

## REFINISHING MARTHA AND MARY A LITERARY APPROACH TO JOHN 11,17-40

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Mark Taylor has rightly written, "The masterpiece necessarily depends upon the subject's 'answering imagination'. This dependence means that the masterpiece can never be finished and must always be refinished. Insofar as (the) work is forever incomplete, its meaning can never be fully present".<sup>1</sup> Traditional historical-critical scholarship has attempted to control John 11 by suggesting that the text is an amalgam of identifiable sources,<sup>2</sup> but 2,000 years of reading and a rich iconographic response to the story of Martha, Mary and Lazarus, from catacomb art to Epstein's masterpiece in the Chapel at Magdeline College, Oxford, indicate that this story has generated a rich "answering imagination". Further refinishing is both possible and necessary. But again to cite Mark Taylor: "The work of a/the master is both persuasive and coercive. The masterpiece is both gripping and captivating; one feels 'caught up in its world'. The fabric of the text takes hold through the (spell)binding lines from which it is knit. The masterpiece works by bringing together two contrasting lines of translation: reader is born(e) in(to) text as text is carried over (in)to reader. The goal of this transference (*metaphora*) process is a 'fusion of horizons'".<sup>3</sup>

The reading of John 11 which follows reflects my being "(spell) bound" by the text, but responding to that spell in a way which does not regard the text as finished, however "binding" it may be. Through a close reading of the matching stories of Martha and Mary, I hope to show that there is much still to be refinished in the endless interplay of possibilities which this text provides to reader, writer and artist.<sup>4</sup> Yet I will give a primacy to the text which many postmodern critics would not accept. Despite recent attempts to dismiss the contribution of a so-called narrative-

criticism,<sup>5</sup> I am persuaded that, while the tyranny of authorial-intention is ultimately destructive to the reading process,<sup>6</sup> the search for unity at the level of the interplay between the author and the reader *in the text* enriches the reader *of the text*, whose act of reading promises new life to both the text and the reader.

A study of the major commentaries and monographic literature which have dealt with John 11 reveals an almost universal agreement that the author wished to communicate to the reader that Martha is the major figure, coming to a solemn confession of faith: "I believe that you are the Christ, the Son of God, he who is coming into the world" (11,27), which matches the stated purpose of the author at the end of the Gospel: "These things are written that you may go on believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in his name" (20,31).<sup>7</sup> A close reading of the narrative, within the overall story, suggests that the reader of the Gospel might come to a different conclusion.<sup>8</sup> A text without context is pretext, yet there is no context which can ever hope to exhaust the possibilities of any given text. It is thus with an awareness of the limitations of my own reading that I offer the following subversive reading of the tradition of Martha and Mary in John 11.

### I - Verses 1-2: Mary who anointed the Lord

As the reader broaches the opening lines of John 11, three characters appear for the first time in the story: Lazarus, Mary and Martha, of Bethany. Jesus is at another place called Bethany, where John the Baptist first baptised (10,30 see 1,28). The reader distinguishes between the two Bethanys, as the author names this Bethany the village of Mary and Martha (v.1). In this setting of the scene by the narrator, the name "Mary" is listed before that of her sister, and the reader's attention is immediately focussed upon this character: Mary anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair (v.2ab). The participles are in the aorist tense (*aleiyasa, ekmaxasa*). What can this mean, as nothing in the narrative thus far has told of a woman called Mary who anointed the feet of Jesus? A gap has been created in the narrative,<sup>9</sup> as the reader seeks in vain in the immediate context for further information about a woman named Mary, and an anointing of Jesus.<sup>10</sup> If there is nothing earlier in the narrative to shed light on

this anointing (*analepsis*), the reader justifiably expects that Mary's anointing of Jesus is yet to be told (*prolepsis*).<sup>11</sup> Thus the reader moves further into the narrative armed with the knowledge of a significant event involving two important characters: a woman called Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha, who has anointed the feet of Jesus.

More is learnt in vv. 1-6: illness and death are in the air (vv.1, 4) but affection exists between Jesus and this family (vv.3, 5). Most importantly, the disciples and reader learn that Lazarus' sickness is not unto death, but the glory of God and the glorification of the Son of God will result from it (v.4). In vv. 7-16 two decisions are made: Jesus decides to go to Judea to wake Lazarus from the sleep of death so that the disciples might believe (vv.7-15) and Thomas, in the name of the disciples, misunderstands the purpose of Jesus' journey. He decides that they should all go up with Jesus, even if they must die with him (v.16). However heroic such sentiments might be, the disciples have missed the point: the journey to Jerusalem is for the glory of God, the glorification of the Son (v.4), and so that the disciples might believe (v.15).

## II - Verses 17-27: Jesus and Martha.

On Jesus' arrival at Bethany, he finds that Lazarus has been in the tomb for four days (v.17).<sup>12</sup> The indication of time informs the reader, from the start, that Lazarus is long dead, and that his entombed body is in a state of advanced decay. The narrator next informs the reader of the proximity of Bethany to Jerusalem: the distance was about fifteen stadia (3 kilometers) (v.18). Three issues lie behind this information. In the first place, it makes the next piece of information - that "the Jews" from Jerusalem came out to console the two sisters on the loss of their brother (v.19)<sup>13</sup> — a genuine possibility. Secondly, the reader senses that the city, well known as the *place of Jesus' passion and death* is nearby. Finally, the increasing hostility of chs 5-10, the presence, however innocent, of "the Jews", and the turn towards the theme of death in vv. 2, 4, 8 and 16, lead the reader to wonder if the *time of Jesus' passion and death* is near at hand.<sup>14</sup> Having set the scene, the narrator reports the encounter between Jesus and Martha and the ensuing dialogue (vv.20-27). Although the initial message to Jesus, announcing that Lazarus was ill, came from both the sisters (see

v.3: *apevsteilan oun ai adelfai pros auton*), there is a careful separation of the two women. Martha moves into action, as she goes out to meet Jesus (*ercetai uphnthsen autw*). Mary, on the other hand, is described as stationary, seated (*ekaqezeto*) in the house (v.20).<sup>15</sup> The two women will respond to Jesus in different ways, and this is marked for the reader as soon as Martha and Mary begin to take an active role in the story.

The words of Martha to Jesus, repeating the earlier respectful but warm salutation *Kurie* (see vv.3, 21) express genuine belief that Jesus' presence would have saved Lazarus. Martha has no hesitation in confessing her faith in Jesus as a miracle worker. She has no doubt that Jesus' presence would have healed Lazarus of his fatal illness (v.21). She also gives her reason for such faith: Jesus has an authoritative access to God. Whatever he might ask of God — even now — will happen (v.22).<sup>16</sup> But the reader is by now suspicious of such an understanding of Jesus. The narrator has criticised the faith of those who believed in Jesus because of the signs which he did (see 2,23-25), and Jesus has expressed dissatisfaction with the miracle faith of Nathanael (1,49-51), Nicodemus (3,1-11), the Samaritan woman (4,25-26) and the crowds beside the lake (6,25-27). During the feast of Tabernacles, among the false suggestions made about the person of Jesus, many people suggested that he was the messianic miracle worker (see 7,31). The man born blind was gradually led beyond the recognition of Jesus as a miracle worker (see 9,11.17.25-32) to belief in the Son of Man whom he could see and hear (see 9,35-38).<sup>17</sup> Both Nicodemus (see 3,2) and the man born blind (see 9,31-33) had expressed their belief that Jesus had special access to God, and was able to work miracles because of this authority.<sup>18</sup> But in neither case was their commitment to Jesus unconditional. Martha repeats their understanding of Jesus, well expressed by Nicodemus, that Jesus is a Rabbi from God who does wonderful signs because God is with him (see 3,2).<sup>19</sup> As with Nathanael, Nicodemus, the Samaritan Woman, the crowds at the feast of Tabernacles, and the man born blind, Jesus' words to Martha must be understood as a correction of her misunderstanding.<sup>20</sup> Jesus begins his response to Martha by informing her that her brother would rise again (11,23). The reader knows that Jesus will be responsible for this rising, and that it would take place within the context of this visit to Bethany. The reader recalls that Jesus has already informed his

disciples that Lazarus is asleep, and that he was going to Bethany "to awake him out of his sleep" (v. 11).<sup>21</sup> Martha was not present at that earlier conversation, held on the other side of the Jordan with his disciples (see 10,40), but she does not allow Jesus any space to explain what he means; she knows (v. 24a: *oida oti*). She immediately intervenes with her own confession of belief in what was becoming an accepted Jewish understanding of a final resurrection (v. 24).<sup>22</sup> Belief in "the last day" seems to have its roots in the OT (see Isa 2,2; Mic 4,1), and the idea of a final resurrection was a constituent part of Pharisaic Judaism (see Dan 12,1-3; 2 Macc 7,22-24; 12,44; Acts 23,8; Josephus, *War II*,163; *Sanhedrin* 10,1; *Sotah* 9,15; *Berakoth* 5,2. See also Mark 12,18-27 parr.).<sup>23</sup> This is the faith expressed by Martha, *she tells Jesus* what resurrection means.

Jesus does not allow his friend to remain in her partial understanding of resurrection. She, like so many people in the story so far, is only prepared to believe those things which form part of her history and culture. A never-ending conflict seems to exist between the horizontal perspective of the actors in the drama (the disciples, "the Jews", Nicodemus, the Samaritan woman, the blind man at Bethesda, the crowd, Jesus' brothers, Jerusalemites) and the vertical inbreak of the one who tells the story of God (see 1,18). Jesus must wrest the initiative from the energetic Martha. In his ongoing attempt to lead Martha from a partial truth into the full truth, Jesus utters words which transcend traditional eschatological expectation, and centre upon his person as the resurrection and the life (v. 25).<sup>24</sup> In a solemn *egw eimi* statement, Jesus points to the essential nature of belief in him as the only way to resurrection and life (vv. 25-26). Despite the solemnity of the words of Jesus, the reader is not surprised by his claims. The heart of this self-revelation of Jesus to Martha has already been made clear for the reader in 5,19-30.<sup>25</sup> There, as here, Jesus states that faith in him brings life both now and hereafter. Commentators have differed in their understanding of the possible meanings (physical or spiritual?) of "life" in the expression "and whoever lives" (11,26a: *kai pas o zwn*).<sup>26</sup> The blending of realised and traditional eschatology, familiar to the reader from 5,24-29 (see also 6,40,54), returns. People die physically (11,25b), but faith in Jesus ensures a life which transcends death. Thus, Jesus insists that faith in him produces a spiritual life both now and hereafter.

Jesus' words claim: the believer, even if he dies physically, will live spiritually (v.25).<sup>27</sup> The believer who is alive spiritually will never die, as on this side of death the believer lives in the spirit (see 3,6; 5,24-25), and the one who believes in him now will live on the other side of physical death (see 5,28-29; 6,40.54).<sup>28</sup> A clear indication that Martha needs to be corrected, and that Jesus is attempting to maintain the initiative in this dialogue, is found in Jesus' blunt question: *pisteueis touto;* (11,26b).<sup>29</sup>

The context of a discussion between Martha and Jesus, where two people who have contrasting ideas about the true meaning of resurrection, must determine the meaning of the Martha's response. The reader has noticed that she fell short of true faith in Jesus in v. 21, where she expressed her confidence in him as a miracle worker. She then attempted to tell Jesus the meaning of resurrection (v. 24), and again fell short of the mark. Her final response to Jesus, after his pointed question concerning her belief in him as the resurrection and the life does not answer Jesus' question. She claims that she has believed for some time (v. 27a: *egw pepisteuka*). The use of the personal pronoun and perfect tense of the verb must be given their full weight. Martha is expressing her long held convictions. In the past she (*egw*) came to believe (*pepisteuka*) in Jesus, and she still retains that faith.<sup>30</sup> This suggests to the reader that Jesus' self-revelation of vv. 25-26 has not changed her understanding of Jesus nor her faith in him.

Martha then proceeds to explain in what her faith consists. She makes no mention of the terms used by Jesus himself in v. 25-26, but states her faith in terms which were acceptable expressions of first century Jewish messianic expectation: the Christ (*o cristos*), the son of God (*o uios tou qeou*), the one who is coming into the world (*o eis ton kosmon ercomenos*) (v. 27b). All of these messianic expressions have been used earlier in the Gospel in a way which fell short of true Johannine faith. The first disciples, (see 1,41. Also 4,25-29 the Samaritan woman; 7,26.27.31.41.42; 10,24 the crowds and "the Jews") and Nathanael (see 1,49) called Jesus "the Christ" and "the son of God", but they were corrected by the words of Jesus which promised the sight of greater things (1,50-51).<sup>31</sup> After the miracle of the loaves and fishes, the crowds confessed that Jesus was the one who was coming into the world (see 6,14), but they also were corrected by Jesus' stern warning that they should not work for a food which perishes (see 6,25-27).<sup>32</sup> The

reader has no hesitation in classing Martha as having arrived at a stage of partial faith, matching that of Nicodemus (see 3,1-11) and the Samaritan woman (see 4,25-26), who also used acceptable Jewish messianic expressions to express their faith in Jesus.<sup>33</sup>

Martha's failure fully to understand who Jesus is does not lessen the impact, and the christological significance for the reader, of the Jesus' self-revelation in 11,25-26. Indeed, the failure of Martha to grasp what Jesus is saying of himself makes it even more urgent for the reader to accept these words. The reader is aware that no character in the story as it is reported in 11,1-27, has shown true faith in Jesus: neither the disciples (see v. 16), nor Martha (v. 27).<sup>34</sup> But Jesus will not renounce his mission to make God known to them (see 1,18). The reader knows, on the authority of the word of Jesus, that the glory of God will result from the miracle and that the Son of God will be glorified by means of it (see v. 4). Jesus has instructed his disciples that the miracle at Bethany will take place "so that you may believe" (v. 15), but Thomas' response gave no indication that they had understood what Jesus was asking from them (v. 16). Jesus' attempt at self-revelation to Martha has failed (vv. 25-27), but the story must continue so that the promise of v. 4 will be fulfilled: "This illness is not unto death; it is for the glory of God, so that the Son of God may be glorified by means of it".

### III - Verses 28-37: Jesus and Mary.

The scene shifts, as the narrator links Martha's return to her sister with her partial confession of faith in v.27 ( v.28a: *kai touto epousa*), summoning Mary by quietly telling her: *o didaskalos parestin* (v. 28b). The reader, aware that she has not come to a full understanding of Jesus in v. 27, now finds her giving him the title "the Teacher" which again reflects her limited faith in the word and person of Jesus. This term has been used to speak of Jesus on two earlier occasions in the narrative. Both occasions reflect an imperfect understanding of Jesus (1,38: the first disciples; 3,2: Nicodemus).<sup>35</sup> Martha passes from one series of limited expressions of faith (11,21-22.24.27) to another (v. 28). The only impact that the encounter with Jesus seems to have made upon Martha is reflected in her reporting Jesus' presence "quietly" (*laqra*).<sup>36</sup> Her aggression has abated somewhat. Martha informs her sister that

the Teacher is calling her (v. 28b: *kai fwnei se*). Although the same verb is used of Martha's summoning Mary (v. 28a: *efwnhsen*), the reader recalls the many earlier occasions when the *fwnh* of Jesus was given particular significance in summoning people to true faith. Without exception, every reference to the *fwnh* of Jesus in the story to this point is a call to the fulness of life with him (see 3,8.29; 5,25.28; 10,3.4.16.27). For this reason, Jesus condemns "the Jews" who never hear the voice of the Sent One (see 5,37). There is a heavy concentration on the voice of the shepherd in 10,1-18 (see vv. 3, 4, 16, 17). In Jesus' description of the shepherd, a passage which the reader has just left behind, the only place where Jesus uses the verb *fwnew* to speak of his own activity has appeared: "The sheep hear his voice (*ths fwnhs autou*), and he calls (*fwnei*) his own sheep by name and leads them out" (10,3). This is the background for the summoning of Mary. She is one of the Lord's own sheep, and he is summoning her.<sup>37</sup> In stark contrast with her sister, who took the initiative in going out to Jesus, and who refused to allow Jesus take the initiative from her (see 11,21-22.24.27), Mary is called forth by the word of Jesus.<sup>38</sup>

The reader is already aware, from the information provided in v. 2, that Mary will be the special sister.<sup>39</sup> Her response to the word of Jesus reinforces such an impression. Every carefully etched detail of v. 29 continues to enhance the author's portrait of Mary. This woman (v. 29a: *ekeinh*), when she hears of his call (v. 29b: *ws hkousin*) responds immediately (v. 29c: *hgerqh tacu kai hrceto pros auton*).<sup>40</sup> The reader has become accustomed to the use of the verb *akouein* in descriptions of a positive response to the word of Jesus (see 1,37.40; 3,8,29.32; 4,42.47; 5,24.25.28. 30; 6,45; 7,40.51; 8,47). This verb has been used four times, in the immediate context, of the sheep responding to the voice of the Good Shepherd (10,3.16.20.27).<sup>41</sup> However widespread scholarly opinion may be that Mary is the lesser sister, the story itself is pointing in the opposite direction.

The narrator paints in some geographical detail, so that the motion of the characters in the narrative can make sense.<sup>42</sup> Jesus has not yet arrived in the village, but is still at the place where Martha met him (11,30). This necessitates movement from Mary (v. 29), and enables the author to introduce "the Jews" who were with her in the house, comforting her (v. 31a). Nothing has been said about the emotional state of Mary. It is only "the Jews"

who offer consolation (see vv. 19, 31). The focalisation of the narrative changes briefly, as Mary's actions (see v. 29) are reported through the eyes of "the Jews".<sup>43</sup> Their interpretation of Mary's immediate rising and exit is that she is going to the tomb to weep there, so they follow her (v. 31b). The reader knows better. She is responding to the call of Jesus, which - as the reader also knows - transcends all human concerns. As so often in the Johannine narrative, there is a clash of worlds: that which flows from the presence of Jesus (see v. 28: *o didaskalos parestin*),<sup>44</sup> and that which flows from accepted religious, cultural and historical custom (see v. 31c: *doxantes oti upagei eis to mnimeion ina klaush ekei*).<sup>45</sup>

The focus returns to Mary, who comes to the place where Jesus was. On arrival, a further contrast between herself and Martha appears. In v. 21 the narrator simply reported: "Martha said to Jesus ...". The reader notices that Mary's encounter with Jesus begins with two different verbs. The narrator reports that when she saw Jesus (v. 32b: *idousa auton*) she fell at his feet (v. 32c: *epesen autou pros tous podas*). Her attitude to the presence of Jesus is markedly different from that of her sister. It is highlighted by receptivity and respect for the person of Jesus.<sup>46</sup> The reader recalls that the only character who has fallen at the feet of Jesus at this stage of the story is the man born blind (see 9,35-38). On hearing that the Son of Man was the one whom he could see, and who was speaking to him (v. 37), he confessed his faith (v. 38a: *Pisteuw kurie*) and fell to the ground before Jesus (v. 38b: *proskunhsen autw*).<sup>47</sup> The reader of John 11 is not told that Mary rises. By means of participial constructions (11,32a: *idousa auton ... epesen ... legousa autw*), the narrator stresses that from her position at the feet of Jesus she repeats *part* of the words of Martha (v. 32b. See v. 22).

The words of Mary addressed to Jesus omit the motivation which Martha gave for her confidence in Jesus' ability to heal Lazarus from his fatal illness: "whatever you ask from God, God will give you" (v. 22).<sup>48</sup> Martha's request paralleled other expressions of faith in the Gospel which attempted to make of Jesus a messianic miracle worker (see 1,49-51; 2,23-25; 3,1-11; 4,25-26; 6,25-27), but no such misunderstanding lies behind Mary's trust in Jesus' presence. The context gives the words of Mary a different meaning. She has responded to the call of the Good Shepherd (see vv. 28-29) and, in the midst of misunderstanding from "the Jews"

(v. 31), she has placed herself in a position of total trust in him (v. 32a). Her words indicate her belief that the presence of Jesus would have saved Lazarus (v. 32b). Nothing more is called for. Jesus is accepted, unconditionally, as the resurrection and the life (see vv. 25-26). There is no need for him to ask for a miracle from God (see v. 22). Only Mary accepts the full significance of Jesus revelation of himself as *egw eimi* (see v. 26). It is Mary who makes a confession of faith with these words, not Martha. The repetition of the words of Martha by Mary does not show that she is in some way a weaker "shadow" of her more powerful sister.<sup>49</sup> The reader is now aware that Mary is the character in the story reflecting genuine Johannine faith (see vv. 29, 32), while Martha has fallen short of such faith (see vv. 21-22, 24, 27).

Jesus is strangely moved as Mary adds her tears to the wailing of the Jews who have come out with her (v. 33). Up to this point of the story Mary's attention has been totally focussed upon her response to Jesus. The death of Lazarus should never be at centre-stage. But even Mary succumbs, joining "the Jews" in their wailing. Jesus has informed the disciples that the problem of Lazarus' death will be solved (see v. 11). The reader knows that Jesus is about to perform an action which will show forth the glory of God, through which the Son of God will be glorified (see vv. 4, 11). The miracle is an attempt, on the part of Jesus, to bring his disciples (see v. 15) and Martha (see vv. 25-26) to true faith. Even more importantly, it is a parable of Jesus' self-revelation as the resurrection and the life. It is not compassion — or lack of it — which creates Jesus' emotion.<sup>50</sup> At the sight of Mary's joining "the Jews" in their lamentations, Jesus is moved to anger in spirit and troubled (v. 33b *Ihsous oun ws eiden authn klaiousan kai kai tous sunelqontas auth Ioudaious klaiontas, enebrimhsato tw pneumatikai etaraxen eauton*). The verb *embrimasqai* is associated with anger, and in its Johannine form its force is accentuated with the addition of a prefix.<sup>51</sup> A debate hinges around the seemingly impossible portrait of Jesus' anger when faced with the loss of Lazarus, which has produced the tears of Mary and "the Jews".<sup>52</sup> The emerging reader, however, aware that the end of Jesus' public ministry is close at hand, joins Jesus' frustrated anger (*enebrimhsato*) and deep, shuddering, internal emotion (*etaraxen*).<sup>53</sup> Mary, who earlier has shown every sign of moving in

the world of Jesus rather than that of "the Jews" (see v. 31), is now reported as having joined "the Jews" in their tears (v. 33a).

The story, as it has been reported thus far, has been marked by the awareness of Jesus that he was journeying towards Jerusalem to show forth the glory of God, and for his own glorification (v. 4). The events of Bethany must not be regarded as an end in themselves. One of the sisters in the story which is about to be told is indicated as a person who anointed Jesus (v. 2). Jesus has told his misunderstanding disciples that he is glad to be going to Bethany. His presence there, to wake Lazarus from sleep (see v. 11), is a further attempt to bring them to true belief (v.15). But Thomas' heroic reponse to Jesus' summons to true faith is complete misunderstanding (v.16). On arrival at the outskirts of Bethany he is met by Martha, who lectures him on her belief in him as the expected messianic miracle worker (vv.21-22), and traditional belief in the resurrection (v.24). He has attempted to lead her beyond these conditioned responses (vv. 25-26), and asked for belief from her (v. 26b). But she has not been prepared to move from her present misunderstanding of Jesus (v. 27). Only one character in the story has moved towards Jesus, heard his voice, shown her receptivity and commitment to who he is, and trusted in the power of his presence: Mary, the one who will anoint Jesus (see vv. 2, 29, 32). However, she is now reported as weeping with "the Jews." Till now, nothing has been said of the tears or mourning of Mary.<sup>54</sup> She has not been reported as crying at any earlier stage of the narrative. It has been "the Jews" who were in the house, mourning (see vv. 19, 31). Now, after a demonstration of an attitude of authentic faith (vv. 28-32), she is described as in tears (v. 33). But more dramatically for the reader: she is in tears, along with "the Jews" who came out to Jesus with her (v. 33a). This is the crucial issue. Will no one come to true belief? Mary, who earlier responded to the voice of Jesus, rather than the expectations of "the Jews" that she would go to weep at the tomb (v. 31), is now with "the Jews", overcome by tears at the loss of her brother (v. 33a). Has she, along with "the Jews", made the death of Lazarus the centre of her attention, and thus lost Jesus? This is a reversal of her response to Jesus earlier in the narrative (vv. 28-32).

Jesus comes to the end of his ministry, angry (or perhaps "severely disappointed" is a better English rendition)<sup>55</sup> that even Mary, the one who shows the best signs of belief in who he is, the

Good Shepherd (see vv. 28-29), and what he comes to bring, resurrection and life (see vv. 25-26, 32), is at risk.<sup>56</sup> The human event of the death of Lazarus, and the expected emotional response of tears and mourning shown by "the Jews" (see vv. 19, 31) threaten the incipient, but authentic, faith of Mary. Thus Jesus is deeply moved by a justifiable anger and emotion.<sup>57</sup> It is the story itself which explains the emotion of Jesus. There is only one solution to this problem. Jesus must proceed with the mission which has been entrusted to him.<sup>58</sup> He must wake Lazarus from his sleep (see v. 11), glorify God, and through this event experience his own glorification (v. 4). Thus he asks to be led to the tomb of Lazarus, and "they" invite him to "come and see". It is Mary and "the Jews" (v. 33) who comprise the "they" (v.34).<sup>59</sup> They respectfully (*kurie*) invite Jesus to proceed to the tomb, to see the situation of a person who has been enclosed there for four days (see v. 17).<sup>60</sup> Once again, it is this association of the one who had best responded to the call of the Good Shepherd with "the Jews" which leads to Jesus' tears (v. 35).

The emotion of v. 33b continues in the tears described in v. 35, and thus the remarks of "the Jews" in v. 36 continue to reflect misunderstanding.<sup>61</sup> Jesus is not weeping because of the death of Lazarus, the disappointment of Martha, or the tears of Mary. The deliberate use of another verb to speak of the weeping of Jesus (*dakruw* [to weep], rather than the *klaiw* [to wail] used of Mary and "the Jews" in vv. 31 and 33) informs the reader that his weeping cannot be associated with the mourning which has created his emotional response.<sup>62</sup> Whatever may have been the depths of Jesus' love for Lazarus (v. 36. See v. 3), this is not the point of his tears. He is weeping because of the danger that his unconditional gift of himself in love as the Good Shepherd (see 10,11.14-15), the resurrection and the life who offers life here and hereafter to all who would believe in him (11,25-26), will never be understood or accepted. While she moved generously towards Jesus, responding to his voice (vv. 28-29) and trusting in him as the resurrection and the life (see v. 32) there was hope. But once she joined "the Jews" in their sorrowing and tears, Jesus' promises seem to have been forgotten. In this clash of two worlds, the world of Jesus — totally determined by his response to his Father — seems to have lost, and Jesus weeps in his frustration and disappointment (v. 35).<sup>63</sup> This, however, has not altered his response to his task to make visible

the glory of God and go through his own glorification: "Where have you laid him?" (v. 34a).<sup>64</sup> The reader, aware that Jesus will wake Lazarus from his sleep (see v. 11), waits for the miracle.

"The Jews" continue to judge Jesus according to their own criteria. Their misunderstanding comes to its climax in v. 37. Looking back to the miracle of the man born blind (9,1-7), some of "the Jews" join Martha's understanding of Jesus as a miracle worker (see 11,21-22). *Here, however, Mary is not associated with them.* It is only "the Jews" who recall that Jesus had shown that he was able to work significant miracles. Why is it that he could not prevent the death of Lazarus? Jesus has every reason for profound emotion as "the Jews" continue to ignore who he is, and the promises which he is making as his public ministry draws to a close. They, like Martha, are unprepared to move away from their own criteria for judging the person and mission of Jesus. The reader is aware that in this attempt to assess Jesus as a miracle worker "the Jews" - as always - are quite wrong.<sup>65</sup> They have not moved from the messianic expectations expressed during the feast of Tabernacles, when some of the people asked: "When the Christ appears, will he do more signs than this man has done?" (7,31). However, even that incorrect assessment of Jesus is now in crisis: he has not been able to cure the illness of this man.

But what of Mary? For the moment, she disappears from the action, swallowed up in the human emotions surrounding the death of her brother. Will the early promise of her authentic belief in Jesus, the Good Shepherd who was calling her (see vv. 28-29) and her trust in his authority as the resurrection and the life (see v. 32), come to nothing? There is a sign that she has not fallen completely into the world imposed by "the Jews", as she is no longer with them in their understanding of Jesus as a failing miracle worker in v. 37. But there is more. The reader, who has known from the beginning of the story of the events at Bethany that she is the one who anointed Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair (see v. 2), is aware that this cannot be the end of her story.

### III - Verses 38-40: Martha at the Tomb.

Another stage in the story opens as Jesus, once again moved to anger by the ongoing inability of "the Jews" to understand him (v. 38a. See vv. 36-37),<sup>66</sup> "came to the tomb" (v. 38b: *ercetai eis to*

*mnhmeion).<sup>67</sup>* As well as a change in location, the reader notices a change in Jesus' attitude. In the earlier episodes he has delayed (v. 6), he has asked for belief (vv. 16, 27), and he has shown anger and emotion (vv. 33, 35, 38a). He has asked to be shown the place where Lazarus was buried. Mary and "the Jews" offered to take him to the place that he might see it (v. 34). Now the reader finds that Jesus is not shown to the tomb; he went there. He is the master of the situation.<sup>68</sup> Jesus moves decisively to fulfil God's design (see v. 4) which, the reader knows, involves waking Lazarus from sleep (see v. 11). A series of initiatives from Jesus will dominate the brief account of Jesus' presence at the tomb (vv. 38-44). The imperative mood will be used no less than four times (vv. 39, 43, 44 [twice]).<sup>69</sup> It is only in his communication with the Father (vv. 41-42) that Jesus shows an attitude of dependence.

The tomb is described: "it was a cave, and a stone lay upon it" (v. 38b).<sup>70</sup> Jesus issues his first order: "Take away the stone" (v. 39a).<sup>71</sup> Martha, whom the reader has followed from one partial understanding of Jesus to another (see vv. 21-22, 24, 27) objects to Jesus' command (v. 39b). Still moving in her own world, she tells Jesus how things are in that world: as it is four days since Lazarus died, there will be a dreadful odour. Can this be the response of someone who has accepted that Jesus is the resurrection and the life, and that whoever lives and believes in him will never die (see vv. 25-26)? Martha has never expressed any such faith. She has always believed that Jesus is *her* expected Messiah (see v. 27). She informs "the resurrection and the life" (see v. 25) that a body shut up in a tomb for four days will be badly decomposed and will smell.<sup>72</sup> Martha's first words in the Fourth Gospel proclaimed her faith in Jesus as a miracle worker (vv. 21-22); her parting words inform Jesus that he has no authority over the decomposing body of someone who has been dead for four days (v. 39).<sup>73</sup>

Jesus no longer attempts to lead her beyond the prison of her own world with further self-revelation. He looks back to his earlier words, but in a way which the reader will understand, although, the reader suspects, Martha may not. Rather than re-stating his claim to be the resurrection and the life, and his promise of life on both sides of physical death (see vv. 25-26), Jesus speaks of the sight of the glory of God. "For the evangelist physical raising of the dead is only a sign for Jesus' power to give *believers* the true life which survives death".<sup>74</sup> Martha is

reminded of the importance of belief in the word of Jesus (v. 40: *Ouk eipon soi oti ean pisteushs*). Jesus has told her that if only she would believe she would see *thn doxan tou qeou*. The guiding, caring, saving presence of God would be visible to her through the events which she is about to witness ... if only she would believe.<sup>75</sup> The verb is in the singular; it is the faith of Martha which is in question.

The reader, aware that Martha has not been able to transcend the limitations of her own world (see vv. 21-22, 24, 27, 39), understands Jesus' indication to Martha that she is not believing, and thus is not able to identify in Jesus the *doxa tou qeou* (see 1,14; 2,11). But the reader suspects more. Jesus' words to the disciples promised that the illness of Lazarus was not unto death, but for the doxa of God and for the glorification of the Son of God (see v. 4). The reader suspects that Martha will not be able to grasp the full significance of Jesus' actions when he wakes Lazarus from his sleep (see v. 11). What is needed is true belief, and Martha's words in v. 39 have shown Jesus that she still has some way to go in her journey of faith (v. 40a). As the experience of the disciples at Cana has shown, the eyes of faith see already, in the wonderful actions of Jesus, the revelation of the doxa (see 2,11). Nothing more is reported of Martha's response to Jesus, to the miracle, nor to Jesus' prayer to his Father *dia ton oclon ton periestwta* (see vv. 41b-42). The reader knows that the miracle of the raising of Lazarus (see vv. 43-44) is to make visible the action of God (see vv. 4, 40). The physical transformation of the dead body of Lazarus into the risen Lazarus is not the main point of the story. Jesus' action has revealed the *doxa tou qeou* (see vv. 4, 40), so that the disciples might believe (see vv. 15, 42); so that Martha and Mary might believe (see vv. 26, 40, 42); so that Mary and "the Jews" might believe (see vv. 33, 42). The greater transformation would be the acceptance of all who witnessed the miracle that Jesus was the Son of the Father, the Sent One of God (see v. 42).<sup>76</sup> A remarkable sign has shown the *doxa tou qeou* (v. 4c), but the reader reads on to trace how the miracle of the raising of Lazarus will be the means by which the Son of God will be glorified (v. 4d: *ina doxasqh o uios tou qeou diauths*).

#### IV - Conclusion: Martha and Mary.

The story of Martha has had a beginning (vv. 20-22), a middle (vv. 24, 27) and an end (v. 39). She appears once more, somewhat transformed, serving a meal in Bethany (see 12,2). There are important hints that Mary's story is not finished. Although she joined the tears of "the Jews" in v. 33, she also witnessed the revelation of the doxa in the resurrection of Lazarus. One of the results of the miracle is a *schisma* among "the Jews" (see vv. 45-46). The many who are described as coming to belief in Jesus are also described as those who had earlier gone to Mary (v. 45). The reader takes it for granted that this refers to the coming of "the Jews" from nearby Jerusalem to console the sisters, reported in v. 19. But in v. 19 both sisters were mentioned. Now, as many come to belief in Jesus, they are referred to as "those who had gone to Mary" (v. 45: *Polloi oun ek twn Ioudaiwn, oi elqontes pros thn Mariam*).<sup>77</sup> There is a singling out of Mary and an association with those who believe.

Mary made a promising response to Jesus' call (see vv. 28-32), only to be swept up into the emotion created by Lazarus' death, joining "the Jews" in their tears (see v. 33). This failure in faith merited the anger and emotion of Jesus (see vv. 33, 35, 38), but it did not prevent him from raising Lazarus, so that the people standing around the tomb might come to faith in him as the sent one of the Father (see v. 42). The reader looks for a resolution to Mary's faltering. Has the miracle of Lazarus done anything for her belief in Jesus? What of the anointing, mentioned by the narrator in v. 2? The reader has been further prodded into asking questions about Mary through the information that "the Jews" who came to faith were the ones who had earlier gone to Mary (v. 45). Justifiably, the reader looks forward to a fuller report of the events mentioned in v. 2, in the hope that this woman, who began so well in her response to Jesus, might also have a fitting conclusion to her story. The reader will not be disappointed, as Mary's anointing makes her the first character in the narrative to recognise the uniqueness of Jesus' death (see 12,1-8, esp v. 7).<sup>78</sup>

But why read this text, in this way, within the context of this Conference? Why did I say, at the beginning of this paper, that my reading of the Martha and Mary story of John 11:17-40, was "subversive"? The tradition has taken it for granted that

Martha's confession: "You are the Christ, the Son of God, the one who is coming into the world" (11:27) is a confirmation, from one of the women in the Johannine story, of the point of view of the male narrator who states, at the end of his account of Jesus: "These things are written that you may go on believing that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God" (20:31). Given the fact that the text of this narrative in Greek, the narrator has, by the end of his story, clearly identified his maleness (see 19:35: "He who saw it has borne witness — his testimony is true, and he knows that he tells the truth — that you also may believe"). As far as the tradition is concerned, I have a powerful memory of an altar-cloth which regularly adorned the front of the main altar in the chapel of the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. On the fold which hung from the front of the altar it read: "*Tu es Christus, Filius Dei, veniens in hoc mundo.*"

But I am suggesting that this is a *misreading* of the Johannine text. The woman (Martha) who identifies with the man (the narrator) in articulating apparently acceptable christological titles has *misunderstood* Jesus of Nazareth. The words may sound correct, but they are not. The signifiers do not match the signified. They do not adequately correspond to Jesus' self-revelation in vv. 25-26. The limits of Martha's understanding of Jesus are nowhere more evident than in her mocking remark to Jesus, which comes some time after her supposed confession of faith: "By this time there will be an odour, for he has been dead for four days" (v. 39). Is this the way to answer the resurrection and the life (see v. 25)?

In the end it is the woman who comes from nowhere who gets it as right as one can ever hope a character in the Fourth Gospel to get it right. It is the woman who waits in silence in the midst of the commotion created by the death of her brother, the wailing of the mourners and the aggression of her sister; it is the woman who hears the voice of the Good Shepherd, and responds to his initiative by not telling him what he could or should do. She waits for whatever action he might — or might not — take. It is the woman who succumbs to human frailty, joining "the Jews" in their tears for Lazarus, as she finally gives way to understandable grief over her lost-one (see v. 33). But, as so often in the Johannine narrative, that which is "understandable" reflects an inability to cope with the demands of a revealer and a revelation which

claims to come from God (see 1:1-18, etc.), from above (see 3:13-14, etc.).

Yet, as the story comes to its *dénouement*, she is associated with "the Jews" who had come to Mary, seen what Jesus did, and who had, consequently, come to belief in him (see v. 45). Others go off to report him to Jewish officialdom (see v. 46), a report which leads to the decision that Jesus must die for the nation, and not only for the nation, but to gather into one the children of God who are scattered abroad (see vv. 49-53). Most tellingly, however, Mary is the one who recognises that Jesus can only be understood through a proper appreciation of the revealing and saving significance of his death (see 12:1-8). Martha might appear to speak the right words, but she has misunderstood Jesus (see 11:27). Mary says very little, but she prepared Jesus' body for the day of his burial (see 12:7). The reader suspects that it is Mary, not Martha, who has best understood Jesus.

## REFERENCES

1. M. C. Taylor, *Erring. A Postmodern Autotheology* (Chicago: 1984) 90.
2. It is impossible to survey the many suggestions which have been proposed for the pre-history of this text. For good surveys, see A. Marchadour, *Lazare. Histoire d'un récit. Récits d'un histoire* (LD 132; Paris:1988) 33-63; J. Kremer, *Lazarus, die geschichte einer Auferstehung. Text, Wirkungsgeschichte und Botschaft von Joh 11:1-46* (Stuttgart 1985) 82-109, and G. Rochais, *Les récits de résurrection des morts dans le Nouveau Testament* (SNTSMS 40; Cambridge 1981) 113-34.
3. Taylor, *Erring*, 89.
4. See Taylor, *Erring*, 170-82.
5. See especially S. D. Moore, *Poststructuralism and the New Testament. Derrida and Foucault at the Foot of the Cross* (Minneapolis: 1994) 65-81.
6. See Taylor, *Erring*, 87-93.
7. R. Schnackenburg, *The Gospel according to St John* (3 vols.; HTCNT 4/1-3; London & New York, 1968-82) 2:328, and B. Lindars, *The Gospel of John* (NCC; London 1972) 396, regard Martha's words as the theological climax of the chapter. For R. E. Brown, "Roles of Women in the Fourth Gospel", *TS* 36 (1975) 693-4, Martha replaces Peter as the one who makes the supreme confession of faith. See also S. M. Schneiders, "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church", *BTB* 12 (1982) 41. M. Scott, *Sophia and the Johannine Jesus* (JSNTSS 71; Sheffield 1992) 199-206, argues that Martha's confession is "both fully Johannine and ... consistent with the pattern of the revelation of Jesus as Sophia". Kremer, *Lazarus*, 70, presents a consensus of opinion when he writes: "Auf dem Höhepunkt und am Schluss des Gesprächs zwischen Marta und Jesus kommt diesen kurzen Credo ein besonderes Gewicht zu". The list could go on: Barrett, Beasley-Murray, Becker, Carson, Gnalka, Haenchen, Lagrange, Marchadour, Marsh, Rochais, Schneiders, Segalla, Sloyan, Stibbe, etc. Scholars discuss the origins of Martha's words as a primitive creed (see Barrett, *St John*, 397) and even suggest that it was a baptismal confession (see G. Bornkamm, "Das Bekenntnis im Hebräerbrief", in *Studien zu Antike und Urchristentum. Gesammelte Aufsätze Band II* (BEvT 28; München 1959) 191-2 n. 8). But what came first: the Johannine literary context or the credal use of Martha's words in the Christian Church?
8. By "the reader" I primarily intend the heuristic device of the emerging reader in the text (generally called "the implied reader" by narrative critics). There is, however, a close relationship between the reader in the text and the reader of the text. On this, see F. J. Moloney, *Belief in the Word: Reading John 1-4* (Minneapolis: 1993) 9-21.
9. On the function of "gaps" (also called "blanks" or "places of indeterminacy") in a narrative, see W. Iser, *The Act of Reading: A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (London 1978) 182-87, and *passim*.
10. For most commentators (e.g. J. H. Bernard, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the*

- Gospel according to St John [2 vols.; ICC; Edinburgh 1928] 2:372-73; R. E. Brown, *The Gospel According to John* [2 vols.; AB 29, 29a; Garden City, NY 1966-70] 1:423; Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:322; LINDARS, *John*, 386-87), this is an added parenthesis.
11. On the use of *analepsis* and *prolepsis* in narrative, see G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method* (Ithaca, N.Y. 1980) 33-85. See also S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (New Accents; London 1983) 43-58.
  12. It is sometimes suggested that the clumsy Greek of v. 17: *elqwn o IhsouV euren auton* looks forward to Mary Magdalene and the disciples' not finding Jesus in the tomb (see 20,1-10). See, for example, Kremer, *Lazarus*, 63; B. Byrne, *Lazarus. A contemporary reading of John 11:1-46* (Zacchaeus Studies: New Testament; Collegeville 1991) 47.
  13. The use of the verb *paramuqeomai*, used here to describe the actions of "the Jews", is rarely used in the NT (see v. 31; 1 Thess 2,11; 5,14). It is a word of wide meaning (see LSJ 1318, s.v.), but there is no cause to suspect the genuineness of the care shown to the bereaved family, or to read the use of this verb as describing non-Christian concern over death. See C. K. Barrett, *The Gospel according to St John* (London 1978) 394.
  14. While it is true that "the Jews" in 11,8.19.31.33.36.45.54 do not play the negative role which has marked their appearance in the story thus far (see Kremer, *Lazarus*, 64), the reader comes to John 11 with their overall negative response well established. However benign they may be to other characters in the story (see vv. 19, 31: Martha and Mary), "the Jews" will continue to be divided by the presence of Jesus, and reject him (see vv. 8, 33-37, 45-46, 54). This is not to deny the possibility that John 11 came from a source which was more friendly to "the Jews" as many (e.g. Brown, *John*, 1:427-8) would maintain.
  15. This is often noticed (e.g. R. Bultmann, *The Gospel of John: A Commentary* [Oxford 1971] 401 n. 4), but scholars give all the credit to Martha, and portray Mary as behaving as one would expect from a grieving person (see, for example, Brown, *John*, 1:433; X. Léon-Dufour, *Lecture de l'Évangile selon Jean* [3 vols; Paris 1988-93] 2: 416-7; Marchadour, *Lazare*, 118-9). The reader, already warned of the importance of Mary in the prolepsis of v. 2, reads it differently.
  16. A link is sometimes made between these words of Martha and the Mother of Jesus to the servants in 2:5. See, for example, Kremer, *Lazarus*, 65. The Mother's openness to the word of Jesus and Martha's trust in his miracle working capacities are quite different. Bernard, *St John*, 2:385, rightly warns against making too much of the use of the verb *ajitei'n* in reference to the prayer of Jesus (see Matt 7,7).
  17. See F. J. Moloney, *The Johannine Son of Man* (BibScRel 14; Rome 1978) 142-59.
  18. Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:329, notes that "the idea is in accord with Jewish piety".
  19. See Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 108-9. Against B. F. Westcott, *The Gospel According to Saint John* (London 1908) 168; Bultmann, *John*, 401-2, and

- Marchadour, *Lazare*, 119, who regard Martha's words in v. 22 as already a satisfactory expression of Johannine faith. For a correction of this view, see G. R. Beasley-Murray, *John* (WBC 36; Waco 1987) 190.
20. See especially D. A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John* (Grand Rapids 1991) 412.
  21. R. H. Lightfoot, and C. F. Evans (ed.), *St John's Gospel* (Oxford 1956) 221, misses this by suggesting that Jesus is comforting Martha by reminding her of the Jewish hope of resurrection. See also C. H. Talbert, *Reading John. A Literary and Theological Commentary on the Fourth Gospel and the Johannine Epistles* (London 1992) 173.
  22. The abruptness of Martha's response is noted by Kremer, *Lazarus*, 66. See also E. Haenchen, *John* 1-2 (2 vols; Hermeneia; Philadelphia 1984) 2:62.
  23. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see H. C. Cavallin, "Leben nach dem Tod im Spätjudentum und frühen Christentum", in *ANRW* II 19/1 (1979) 240-345.
  24. The words *kai h zwh* are missing from some good witnesses (P45, Old Latin [Vercellensis], Sinaitic Syriac, Cyprian, and sometimes by Origen). Brown, *John* 1:425, claims that its omission is harder to explain than its addition, but Barrett, *St John*, 396, suspects that the shorter text may be original, but "makes little difference to the sense". This is hardly the case, given the play on *zwh* in vv. 25b-26. On this, see C. H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge 1953) 364-5, and A. Stimpfle, *Blinde sehen. Die Eschatologie im traditionsgeschichtlichen Prozess des Johannesevangeliums* (BZNW 57; Berlin 1990) 109.
  25. See, among many, Barrett, *St John*, 395-6, and especially J. H. Neyrey, *An Ideology of Revolt. John's Christology in Social-Science Perspective* (Philadelphia 1988) 81-92.
  26. For a summary of the discussion, see Brown, *John* 1:425; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 190-1. On "life" and "eternal life" in the Fourth Gospel, see J. G. Van Der Watt, "The Use of AIWNIOS in the Concept ZWH AIWNIOS in John's Gospel", *NovT* 31 (1989) 217-228.
  27. See Brown, *John*, 1:425. For an existentialist reading of these words as "rising into life" through faith, see Bultmann, *John*, 402-3.
  28. The question of physical life and death was important in the Johannine Community. See Stimpfle, *Blinde sehen*, 111-6. See also S. M. Schneiders, "Death in the Community of Eternal Life. History, Theology and Spirituality in John 11", *Int* 41 (1987) 46-52; J. P. Martin, "History and Eschatology in the Lazarus Narrative", *SJT* 17 (1964) 332-43; B. McNeil, "The Raising of Lazarus", *DRev* 92 (1974) 269-75.
  29. The concrete nature of this question is completely lost in Bultmann's existentialist interpretation (*John*, 404).
  30. I am giving the perfect tense its full value. On this, see BDF, 175-6, para. 340. See also Stimpfle, *Blinde sehen*, 119. This is generally explained away by commentators by claiming that this is a characteristic use of *pisteuein* in the Fourth Gospel. See, for example, Barrett, *St John*, 396, citing 3,18, 6,69; 8,31; 11,27 16,27 and 20,29 as examples. Commentators

commend her "firm faith" (Schnackenburg, *St John*, 332). A careful situating of each of these passages in its narrative context, alongside the other 92 uses of *pisteuein* in John renders the word "characteristic" somewhat doubtful. The reader finds the egw *pepisteuka* of 11,27 a genuine perfect tense, indicating a coming to faith which preceded Jesus' question in vv. 25-27. Her words in v. 27 show that she has not moved beyond that point. An identical use of the perfect tense of *pisteuein* to indicate partial faith is found in the troublesome 8:31. On this, see G. Segalla, "Un appello alla perseveranza nella fede in Gv 8,31-32?" *Bib* 62 (1981) 387-89.

31. See Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 67-75.
32. Barrett, *St John*, 397, claims too much for "the one who is to come into the world" when he comments that the Evangelist "uses it to express his own fundamental conception of the mission of Jesus from the Father". Brown, *John*, 1:425, sees the problem of the parallel between 6,14 and 11,27, but suggests that Martha expresses a different expectation. The Johannine reader takes consistency for granted.
33. On these "stages of faith", see the summary in Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 192-9.
34. See also Stimpfle, *Blinde sehen*, 117-9; Byrne, *Lazarus*, 53-54; D. A. Lee, *The Symbolic Narratives of the Fourth Gospel. The Interplay of Form and Meaning* (JSNTSS 95; Sheffield 1994) 205-6.
35. On these uses of *didaskaloV* as imperfect confessions of faith, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 67-8, 108-9. It is, of course, the Greek for "Rabbi", which has

always been used to address Jesus in contexts of limited faith (see 1,38,49; 3,2; 4,31; 6,25; 9,2; 11,8). Barrett, *St John*, 397, admits: "The description is surprising after the exalted terms of Martha's faith (v. 27)".

36. Brown, *John*, 1:425, suggests that this is a "cautious whispering" to keep Jesus' presence secret from "the Jews". Kremer, *Lazarus*, 71, links it with the Johannine Church's exclusion from the Synagogue. The detail also indicates the weakening of Mary's role in the narrative.
37. See Kremer, *Lazarus*, 71.
38. The following positive interpretation is again at variance with commentary on the passage. I disagree with the remarks of Brown, *John*, 1:435: "This scene does not advance the action; vs. 34 could easily follow vs. 27, and no one would know the difference". Rochais, *Les récits de résurrection*, 143, regards vv. 28-31 as "versets de remplissage", and Scott, *Sophia*, 206 comments that "Mary's role ... is almost insignificant in comparison with that of her sister". There have been attempts to show Mary as the model receptive disciple (see, for example, S. M. Schneiders, "Women in the Fourth Gospel and the Role of Women in the Contemporary Church", *BTB* 12 [1982] 41-2), but most look to 12:1-8 for this interpretation.
39. Historical-critical analysis, which disregards v. 2, produces Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:333: "Mary thus gives the impression of being nothing but a complaining woman". On v. 2 as a gloss, see *ibid.*, 2:322.
40. See Barrett, *St John*, 397, on the importance of "coming to Jesus".
41. The same verb has been used against those who do not listen

- to the voice of Jesus (see 5,37; 6,60; 8,38,43,47).
42. On the skill of this "layout", see Haenchen, *John* 2, 65.
  43. On "focalisation" in a narrative, see Genette, *Narrative Discourse*, 189-94; S. Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 71-85.
  44. Barrett, *St John*, 397, notes the relationship between this verb and the noun *parousiva*. See also Kremer, *Lazarus*, 71.
  45. Some manuscripts (e.g. P<sup>66</sup>, Alexandrinus, Kōridethi) read *legonteV*, rather than *doxanteV*. The sense of an inner expression of common opinion must be maintained, on both textual and narrative grounds. As Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:334, correctly notes: "She is expected to give way to her grief and 'weep' at the tomb". Stress mine.
  46. It is not, as Byrne, *Lazarus*, 56, comments, "extremity of emotion". Nor, as J. Calloud and F. Genuyt, *L'Evangile de Jean (II). Lecture sémiotique des chapitres 7 à 12* (Lyons 1987) 104-6, argue, does Mary "somatise" the failure of Martha's "verbalisation".
  47. The verbs are not the same, but the action is. The reader also recalls the use of the verb *proskuvnew* in the discussion of true worship in 4,20-24. On this, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 149-53, esp 152 n. 82.
  48. Byrne, *Lazarus*, 56, misses the point when he describes Mary's words as "a poor, truncated piece compared with Martha's".
  49. This expression is used by W. Bauer, *D a s Johainesevangelium erklärt* (HKNT 6; Tübingen 3<sup>1933</sup>) 157, citing Wellhausen. It is also used by Haenchen, *John* 2, 65.
  50. On the dangers of psychologising interpretations, see Schnackenburg, *St John*,
- 2:334-5; E. C. Hoskyns and F. N. Davey (ed.) *The Fourth Gospel* (London 1947) 404.
51. The basic meaning of the verb is to express anger outwardly, for example, with a snort or the like. But this is internalised here by the addition of *en pneumatī*. On the verb, see LSJ 330, s.v. *brimazw*; 540, s.v. *embrimaomai*. See the survey of its use in classical literature in B. Lindars, "Rebuking the Spirit. A New Analysis of the Lazarus Story of John 11", *NTS* 38 (1992) 92-6.
  52. It is not possible to offer a history of this discussion. For surveys, see Barrett, *St John*, 398-400; Brown, *John*, 1:425-6. For earlier discussions, see M.J. Lagrange, *Évangile selon Saint Jean* (EB; Paris 1936) 303-5. Attempts have been made to lessen the idea of anger, to the extent that P<sup>45</sup>, P<sup>66</sup> and Codex Bezae add "as if" before the verb. M. Black, *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts* (Oxford 3<sup>1967</sup>) 240, suggests that the two Greek verbs translate one Aramaic expression meaning "to be moved strongly". For a discussion of the textual variants, and this possible Aramaic background, see Barrett, *St John*, 399-400.
  53. Commentators rightly point out that the expressions *en pneumatī* of v. 33, and *en eautw* of v. 38 are parallel. There is no reference to anger "in the Spirit", but a deep, internal experience.
  54. Mary's remaining seated in the house (see v. 20) does not indicate her taking up a traditional position of mourning, despite Job 2,8,13; Ezek 8,14. It is inaccurate to claim "Marie de bout en bout est marquée par une série cumulative de notions funèbres" (Marchadour, *Lazare*, 124).

55. Westcott, *St John*, 170, points out that "indignation" is part of the general notion implied by the verb.
56. There is no need to resort to a softening of the context, suggesting that Jesus is moved by his sympathy for the sufferers. See, for example, Lindars, *John*, 398-9; Schneiders, "Death in the Community", 54; M. W. G. Stibbe, *John* (Readings: A New Biblical Commentary; Sheffield 1993) 124-5. Barrett, *St John*, 398, rightly dismisses any suggestions that Jesus is angry with the hypocrisy of "the Jews". It is Mary's association with the wailing of "the Jews" which angers Jesus. Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:336, see "lack of faith of the wailers" as the reason for Jesus' anger, but does not see the importance of Mary's association with it. Bultmann, *John*, 406, and Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 404-5, do link Mary with "the Jews". Recently, Lindars, "Rebuking the Spirit", 97-104, has claimed that John's source (parallel to Synoptic exorcisms: see Mark 1,43; 9,25-29) originally had Jesus rebuking the spirit. In John, not demons, but death is overcome. In accommodating the source to its present context, John's use of embrimasqai is conditioned by tarassw, and thus - shifted from its original angry context - comes to mean emotionally moved.
57. A number of scholars see the use of tarassw as a link with the forthcoming passion. See, for example, J. Beutler, "Psalm 42/43 im Johannesevangelium", NTS 25 (1978-79) 38-46; A. T. Hanson, *The Prophetic Gospel. A Study of John and the Old Testament* (Edinburgh 1991) 156-8. Later appearances of the same verb (see 12,27; 13,31) will make the link clearer to the reader.
58. Jesus is, despite his emotion, the master of the situation. On this characteristic of the Johannine Jesus, see R. A. Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel. A Study in Literary Design* (Foundation and Facets; Philadelphia 1983) 111.
59. Against Westcott, *St John*, 171, and Bernard, *St John*, 2:394, who guess that "they" must refer to Martha and Mary.
60. The expression used in v. 34: "come and see" recalls Jesus' provocative use of these words in 1:39. Lightfoot, *St John*, 233, draws a contrast between the invitation of Jesus and the invitation of human beings. The repetition is probably coincidental.
61. See Bauer, *Johannesevangelium*, 153; Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 405; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 194. Many commentators wrongly remark that at least here "the Jews" interpret the actions of Jesus correctly. See, for example, Bernard, *St John*, 2:394; Barrett, *St John*, 400.
62. This is the only place in the NT where the verb dakruw appears. The noun dakruon appears in Heb 5,7 (significantly in the famous passage on Jesus' loud cries and tears).
63. Bultmann, *John*, 407, rightly sees the surrounding unfaith as the reason for Jesus' emotion in both v. 33 and v. 35.
64. This question has nothing to do with a contradiction of Jesus' omniscience, as Haenchen, *John* 2:66, claims. It is a sign of his commitment to the project of v. 4, promised to both the disciples and the reader in v. 11.
65. This misunderstanding is missed by commentators who identify "the Jews" here with the general population. See, for example,

- Léon-Dufour, *Lecture* 2:424-5; Kremer, *Lazarus*, 74.
66. Thus Bultmann, *John*, 407.
67. It is here that I differ from the structure of Marchadour, *Lazare*, 86-7. Marchadour is led by the presence of mourning and the tomb in both v. 31 and 39, thus forming an inclusion which creates a section of vv. 31-39. An inclusion is a confirmation of a division, but a repetition may also indicate the beginning of a new section, and not necessarily its conclusion. In this case the change of place in v. 38 marks the beginning of a new section.
68. See Hoskyns, *Fourth Gospel*, 405.
69. Barrett, *St John*, 401, writes of the "highly dramatic speed" of this part of the story.
70. The general term *mnhmeion* is further described as a cave (*sphlaion*). This type of burial place was widespread in first century Palestine. See J. Jeremias, *Heiligengräber in Jesu Umwelt. Eine Untersuchung zur Volksreligion der Zeit Jesu* (Göttingen 1958).
71. Kremer, *Lazarus*, 75, points out that Mary Magdalene will find the stone of Jesus' tomb already removed. See also Byrne, *Lazarus*, 63.
72. See also Byrne, *Lazarus*, 62. A. Loisy, *Le quatrième évangile* (Paris 1921) 352-3, and Bultmann, *John*, 407 n. 7, point to the contradiction, but most scholars struggle to combine the supreme confession of Johannine faith of v. 27 with this answer to Jesus' command in v. 39. See, for example, Lindars, *John*, 399-400; Kremer, *Lazarus*, 75; Léon-Dufour, *Lecture*, 2:426-7. Some simply ignore it (e.g. Barrett, *St John*, 402), others (e.g. Bultmann, *John*, 407) put it down to a confusion of sources. Schnackenburg, *St John*, 2:338, claims that "it is a mistake to worry about the contradiction".  
(!)
73. See Stimpfle, *Blinde sehen*, 138.
74. Schnackenburg, *St John* 2:338. Stress mine.
75. For this meaning of doxa tou qeou, see Moloney, *Belief in the Word*, 55-57. All the bystanders will see the events, but only the believer will see the doxa. See Lightfoot, *St John*, 224. Most commentators read v. 40 as a promise rather than a recommendation to greater faith. See, for example, Kremer, *Lazarus*, 76.
76. See Kremer, *Lazarus*, 80.
77. Reading *oi elqonteV proV thn Mariam* as a recollection of v. 19, and not "who had come *with* Mary" (RSV). For my reading, see Bernard, *St John* 2:401-2; Léon-Dufour, *Lecture*, 2:430.
78. I argue this case in greater detail in Chapter Seven of *Signs and Shadows. Reading John* 5-12.