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Book Reviews

Discipleship and Gender
in *The Gospel According to Thomas*:
A Narrative Analysis of Salome and Mariam Through the Implicit Narrator

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Abstract

The following essay analyses the ways in which the narrator of *The Gospel According to Thomas* (GosThom) stages its personages, using their identification and dialogues as emblematic of their characterization. I will focus on the depiction of Mariam and Salome, analyzing their interaction with Jesus in comparison to others. Rather than using an onomastic approach to import and force their portrayal onto the GosThom, this research applies a narrative analysis to the text as found in the Nag Hammadi Library (Codex II,2). Although similar approaches have been taken in the past (Marjanen: 1998, Brankaer: 2006), these studies have limited their research to particular *logia*, were aimed at comparing their results to the canonical gospels, or hoped to reconstruct implied communities. I will argue that narrative approaches ought to consider the GosThom's entire literary context, and that they do not need the addition of a comparative approach or to be confined to a single *logion*. Aware of the narrative limits that previous scholarship has drawn, I argue that the narrative frame of the GosThom ought to be perceived as a string of dialogues between Jesus and its entourage rather than limited to action and location.

Keywords: Gospel According to Thomas, Gospel of Thomas, Narrative Approach, Narrator, Salome & Mariam, Nag Hammadi, Apocrypha, Gender Studies,

Little attention has been granted to the narrative development in *The Gospel according to Thomas* (GosThom). Several factors can be assumed to account for this, but perhaps one of the main reasons is the lack of action and plot development. Rather than finding unfolding events, the reader is faced with segmented proverbs or enigmatic sayings that exhibit a lack of flow. Furthermore, the division of the text into 114 *logia* has limited most studies to individual or limited proverbs. This research argues that although little action appears in the text of the GosThom as found in Codex II of the Nag Hammadi library, it is nevertheless possible

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to analyze the narrative development through the dialogues and interaction between Jesus and his audience—the disciples, Salome, Mariam, as well as the unidentified characters. To do so, the GosThom has to be analyzed in its entirety as a unified corpus so as to investigate the development of characters as well as how the narrator depicts their interactions.[1] In doing so, this research demonstrates that discipleship and salvation in the GosThom are not Gender-Biased. Although it has been suggested that the GosThom disapproves of women attaining salvation, a narrative approach based on the entire corpus of the GosThom reveals that it is rather a detachment of worldly matters that is addressed, as opposed to one's gendered identity. Since very little has been done to analyze the relationship between the narrative development of the GosThom and the question of discipleship, I propose to study the depiction of women and men in this text in order to discern how Salome and Mariam are portrayed by the narrator.[2]

I. Diachronic Approaches

The GosThom has been primarily analyzed as a segmented text, assuming that it exhibits a series of "oral traditions" that can be traced back to either canonical gospels, perhaps *Quelle*, or to the historical Jesus. It was therefore deemed essential to fragment the text into the 114 detectable "*logia*," which subsequently limited studies of the GosThom to individual sayings rather than the gospel in its entirety. As a byproduct, academics have ignored its literary redaction and distinctive theological perspective, reducing its literary genus to that of a fragmentary product. Furthermore, studies in the GosThom have often benefited either research on the Synoptic Gospels or on Late Antiquity "Gnostic" studies. Moreover, textual studies have assumed scribal manipulation of the text due to textual similarities with canonical and apocryphal material, not to mention the Greek *vorlage*, which has guided academic endeavors to search for the original GosThom. Although these assumptions have been established upon attested evidence, it remains that the mirage of a second century text prevails when what we have at hand is (*perhaps*) a fourth century Coptic manuscript.

Another trend has been the research on Christian figures through an onomastic approach, which has attempted to reconstruct their associated meaning. However, it has often extracted their characterization from the narrative setting and imported these depictions into the GosThom without closely analyzing their literary depiction within the GosThom. Although this approach may enrich our understanding of their common characterization

and notoriety, it imposed a singular way of reading while overlooking at the narrative subtleties and development within the GosThom.

In this sense, the historical and theological inclination of the first studies mapped the road on which future scholars would focus their attention. These elements have not only limited Thomasine inquiries, but also created a series of presuppositions that, to this day, seep their way into current academic research. These assumptions have made it difficult for synchronic approaches to analyze the text since their aim is not devoted to the history behind the text, but rather to the text in its final literary form.

This research proposes a narrative study of certain characters found in the GosThom through the narrator's depiction. I argue that the binary associations often imposed by biblical scholars have enforced a monophonic reading, discarding the complexity of opinions and intricacies that can be found in the text. Moreover, I propose that a narrative approach can unveil the multiple voices found within the GosThom, thus proposing an alternative reading to certain *logia*. At first I will engage with flourishing theories that have been applied to Nag Hammadi literature, theories which have attempted to correct previous misconceptions. Following this, I will apply two particular narrative theories to the study of the GosThom; the polyphonic reading proposed by Mikhail Bakhtin, and that of *time* and *action* in the act of reading as proposed by H. Porter Abbott. Lastly, I will analyze the depiction of Mariam and Salome through a narrative lens and underline how the narrator casts their voices in comparison to other dialogues found throughout the GosThom. However, it should be noted that the goal of this exercise is not to devalue previous interpretations nor to diminish their efforts, but rather to propose an alternative reading that allows for characters other than Jesus and Thomas to become protagonists.

II. Currents in Theoretical Frameworks

Over the last few decades, several studies have proposed links with either platonic philosophy, or certain religious doctrines that had underlying dualism. However, Risto Uro's study on the GosThom has proposed alternative interpretations to previous misconceptions. In particular, he criticizes modern notions of "dualism," perceived as extreme and disjointed entities. According to Uro, this perception is not representative of the theology found in the GosThom.[3] For instance, Uro maintains

that although the negative perspective toward the material world can be perceived, there are *logia* that present the material world as insignificant (*logia* 56; 80; 21), while others portray it with positive connotation (*logia* 28 and 113).[4] Uro reasons against a simplistic understanding of dualism, opposing the material versus the spiritual or proto-orthodox Christianity versus "Gnostic" teachings. In regards to the material world, he claims that this understanding infers "a notion that such dualism stands in stark contrast to that of the New Testament authors who taught the resurrection of the human body and maintained that the bodily physical reality was good because it was created by God."[5] He thus underlines the stereotypes found in Nag Hammadi studies that imply an "anticosmic hatred of the body," which don't take into account the richness and complexity of Greco-Roman culture in Late Antiquity.[6] Uro also warns of forthright associations between ideology and praxis, where scholars have made the direct relationship between "Thomas' dualist body language with the ascetic behaviour of the Thomasine Christians."[7] This oversimplified view on "Gnosticism" can cast certain stereotypes in regards to dualism, imposing conventions of understanding onto the text.

In order to defend this argument, Uro presents three examples that are often seen as opposing constructs, or binary associations. First, using *logion* 112, he presents a series of existing traditions from Late Antiquity that perceived an interdependence between the body and the soul, yet not solely focused as binaries of opposition but rather complementary.[8] The second argument presented by Uro focuses on the GosThom and the semantics it uses, where terms are not limited to a singular meaning but rather exhibit a complex symbolic representation.[9] Thirdly, he develops the themes of wealth and poverty to focus on the quality of the corporeal body and that of the soul, noting an interdependence on the richness of one and poorness of the other. Uro maintains that the GosThom does not present as clear a dislike for the material body as conventional dualism would have us believe. Instead, it is rather the renunciation of the descriptive quality and role that the material world has upon the believer. Instead of describing oneself as a follower of Jesus, the qualities used to define oneself are often associated with the materiality of one's body; gender, ethnicity, social status, etc. It is these defining characteristics that become problematic in the GosThom.

What is at stake is the notion of binaries as opposing entities, which Uro questions and to which he proposes an amendment. Marc Girard argues that oppositions and antithesis are a rather occidental approach to distinguishing elements, and that certain Semitic texts employ opposite concepts (e.g. *Heaven* and *Earth*) not to create oppositions but rather as inclusive poles of everything found within these extremities.[10] In this regard, binaries ought to be perceived as more than opposing entities, but more precisely as a large spectrum in which several categories can coexist.

III. Regarding Women in the Gospel According to Thomas

The notion of binaries is also pervasive when it comes to gender analysis in the Thomasine scholarship. Although it is true that gender categories were often arranged hierarchically, where the male dominated the female, one has to also be aware that this distinction was not homogeneously understood. More importantly, what is at stake is not the focus on the hierarchical dyad but rather the sole-emphasis that salvation could be obtained by "becoming male;" that is, by climbing that social-hierarchical ladder and attaining male-status. The underlying assumption of such interpretation does not focus on the un-gendering of oneself per say, but rather on the notion that maleness is one step away from salvation. This idea often appears as self-evident when reading the GosThom, particularly *logion* 114, and is perceived as the dominating voice of the time. As Elizabeth Castelli points out, "there is a clear differentiation in gnostic texts between a notion of 'oneness,' where sexual or gender identity is erased, and a notion of an 'androgyne,' where genders are blended."[11] Castelli mentions that the myth of the "androgynous wholes, now separated and forever seeking reunification with their other halves" voiced through Aristophanes, in Plato's Symposium, is "but one articulation of the notion that human perfection is only accessible apart from sexual differences."[12] Castelli, along with other scholars, point out Galatians 3:28 (*there is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female*) where Paul suggests that, "becoming a Christian somehow elided one's other social markers."[13] The variety of philosophies regarding gender and salvation in Late Antiquity provides more options than a reductionist interpretation limited to a binary opposition as the sole key to understanding salvation.

This dichotomy has often been the key by which *logion* 114 has been interpreted; that "becoming male" is the way through which Mariam can obtain salvation. Previous gender studies have fortified their argument

using the criticism made on the dyad of Male/Female. This set of modern concerns, questions, and approaches has done more than suggest certain readings, and has subsequently encouraged a perception of binary-oppositions. The stress placed on gender hierarchy as a way to salvation has thus muted all other possibilities. Although these critics are right in underlining that maleness is favoured in certain Nag Hammadi texts, it does not result in a doctrine that is consistent throughout all of the Nag Hammadi tractates. Furthermore, it neglects the other portions of texts where females play an essential narrative role. This dichotomy is perhaps amplified not only by our current focus on gender equality, but also because biblical scholars have favoured the voices of Jesus and Thomas when working on the GosThom. As our next section will let us perceive, favouring voices is one of the lenses that can be used when examining literary themes. In order to suggest an alternative, I propose to analyze current literary theories that might shed new light on the depiction of Salome and Mariam within the narrative frame of the GosThom.

IV. Literary Theories

Perhaps the reason why the narrative frame in the GosThom has not been analyzed thoroughly is because the events do not lend themselves explicitly to be analyzed as a narrative—there appears to be no story-climax, change of location, or major occurring incident. Instead, a series of "proverbs" are presented in sequence, and only in these proverbs does any action seem to take place. However, limiting narrative criticism to the active elements confines the examination to the first degree of analysis, hence omitting the narrator, the voice that it borrows, the focus and the elements that are distanced, the repetitive motives and themes, the dialogues and its gaps, its continuity (or lack thereof), character growth, the paratext, and at last the response of the reader. If indeed the GosThom has not been analyzed through a narrative-lens it is because of a misunderstanding of what narrative does.

According to H. Porter Abbott, narrative is construed through the agency of time, in which verbs are interpreted using tenses, gender, active or passive voices. The duration of a verb tense also allows the audience to perceive how long an action took place. Simple subject-verb statements convey an action with precision, while more complex syntactic phrases provide a chronological explanation of what happened first, during, and afterward. Grammar and verbs provide enough clues to the audience not

only to understand when the event took place but also of the duration of the action. The reader thus constructs the narrative the moment words are put together and an interaction with sentences occur.[14]

Although there are *literary genres* that carry the approval stamp of narrative genre while others do not (eg. poems, ballads, short story, or even humour), any written communication is driven and understood through narrative. The subject of any given sentence is often the implied central character for it has become the agent of the action. The juxtaposition between verb, subject, adjectives, nouns, prepositions and conjunctions give room for the imagination to recreate the missing elements in this narrative. In other words, one does not need an explicit storyline to conceptualize a narrative—subjects, verbs, time, place and implied messages all interact with each other as well as with the audience, which activates the audience's narrative imagination in order to convey a message.

V. The Narrator

The GosThom therefore cannot be limited to a series of proverbs solely, but ought to be considered as a narrative, for there is a narrator, characters, intrigues, interactions between characters in the form of dialogues, and at times implied movement. Through a narrative approach, the reader establishes the timeline as he/she reads it chronologically, from beginning to end. The narrator is a third-person, an unspecified entity that seems to be recording the secret revelation that Thomas received. In *logion* 1, the narrator situates his/her testimony, yet it remains ambiguous who this entity is, and, furhtermore, what the nature of their relationship is to Thomas or Jesus. We can however ascertain that the narrator's involvement with the story stays at the 1st level, in the sense that a) his/her only interaction is limited to framing the dialogues regarding who said what, and b) the narrator does not have access to the secret words that Thomas receive, nor to anyone's thought, or events outside of the narrative. The narrator is therefore not an omniscient entity. In fact, the narrator does not interact directly with the storyline, but instead is a third-person narrator who does not represent other characters or events outside of the strings of dialogue. The reader is therefore invited to interact with the presented dialogues and how they are related to the characters on stage.

VI. Characters: Not as Agents but as Voices

From a narrative perspective, one will notice that in the GosThom, the disciples are often portrayed as misunderstanding the words of Jesus, and are constantly questioning him about his own nature and about the future. To answer these uncertainties, Jesus readdresses their interrogations toward their present condition. As for the identified characters, we encounter James (*logion* 12), Thomas (*logion* 13), Peter (*logion* 13 and 114), Matthew (*logion* 13), Mariam (in *logion* 21 and 114), and Salome (*logion* 61). Although these personages are always characterized as questioning Jesus, the essence of their curiosity differs. While Stevan Davies has highlighted unique characteristics for every character in the GosThom, his analysis did not elaborate on the narrative or hermeneutical consequences.[15] Furthermore, his analysis seems to perceive Thomas and Jesus as round characters only, inferring that all others characters are second class agents.

Contrary to this approach, which limits its study to the storyline and how characters converge with and within it, I believe that a careful analysis of the GosThom allows us to see that the narrative frame is not constructed through the narrator's voice but rather with the engaged reader. Several elements are presented through the series of *logia* (characters, place and time, stories within stories, interaction with the main characters, developing themes, just to mention a few) and it is up to the audience to unfold its implied meaning. Parabolas are often depicted to unfold stories, and the audience is asked to interpret their meaning according to the scenario, characters and the dialogue that is taking place. Where the story begins and where it ends depends on how the reader interacts with the text and how they interpret its various enigmatic proverbs. However, this also creates the problem of the subjective reconstruction of characters. A recent study lead by Aldo Nemesio suggest that readers often enough import features from their personal lives and recollection in the construction of fictional character.[16] Therefore, for the purpose of this study, this paper will limit its analysis to the narrator and their depiction of identified and unidentified characters, focusing on the dynamics between identity and discipleship observed in the dialogues.

VII. Dialogues: Monophony and Polyphony

Narrators often present more than one character, and thus not only invite the reader to engage with the words, but also to react and reflect, interpret, appropriate parts of the narrative, and accept or refuse certain

ideas. A dialogue is thus established between the reader, the story and characters. Yet, because characters are entities that change as the narrative unfolds (either because of dialogues or story development), they are to be considered unfinalized beings, as proposed by Bakhtin.[17] Furthermore, readers—as much as the characters within a story—ought to be considered as *unfinalized* entities, for they as well are constantly changing through their comprehension and interpretation of the stories and worldviews personified. We come to understand characters as we engage with the text and either agree or reject certain notions. According to Bakhtin, *unfinalizability* gives room to a Polyphonic reading of the text. Because every character has a voice, a history, and complex opinions, they come to represent different worldviews present in the text, at times even in opposition to the protagonist.

Yet, as narratives unfold, characters are faced with different worldviews, at times in conflict with the protagonist. This variety of opinions is what Bakhtin perceives as Polyphony. According to his theory, monophony is present whenever one sole notion is defended or repudiated in a literary piece, barring any complexity from development. It becomes an assertion that transcends the individual consciousness and embodied philosophy, thus creating a unity between the assertion and the persona.[18] This category comes to imply an unaffected and radical state. Contrary to this is the idea that characters each embody different worldviews—what Bakhtin perceives as "reigning voices of the epoch, that is, the reigning dominant ideas (official and unofficial)" as well as the emerging ideas, or what Bakhtin likes to call "embryos of future world views."[19] These voices are not isolated, but rather intertwined with all other dialogues found either in the immediate plot or in the literary piece as a whole.

The concept of Polyphony ought to be considered essential to any literary analysis of the GosThom since it casts more characters that Jesus and Thomas. Anna C. Miller argues that "scholars have tended to read the GosThom according to a monologic model", and thus have "privileged Jesus' voice as pointing to such a unified context that may be understood to represent the point of view of an ideologically single toned community."[20] Applying this philosophy of Polyphony allows us to perceive a multidimensional narrative in the GosThom. We encounter more than the disciples' questions and Jesus' affirmation; we perceive the interaction between the different voices of emerging characters and changing positions. Particularly, the questions

raised by Mariam and Salome ought to be elucidated, not only in parallel to the enigmatic parabolas that are used as answers, but also in relation to their persona and how they come to experience change, how they affect others, and how these elements can help the reader construe matters of discipleship in the GosThom. Furthermore, the concept of Polyphonic perspective ought to be paralleled with unfinalizability, which suggests that characters change not only within their *logion*, but also throughout the narrative development. Although very little seems to happen, one can analyze the tendencies of questions that are raised, and the responses that are evoked by Jesus. Rather than construing their meaning in parallel with the synoptic Gospel, one ought to put in context the characters on stage, their questions, the answers, the narrative that is found within that answer, and the following questions.

The narrator therefore comes to play a crucial role in the interpretative development, not only because they are the one who tells the story, but also because they are the first one to interpret the events. The narrator decides what details to share and which ones to leave out; they select precise words to describe scenes, and often invite the reader to respond to certain anecdotes—either through humour, horror, compassion, or discussion. The narrator has embodied the story, and they tell it according to their own time and place, thus hoping that the story and details will not only connect with the reader, but that the reader will also detect the hints they leave behind.

At last, the hope is that the reader arrives at the same interpretation the narrator had when recounting the events. Therefore, the narrator is not only one of the many subtle voices of the time, but also one who is "[making] choices, provid[ing] options, and offer[ing] alternatives in the selection of scenes, in what characters say, in the settings elaborated, and in the interaction with other characters."[21] In fact, although the narrator in the GosThom distances him or herself from the story, it is possible to perceive the theological nuances left behind. As Daniel Marguerat points out, "*cet effacement explicite du narrateur ne l'empêche pas d'être terriblement présent au travers de la stratégie narrative qu'il déploie.* "[22]

VIII. *The Role of the Reader*
Because there is no time reference provided by the narrator in the GosThom, the only chronology of events is guided by the reader through their reading

sequence. Thus, what the audience perceives is not necessarily the sequence of events but rather a series of dialogues that come as a direct or indirect *Q & A* between Jesus and his disciple and other unidentified characters. Therefore, what ought to be analyzed is not only the occasional events that occur or its resemblance with the synoptic gospels, but rather how the dialogue interacts with the different characters that the text presents as well as its implied audience. The action is therefore not only subjective to physical movement but rather to how the narrator plays with the addressees and the identity of those questioning Jesus. The movement is therefore not physical, but rather perceived as the narrator addresses the audience—either the disciples directly, a person, or a general audience. The role of the reader changes from focusing solely on the metaphors to also analyzing how the characters change as the different dialogues unfold. Although this research disagrees with Resseguie's binary perspective, he correctly underlines that "a narrative critic is aware of the conflict not only from Jesus' point of view but also from the point of view of the opposition."[23] Stepping outside of this binary perspective would give voice to more characters than just the opposition, and instead to the different voices and concerns present in the text.

IX. The Implicit Narrator

Although the general tendency would be to perceive the narrator in the GosThom to be Thomas himself, one has to account for the fact that the opening lines of the text portray Thomas as a third party: "These are the secret words that Jesus said to Thomas (didymus)." The fact that Thomas is therefore removed from the central role of narrator allows us to notice that he is not the only agent in whom the revelation has been given. The reader is invited to read, engage and interpret the text in order to gain access to immortality as well (*logion* 1). Thomas is placed not only at the same level as the other disciples, but also at the same level as the women and the reader.

An important marker in the GosThom is the question of salvation, placed in the beginning of the text as well as the end. This theme seems to be paralleled with the notion of secret revelation to Thomas. As the prologue informs the reader, "These are the hidden sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Judas Thomas the Twin recorded." The conclusion again underlines this revelation in the title found on page 51 of Codex II of the Nag Hammadi library: "The Gospel According to Thomas." Although Thomas is portrayed

as another character, he is the one who gains access to the secret sayings that Jesus spoke and Thomas writes down, as well as the secret revelation in *logion* 13. In *logion* 13, Jesus asks his disciples to "compare him to something and tell him what he is like." When the turn of Thomas comes, Thomas calls him a *Teacher*, and tells Jesus that his "mouth is utterly unable to say what he is like." Jesus therefore takes him aside and says three words to him, which the narrator does not disclose. The reader thus creates the association between Thomas' inability to utter what Jesus is like and the secret revelation that he receives. Furthermore, Thomas associates Jesus with a *Teacher*, as opposed to Peter and Matthew who compare Jesus to a *Messenger* or a *Philosopher*. The narrator clearly sets the stage for Thomas by underlining the secret revelation that he received.

Similar to this, *logion* 114 seems to explain how women are to gain salvation. Although it has been argued that *logion* 114 exhibits a later redaction stage, our analysis is focused on the final version of our tractate, rather than a presupposed scribal influence. A close textual analysis allows us to perceive that the narrator dropped the conjunction "ϫⲉ," indicating that Jesus' reply is not addressed directly to the disciple but rather to a general audience. In other instances the narrator explicitly uses the formula "ⲡⲉⲕⲉ ⲙⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ ⲛⲓⲥ ϫⲉ"[24] or "ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓⲥ ϫⲉ,"[25] rather than address his answer to a general audience, thus using "ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓⲥ." Yet, in *logion* 114, Jesus' answer is not limited to Peter but rather to a broader audience. This does not necessarily imply that Jesus' response was not attacking the content of Peter's declaration, but rather that the narrator takes advantage of Peter's point of view in regards to salvation, and targets Jesus' response to a general audience rather than limited to Peter's misconception only. The content of Jesus' reply is in opposition to Peter's declaration, and he includes the disciples in this; "so that she might come to be also a living spirit, resembling you (plural)." The pronoun used here in the plural directs the content of Jesus' words to the disciples, but not does confine it to that *logion* context.

One will notice that Jesus' reply is often directed in the second person, plural form. For example, *logion* 6, has "ⲡⲉϫⲉ·ⲓⲥ ϫⲉ," thus addressing directly a general audience, and *logion* 13 has only "ⲡⲉϫⲉ·ⲓⲥ", omitting the conjunction "ϫⲉ". Only in *logia* 12, 14, 24, 37, 100 (ⲡⲉⲕⲉ·ⲓⲥ ⲛⲁⲩ ϫⲉ) and 13 (ⲡⲉⲕⲉ·ⲓⲥ ⲛ·ⲛⲉϥ·ⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ) does he address "them" or "his disciples" directly. In these cases, the immediate audience is underlined, limiting

the response to its immediate context. Furthermore, this voice is not only directed at a specific audience and context but also the implied reader. Consequently, one can perceive how the narrator limits Jesus' answers to an immediate situation or to a general context. In the same way, *logia* 93, 101 and 113 begin without introducing the speaker. At other instances, the narrator omits the *nomina sacra* (*Logia* 51, 53, 60, 72, 74, 79, 91 and 99), but provides a context in which the reader understands whom the interlocutor is. Therefore, one can see that the narrator plays with intended audiences, at times limiting Jesus' reply to a context, and at others placing Jesus' answer in the form of a general proverb. The identity of the interlocutor is therefore revealed or hidden, depending on the context of the dialogue.

X. Addressing Women in the Gospel According to Thomas

What is interesting is that the only instance where Jesus addresses a woman directly is in the case of Salome (*logion* 61), where the formula "ⲡⲉϫⲉ ⲓ̅ⲥ̅ ⲛⲁⲥ ϫⲉ" is used. The other instance appears to be in *logion* 21, when he answers Mariam's question. At this instance, when Mariam questions Jesus about the nature of his disciples, the scribe drops the *nomina sacra* for Jesus (ⲓ̅ⲥ̅) and simply uses "ⲡⲉⲕⲉϥ ϫⲉ."

> Jesus said, "Two will rest on a couch, one will die, one will live"
> Salome said, "Who are you, mister? You have climbed onto my couch and eaten from my table as if you are from someone"
> Jesus said to her, "I am the one who comes from what is whole. I was given from the things of my father."
> "I am your disciple."
> "For this reason I say, if one is whole, one will be filled with light, but if one is divided, one will be filled with darkness."
>
> *Logion* 61.

As we can see from the string of dialogue, what is implicitly understood as Salome's reply to Jesus is in fact an omission from the narrator, not asserting who voiced the declaration of discipleship. The only marker we have to identify the character who utters this declaration is the pronominal possession found with the term disciple; "I am your (feminine) disciple" (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲧⲉⲕⲙⲁⲑⲏⲧⲏⲥ). Although her gender is defined, her identity is not limited by it but rather takes the role of discipleship as well. Furthermore, this is the only *logion* where someone identifies themselves as a disciple of Jesus.

Kathleen E. Corley interprets *logion* 61 by contrasting the declaration "two are on a couch, one will live and one will die" with Jesus and Salome being on the same couch. Corley argues that "given that Jesus is the one who is 'whole' and 'undivided', by implication, Salome is the one who will die."[26] Corley thus claims that, "the criticism of the woman does not come from the direction of the opposition, as in the case of Peter's attack on Mariam in 114, but directly from Jesus."[27] She correctly critiques Layton's amendment in regards to *logion* 61 (�束ⲱⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ) as a "possible mistranslation of the Greek ὡς ξένος [that] should be carefully reconsidered," attacking the implied Greek *Vorlage*, but uses that same translation of ξένος to construct a fellowship dinner. In fact, she proceeds with arguing in her footnote that "the text or translation is corrupt at this point."[28] Although page 43 of Codex II, line 26 does not show any sign of a lacuna, unreadable characters, or any amendment to its original writing, she insists on the idea of "text" and "translation." The structure of her argument is thus based on a plausible translation to construct a meal scene, which in turn comes to strengthen her argument. However, the constructed scene is hardly perceivable seeing that *logion* 61 does not talk of a feast, nor is Salome's participation at the table questioned. If indeed there is a critique on behalf of Jesus, this one is very subtle and can only be rendered by the reader's perspective towards women. What is at stake in Corley's critique is not only his implied *Vorlage* but the monophonic reading applied, which favours male-discipleship over the idea of women gaining access to salvation rendered possible in this text. A polyphonic reader gives voice to Salome and is inclined to analyze the narrator's depiction of her concerns. Perhaps what is difficult to understand is not the word-by-word translation, but rather the idea that is evoked by the "ⲅ̄ⲱⲥ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅ̄ⲛ ⲟⲩⲁ." The idea of unity is not only given in this difficult segment, but is used by Jesus in his following statement; "I am the one who comes from what is whole. I was given from the things of my father." (ⲁⲛⲟⲕ ⲡⲉ ⲡⲉⲧⲯⲟⲟⲡ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅ̄ⲙ ⲡⲉⲧⲯⲏⲩ ⲁⲩ† ⲛⲁⲉⲓ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲅ̄ⲛ ⲛⲁ ⲡⲁⲉⲓⲱⲧ). One will therefore notice that the difficult segment is repeated in Jesus' second declaration, hence the idea of unity is emphasized within his dialogue with Salome. What follows is the declaration "I am your disciple," where the narrator omits to declare who voices this remark. Although the context implies that the statement belongs to Salome, one can question why the narrator removed the identity of the person making this declaration.

In Salome's reply to Jesus, most markers of identity are stripped away from Salome and only claim remains; her new identity as a disciple. One can therefore perceive how the narrator implies a de-personification

of Salome; the perfect disciple is the one that becomes one – not only in the androgynous way, but also stripping themselves from all worldly associations. By omitting to declare who the speaker is, one can remark how the narrator puts Salome's word in unity with that of Jesus. This similarity can also be found in *logion* 1, where there is confusion on whether to attribute the words in *logion* 1 to Jesus or to Thomas.[29] In these two cases, as the secret revelation is mentioned and the discipleship is affirmed, there is a unity between Jesus' words and those of his disciples—Thomas and Salome. They are de-personified perhaps because they gain access to this secret revelation and become one with Jesus.

Castelli's interpretation of *logion* 114 points out that "it is important to stress that there is a clear differentiation in gnostic texts between a notion of 'oneness,' where sexual or gender identity is erased, and a notion of an 'androgyne,' where genders are blended."[30] Interpreting *The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas*, Castelli points out that "victory is described *as* and *by* the stripping off of feminine gender. It is not simply that Perpetua's victory [i.e. salvation] is assured through becoming a man—rather it is marked by the emblem of her new male body, it is signified by the transformation itself."[31] Therefore, renunciation to the world did not mean ending with worldly pleasures solely, but also going against cultural norms and expectations projected on women.

Ascetic movements are often understood as an attempt to become male, thus priming the gender-hierarchy. Castelli argues instead that "these women's refusal to participate in the conventional sexual roles ascribed to them by late antique culture (not as an attempt to undercut the patriarchal social order, but in order to achieve spiritual perfection) was perceived ambivalently."[32] While analyzing John Chrysostom's condemnation of ascetic practices, Castelli argues that the problem is not "that these people are breaking their vows of chastity, but rather their practice is problematic because they are blurring the distinctions between the sexes, and the men in particular are at risk of the feminizing effects of such close proximity to women."[33]

Thomas is often viewed as the perfect disciple, the one who gains access to this special revelation. However, although Thomas receives this revelation, Salome and Mariam seek to gain access to it by questioning matters of discipleship. Contrary to this view, Johanna Branker maintains that the GosThom presents several models of disciples, but that the accomplished

disciple is the one that goes beyond the transitory condition of disciple.[34] She perceives Thomas as the perfect disciple, for she argues that *logion* 13 is divided in two mirror parts, and that the title of the main character is transferred from Jesus to Thomas. What is normally seen in the role of Jesus (answering his disciples) is transposed to Thomas. This detail allows her to pursue her thesis where Thomas is elevated to the role of Master, becoming an accomplished disciple no longer in need of a master, and thus allowing us to see that the idea of a functional authority figure is not at stake in the GosThom.[35] However, it ought to be noted that Branker argues that the GosThom lacks a narrative frame that engages all characters. Instead, she underlines the static depiction of certain characters.[36] From a theoretical point of view, her analysis of characterization is done solely upon the development of flat or round characters within the storyline.[37] As we have demonstrated, an analysis of the narrator's depiction of characters allows us to perceive the complexity of existing dialogues. In fact, although characters may appear only once or twice within the storyline, some of them portray a dynamic persona—"undergoing a radical change throughout the course of the [dialogue]"[38] —as the depiction of Salome has shown us.

XI. Conclusion

In this short paper, I have attempted to demonstrate how a polyphonic voice allows the narrator to present subtleties in the description of women. The focus on the narrator and its portrayal of women has allowed us to perceive that there is more than one voice that is echoed in this text. The question of discipleship and salvation is not only limited to the interpretation of *logion* 114, but rather through the analysis of the narrator's voice throughout the GosThom. The implication that women have access to salvation has often been understood in terms of a binary framed in a gender-hierarchy. Thus, for women to gain access to salvation they must become male. However, as Castelli has demonstrated, there is more than gender difference. Through her analysis of women's portrayal in The Martyrdom of Perpetua and Felicitas, what is being renounced is not the gender, but rather the social marker that limits the persona. In the GosThom, Salome not only associates herself with Jesus in an attempt to avoid becoming a dead-corpse, but also renounces her social identity as ascribed by society. Perhaps this goes beyond her identity being erased when addressing Jesus, and goes as far as to question women's participation in social meals. However, I argue that the meal scene ought to be analyzed not from the social-meal perspective and its social implication and expectation solely, but also through the dialogue

between Jesus and Salome. This angle allows us to perceive that worldly attachments to social markers of identity are to be abandoned in order to gain access to salvation by becoming one.

As this essay has shown, the analysis of characters and their personality is not only subjected to the narrator's identification of them but also how he/she articulates their implications with the strings of dialogues. Rather than analyzing only the action, one needs to examine the way in which the responses are voiced and how these agree with the content of the enunciation. Through this research I have demonstrated that the GosThom does not exhibits a static narrative as claimed in the past. Instead, I argue that it is perhaps the static lens through which characters and setting have been analyzed that provided an absence of narrative frame—or at least, according to our conventional models. Past narrative approaches have read the text through monophonic readings, a diachronic approach, or by onomastic examination. By doing so, they have attempted to inquire about the history behind the text, rather than the story within it. This paper has also argued that a polyphonic reading gives room to a complexity of worldviews present in the text. The monophonic reading that has often been applied to the GosThom—and which favours Jesus and Thomas— overlooks how other characters stand in relation to Jesus. Although Thomas has been interpreted as the ideal disciple who has gained access to this secret revelation, little has been done to contrast Mariam and Salome's concerns in regards to discipleship. A vertical-binary understanding of Gender has perhaps infiltrated the interpretation of the text, where *logion* 114 is given preference. This monophonic reading boldly underlines Peter's refusal of Mariam in the group of disciples and echoes this as the favoured *logion*. However, as our analysis has demonstrated, there is a polyphony of voices present in the text, which allows us to perceive Salome as another type of disciple; one that renounces her persona and aims at becoming one with Jesus.

Notes

1. Similar to this approach, see Gagné (2008, Pg. 248-249).
2. In fact, previous narrative approaches have been done to detect redaction layers in the GosThom to unfold previous versions of the text (c.f. J.-M Sevrin, 1993), limited to particular logia (c.f. Brankaer, 2005, 2006; Miller, 2006), or with a comparative approach aimed at demonstrating the similarities and difference with either canonical material or other apocryphal texts (c.f. Toda, 1998).
3. Uro, 2003. Pg. 55.
4. Uro, 2003. Pg. 56. Uro also refers to Davies (1983) and Marjanen (1998) for positive interpretations of the material world.
5. Uro, 2003. Pg. 56.
6. Uro, 2003. Pg. 57.
7. Uro, 2003. Pg. 57.
8. Uro, 2003. Pg. 57-60.
9. Uro presents Sellew's research, where Sellew underlines the connection between the words "world" (kosmos) and "body" (ptwma) in logion 80, becoming interchangeable terms (Uro, 2004, Pg. 61, quoting Sellew (1997), Pg. 530). Thus, the text does not necessarily attempt to create disjointed ideas between the "world", the "body," but rather to evoke each other by creating word-associations. Uro argues that body is therefore "capable of denoting both the human body and the cosmos" (Pg. 62).
10. Girard (1996), Pg. 49.
11. Castelli (1991), Pg. 32.
12. Castelli (1991), Pg. 31.
13. Castelli (1991), Pg. 30.
14. Porter (2002), Pg. 1-3.
15. Davie (2009), Pg. xli-xlii
16. Nemesio, Levorato, Ronconi (2011).
17. Bakhkin analyzes the personage Dmitry in The Brothers Karamazov, by Dostoevsky, in which Bakhtin argues that "The investigator, judges, prosecutor, defense attorney, and commission of experts are all equally incapable of approaching the unfinalized and undecided core of Dmitry's personality, for he is a man who stands, in essence throughout his entire life, on the threshold of great internal decisions and crises" (Bakhtin, Pg. 62). Similar to this, he also categorizes Raskolvikov from Crime and Punishment as an "unfinalized and unresolved soul" (Bakhtin, Pg. 61). Furthermore, he argues that "Dostoevsky would have not depicted the death of his heroes, but the crises and turning points in their lives; that is, he would have depicted their lives on the threshold. And his heroes would have remained internally unfinalized" (Bakhtin, Pg. 73).
18. Bakhtin, Pg. 80.
19. Bakhtin, Pg. 90.
20. Miller (2006), Pg. 2.
21. Resseguie (2005), Pg, 21.
22. Marguerat (2009), Pg. 18.
23. Resseguie (2005). Pg, 21.
24. See logion 13.
25. See logia 3, 6, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15-17, 19, 25, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 37-39, 41, 42, 44, 46-50, 54-57, 58, 59, 62-64, 66-68, 71, 73, 76-78, 80-83, 85, 86, 88-90, 92, 95-97, 102, 108-112, and 114)

26. Corley (1999), Pg. 88.
27. Corley (1999), Pg. 89.
28. Corley (1999), Pg. 89.
29. The narrator does not provide who is making the statement in logion 1: "These are the hidden sayings that the living Jesus spoke and Judas Thomas the Twin recorded. And he said, "Whoever discovers the meaning of these words will not taste death." (prologue and logion 1)
30. Castelli (1991), Pg. 32.
31. Castelli (1991), Pg. 42.
32. Castelli (1991), Pg. 46.
33. Castelli (1991), Pg. 45.
34. Brankaer (2006), Pg. 250-251.
35. Brankaer (2006), Pg. 250.
36. Brankaer (2006), Pg. 251.
37. See Resseguie (2005) Pg. 123, and Porter (2002) Pg. 126-127. Ressiguie defines flat characters as "two-dimensional, constructed around a single idea or quality; they can be summed up in a single phrase or sentence…lacks hidden complexity or depth and is incapable of surprising the reader" (Pg. 123). However, he falls into the binary understanding of major and minor characters, defining major characters as round ones and minor characters as flat ones. Similar to Resseguie, Porter identifies flat character as "characters who have no hidden complexity… they have no depth…. Frequently found in comedy, satire and melodrama, flat characters are limited to a narrow range of predictable behaviors" (Pg. 126). Although both theorists insist on the lack of hidden complexity and depth, Resseguie nuances his definition based on the descriptive quality of the persona ("being summed up in a single phrase" and the idea of "surprising the reader" because of their predetermined description), while Porter insists on the function of flat characters (where they are to be found, and their predictable behavior confined to their functions). Therefore, complex or flat characters are to be analyzed in the way that they are perceived as opposed to simply the way they fit in the story-line. This perception allows us to see the analytical complexity (or lack of) invested.
38. Resseguie (2005), Pg. 125.

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