Mary and her worthiness, it is interesting that Levi does not call her by name nor does he offer her the title of "sister"; instead, he refers to Mary as "the woman." This clearly illustrates the social *milieu* of the author, where female characters are often nameless or named based on their relationship to male characters.
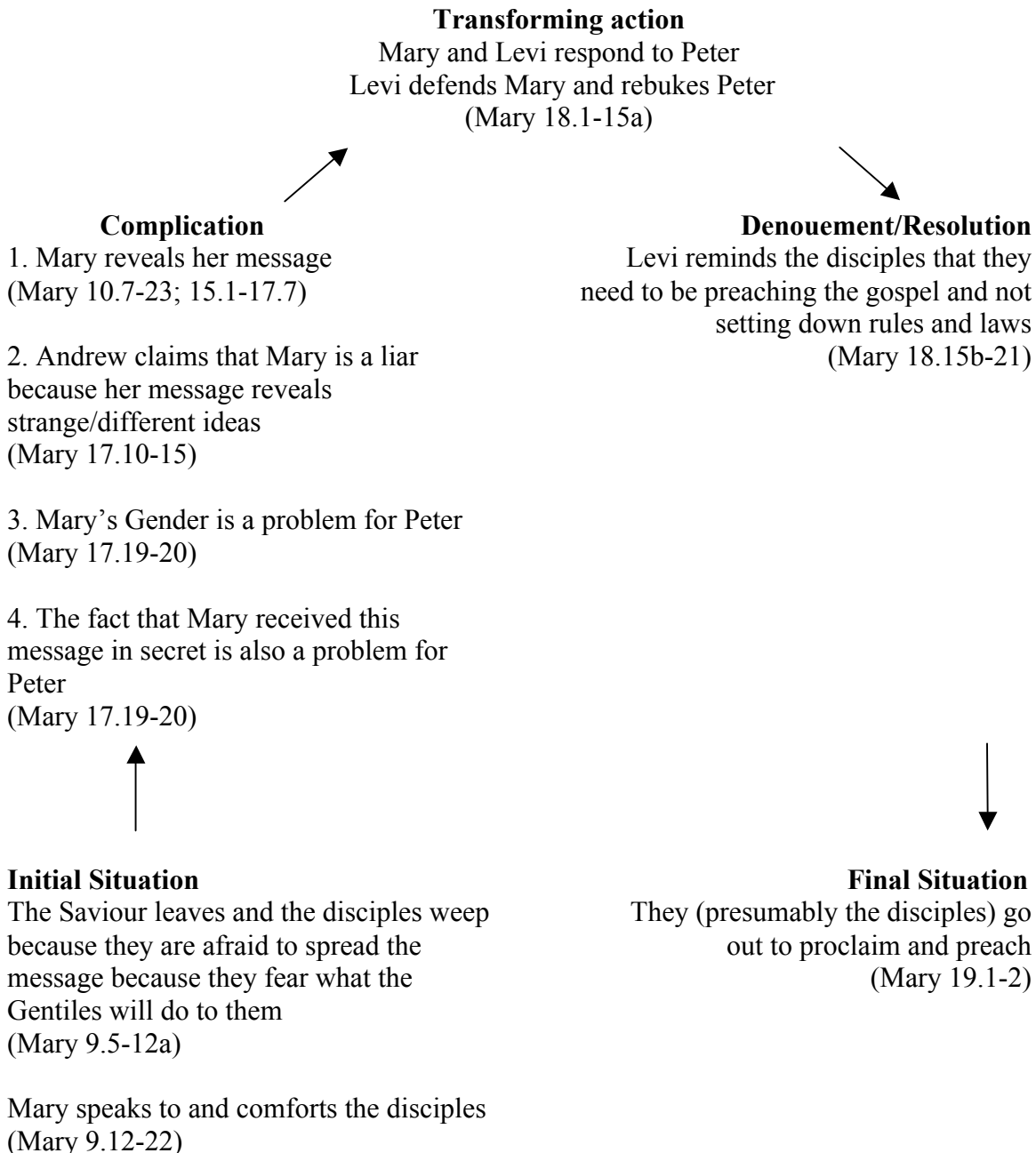
8. The Plot

The plot can be visually represented by the following Quinary Scheme. It depicts the events that happen between the initial situation and the final situation in the narrative. The Quniary Scheme sums up the macro-narrative of the *Gos. Mary*.

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[500] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 193-194; Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 119.
[501] Marjanen, *The Woman Jesus Loved*, 119.

Quinary Scheme (9.5-19.2)

Transforming action
Mary and Levi respond to Peter
Levi defends Mary and rebukes Peter
(Mary 18.1-15a)

Complication
1. Mary reveals her message
(Mary 10.7-23; 15.1-17.7)

2. Andrew claims that Mary is a liar
because her message reveals
strange/different ideas
(Mary 17.10-15)

3. Mary's Gender is a problem for Peter
(Mary 17.19-20)

4. The fact that Mary received this
message in secret is also a problem for
Peter
(Mary 17.19-20)

Denouement/Resolution
Levi reminds the disciples that they
need to be preaching the gospel and not
setting down rules and laws
(Mary 18.15b-21)

Initial Situation
The Saviour leaves and the disciples weep
because they are afraid to spread the
message because they fear what the
Gentiles will do to them
(Mary 9.5-12a)

Mary speaks to and comforts the disciples
(Mary 9.12-22)

Final Situation
They (presumably the disciples) go
out to proclaim and preach
(Mary 19.1-2)

There is a clear relationship between the initial situation and the final situation. In the

beginning the disciples are weeping and not going out to preach like the Saviour had told

them, but by the end of the gospel, they are setting out to preach and proclaim. The

conflict is not directly solved by addressing the "problem" of Mary Magdalene's gender,

but only when the disciples apparently receive the message.[502] The relationship between the complication and the resolution is interesting. The complication lies in the gender of Mary and the message that she is trying to give. The resolution involves Levi, a male character reinterpreting Mary's message and apparently not faced with any opposition. Leaving aside any questions of redaction, the text seems to hinder the reader's prediction, since he / she is not aware that Mary is going to face such hostility by Peter, especially after he invited her to share the knowledge of the sayings of the Saviour. The end is somewhat open as the reader does not know exactly who went out to preach and proclaim. Did they all go? Were Mary and the other women included in the mission?[503]

9. Conclusion

It may also be possible that the *Gos. Mary* speaks about androgyny where male and female become one and are no longer separated. K. King has claimed there is an apparent gendered model in the *Gos. Mary*, which suggests that "the ideal is nongendered; gender and sexuality belong to the lower sphere."[504] King suggests that this is the case because the characters take on leadership roles based on their spiritual strength and understanding, not based on their gender and that ones "true self is not the body, but the spiritual."[505] It can be argued that the gospel also reflects gender neutrality based on Mary and Levi's reference to the "perfect man." The Coptic word used for man is ⲣⲱⲙⲉ. According to

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[502] Koivunen, *The Woman Who Understood Completely*, 219-220.

[503] *Gos. Mary* 19: ⲁⲩⲱ ⲁⲩⲣ̄ⲁⲡⲭⲉⲓ ⲛ̄ ⲃⲱⲕ [ⲉⲧⲣⲉⲩⲧ]ⲁⲙⲟ ⲛ̄ⲥⲉⲧⲁϣⲉⲟⲉⲓϣ ⲡ[ⲉⲩ]ⲁⲅⲅⲉⲗⲓⲟⲛ ⲕⲁⲧⲁ ⲙⲁⲣⲓϩⲁⲙⲙ which is translated as "and they began to go out [to pr]oclaim and to preach. [The] gospel according to Mary." (The translation is adopted, verified and adapted from Tuckett's translation. Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 103).

[504] King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*," 59.

[505] King, "Why All the Controversy?: Mary in the *Gospel of Mary*," 60.

King, because both men and women are included, as Mary says "us," (*Gos. Mary* 9.20), the concept can be translated as human beings. The noun ⲣⲱⲙⲉ also has the possibility of being translated as "human being," unlike ϨⲟⲟⲨⲦ in the *Gos. Thom.*, which is translated simply as "male." Although in today's society we would consider the use of "man" instead of "human being" to be patriarchal, its use in the *Gos. Mary* involves a sense of inclusion, where both male and female are being referenced.[506]

If Mary is included in the pronoun "us" – pronoun used by Levi – then the text may seem to imply androgyny. It is possible however, that Mary is not included in this statement. Levi tells Peter and Andrew that they should be ashamed that they (including Levi) need to be clothed in the perfect man. This does not seem to be directed towards Mary, however. If Mary is not included, does this then suggest that she is not considered a part of the group that is worthy to be clothed? Or is she excluded because she is already made worthy?[507] Based on the Levi's defence of Mary, it seems that he considers her to be at a different level than the others, suggesting that she has already been "clothed" by the perfect man.

Overall the author illustrates that it is not Mary's gender that is the main concern. In the end the message is accepted even if it comes from a woman. The boundary of gender differences initially causes a problem, but after a complete reading of the text, one realizes that the conflict also lies in the misunderstanding of Peter and Andrew, not solely in the gender of Mary. When examining this text, it is easy to come to the conclusion that Mary has a prominent standing and one might think that the author was defending the feminine. In fact, femininity is not defended, but it is rather the status of Mary. This,

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[506] Tuckett, *The Gospel of Mary*, 78.
[507] See de Boer, *The Gospel of Mary*, 93.

therefore, does not suggest that women were offered favoured positions, instead it illustrates the value that communities had regarding the figure of the Magdalene.

According to J. Schaberg, the figure of Mary, in the gospel written in her name, is characterized as being a prominent woman among the disciples. She stands in a leadership role, she is a visionary and she is a female character "in a textual world of androcentric language and patriarchal ideology."[508] Perhaps Mary is simply taking up traditional feminine roles? She is shown as comforting, weeping and falling silent. She is also called "woman." Although it may be possible to see Mary as simply fulfilling the roles that are typical of female characters, there is more to her character that sheds a positive light on this female protagonist. Despite these patriarchal traits, in the end, Mary acts as a comforter, leader, revealer, sister, and possibly a preacher of the gospel. She is a female character who helps to advance the plot and it is through her that the theological message reaches the audience.

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[508] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 129.

Conclusion

After examining the figure of the Magdalene in the *Gospel according to John*, the *Gospel according to Thomas*, the *Gospel according to Philip* and the *Gospel according to Mary*, it is apparent that there is a progression in the significance and value of the Magdalene as a literary character. In the Fourth gospel, the Magdalene is an essential character in the macro-narrative. Mary has a significant role as she witnesses Jesus' death and glorification on the cross. She is also the first to discover the empty tomb, aids in the Beloved Disciple's resurrection faith and is the first to encounter the risen Jesus. Not only does she see the risen Jesus but he also commissions her. The Magdalene also assists the reader in understanding Jesus as both the Son of Man and Son of God.

The *Gos. Thom.* was the second gospel examined in this thesis. Therein, Mary Magdalene is first presented, along with Salome, as a disciple who has not yet matured in her understanding. The fact that she is characterized as needing to reach a deeper understanding in *logion* 21 does not take away from the value that is attached to the Magdalene in this gospel. One of the most striking aspects of *logion* 21 is the fact that Mary Magdalene, a female character, is named and directly partakes in dialogue with Jesus. As noted in the above chapter, through this *logion* it is possible to see Mary as a representative for the disciples, as it is likely that she is speaking on their behalf. While *logion* 21 plays a valuable role in illustrating the significant position of the Magdalene in the *Gos. Thom.*, it is ultimately *logion* 114 that is the most interesting saying, as it directly speaks of salvation. Through *logion* 114 the reader is made aware that Mary Magdalene, and in fact all women, have equal rights to the community and salvation. Her character expresses the gendered equality that exists in salvation.

The *Gos. Phil.* is one of the most fascinating portrayals of the Magdalene. Within this gospel the Magdalene is characterized as being the most loved disciple, as receiving special revelation through the act of a kiss and is closely characterized with Sophia, who is the companion of the Lord. This gospel highlights the value that was attached to the Magdalene in the pre-resurrection stories. After the resurrection of Jesus, the Magdalene no longer holds this prestigious position as it is clear that both male and female have become equal in Christ. The role that she occupies is thus significant in depicting the theological motif of the gospel.

The *Gos. Mary* is perhaps the most interesting source that was examined in this thesis. The Magdalene is the main character where she acts as a leader, revealer and proclaimer. In this gospel, Mary Magdalene is depicted as a leader and is the sole individual who has a vision of the Lord. In this vision she receives a revelation which she then tells the male disciples. This revelation leads to a conflict with Peter and Andrew causing Mary to weep. She is depicted as being a comforter, as weeping, and falling silent, which are typical feminine traits. Despite this, the reader is made aware of the power that the Magdalene holds in this text. Mary is the protagonist through which the meaning of the text is successfully delivered.

There are common elements throughout these four texts. In all four gospels the Magdalene occupies a privileged position as a close follower of Jesus. Whether she is a protagonist in a micro-narrative or not, the Magdalene's involvement in each gospel adds value to the narrative and theological message. In John, the Magdalene is a witness to the empty tomb and is the first to encounter the risen Lord. In the *Gos. Thom.*, Mary is one of only four disciples who are named and given the privileged position of directly asking

Jesus a question. Her small role is important as it suggests that the Magdalene was valued in the Thomasine community. In the *Gos. Phil.*, the Magdalene is presented as the most loved disciple, and is kissed by Jesus; thus, her privileged position cannot be disputed. In the *Gos. Mary*, the Magdalene is the protagonist and is the sole individual who is privileged enough to have a vision of the Lord.

Along with having a privileged position in each of the gospels, another element that is common to the four gospels is the role that the Magdalene, a female character, has in advancing the plot and or the theological message of each text. In these gospels, Mary is the protagonist in both micro as well as the macro-narratives. The Magdalene is also essential to understanding a woman's place in salvation, as well as encouraging the reader to understand what unity in Christ truly signifies.

In two of the selected gospels – the *Gos. Phil* and the *Gos. Mary* – it is clear that the Magdalene is the most loved disciple. This is particularly interesting because in the *Gos. Phil.*, Mary is characterized as being loved more than the disciples in pre-resurrection stories and in the *Gos. Mary* the narrative takes place post resurrection. After the resurrection in the *Gos. Phil.,* Mary and the male disciples are understood to be equal in Christ and the Magdalene no longer holds a privileged position. Characterizing the Magdalene as the beloved disciple in these gospels is significant, as it clearly highlights the importance of female characters both within narratives as well as within the Christian community.

A further aspect that is significant to note, is the relationship that the Magdalene has with male characters in the texts. Throughout these four gospels, it is clear that gender is a significant component. The interaction between Mary and the male characters

contributes to her own characterization. It also clearly helps discern the patriarchal elements of these texts. In John's empty tomb narrative, Mary interacts with Peter and the Beloved Disciple. These male characters help in verifying that the tomb is in fact empty and the Beloved Disciple also overshadows Mary as he is the first individual to come to resurrection faith. The *Gos. Thom.*, also pairs Mary with male characters. She does not directly interact with male characters, nor does she have dialogue with them; however, Peter speaks of Mary and women negatively by questioning if they are worthy to obtain salvation. In the *Gos. Phil.*, the male disciples question the love that Jesus has for Mary, and she is depicted as having a superior pre-resurrection position. Although the Magdalene is opposed by Peter and Andrew in the *Gos. Mary*, she is nonetheless defended by Levi. This defence is both beneficial and degrading to Mary Magdalene. Levi's character is the last to speak in the gospel; therefore, while he helps to validate Mary's vision, he also devalues her, as he is the last character to speak. The last words in the gospel are not spoken by the protagonist, but by a male character. This leaves the Magdalene silent after Levi defends her.

Although it is noteworthy that a female character is named, speaks, leads and at times is the protagonist, the Magdalene is often overshadowed by the male characters and in some narratives she is characterized as a weak female.[509] While the Magdalene is characterized in such a way, the modern day reader must keep in mind the social context in which these gospels were written.

Gender in these gospels is less about the way women interacted in society and their social duties. Rather, it is more about the innate and predestined qualities of the feminine. Although the Magdalene is a strong female character who moves the narrative

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[509] John 20.11-13; *Gos. Mary* 18.2

forward, it can be difficult not to overlook particular aspects. One of these being the denial of Mary as a disciple in the Fourth gospel. The other aspect is the androgynous elements in the *Gos. Thom.*, where female must become male in order to reach salvation. In the end, both are offered salvation. While the transformation from female to male may illustrate the 'flaws' in the feminine, it ultimately illustrates the bond between females and Jesus.[510]

Although it cannot be said for certain which sources were used in the development of the Christian texts at Nag Hammadi, it can be speculated that the reception of John had an influential role in the development of the Magdalene in the three Coptic texts we have studied. Out of the four canonical gospels, it is clear that the Magdalene occupies the most prominent position in the *Gospel according to John*. In the *Gos. Thom.*, the character of the Magdalene illustrates the place of women in salvation. In the *Gos. Phil.*, Mary Magdalene is viewed as the beloved disciple. In the *Gos. Mary*, the Magdalene has the most significant and positive role as the recipient of a revelation, a comforter and ultimately a leader. There seems to be a positive progression in the character of the Magdalene as she is found in numerous post-canonical texts, where her character is important to revealing the theological message of the narrative.[511]

Even if it is not possible for us to say for certain why the figure of the Magdalene became a positive and prominent figure in some Christian literature, it is clear that there were multiple reasons for including Mary Magdalene in these narratives. One possible reason as to why the Magdalene is presented in such a positive light is because the figure

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[510] This is clear as Jesus' defends Mary's right to salvation, as well as those of all women in *logion 114*.
[511] The figure of the Magdalene is also found in: the *Soph. Jes. Chr.,* the *Dial. Sav., PistS,* the *Great Questions of Mary*, and the 1 *Apoc. Jas*.

became an important symbol in these early communities. As there is a clear opposition between Mary Magdalene and Peter, it is also possible that there were communities that valued the Magdalene over Peter.

Along with being a prominent symbol in early Christian communities, the literary Magdalene may also offer a glimpse into the social situation of such groups. The fact that Mary Magdalene is offered a more privileged position, than expected of a female character, may suggest that women did have more privileges or were at least equal to men in terms of salvation. Perhaps this is the case for the *Gos. Thom.* where it is clear that the author was trying to convey a message of equality in regards to salvation. Another reason as to why Mary Magdalene is offered such a prominent place in these texts is because she was understood as a feminine symbol closely associated with Sophia. Her connection with Sophia is expressed in the *Gos. Phil.* where she is a symbol of Christ's spiritual syzygos. Although the Magdalene has some value in the synoptics, and even more so in John, she is not referred to as a disciple and is still overshadowed by male characters. It is possible to suggest that the Magdalene was used by those who did not agree with the developing orthodox traditions and ideals.[512] The figure of the Magdalene served to promote a particular theological point of view.

The figure of the Magdalene in these texts illustrates the value that female characters bring to a narrative. The Magdalene as a literary figure not only brings value to the micro-narrative, but she is also vital to the entire theological message of the gospels. As a valuable character, the Magdalene evokes emotions in the reader, including sympathy and empathy. Without going into detail regarding the historical Magdalene,

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[512] Schaberg, *The Resurrection of Mary Magdalene*, 187.

one can conclude that she had an influential impact on the earliest Christian communities. The figure of the Magdalene empowers the women of both the ancient world and today's, as her character highlights the bond between Jesus and women, women's rights to salvation and the unity that both male and female find in Christ. Despite some patriarchal elements in the gospels, the Magdalene represents a form of equality that existed in some early Christian communities.

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