MODEL SPEAKERS

THE SUBVERSIVE POTENTIAL OF REPORTED FEMALE SPEECH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT GOSPELS

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ABSTRACT – *Several female characters in the canonical Gospels provide the reader with models for public speech and behaviour that test the boundaries of appropriateness. These characters include the Samaritan woman (John 4:1-42), female witnesses to Jesus' resurrection (Mark 16:7-8), and Mary Magdalene (John 20:1-2, 18 and Luke 24:8-11). The modelling potential of these figures derives from the Gospel authors' use of reported female speech, a feature that deviates from the typical paradigm for the representation of female figures by male authors. Roman epigraphic and literary records exhibit the key features of this paradigm, against which the Gospel accounts may be compared. This comparison reveals that, although the reported words and actions of the women of the canonical Gospels do complicate the extant model, the Gospel authors also employ aspects of the typical paradigm (especially at Luke 24:8-11), thereby ultimately reconciling divergent female speech and behaviour with appropriate norms.*

INTRODUCTION

The laudable words and deeds of ancient Roman women survive in a number of written forms, including literary accounts, public inscriptions on plaques and statue bases, and epitaphs on public grave markers.[1] However, due to the limited extent to which Roman women could partake in the affairs of state – much less than men

1 On the epigraphic evidence available, see John P. Bodel, *Epigraphic Evidence: Ancient History from Inscriptions* (London: Psychology Press,

of similar status – the amount of public space dedicated to their commemoration contrasts with the physical space these women would actually have occupied in the public sphere. Many scholars have described how such prominent Roman women, noteworthy for their personal accomplishments, benefactions, and outstanding *personae*, were primarily represented in public, written commemorations as standardized iterations of domestic duties and virtues.[2] If the city and its citizen body could be conceived of as a macrocosmic amplification of the home and its hierarchy of gender and station, such women served as a magnifying glass. The effects of this projection were described in a thoroughly predictable manner, creating a significant discrepancy between the unique lived experiences of women who acted outside of their station and the homogenous representation of their deeds in written form. Most importantly, the limited number of characteristics for which women could appropriately be praised, once set in writing, served as a persistent model not only for subsequent written accounts, but also for the actual deeds of the women who read, or were read, these records.

Given this premise, I argue that the words and deeds of the women featured in the canonical Gospels complicate the models for female behaviour that are preserved in the written records of Rome. These women, who served and travelled as disciples of Jesus, lived in regions that were, at the time, only loosely connected to the imperial centre in Rome.[3] They were removed, by some degree, from the direct and daily influence of inscribed monuments located in the city and its immediate environs, and from written documents in circulation there. They would have been speaking and acting publicly at a time characterized by the development, rather than the finalization, of canonical written prescriptions for acceptable behaviour within the nascent Christian community.[4] Furthermore, the Gospel accounts differ from written models preserved at Rome, in that their authors consistently report the self-directed words of individual women. These words are neither explicit reproductions of male speech, nor the exact product of training overseen by a male authority. However, the same authors also persistently undermine the non-normative actions of these women by questioning the reliability and authority

2001); Mary R. Lefkowitz and Maureen B. Fant, *Women's Life in Greece and Rome: A Source Book in Translation* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1993); Brian K. Harvey, *Roman Lives: Ancient Roman Lives as Illustrated by Latin Inscriptions* (Newburyport: Focus Publishers, 2004).

2 The scholarship on this topic is rich and multifaceted; useful overviews are found in Ramsay MacMullen, "Women in Public in the Roman Empire," *Historia* 29 (1980), 208-18; Natalie Kampen, *Image and Status: Roman Working Woman in Ostia* (Berlin: Mann, 1981); Richard. A. Bauman, *Women and Politics in Ancient Rome* (London: Routledge, 1992); Elaine Fantham et al., *Women in the Classical World* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Emily Ann Hemelrijk, *Matrona Docta: Educated Women in the Roman Elite from Cornelia to Julia Domna* (London: Routledge, 1999); Suzanne Dixon, *Reading Roman Women: Sources, Genres and Real Life* (London: Duckworth, 2001); Kristina Milnor, *Gender, Domesticity, and the Age of Augustus: Inventing Private Life* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005).

3 Judea, for example (from whence the Samaritan woman

of their self-produced speech and self-directed action. As a result, the reader of these texts is left with a problematized version of a recognizable model. The Gospel accounts suggest that Jesus' female followers had the potential to provide the reader with an alternative paradigm for appropriate public female behaviour. Yet they also evince the power of writing – and of male authorship – as a means by which to preserve the social norms that these women disrupted by speaking and acting independently.

THE WRITTEN MODEL: WOMEN AS WORDS

In order to continue this exploration, it is first necessary not only to confirm the existence of such a paradigm, but also to explain how this model served as the basis for the array of subsequent written accounts, in which male authors portrayed unique, individual women as recognizable iterations of their predecessors. Modern linguists argue that writing systems develop not merely in response to the need to record speech in symbolic form, but also as a tool by which to establish a symbolic framework for spoken communication.[5] Put another way, we do not write only what we can already say; we also use writing to explore and to confirm what we could say, before we say it. As David Olson explains, "writing systems are developed for mnemonic and communicative purposes, but because they are 'read' they provide a model for language and thought [...] we introspect our language along lines laid down by our scripts".[6] Applied to the situation at hand, one can hypothesize that what is written by men about women not only utilizes preapproved sentiments and characterizations, but also perpetuates these paradigms as appropriate models for female representation (and for how female readers will represent themselves). Although numerous scholars have already convincingly delineated the salient features of this system in the Roman context, a few examples might help to better orient the reader.[7] The women in these examples are of different ages and social levels, and their commemoration takes different forms (spoken, epigraphic, and literary). Given the diversity of their lived experiences, the numerous confluences between the

of Jn 4:1-42), was governed only by a prefect or equestrian procurator until the rebellion of 69-70 CE (see Tacitus, *Annals* 12.60; Flavius Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 17.355, 18.1-2). In response to the revolt, the province was brought under the much stricter control of a legate with full military authority.

4 I accept the standard dates of composition proposed in Michael D. Coogan (ed.), *New Oxford Annotated Bible, NRSV 4th edition* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010): Mark c. 60-70 CE (1791); Matthew c. 80 CE (1746); Luke c. 85 CE (1827); John c. 85-90 CE (1879). On the role of women as organizers and office holding members of the early Christian community, see Ute E. Eisen, *Women Officeholders in Early Christianity* (Collegeville: Liturgical Press, 2000); Margaret MacDonald, "Was Celsus Right?" in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, eds. David. L. Bach and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2003), 157-84; Kevin Madigan and Carolyn Osiek, *Ordained Women in the Early Church: A Documentary History* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 2005); and Carolyn Osiek, Margaret MacDonald, and Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman's Place: House Churches in Earliest Christianity*

written records of their deeds serve to demonstrate the pervasive nature of the predictable set of appropriate praises attributed to these women by the male authors who commemorate them.[8]

To begin with a popular example: the first century BCE marble-inscribed eulogy for Murdia (*CIL* 06, 10230) evinces the homogeneity of public praise of women, in both spoken and written form.[9] Reportedly delivered by one of her sons, the eulogy highlights Murdia's supreme equanimity when distributing her estate among her sons,[10] and current and former spouses, but does not go so far as to assign any unique praise to Murdia herself, because:

> [T]he praise of all good women is straightforward and comparable: since [their] natural, in-born quality of goodness and lasting trust do not call for a diversity of words; and because it is sufficient that they have done the same good deeds worthy of repute.

Murdia's eulogy also explains that it is difficult to find novel terms of praise (*novae laudes*) for women, therefore it is better to celebrate their shared qualities (*communia*): "lest some expression, parting from the legitimate maxims, should corrupt the rest".[12] In all, the eulogy (and subsequently, the inscription) identifies and rationalizes a type of commemoration that draws from an acceptable set of pre-existing praises (*iustis praeceptis*), applicable to any woman. Murdia's particular accomplishments are subsumed by a homogenous, written model for all good deeds done by women, and any unique insight into her life is interrupted by its refraction through the words of a male author who is used to talking about women in a certain way, and writing about them with the same words.

Constancy, simplicity, and a nod to an established canon of language: these features are found in literary sources as well. For example, Cicero, when evaluating the public speaking skills of Laelia,[13] writes:

(Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006).

5 The previous hypothesis, shared by linguists and developmental psychologists, was that one learned to read and write in order to translate sounds into written signs. Developmental psychologist David Olson, in light of the work done by Noam Chomsky, Roger Brown, Jerome Bruner, and Lev Vygotsky (among others), helped introduce a new perspective, in which literacy was considered an aspect of learning to think about the rules of language that are implicit in oral communication. For a comprehensive examination of twentieth-century theories of language, see Mortéza Mahmoudian, *Modern Theories of Language: The Empirical Challenge* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1992).

6 David G. Olson, "How Writing Represents Speech," *Language and Communication* 13 (1993), 2; 15.

7 All *CIL* texts were accessed via the *Clauss-Slaby Epigraphik Datenbank* (http://www.manfredclauss.de/gb/index.html). For Bible passages, I have used Nestle-Aland, eds., *Novum Testamentum Graece, 26th*

> The very sound of her voice is so direct and clean, as to convey no aspect of showmanship or imitation; from [these qualities of] her speech I [can] adjudge the manner of her father's speech, [or] that of her forebears.[14]

Although Laelia is herself portrayed as the speaker, the words she produces are not her own. Like the every-woman in the *Laudatio Murdiae*, Laelia (and thus, her manner of speaking) remains unspoiled by the social changes occurring around her. Unaffected by the evolution of styles and tastes of public speakers and their audiences, Laelia preserves a set of *iustis praeceptis dicendi* (approved rules of speaking), which she reproduces without ostentation or originality. For this she is, at least in Cicero's narrative, worthy of approbation.

Finally, Eucharis of Licinia also serves as a mouthpiece for her male forebears. Her first-century BCE funerary inscription (*CIL* 06, 10096) narrates, in the voice of the deceased 14-year-old former slave herself, how her parens arranged for her epitaph in order to inform passers-by of her best qualities and outstanding accomplishments.[15] Eucharis was an unmarried girl, learned and accomplished in every skill,[16] and so proficient that she could have been educated by the Muses themselves, as evinced by her stage-performance as a member of a chorus.[17] Yet no crowd of admiring fans mourns the loss of so talented a performer: "I, the daughter, have left tears to my progenitor".[18] Eucharis' father brackets either side of her inscribed 'address'. Like Laelia's ancestors in Cicero's account, he has arranged for her artistic education, and for the form and content of her speech. He will suffer most from the loss of this girl, trained to speak and perform according to his own proclivities. Like Laelia, Eucharis speaks words that are not her own.

From these examples, the reader can see that Roman women of various ages and social levels had the potential to be publicly noted. Yet these examples also demonstrate the numerous ways in which male authors effectively homogenized an array of unique circumstances and personalities, and asserted the presence of a

edition (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979). All translations are my own.

8 The use of these non-Christian examples is necessitated by the lack of distinctly 'Christian' material culture until (at earliest) the middle of the first century CE; see Orazio Marucchi, *Christian Epigraphy: An Elementary Treatise, with a Collection of Ancient Christian Inscriptions Mainly of Roman Origin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1912; Chicago: Ares Publishing, 1974) and, more recently, Graydon F. Snyder, Ante Pacem: *Archaeological Evidence of Church Life before Constantine* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 2003).

9 Hugh Lindsay, "The 'Laudatio Murdiae': Its Content and Significance," *Latomus* 63 (2004), 88-97.

10 Lefkowitz and Fant, *Women's Life*, inscription no. 43, 17-18.

11 *CIL* 06, 10230, 21-25: "… quom omnium bonarum feminarum simplex simi / lisque esse laudatio soleat quod naturalia bona propria custo / dia servata varietates verborum non desiderent satisque sit / eadem omnes bona fama digna fecisse…".

domestic and patriarchal boundary within which women could appropriately speak and act. In doing so, the authors ensured that to whatever extent such women confounded domestic expectations by speaking out or venturing into the public sphere, the records of their rule breaking represented these actions as normative rather than subversive. Within such linguistic boundaries these women served, at the time of each text's creation, as graphic reproductions of the tastes and values of the men who wrote about them. Moreover, they became symbolic models for what women could appropriately say and do thereafter, for one who reads an account comprised of such persistent prefabrications engages with this normative set of words and concepts, allows it to model her own behaviour, and in doing so, translates the written symbols back into tangible actions.

IN THEIR OWN WORDS? THE REPORTED SPEECH OF THE FEMALE DISCIPLES

Now that the model has been established, it is possible to consider how the words and deeds of several women from the New Testament Gospels engage with it and complicate it. Although the written record of these women's words and deeds is authored by men, the content of their accounts differs somewhat from the model we have seen because the words and actions of the women are reported as being independently produced and motivated, rather than formed from, and limited by, *iusta praecepta*. As a result, at the moment of speaking or acting, these women are neither mouthpieces of preapproved speech, nor do they limit their actions to those portrayed by the model as appropriate. The male authors do have the last word, so to speak, which allows them to reframe potentially subversive content in a manner befitting the paradigm. Nonetheless, the words and deeds of Jesus' female disciples retain significant potential as written models for subsequent readers. Those readers can recognize that the male authors' attempts to reassert the model are primarily necessary because the model was questioned in the first place.

The parable of the Samaritan woman in John 4:1-42 constitutes one of the longest sustained dialogues in the canonical Gospels.[19] Of course, the words

12 Ibid., 27-28: "… ne quod / amissum ex iustis praeceptis cetera turpet. "

13 The mother-in-law of L. Licinius Crassus, consul in 95 BCE.

14 Cicero, *De Oratore* 3.45, in *Rhetorica: Volume I*, ed. Augustus S. Wilkins (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1922): "sono ipso vocis ita recto et simplici est, ut nihil ostentationis aut imitationis adferre videatur; ex quo sic locutum esse eius patrem iudico, sic maiores."

15 *CIL* 06, 10096, 3-4.

16 Ibid., 2: "docta erodita omnes artes virgo."

17 Ibid., 11: "docta erodita paene Musarum manu"; 12-13.

18 Ibid., 18: "reliqui fletum nata genitori meo."

19 On the Samaritan woman, see Mark Edwards, "The Samaritan Woman: John 4.3-45," in *John* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2004), 53-61. For the Gospel of John in general, see Craig S. Keener, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary, Volume I* (Peabody: Hendrickson, 2003).

the Samaritan woman speaks are not entirely her own; a male author serves as intermediary between the woman's actual words and deeds, and those reported to the reader. Yet, it is precisely in the author's attempts to render the Samaritan woman paradigmatic that the reader can detect that the woman herself had spoken and acted independently of appropriate social paradigms. From the outset of their meeting alongside a well, Jesus himself, as Barbara MacHaffie notes, disregards predominant social prohibitions when he asks the woman for a drink of water: "Not only does he, a Jew, speak to a Samaritan, but he disregards the Jewish norm prohibiting men from speaking to women in public".[20] Nonetheless, the Samaritan woman continues to engage with him, and eventually realizes that the man before her is a divine prophet: "And the woman said to him, 'Lord, I see that you are the Messiah'."[21]

The verb for 'seeing' (θεωρῶ), although it can indicate an act of internal contemplation,[22] is primarily used in Greek literature to indicate the consultation of an oracle.[23] The one who consults (θεωρός) was tasked with receiving the words spoken through the oracle, the direct communication from divine to mortal. As such, a θεωρός served a different function than a μάντις (also often translated as 'seer'), whose skill rested in his ability to interpret signs sent by the gods (e.g. dreams or weather patterns).[24] The distinction is crucial in emphasizing that Jesus' identity becomes apparent to the Samaritan woman in the course of a verbal exchange, in which both parties play an active role, rather than as the result of the woman's contemplation of concrete, physical signs or symbols – such as text, which occupies space on a stone or page – corresponding to a particular paradigm.

Yet the Samaritan woman is not a traditional θεωρός, either, as this consultant's task does not generally require active interpretation of the gods' pronouncements. Instead, the θεωρός functions as a mouthpiece, a reporter who strives for as faithful a reproduction of the model – i.e. the god's 'original' words – as possible. The Samaritan woman, on the other hand, makes an independent decision about how she will convey her experiences to the men of her village. Several aspects

20 Barbara J. MacHaffie, *Her Story: Women in Christian Tradition* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1986), 16.

21 Jn 4:19: "λέγει αὐτῷ ἡ γυνή, Κύριε, θεωρῶ ὅτι προφήτης εἶ σύ."

22 E.g. Plato, *Gorgias* 523e; Aristotle, *Metaphysica* 1003b15; Epicurus, *De natura* 2.6.

23 Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott, comps., *Greek-English Lexicon* (1843; repr. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), s.v. "θεωρῶ", I. Its secondary connotation, 'to view a spectacle' (s.v. "θεωρῶ", II) likewise constitutes an interaction with the world outside the subject's own mind.

24 On ancient seers, see Michael A. Flower, *The Seer in Ancient Greece* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), esp. 22-71.

of John's text indicate her autonomy as both an actor and speaker. First, before she departs, the woman receives confirmation from Jesus regarding his Messianic status: "Jesus said to her, 'I am [the Lord] who converses with you'".[25] As we shall see, the woman does not merely report this confirmation in her address to her townspeople, but provides her own uniquely-worded account of the encounter. Then the woman departs: "Therefore, the woman left her water jug behind and came from there into the city; she speaks to the men […]".[26] This action reveals a shift in the woman's priorities: she had left her home, and the confines of the city, to fulfil a domestic responsibility (gathering water for the household); when she returns, her primary concern is the public address that she will make to the men of her village.[27] John underscores this contrast by switching back to the simple present tense (λέγει). Furthermore, the woman had not simply forgotten the vessel in her haste, but deliberately left it, and the domestic priority it symbolized, at the well as she departed to pursue a public priority. This dichotomy is well represented by the structure of the text: the jug is 'left' at one end of the sentence, and the woman, placed squarely in its centre, moves forward towards the city. Thus, John indicates to the reader that, even before she addresses the townsmen, the Samaritan woman is acting on her own prerogative. Unlike the typical θεωρός, who is sent to fulfil a specific task and is only successful if he returns to precisely reproduce the words he has heard, the Samaritan woman returns not only without the water for which she had set out, but also without the exact words of Jesus on her lips.

When she speaks, furthermore, the Samaritan woman does not merely repeat Jesus' claims of divinity, but fashions her address in such a way as to elicit a particular response from the townsmen: "Come now and see the man who told me all things, as many as I have done; surely this man is not Christ, is he?"[28] By encouraging the incredulity of her fellows, the Samaritan woman prompts the men to act. According to the Gospel of John: "Many of the Samaritan men from that city believed in [Jesus] as a result of the Samaritan woman's account (λόγον τῆς γυναικός), when she attested (μαρτυρούσης) that '[Jesus] told me all the things I have done'".[29] As with his description of the water jug, the

25 Jn 4:26: "λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Ἐγώ εἰμι, ὁ λαλῶν σοι."

26 Jn 4:28: "ἀφῆκεν οὖν τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λέγει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις."

27 For an alternative interpretation, see Frank A. Spina, *The Faith of the Outsider: Exclusion and Inclusion in the Biblical Story* (Cambridge: William B. Eerdmans, 2005), 154-55.

28 Jn 4:29: "δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα: μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ Χριστός".

29 Jn 4:39: "Έκ δὲ τῆς πόλεως ἐκείνης πολλοὶ ἐπίστευσαν εἰς αὐτὸν τῶν Σαμαριτῶν διὰ τὸν λόγον τῆς γυναικὸς μαρτυρούσης ὅτι Εἶπέν μοι πάντα ἃ ἐποίησα."

author's choice of words is significant with respect to the Samaritan woman's deviation from social norms. As one able to attest the words of Jesus due to her role as a witness (μαρτυρούσης), the Samaritan woman again calls to mind the figure of the θεωρός. In the absence of Jesus himself, the woman produces her own λόγος, her own credible report of her experiences.

The significance of the fact that her initial address is called a λόγος is revealed as the reader continues, for when the men go and meet Jesus himself, they quickly discard the Samaritan woman's speech in favour of the words of the Messiah:

> And more by far believed on account of [Jesus'] word (λόγον) and to the woman they said, 'No longer do we believe because of your idle talk (λαλιάν), since we have heard for ourselves'.[30]

30 Jn 4:41-42: "καὶ πολλῷ πλείους ἐπίστευσαν διὰ τὸν λόγον αὐτοῦ τῇ τε γυναικὶ ἔλεγον ὅτι Οὐκέτι διὰ τὴν σὴν λαλιὰν πιστεύομεν: αὐτοὶ γὰρ ἀκηκόαμεν."

Now, Jesus' own speech (λόγος) inspires belief, while the Samaritan woman's words, by comparison, are reduced to mere loquaciousness.[31] From the outcome of the episode of the Samaritan woman, one can see how the written medium of the Gospel of John is used to arrange a hierarchy that privileges the public authority of a male speaker. When the Samaritan woman's words are first reported, they are assigned the status of λόγος, and are believed on their own merit; when Jesus provides his own λόγος, however, the status of the woman's words diminishes by comparison to be considered gossip or chatter (λαλιάν).

31 The usual derogatory connotation is evident at Aristophanes, *Clouds* 931 and Polybius 3.20.5. Over time, the term acquires a more neutral connotation, e.g. Jn 4:26. See Liddell and Scott, *Greek-English Lexicon*, s.v. "λαλιά", II.

Kasper Larsen equates the Samaritan woman to certain of Jesus' male disciples, since her testimony "arouses the Samaritans' interest, and it has the same effect as the testimonies of Andrew and Philip in [John] 1:35-51. It creates new observers who approach Jesus in order to see for themselves".[32] However, this passage is noteworthy for another reason. At John 1:35-37, John the Baptist points Jesus out to two of his own disciples, with whom he is speaking: "and the two disciples heard [John] saying this (λαλοῦντος), and they followed after

32 Kasper B. Larsen, "Anagnorisis and Arrival (John 1-4)," in *Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 138-40.

Jesus".[33] In this case, the two disciples accept John the Baptist's identification of Jesus, although his words are an example of λαλιά rather than λόγος. The derogatory connotation of λαλιά is not present, and John's words are believed without further justification.

From this we can posit that the hierarchy of accounts, in the case of the Samaritan woman, does not result merely from Jesus' superior status as a divine figure, but from his superior status as a male authority figure whose public address to other males does not break any social rules. Jesus' initial conversation with the Samaritan woman corroborates this supposition, for a neutral connotation of the term is also used at 4:26: "Jesus said to her, 'I am [the Lord] who converses (λαλῶν) with you'."[34] The Gospel of John again employs the neutral meaning of λαλιά, and indicates its subordinate status to λόγος when describing Jesus' response to the sceptical Jews at 8:43: "For what reason do you not understand what I say (λαλιάν)? It is because you are unable to receive my word (λόγον)".[35] In none of these instances can λαλιά/λαλῶν be adequately translated as 'chatter' or 'gossip'. The latter example, furthermore, illustrates the priority of λόγος over λαλιά; as an authority figure, Jesus is able to credibly produce both types of speech, but his λόγος still serves as the basis of any λαλιά that follows. All the more important, then, is the Samaritan woman's brief production of her own λόγος, and its power to compel belief.[36] Her initial success reveals the potential for women to model speech that has not already been modelled, as she does not simply report the words of Jesus, but fashions her own. The author need only assert the ultimate preference for Jesus' speech over that of the Samaritan woman if the reader is initially able to consider the divergent λόγοι as equally legitimate and authoritative. Put another way, the subjugation of the woman's words is necessitated precisely because they threaten both the verbal hierarchy of λόγος over λαλιά, and the related hierarchy of credibility based upon the speaker's gender.

John's Samaritan woman also responds to the portrayals of appropriate female speech and action found in the other canonical Gospels. The fact that she addresses

33 Jn 1:37: "καὶ ἤκουσαν οἱ δύο μαθηταὶ αὐτοῦ λαλοῦντος καὶ ἠκολούθησαν τῷ Ἰησοῦ."

34 Jn 4:26; see note 24.

35 Jn 8:43: "διὰ τί τὴν λαλιὰν τὴν ἐμὴν οὐ γινώσκετε; ὅτι οὐ δύνασθε ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τὸν ἐμόν."

36 Jn 4:39; see note 29.

the men of her town at all, for example, seems a notable contrast with the stunned silence of the women who discover Jesus' empty tomb in Mark:

> 'Go and tell the disciples of Jesus and Peter that [Jesus] is going ahead of you into Galilee [...]'. And they fled from the tomb, for fear and wonderment seized them, and they said nothing to anyone, for they were frightened.[37]

It is here that Mark's Gospel comes to an abrupt conclusion, which, Richard Horsley concludes, "invites the reader to continue the story of Jesus and the kingdom".[38] Indeed, the very existence of this text suggests that Mary Magdalene, Mary mother of James, and Salome were eventually able to overcome their shock and report what they had seen to the male disciples. While the instructions given at 16:7 suggest the content of the report, and thereby provide a model for the reader's own imagining, they do not go so far as to shape the exact form of either the women's report, or of the male disciple's reactions. As a result, Mark's male and female speakers are left on an ambiguous, yet equal plane, as potential reproducers of the account of Jesus' resurrection.

While the original author of the Gospel of Mark was comfortable with such a possibility, an emender of his text clearly was not. Likely added to the original text in the second century CE, the 'long ending' of Mark (16:9-19) elides the potentially self-directed words of these women, and those of the reader, by emphasizing the correspondence between physical symbols and speech as mutual confirmations of an account's veracity.[39] For example, in Mark 16:17, Jesus explains that believers who proclaim his word will be attended by signs of their belief (σημεῖα), and uses the neutral connotation of λαλέω when describing such proclamations: "In my name they will cast out inferior spirits, they will make utterances (λαλήσουσιν) in novel tongues".[40] The emended ending further confirms, in the voice of the omniscient narrator, that symbols (σημεῖα) and speech (λόγος) are complementary parts of the Lord's oversight in the apostolic process (16:20). Here, the σημεῖα likely connote portents or omens rather than written symbols.[41] Yet the term embraces a wide

37 Mk 16:7-8: "ἀλλὰ ὑπάγετε εἴπατε τοῖς μαθηταῖς αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ Πέτρῳ ὅτι Προάγει ὑμᾶς είς τὴν Γαλιλαίαν [...] ἔφυγον ἀπὸ τοῦ μνημείου, εἶχεν γὰρ αὐτὰς τρόμος καὶ ἔκστασις: καὶ οὐδενὶ οὐδὲν εἶπαν, ἐφοβοῦντο γάρ."

38 Richard Horsley, "Gospel of Mark," in Coogan et al., *New Oxford Bible*, 1791.

39 Horsley (ibid., 1824) writes that the emender wanted Mark's original text to "conform to the common pattern" of the resurrection as described in the other canonical Gospels. An additional 'shorter ending' was composed as an alternative to the first emendation, though not before the fourth century CE.

40 Mk 16:17: "ἐν τῷ ὀνόματί μου δαιμόνια ἐκβαλοῦσιν, γλώσσαις λαλήσουσιν καιναῖς."

range of connotations, all of which are linked by the fact that σημεῖα can engage any number of senses, including sight and touch,[42] while spoken words engage only the ears. Given the flexibility of the term, it is not too indulgent to imagine that the emended ending, the written account comprised of observable, linguistic symbols, is itself a σημεῖον, through which the emender of the Gospel of Mark augments the ambiguous original ending and asserts a fixed version of events. The unspoken and unwritten testimony of the female witnesses consequently cedes to the authority of articulate men (λαλήσουσιν) whose utterances claim the superior status of a λόγος corroborated by symbols of God's approbation.

Perhaps a model for the emender of Mark, the Gospel of John also addresses the authority of graphic witnesses, although in his account they take priority over the words of both male and female speakers. Nonetheless, the words of male speakers still prove to be more authoritative than those of female interlocutors. In addition to the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene stands out in John's text as a female speaker whose words are prompted by nothing but her own experience:

> Mary Magdalene came [...] to the tomb, and she saw that the stone had been taken away [...] therefore she ran to Simon Peter and to other disciples, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken the Lord from the tomb, and I do not know where they have put him'.[43]

Like the Samaritan woman, Mary uses words of her own design to encourage her addressees to investigate. When Mary speaks again at 20:18, she not only reports what Jesus told her but, again like the Samaritan woman, adds her own words to his: "Mary Magdalene arrived, announcing to the disciples, 'I have seen the Lord', and also the things he said to her".[44] This time, however, her words elicit no response that the author saw fit to record. Her incredible role as the sole recipient of Jesus' seminal revelation is rendered ambivalent by her elision from the text immediately thereafter. When Mary disappears from the text, the reader's

41 A typical meaning, applicable in both poetry and prose, e.g. Sophocles, *Oedipus Coloneus* 294 or Plato, *Phedrus* 244c.

42 E.g. dog tracks (Sophocles, *Antigone* 257); a shield device (Herodotus 1.171); a signet on a ring (Aristophanes, *Knights* 952); symbols for written shorthand (Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 23).

43 Jn 20:1-2: "Μαρία ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἔρχεται [...] εἰς τὸ μνημεῖον, καὶ βλέπει τὸν λίθον ἠρμένον [...] 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."

44 Jn 20:18: "ἔρχεται Μαριὰ ἡ Μαγδαληνὴ ἀγγέλλουσα τοῖς μαθηταῖς ὅτι Ἑώρακα τὸν κύριον, καὶ ταῦτα εἶπεν αὐτῇ."

attention is abruptly shifted to the male disciples; apparently unmoved by Mary's speech, they are instead prompted to believe from the physical signs Jesus gives them (20:19-30). John's reader, furthermore, is instructed to base his own belief on the written commemoration of these physical signs:

> There are many other signs (πολλὰ…σημεῖα) as well which Jesus enacted in the presence of his disciples, which are not recorded in this book (οὐκ γεγραμμένα); but these, on the other hand, are written (γέγραπται), that you may believe that Jesus is Christ the Son of God.[45]

Thus, in the penultimate chapter, John's author adds an additional rung to the ladder of authority: Mary's words, a form of λαλιά corroborated neither by Jesus' word nor by σημεῖα, occupy the bottom rung. Jesus' reported speech to the disciples, confirmed by signs, represents a step up in terms of authority, but it is the tangible, inscribed account of these signs that occupies the top rung, and that forms the basis for continued belief.

The inscribed status of John's text thus adds to its legitimacy. As in the case of our Roman evidence – Eucharis' or Murdia's epitaphs, or the mention of Laelia – the author portrays his women in a manner that assures conformity to expectations established by the model women whom the texts themselves help to create and approve. However, the Gospel of John's report of the actual words of the Samaritan woman and Mary Magdalene presents the reader with a more complex model: each woman does, in the end, conform to the paradigm, but the author forces her to do so only after she spoken and acted outside of the norm. Mark's original report also allows for this complexity, although less explicitly; by suggesting the speech of the women at the tomb without committing it to any final form, Mark's author enables his reader to imagine the women's words as she sees fit. The emender of Mark removes this ambiguity in a manner comparable to John's technique, namely, by asserting the priority of a written model over that of uninscribed speech.

45 Jn 20:30-31: "Πολλὰ μὲν οὖν καὶ ἄλλα σημεῖα ἐποίησεν ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἐνώπιον τῶν μαθητῶν [αὐτοῦ], ἃ οὐκ ἔστιν γεγραμμένα ἐν τῷ βιβλίῳ τούτῳ / ταῦτα δὲ γέγραπται ἵνα πιστεύ[ς]ητε ὅτι Ἰησοῦς ἐστιν ὁ Χριστὸς ὁ υἱὸς τοῦ θεοῦ."

Finally, the Gospel of Luke provides a negative example that can help the reader to appreciate the complexity of the respective portrayals in Mark and John, for Luke goes further than either of them, both in terms of the elision or condemnation of female speech, and in the assertion of the ultimate authority of male-produced written models for speech.[46] In Luke 24:8, Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary mother of James, and a group of other women provide a collective report to the apostles based upon their recollection of the 'spoken' (i.e. modelled) words of Jesus.[47] Notably, their words are not of the same independently-inspired nature as those of the Samaritan woman, Mary Magdalene, or (potentially) the women at the end of Mark's original text. Furthermore, the male disciples immediately disregard the women's account as 'mere nonsense' (λῆρος).[48] Two of the sceptical male disciples are confronted by Jesus soon thereafter, who rebukes them for doubting the account, but only because it was previously predicted by male prophets, and Moses in particular.[49] Thus, although the women had reported the same information contained in the prophetic accounts, Luke's Gospel asserts that the accuracy of their report does not assure its authority.[50]

Yet Luke's author is not satisfied with merely asserting the authority of male over female speakers. Rather, the men's disbelief is only expelled when Jesus directs their attention to the written scriptures (γραφάς) from which his words are drawn: "And he said to them, 'Thus it was written [...] You are witnesses (μάρτυρες) of these things'".[51] Unlike the Samaritan woman in John, who is a witness (μαρτυρούσα) to Jesus' words, the male disciples in Luke's Gospel corroborate their own testimony based upon their witness of more compelling, written models. In addition to eliding the potential for independently-produced female speech, then, Luke further undermines even modelled female speech by presenting it as doubtful testimony that is best ignored in favour of male speech and male-authored written accounts. Furthermore, in Luke's Gospel the opportunity to witness such an account is offered only to male disciples: this circumstance removes the potential for women in his text to serve as models for the reader, as regards the proliferation of Jesus' word.

46 Upon cursory examination, Matthew's Gospel reveals little, if any, sense of anxiety over the production of a written model for speech. A closer look, however, which I have forgone in the interest of space, might prove productive.

47 Lk 24:8: "ἐμνήσθησαν τῶν ῥημάτων αὐτοῦ." Cf. Liddell and Scott, Greek-English Lexicon, s.v. "ῥῆμα", I.

48 Lk 24:11.

49 Lk 24:25: "ἐπὶ πᾶσιν οἷς ἐλάλησαν οἱ προφῆται" (another example of the neutral connotation of λαλέω, when related to male speakers, οἱ προφῆται). Compare to Lk 24:26-27.

50 Compare Lk 24:1-10 to 24:24-27.

51 Lk 24:45-48: "καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὅτι Οὕτως γέγραπται … ὑμεῖς μάρτυρες τούτων."

The portrayal of Jesus' female disciples by Luke's author represents a reaction to non-normative, female words and deeds that is more restrictive than that of his fellow Gospel authors. Yet the level of authority that the Gospel of Luke grants to written testimony, as a definitive means of communicating a fixed, normative model, ultimately corresponds to that granted by the author of John and the emender of Mark.

CONCLUSION

The features of this normative written model are evident in the broader cultural paradigms for appropriate female behaviour established prior to the early-mid first century CE, namely those preserved in the form of Roman eulogies, epitaphs, and literary accounts. Given this definition of appropriate female behaviour and speech, one can examine the potential challenges to these cultural norms that would derive from independently-produced female speech, which the male Gospel authors navigate by reconciling non-normative speech and deeds to the broader paradigms. As such, the respective Roman and Gospel texts bracket the lived experiences of these female disciples: their words and deeds exist in the time and space between the typical model, in both literary and epigraphic form, from which they deviate, and the more specifically Christian model found in the Gospels which report these deviations. They are, however, then undermined in a manner guided by the rules of the original model.

The examples employed are by no means exhaustive. Yet by identifying a few female figures, such as the Samaritan woman or Mary Magdalene, who speak and act in the space between the rejection of one model and the creation of another, I hope to have encouraged the reader to continue thinking about the potential that such women had as models for novel types of speech and action. Of course, it is highly unlikely that any of the Gospel authors set out to compose their respective accounts with the primary aim of overtly glorifying or emphatically undermining their female characters.[52] What seems more likely, and

52 Thank you to an anonymous reviewer for directing my attention to Sandra M. Schneiders, "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church," *Biblical Theological Bulletin* 12 (1998), 513-35.

53 I extend my sincere gratitude to Karine Laporte and Tessa de Zeeuw, as well as to the anonymous reviewers of the previous versions of this paper, and to the participants of the LUCAS Graduate Conference (Leiden, 29-30 January 2015), all of who have helped me to refine and organize my ideas, and to strengthen my argument. Any extant weaknesses in argumentation and presentation are entirely my own.

what can help explain the parallels between the Gospel accounts explored above, is that the broader Roman written models, from which our female characters diverge, were nonetheless ubiquitous enough to unobtrusively influence the Gospel authors' accounts, even as these authors portrayed women speaking and acting in ways outside the norm. Yet it is precisely this discrepancy between the models that allows the reader to receive the reported speech and actions of these women (John), or to imagine these things (Mark), and to recognize the modelling potential of these outstanding words and deeds, even if only for a moment.[53]

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