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ABSTRACT

Consensus is rarely reached about the meaning of Mk 7:24-30 except to say that it addresses Jew-Gentile relations, that Jesus’ metaphor is crucial to understanding the scene, that Jesus’ initial response to the woman seems harsh, and the woman’s actions and words are counter-cultural within a first century context. After a review of the exegetical literature, there are nuances in Mk 7:24-30 that are not adequately explained; many concern the protagonist in the scene, namely, the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Narrative criticism is useful in analyzing the characterization of the woman, bringing to light some possible explanations about these unexplained subtleties within the text.

In this narrative critical exegesis of Mk 7:24-30, the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman reveals her transitional role in Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles. For a female minor character, she is well-developed, with the traits of a bold and active suppliant with faith, who is understanding, intelligent and witty. The Greek Syrophoenician character’s dialogue with Jesus is unique to Mark on three counts: it is the only example of the Markan narrator providing a woman’s words to Jesus in first-person dialogue form; it is the only example of anyone besting Jesus in a debate; and it is the only example of anyone changing Jesus’ mind. Jesus’ metaphor of the ‘children’ (Jews) receiving their ‘bread’ (life-giving sustenance) before the ‘dogs’ (Gentiles) resonates on various levels when the reader understands its first century context (including the socio-political relationship between the Tyrians and the Galileans, and the ancient Near Eastern use of dogs in healing rituals). The woman’s response to Jesus shifts his view of the Gentiles, so that he renews and expands his activities among them. The Greek Syrophoenician woman speaks out, is heard and understood by Jesus, and that makes all the difference not only in the lives of her and her daughter, but also within the Gentile world of the Gospel of Mark.
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My thanks to fellow HAG group members—Beverley Atkinson and Christina Ray—for their abiding support and advice, and for their instincts. They helped to make the process of writing this thesis a lesson in self-fulfilment.

I offer this work in remembrance of my mother and father, Dorothy and Stanley Roberts, who taught me to love and value learning, and in remembrance of my granny, Dolly Peterson, who showed me the influence of religion in the world.
INTRODUCTION

A well-told story captures the imagination of its reader, drawing him or her into the world of its narrative. When I first read Mk 7:24-30, I was drawn into the story about the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Attracted by its cryptic dialogue, I became interested in the interaction between Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Questions rushed into my mind. Why does Jesus initially refuse to help the woman? Who exactly are the children and the dogs that Jesus refers to, and how are they related to this woman and her possessed daughter? If Jesus is implying that the woman and her daughter are the dogs, why does he address the woman in such an insulting way? And why does Jesus end up helping her in the end?

The task, as I see it, is to provide an exegesis of Mk 7:24-30 that supplies an interpretation of the passage and takes into account its place within the Markan narrative as a whole, while addressing the socio-historical context of its key-words. In this paper, I undertake such an exegesis, developing my interpretation through examining the Greek text (Aland et al. 1983), consulting existing scholarly interpretations of that text, and then analyzing specific aspects of the text through the use of narrative criticism.

Exegetical literature on Mk 7:24-30 emphasizes that this story is about Jew-Gentile relations and the Gentile mission within the Markan narrative. The literature that analyzes this story from the angle of gender indicates how unusual the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s actions are within a first-century context. While researching various interpretations of this text, I encountered a wealth of insight from many scholars. I was struck by the variety of theoretical approaches that have been applied to the text, each revealing fresh observations. These observations, however, have not been able to answer all of the questions regarding this text, so parts of it still remain a mystery. What is the significance of the woman being described as ‘Greek’ and ‘Syrophoenician by race’? Would not one of these descriptors have sufficiently
exposed her as a Gentile? And why are various Greek words used to describe the children (tékna, παιδία)? I soon discovered that this is the only instance in Mark when the narrator puts a woman’s speech to Jesus in the form of direct rather than indirect speech. How does this direct speech affect Jesus? How does it affect the reader? And what impact do Jew-Gentile relations and male-female relations have on the interaction between Jesus (a Jewish male) and the Greek Syrophoenician woman (a Gentile female)? These topics were briefly mentioned by the scholars I read, but they were not sufficiently explored. Since many of these elements are linked to the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, an analysis of her characterization is a useful way to approach this pericope.

By applying narrative criticism (focusing on characterization analysis), I am able to understand more clearly the scene’s significance within the whole of the Markan gospel. This method addresses some of the subtleties within the text. When informed by discussions from feminist studies, it can explore the abundant nuances that exist within Mark’s female characterizations. Dewey (1993) focuses on issues of gender within Markan stories involving females “because feminist scholars have often found that using gender as a major category of analysis reveals aspects of texts and tradition hitherto unnoticed” (178). Although the Greek Syrophoenician woman is a minor female character (appearing only once in Mark), she plays a pivotal role in Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles. It is suggested that, due to his encounter with this intelligent, witty, persistent female character, Jesus is persuaded to expand his activities among the Gentiles. The woman speaks out and influences not only her own life and that of her daughter, but the other Gentiles with whom Jesus comes into contact in the ensuing narrative.

Chapter 1 of my thesis begins with a review of the literature on Mk 7:24-30, mentioning the fundamental issues discussed in the field: textual variations; forms classifications for Jesus’ saying and for the story as a whole; the socio-historical factors that influence this first-century
interaction (such as male-female relations and Jew-Gentile relations); and the literary features (such as structural context for the pericope, key-words in the scene, analogies to other stories, themes discussed, and characters analyzed). I also indicate where further research is needed in the exegesis of Mk 7:24-30. Since many of the unsolved mysteries about this pericope revolve around the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, this female protagonist becomes the focus of my analysis.

Chapter 2 develops the method that I shall employ for analyzing her characterization. This will involve reviewing the theoretical discussions about character and characterization from both biblical and non-biblical theorists, including theories on speech representation from literary criticism and linguistics. The analysis of her characterization is done in two stages. The first stage abstracts from the text character information that the narrator provides about her. The second stage resolves the character back into the larger narrative. In the first stage, the character indicators about the character need to be extracted; four methods of evaluation are proposed. These indicators need to be placed within their socio-historical and literary contexts; the indicators can then be translated into character traits. Narrative devices that appear in Mk 7:24-30 are also analyzed to discover their influence on the reader's understanding of the character (i.e., speech representation, two-step progression, transitional episodes, and the order in which information is presented to the reader). A categorization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is also required so that her character can be compared with other characters and their stories. In the second stage, the character is resolved back into the larger narrative through highlighting aspects of Mk 7:24-30 that can be compared or contrasted to other stories; these aspects include themes, vocabulary, and sociological relations (Jew-Gentile and male-female).

Chapter 3 applies this narrative critical method to the woman's characterization in Mk 7:24-30. The abstraction of the woman's character points out the significant information about
her. By placing this information within its literary and socio-historical context, it appears that Jesus and the woman have different expectations of each other because of their different religious affiliations and their different genders; they also have different associations with the term 'dogs' due to their different cultural backgrounds. By looking at the speech representation in Mk 7:24-30, it is clear that the woman succeeds in changing Jesus’ mind by ingeniously transforming his metaphor so as to include the Gentiles within God’s kingdom. In the second stage of the analysis (resolving her character back into the text) two of the categories that apply to the woman are used to investigate her connections to the larger Markan narrative. The first category--female-- requires a discussion about male-female relations, including comparisons between Mk 7:24-30 and other Markan stories about women involved in healings and women who are mothers to daughters; it also includes comparisons between Mk 7:24-30 and three non-Markan stories about women (the Hebrew Biblical stories about the widow of Zarephath and Jezebel, and the Greek story by Plutarch about Eumetis). Scholars have already discussed the connections between the widow of Zarephath and the Greek Syrophoenician woman and have begun to compare Eumetis and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. The connections between Jezebel and the Greek Syrophoenician woman have yet to be explored. The second category--Gentile--connects Mk 7:24-30 with other Markan stories about Gentiles. Besides discussing Jew-Gentile relations in Mark, I examine how the narrator portrays Gentiles and how he develops the Gentile mission as the narrative progresses. Comparing these stories and their related themes begins the process of resolving the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s character back into the larger Markan narrative, and shows what her function is within that story world.

Chapter 4 summarizes my conclusions about the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s character and characterization, including the implications for the story in which this character appears and for the larger narrative that she influences. In my conclusions, I also make
suggestions as to future directions for research on Mk 7:24-30, and where narrative criticism's theoretical foundation can be expanded.

Since I am writing this thesis in the post-structuralist era, I believe it is important to mention my personal approach to this undertaking. Any analysis can include personal bias, making it questionable what to accept as 'objective fact.' Veeser (1989) suggest that interpreters challenge the idea of "disembodied objectivity" and acknowledge openly in their writing their individual interests, assumptions, and biases (v); and Greenblatt (1989) advises interpreters to have "methodological self-consciousness" (12). I shall make explicit in this introduction the aspects of my cultural background that I believe may influence my interpretation; in chapter 2 (and in appendices B and C) I shall discuss the method that I am using and its assumptions.

By identifying to you, the reader, some of my personal biases and assumptions, I do not intend them to constrain my interpretation of the text, yet I recognize that they may blind me to other options or influence my preference for one interpretation over another. Although I strive to support my analyses with reason and existing interpretations, I do not believe that I am 'objective' in my observations; I offer my interpretation of the text of Mk 7:24-30. This interpretation may be influenced by my background (Porter and Clarke 1997, 14-15). I am a Canadian-born woman with ancestors of European descent. My educational experience was founded on a 'Western' approach, with its implicit assumptions about absolute ideals and dualisms, and with methods founded on an 'objective' scientific empiricism (Minton and Shipka 1982, 124). I accept that my background influences my world-view, and I attempt to identify in my thesis my subjective statements, my assumptions, and my relative viewpoint. Another factor influencing my background is my being a member of a liberal religious community. I may intend to stand outside my 'faith' stance to interpret Mk 7:24-30 by its own standards, yet I
recognize that my religious assumptions may influence my interpretation unconsciously and consciously.

There are also assumptions about the narrative that are useful to discuss before proceeding. The oldest text that offers a basic chronology of Jesus’ adult life is commonly referred to as ‘the Gospel of Mark.’ Mark was probably written before the other three New Testament gospels (Matthew, Luke, and John), coming into its final form either preceding or following the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem (65-75 C.E.) (Selvidge 1990, 4; Hooker 1991, 8). As to where the Gospel of Mark was written, critics argue about whether it was written in Rome, southern Syria, or Palestine (in Galilee); “there is no consensus on the setting of [the writing] of Mark” (Donahue 1995, 2). The writer of Mark preserves oral and possibly written traditions that were handed down from the followers of Jesus to the early ‘Jesus movement’; this writer then composed this gospel narrative, using narrative and stylistic devices that would communicate to his first-century audience various theological messages about Jesus’ words, actions, and life.
NOTES

Introduction

1Porter and Clarke (1997) explain that "[t]he word exegesis itself is derived from the Greek term ἐξερεύναμαι, which literally meant 'lead out of.' When applied to written texts the word referred to the 'reading out' of the text's meaning. More generally, exegesis also meant to explain, interpret, report or describe" (5).

2By 'post-structuralism' I am referring to the reaction against "structuralist pretensions to scientific objectivity and comprehensiveness. . . . [This school of thought] emphasized the instability of meanings. . . . [and sets] out to dissolve the fixed binary oppositions of structuralist thought. . . . [favouring] a non-hierarchical plurality or 'free-play' of meanings, stressing the indeterminacy of texts" (Baldick 1990, 175-176).

For further discussion about the need for the interpreter's implicit (or explicit) reflection upon him/herself, and the need to recognize that he/she is not reading the biblical text from a neutral stance, see Moore (1989, 174, 181) and Porter and Clarke (1997, 14-17).

3Veeser (1989) and Greenblatt (1989) apply the New Historicism method (Baldick 1990, 150). In use since the early 1980s, New Historicism questions the traditional historical approach and its "disembodied objectivity." It studies literary words within their historical and political contexts (Baldick 1990, 150). I shall apply these suggestions from Veeser and Greenblatt, although I do not apply the complete method of New Historicism.

4I am a member of the Unitarian Universalist religious movement. It is a non-creedal movement (having no required set of beliefs to which one must adhere to become a member); value is placed on the use of reason and the use of religious freedom while being responsible and ethical in the application of one's individual choice. The New Testament is seen as one body of religious texts among many from the various world religions to which one can turn for inspiration about ethical and spiritual issues.

Rather than approaching the New Testament gospels as a set of documents that offer verbatim literal descriptions of historical events, I understand them primarily as stories intended to affect their readers or hearers through the writers’ theologies; of course they do contain some historically accurate information. From my own religious viewpoint, I believe that Jesus was a human being, a prophet, not a divine figure; he probably lived c. 6 B.C.E. to 30 C.E. Much research has been done on the topic of who Jesus believed himself to be, and who his followers believed him to be. In Mark (the oldest gospel), Jesus is portrayed as the Messiah ('the anointed one') (8:29) and a son of God (1:1; 15:39); since the Markan Jesus says that 'God is one' (12:29) and rebukes the rich man that calls Jesus good, saying 'no one is good but God alone' (10:18), it appears to me that Mark portrays Jesus as not considering himself a divine figure. A detailed discussion of Jesus’ identity is outside the purview of this paper, but I offer these few comments to indicate my personal views on the historical Jesus and the Markan Jesus, so that they are explicit to you, the reader.

5The text does not indicate who wrote this gospel. Early Christian Church tradition has it that Mark (Peter’s disciple) was the author, basing the gospel on Peter’s reminiscences of Jesus. New Testament scholars, however, believe that the information in this gospel does not come from a single source (Peter), but from multiple sources through oral traditions.

Even though the name of the writer of the Gospel of Mark is not known, for simplicity’s sake, I shall be referring to the writer/narrator as ‘Mark’ (and as ‘he’); I shall also be referring to
the text known as the Gospel of Mark as ‘Mark’-- the context will make it clear whether I am alluding to the narrator or the text. When I refer to ‘Jesus’ as the character in Mark, I am not assuming that it is an accurate portrayal of the historical Jesus, but that it is one person’s literary depiction of him.
CHAPTER 1
REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE ON MK 7:24-30

I. Introduction

Mk 7:24-30 is one of the most difficult and puzzling passages in the Gospel of Mark (Hasler 1933-34, 459; Harmon 1951, 754-755). Much has been written about it, but there is a lack of consensus about its meaning. In evaluating the current state of the exegesis on Mk 7:24-30, some of the fundamental issues will be examined, such as textual variations, form classifications, socio-historical factors, and literary features (including structural context, significant vocabulary, analogies, thematic content and characterization). In reviewing the literature on Mk 7:24-30 it is clear that much has already been understood and commented upon, but nuances remain that have yet to be explored.

There are three parts to this chapter. Part I provides a framework for the review by outlining the parts of this chapter. Part II is an overview of existing interpretations of Mk 7:24-30, classified according to the method used. Part III summarizes the overall field, and what remains to be explored in an exegesis of this passage. I shall propose an hypothesis that addresses one unexplored area and a method that will be useful for exploring that area. For the reader's reference, the Greek text of Mk 7:24-30, as well as my translation of this text into English, are to be found in Appendix A (Aland et al. 1983, 150-151).
II. Overview of Interpretations of Mk 7:24-30

Exegesis involves a multifaceted collection of disciplines (Porter and Clarke 1997, 17-18). Many different methods have been applied in the exegesis of Mk 7:24-30. This pericope has been analyzed using the following methods: textual, source, redaction, and form criticisms; historical, feminist, and social criticisms; and literary, structural, narrative, and reader-response criticisms. Although I find that most interpreters address the basic context of the story—namely, the question of Jew-Gentile relations—many do not address the subtler aspects of the pericope. I shall point out these subtleties as I proceed.

A. Interpretations of Mk 7:24-30 from Textual, Source, Redaction, and Form Criticisms

Textual, source, redaction, and form critics have made some helpful observations about the text. These critics approach the text as a window on history, attempting to see through the text back in time to the original event and its progression from an oral tradition into a written form.³

1. Textual Criticism

Textual research has assembled a Greek text of Mk 7:24-30 that most scholars believe is very similar to the original written document of the Gospel of Mark.⁴ This passage has few textual variations (Downing 1992, 130). Some textual critics note Τύρου καὶ Σιδώνος (‘Tyre and Sidon’) (7:24) and ναι Κυρίε (‘Yes, sir’) (7:28), and suggest that both καὶ Σιδώνος and ναι are redactional changes made later to assimilate the Markan text with the later Matthean parallel of the story (Mt 15:21-28) (Metzger 1971, 95).⁵
2. Source Criticism

Source critics question whether the story of Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman is based on an event in Jesus' lifetime. There is no consensus on this matter. Some critics believe it developed later, during the early Christian Church’s struggle to define itself against the Judeans (Bultmann 1963, 38-39; Ringe 1985, 68). Others admit the possibility of the event occurring during Jesus’ lifetime, particularly since it does not conform to the social standards of Jesus’ day. The Greek Syrophoenician woman bests Jesus in a debate, which is unusual not only because she is Gentile, but also because she is a woman. Why would such a counter-cultural story be included in Mark unless it was founded on some historical incident (Dewey 1993, 191)? Are there not other less disconcerting ways for the Markan narrator to introduce a Gentile mission? As well as these counter-cultural aspects, Dewey notes that the story includes features that make it likely to have been transmitted orally; since the story survived in the oral traditions of the early Christian movement, it is likely to be based on an historical event (189). Dewey’s argument is not without flaws, but its focus on the counter-cultural aspects of the story points out how the story fits into Mark: ‘the lowest’ gain in status and favour when they interact with Jesus. Although it is impossible to authenticate the historicity of the story, the source critics’ discussion is relevant to my interpretation because it draws attention to those counter-cultural aspects of Mk 7:24-30.

3. Redaction Criticism

Although there is debate about the story’s historicity, there is little concern about redactional interference after the story was composed by the author of the Markan gospel. Redaction critics generally agree that the pericope is a unitary composition, with 7:24a and 7:31 being an editorial arrangement by the author of Mark (Bultmann 1963, 38-39). Bultmann suggests that πρῶτον (‘first’) may be a later editorial insertion (7:27). His reasoning, however,
is based not on any manuscript evidence, but on the impact it has in the story: “[it] makes a concession, and weakens the comparison on which the argument of Jesus is based” (38). I agree with Bultmann that it does weaken the comparison, but its inclusion creates a link between the children and the dogs (on which the woman forms her reply). This link sets up Jesus’ subsequent interactions with Gentiles, creating connections within the narrative as a whole. In considering Bultmann’s suggested redaction, the interpreter needs to analyze the pericope as part of the whole; narrative criticism helps knit πρῶτον (7:27) and its editorial arrangement (7:24a, 31) into the existing Markan structure.

4. Form Criticism

There is a lack of agreement among form critics in regards to the story type and saying type. The saying is classified both as a chreia (Beavis 1988, 5), and as an apophthegm (Bultmann 1963, 41). The story is classified either as a pronouncement story, a story about Jesus, a miracle story, or a controversy dialogue. The pericope is not easily definable, since it has elements from a number of different forms. The use of more than one form may be an attempt by the writer to link subject matter. It is not crucial to decide upon a single classification for the story to understand its meaning within the Markan narrative. It is clear that, although the healing is the context for the scene, the dialogue is its central focus.

While there are many ways to describe the dialogue itself, specific forms have been proposed: a controversy dialogue using a metaphor or a riddle (Bultmann 1963, 41; Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 137; Ringe 1985, 67-68; Rhoads 1994, 355-358; Camery-Hoggath, 1992, 151); and a clever response by an inferior to a superior (Rhoads, 1994, 358). Bultmann (1963) begins the process of examining the dialogue as a ‘controversy dialogue.’ The form of the controversy dialogue includes both an attack and a reply in a typically rabbinic style, in this case using a metaphor (39-54). What is not mentioned by Bultmann is that the usual pattern for a controversy
dialogue is reversed in Mk 7:24-30. Rather than having an event that provokes a hostile question from some onlooker, it is Jesus who provides that hostile saying; the woman responds with a correcting or reproving statement (Ringe 1985, 67). The dialogue includes a discussion about the children, the dogs, and the bread; the use of these terms is described as both a metaphor (Bultmann 1963, 41) and an allegorical riddle (Rhoads 1994, 355-358). Rhoads characterizes the exchange between Jesus and the woman as “a classic example from the ancient Near East of the clever request by an inferior to a superior in which there is an exchange of proverbial sayings” (358-359). In coming to Jesus, a male and a healer, the woman kneels before him, clearly treating him as her superior. The woman’s response to Jesus “honours all that he says in his rejection and says nothing to contradict or shame him. She calls him ‘lord,’ recognizing his right to accept or reject her request. . . . cleverly [making] use of the dynamics of honour and shame in order to get her request granted” (359). Bultmann’s controversy dialogue fits the form used by the Markan narrator, and Rhoads’ comparison of the dialogue to a classic ancient Near East form of ‘the inferior’s clever response to a superior’ sets the story into its historical, social and literary context. As to the dialogue’s overall significance, the Greek Syrophoenician woman is the only Markan woman with whom Jesus ever has this kind of contentious dialogue. Unlike the Pharisees and Scribes, she wins the argument and brings about a change in Jesus’ stance, resulting in the healing of her daughter (Munro 1982, 227; Beavis 1988, 6). This change in Jesus’ behaviour is the main point of the dialogue (Bultmann 1963, 38).

These various forms highlight several key points about the story: the form of the ‘controversy dialogue’ highlights the contention between Jesus and the woman; the designations for the saying of ‘metaphor’ and ‘riddle’ imply a need to decipher the specific vocabulary involved; and the form ‘the inferior’s response to a superior’ indicates that there is a status difference between the two characters so that their relationship must be examined to understand how status is involved. These key points shall be taken up in chapter three.
B. Interpretations of Mk 7:24-30 from Feminist, Historical, and Social Criticisms

Historical analyses of Mk 7:24-30 draw upon feminist, historical, and social criticisms. One method is often used in conjunction with one or both of the others, since they are all interested in examining the first century context of the story. As well as providing valuable comments on the socio-historical context of Mark as a whole, they create a socio-historical context for the story of Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

1. Feminist Criticism

Not much analysis had been done on Mark and the topic of women (Selvidge 1990, 9). There is increasing interest in gender analyses of Mk 7:24-30. Critics who explore the function of the gender of the Greek Syrophoenician woman note that what she does in the story is remarkable; this female character is a model of a faithful follower of Jesus (Malbon 1983, 34-35; Beavis 1988, 8). Feminist approaches sensitize the reader to the subtle aspects of a story about a woman, aspects that may initially go unnoticed in a narrative dominated by male characters. Feminist critics have formulated responses to formerly unaddressed aspects of this story, such as the extent of its counter-cultural elements (Dewey 1993, 188-189), the significance of the direct speech by the woman (Dewey 1997, 53-54), and the influence a female character has within the Markan Gentile mission (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 138). The impact of gender in the narrator's portrayal of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 should be more concretely explored; this exploration can be done through socio-historical investigation into gender roles in both Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures.
2. Historical and Social Criticisms

Besides the patriarchal context of the story (which feminist critics specifically address), other cultural assumptions can be unearthed in Mark through historical and social criticisms. Although most analyses of Mk 7:24-30 focus on Jew-Gentile relations, many recent examinations focus on male-female relations in the story. Cultural norms within both types of social relations are challenged.

Jew-Gentile relations are important to understand, since the Markan gospel suggests a shift in those relations within the Jesus movement. Rhoads (1994) credits Mk 7:24-30 for being pivotal in the development of Jesus' mission to the Gentiles (363). The metaphor Jesus uses about children and dogs alludes to this, with the children representing the Jews, and the dogs representing the Gentiles (356). In placing the story within a social context of the first century, scholars refer to the fundamental social boundary between Jews and Gentiles (Dewy 1993, 189). The boundary is based on the Jewish laws that guard against uncleanness, which was believed to result from contact with Gentiles (as well as through other means). Uncleanness affects the ritual purity that is required for Jews during worship. The woman crosses this boundary when she approaches Jesus. Her interactions with Jesus, however, seem to bring about a change in Jesus' subsequent attitude to Gentiles, and the Gentile mission is developed.

As far as gender is concerned, Rhoads sums up the views of many interpreters by suggesting that gender is not an essential issue in Mk 7:24-30 (Rhoads 1994, 367). In discussing this passage, most interpreters do not distinguish between gender roles in Jewish and in Gentile cultures, discussing instead first century culture in general. Differences they do mention include the following: the prescriptive language against women in parts of the Jewish culture (Gundry-Volf 1995, 509; Tufariua 1990, 49); the female personification of wisdom in the Hebrew Bible (perhaps from an Hellenistic influence) (Kee 1992, 228); and the *chreiai* in Greco-Roman literature rarely being about women (Beavis 1988, 5). Although many interpreters do not
pursue it, analyzing this pericope according to gender is important. It informs the reader about the Markan social world, the type of gender bias that might exist within it, and how that world is influenced through the responses of Jesus. Jesus’ interactions with the Greek Syrophoenician woman make this scene remarkable within that social context. The woman in Mk 7:24-30 is at a double disadvantage within first century society, since not only is she a woman in a patriarchal world, but she also seeks healing for a daughter (when daughters were seen as a liability) (Kraemer 1992, 133; Gundry-Volf 1995, 519). Most interpreters consider that the woman must have been completely alone and isolated from family support, “for if there had been any male relative in her family (or among her in-laws if she had been married), he would have had the responsibility of caring for her and her daughter and of interceding on their behalf. . . . She may have had sons somewhere, but if she were widowed or divorced they would probably have been taken over by her in-laws” (Ringe 1985, 70). Despite this disadvantage, the woman crosses over the male-female social boundary.

When Dewey (1993) analyzes the counter-cultural elements that appear within the six Markan healing narratives involving women, she describes how the Greek Syrophoenician woman violates the prescriptive norms for women’s behaviour within the dominant culture. She not only crosses the fundamental social boundary between Jews and Gentiles, but also enters a house where she is not wanted, speaks to a male stranger, and when her request is refused, she does not withdraw but cleverly takes up the challenge and ends up besting Jesus in the debate: “this is the only instance in the extant tradition of Jesus being taught by someone, and that someone is a woman who should not properly be speaking to him at all” (189). This is also the only time in the Markan healing narratives where a woman’s words are directly quoted in her dialogue with Jesus (Dewey 1997, 55). The suggestion that her words motivate Jesus’ further healings and miracles on Gentile soil shows the significant impact of Mk 7:24-30 on the whole
Markan narrative. It is clear that the more socio-historical information a modern reader has, the better he/she will understand this challenging pericope.

C. Interpretations of Mk 7:24-30 from Literary, Structural, Narrative, and Reader-Response Criticisms

Interpreters have more recently sought to understand Mk 7:24-30 as part of the larger Markan narrative. Understanding the pericope as part of a whole story has helped immensely in revealing its nuances (Rhoads 1994, 343). Literary criticism—and its associated methods of structural, narrative, and reader-response criticisms—has shown how the various threads within Mark are interwoven through this story as well. Socio-historical methods have more recently been combined with these literary methods in an effort to understand the Markan social world and to create a fuller context for the vocabulary used in the text. These literary interpretations often draw attention to the textual analogies to Mk 7:24-30—in vocabulary, in intratextual and intertextual analogues, and in intertextual parallels.13

1. Structural Analyses

Unlike form critics, who analyze small segments of the text, structural critics analyze Mk 7:24-30 by locating it within the context of the larger Markan narrative. These critics trace structural patterns that underlie particular writings in an attempt to find groups or 'sets' of similar texts (Gottwald 1987, 24-25). Structural critics divide up the gospel in various ways, without much consensus as to the criteria used in making the divisions or to the resulting divisions themselves. Interpreters place Mk 7:24-30 in the following structures: Achtemeier's miracle catenae, Burkill's parallel cycles, Grassi's three acts, Malbon's echoes and foreshadows in Mark 4-8, and Williams' sections according to the minor characters.14 What several of these structural analyses have in common is that they place this particular pericope within the larger
section of Mark 4-8, addressing the analogies between the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story and the other stories within that section (particularly the similarities to the healings of Jairus’ daughter and the hemorrhaging woman, and the contrast with the stories about disciples). These analogies will be investigated in the section on narrative criticism.

2. Textual Analogies

a) Vocabulary within the story

There are a number of key-words in Mk 7:24-30 that the reader must understand for a full appreciation of the story. This vocabulary is found in three areas: the metaphor used by Jesus and the woman; the words used to describe Jesus and the woman; and the setting for the story. Critics place the vocabulary in its socio-historical context, as well as within its literary context. I shall give an overview of their most significant insights, and I shall discuss this vocabulary in more detail later in my analysis of the text (in chapter 3).

(I) The metaphor. The metaphor is crucial to the meaning of the story. Interpreters most often analyze the following words: τέκνα/παιδία (‘children’), κυνάρια (‘dogs’), πρωτός (‘first’), ἄρπος (‘bread’), and χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’). These words are placed within the context of intrascriptural and interscriptural references.

In all interpretations of Mk 7:24-30, the word τέκνα is taken to refer to the descendants of the house of Israel. Besides τέκνα, there are other Greek words in Mk 7:24-30 referring to children, each offering a slightly different nuance to the scene. Pokorný (1995) is the only interpreter who makes this distinction. In the introduction to the scene, the narrator describes the woman as having a ‘little daughter’ (θυγάτριον, 7:25). When the woman mentions her daughter to Jesus, she describes her as her ‘daughter’ (θυγάτηρ, 7:26). In Jesus’ reply to her, he uses ‘children’ in the sense of descendants and privileged members of the house, by which he means
the Jews (τέκνα, 7:27). The woman’s reply refers to the children as παιδία (7:28), which stresses their immaturity and dependence, so that she pictures the people who come to Jesus as being like children in their dependence on him. In Jesus’ final statement, he links the healed child to her mother, referring to the child as ‘your daughter’ (τὴν θυγατρός σου, 7:29). In the last sentence the narrator calls the healed daughter ‘the child’ (τὸ παιδίον, 7:30), reinforcing the woman’s view of the children as dependent. Through the use of these different terms, the reader is forced to shift his/her understanding of the metaphor; the bread is not only for the Jews, but it is for all who are dependent and immature (such as the Gentile woman’s daughter) (Pokorný 1995, 337).

Discussion around the term κυνάρια centres on three main issues: that ‘dogs’ is a Hebrew Scriptural reference to Gentiles; that Jesus and the woman have different attitudes to dogs due to their different cultural backgrounds; and that κυνάρια is a diminutive form of κύων (‘dog’). In interpretations of Mk 7:24-30, the κυνάρια are the unclean lowly creatures, often the enemies (which most interpreters assume refers to the Gentiles). The Gentiles are pejoratively compared to ‘dogs’ in Hebrew Scriptural references, as well as in rabbinic references (Guelich 1989, 386; Burkill 1972, 109 n.15; Mally 1968, 37). The Hebrew Biblical references often do focus on ‘dogs’ being unclean, and therefore defiled, animals (Pokorný 1995, 324). There is also a reference in Dt 23:19 to the Hebrew term keleb (‘dog’); this term has been interpreted as meaning a male cultic functionary in a pagan temple (Thomas in Burkill 1972, 109). These are not the only connotations connected to the term ‘dogs,’ however, so further investigation into its Hebrew Scriptural representation is warranted.

As far as the different cultural attitudes to dogs is concerned, scholars commonly assume that Jews thought dogs were unclean scavengers, and that Gentiles saw dogs as domestic pets. Downing (1992) provides another possible explanation for why the Markan narrator might have
included a reference to dogs in Mk 7:24-30. Downing compares the view of dogs within that pericope to sayings unfavourably comparing Cynics to dogs: “There’s a lot about dogs in the commentaries, very little about dogs at table” (139). He presents an interesting hypothesis that the woman in this passage has the traits of a Cynic philosopher and that Jesus recognizes this fact (143). In comparing the use of the term ‘dogs’ in intertextual references concerning Cynics and in the references concerning the woman in Mk 7:24-30, Downing makes three salient points. The first point is that dogs are pictured at the table, eating remnants. There are a couple of examples of dogs at the table that appear in Jewish and Greek literature. Downing also discovered references in which people agreed to be called ‘dog.’ Many such examples in the Greek-speaking world describe people “explicitly or apparently conventionally” referring negatively to Cynics (140). The second point is that when Cynics are compared with dogs, Cynics not only accept the comparison, but they often responded in witty repartée. In these examples, it is clear that ‘giving remnant scraps to the dogs’ was a known way of insulting the Cynics (who were at the table for feasts) and that Cynics were not put off by the insult. The third point is that there were female Cynics, who were also referred to as dogs. There is merit in Downing’s interpretation of the woman’s response to Jesus’ metaphor about dogs (accepting it, turning it to her own advantage, perhaps Cynic-like). I would not necessarily conclude, however, that Jesus intended to address her as a Cynic. It is necessary to distinguish between Jesus’ association with the term ‘dog’ and that of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Their different associations with the term might be due to their different cultural backgrounds. The sociological differences between the role of dogs in Jewish and in Gentile cultures needs further investigation. (This shall be discussed in the analysis in chapter three.)

As to the form of κυνός, Hellenistic writers were not consistent in their use of the diminutive so it is not necessarily a factor in this story (Burkill 1972, 111; Derrett 1977, 151 n. 4). Although some interpreters believe that the diminutive reduces the harshness of Jesus’ insult
to the woman, most accept that there is an intended denigration of the woman by Jesus, regardless of the diminutive form.\textsuperscript{22} It is clear that within the Jewish scriptural context, ‘dog’ is a term for something negative, something unclean, that scavenges.

As far as the significance of the word πρῶτον (‘first’), it suggests that the Jews/children receive God’s benefits first. Gentiles/dogs receive them subsequently. Bultmann (1963) thinks that πρῶτον may have been a later addition to the text; if that were the case, the original intent of the narrator was to have the Jews as the exclusive recipients of Jesus’ work. This, however, is not clear in Mark, since both Jews and Gentiles receive God’s benefits within the narrative. The word πρῶτον (‘first’) needs further intratextual and intertextual examination to arrive at a clear understanding of how πρῶτον fits within the Markan narrative.\textsuperscript{23}

Scholars look to the larger Markan context to explore the significance of the words ἄρτος (‘bread’) and χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’). ‘Bread’ is symbolic as a life-giving substance. Pokorny (1995) believes that “in all cultures bread is a metonymy of life and even of eternal life and that Mark was aware of it. Jesus’ answer is metaphorical in a double sense” (324). Bread has another symbolic reference: of table fellowship, and how it this is forbidden between Jews and Gentiles.

Within the Markan narrative, the words ἄρτος (‘bread’) and χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’) connect Mk 7:24-30 with the two feedings of the multitudes (Jews, then Gentiles) (Mk 6:35-44; 8:1-10). The Jewish feeding is first and the Gentile feeding comes last, with the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman and Jesus sandwiched in between. In Mark, the verb χορτάζω (“I am satisfied”) is found only in these three stories (6:42, 7:27, and 8:4,8), reinforcing the significance of their connection (Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 138; Downing 1992, 142). These verbal threads help to link the three episodes in the reader’s mind, showing the major change of strategy that has occurred in Jesus’ mission (Rhoads 1994, 361-363).\textsuperscript{24} It is the Greek
Syrophoenician woman’s response that changes Jesus’ mind, and prompts Jesus to engage in a major ministry to the Gentiles.

Verbal threads link the Markan stories with the Hebrew Scriptural story of David and the shewbread (1 Sm 21:1-6) and with other Markan stories about the Jewish authorities and about the disciples (Drury 1987, 414-416). Drury analyzes the Markan episodes dealing with ‘bread’ in what he terms “The Riddle of the Bread.” He compares the story about David and the shewbread (1 Sm 21:1-6) with the Markan references to bread. The story about David helps explain the numerical references in the two feeding stories. David takes five loaves, which would leave seven (since shewbread is set out in twelve loaves) (Lv 24). In Mark these numbers have significance. The first feeding starts with five loaves among five thousand people and ends with twelve baskets left of bits of bread (Mk 6:35-44). The number twelve refers to the twelve tribes of Israel, the Jews. The second feeding starts with seven loaves among four thousand people and ends with seven baskets left of bits of bread (Mk 8:1-10). The number seven is the sacred number of fulfilment, with “[t]he miraculous feeding of Gentiles [as] a consummation even greater than the miraculous feeding of the Jews” (Drury 1987, 416). This feeding of the four thousand “reflects the great question which faced the church after Jesus, of whether or not to admit Gentiles to its sacred meals, and the positive answer to it” (416). Since the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman also uses the term ‘bread,’ and since she helps shift Jesus’ view of Gentiles, it acts as a bridge between the feeding of Jews and of Gentiles.

The theme of eating and bread also connects the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman “with the disputes with the Jewish leaders, particularly the Pharisees . . . but the more fundamental issues are purity and authority” (Malbon 1986, 122). Just prior to the woman’s story, there is the dispute over eating with unwashed hands that leads Jesus to imply that all foods are clean, thereby removing one of the basic barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Mk 7:1-23). The Pharisees do not accept Jesus’ authority in this matter. In the next story, the Greek
Syrophoenician woman does accept Jesus’ authority and is therefore allowed into the household that shares the bread of God.

Drury (1987) also mentions the connection with the disciples and ‘bread.’ After the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story and the feeding of the four thousand (and just prior to the healing of the deaf and dumb man), there is a passage where the disciples do not understand Jesus’ reference to the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod; they think Jesus is referring to the fact that they only have one loaf of bread (Mk 8:14-21). Jesus rebukes them, wondering if they have ears to hear and eyes to see, since they do not understand even after the feedings of the five thousand and the four thousand. This forms a stark contrast to the previous story in which the Greek Syrophoenician woman does understand the significance of the bread and its abundant power.

(2) The words used to describe the woman and Jesus. The words to describe the woman are not often thoroughly examined in existing interpretations. ‘Ελληνίς (‘Greek’) and Συροφοινίκισσα (‘Syrophoenician’) are mainly understood by interpreters to indicate that the woman in the story is Gentile (Taylor 1966, 349; Malbon 1992, 44). There is some exploration of them as separate terms. ‘Ελληνίς alludes to her religious status (pagan, i.e., non-Jewish), and her social rank (Greek-speaking, so therefore of the Syrian upper class, perhaps a free citizen).27 The woman being a wealthy ‘Hellene’ is supported through the reference to her daughter’s bed as a κλίνη rather than the “easily transportable κράβατος of the poor people” (Pokorny 1995, 329). In the literature on Mk 7:24-30, there is a minor controversy over whether ‘Ελληνίς was the original term, or whether there was instead a term for ‘widow’ or a term for ‘pagan woman.’28 Both of these options are generally discounted.

Συροφοινίκισσα τῆς γένει (‘Syrophoenician by race’) is the other major expression used to describe the woman. The socio-historical context for this expression comes from the fact that
the ancient land of Phoenicia belonged administratively to the Roman province of Syria; having ‘Syro’ as a prefix distinguishes it from Libophoenicia (with its centre at Carthage in North Africa) (Lane 1974, 260). The word describing Jesus in the story is Κύριε, which could mean ‘sir’ or ‘Lord’ (as a confessional title) (Ringe 1985, 67). Most interpreters translate it as ‘sir,’ although several do believe that the woman recognizes Jesus as the divine Lord. The term simply indicates the woman’s acceptance of Jesus’ superior status, perhaps due to his ability as a healer (Sugirtharajah 1986, 15).

(3) The words used to describe the setting of the story. The other phrase that interpreters note is τὰ ὀρια Τύρου (‘the region of Tyre’). Tyre was one of the major cities in Phoenicia (Malbon 1992, 44). The region of Tyre was known for its antiquity, wealth, and civilization (Gould 1961, 134). The setting for the story places Jesus in mainly Gentile territory. This region is described in the Hebrew Scriptures in both positive and negative ways. One positive image that links the royalty of Tyre and Israel is the friendships between Hiram (king of Tyre) and David and Solomon (kings of Israel). One negative image shows the Tyrians harshly oppressing their Jewish neighbours. The Jewish historian Josephus describes the Tyrians as...
"notoriously our bitterest enemies" (*Contra Apion* 1.13); they exploited their Galilean neighbours (who provided food for the Tyrians) (Gundry-Volf 1995, 516). Jesus' saying in Mk 7:27 gains force from the literal competition for food that existed between the Tyrians and the Jews, and may explain Jesus' view of who gets food when (Theissen 1991, 73-75; Downing 1992, 138; Rhoads 1994, 370). Further exploration of the city of Tyre and region may provide additional insights about this pericope.

b) Intratextual and intertextual analogues

Besides an investigation into the vocabulary of the story, some narrative critics also explore the intratextual and intertextual analogues to Mk 7:24-30. Analogues are specific stories that show some correspondence or similarity with the main text; this assumes that the narrator (consciously or unconsciously) was directing the reader to link these stories and then draw inferences from the analogues in an effort to better understand the main text.

1) Intratextual analogues. Intratextual analogues to the story about the Greek Syrophoenician woman include stories about Jesus and the following characters: Jairus (5:21-24, 35-43); the hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34); the deaf mute (7:31-37); and the disciples (4:11-8:21). Williams (1994) provides an in-depth analysis of intratextual analogues among minor characters in Mark. In his analysis, Williams compares the Greek Syrophoenician woman's story with those mentioned above and finds character similarities and contrasts. The Greek Syrophoenician woman and Jairus both come on behalf of their sick daughters (5:23; 7:25); the Greek diminutive form of 'daughter' (θυγατριόν) is used in Mark only in these two stories (Williams 1994, 46). The Greek Syrophoenician woman and the hemorrhaging woman both hear of Jesus and step outside of accepted social boundaries to gain healing from him. All three of these characters fall at Jesus' feet, showing a basic pattern of suppliants' actions towards a healer. The Greek Syrophoenician woman and the deaf mute are linked not only by the healing
that occurs in each, but also by the use of the verb \( \beta\alpha\lambda\lambda\omega \) (‘I throw’). There is a need for true perception within these two stories, with the woman offering her perception to Jesus, and Jesus offering it to the mute (Williams 1994, 121; Malbon 1983, 127). The Greek Syrophoenician woman serves as a foil for the disciples by showing courage, faith, and understanding, while the disciples often display their fear, disbelief, and lack of understanding about what Jesus says (Williams 1994, 105, 123); this is part of the minor theme of ‘supplicants as foils for the disciples’ (Rhoads 1994, 346-347).

(2) Intertextual analogues. The intertextual analogues interpreters explore are the Hebrew Scriptural story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24), and the Synoptic Gospel story of the healing of the centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10).

In looking at the relationship between Mk 7:24-30 and a Hebrew Biblical analogue, Derrett (1977) suggests the use of a ‘midrashic explanation.’ Derrett explains that, when there are dissonances or incongruities in the story of Mk 7:24-30, “we should expect a midrashic explanation . . . . By midrash I mean, in this context, the interaction of [Hebrew Biblical] text and first century event, so that the former seems to be illustrated or revivified by the latter, and the former explains and illumines the latter: the duty of the evangelist is not merely to tell a tale, but also to develop its contextuality with the Hebrew [B]ible. To tell Jesus’ life was a representation of familiar [Hebrew Biblical] narrative” (145).

i) Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24). Derrett (1977) offers a midrashic explanation of Mk 7:24-30 by comparing it to 1 Kgs 17:8-24: the stories in both texts show how Jewish prophets are to be fed first by the Gentiles they encounter, then the Gentiles are allowed to eat; in return for the Gentiles accepting this protocol, acts of power can be performed to sustain those in need, including the healing of Gentile children through the power of men of God (145-149). The word \( \pi\rho\omega\tau\omicron\nu \) (‘first’) (Mk 7:27) is one of the clues that direct us to the story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24). The perception that the Jews have a right to
be fed first is metaphorical and literal. In Mark, it is metaphorical: Jesus says that the children (Jews) must be fed first (7:27). In 1 Kings, it is literal: Elijah requests that the widow of Zarephath feed him (a Jew) first, and then herself and her son (Gentiles) (17:13). Derrett (1977) sees this as an example of the theme of reciprocity, since the “ancient world was concerned about reciprocity, which could endure as an obligation, over generations” (148). The widow’s faith is tested by the demand to be fed first, and because she does as the prophet Elijah bids her to do, by the miracle of Elijah’s God there continues to appear enough food for them all to survive; as well, when her son takes ill and appears to die, Elijah revives him (1 Kgs 17:17-24). Although Jesus also heals a Gentile child in the Markan story, the theme of reciprocity does not explicitly apply since “[t]he Syrophoenician woman had no claim on the basis of reciprocity, but the work of Elijah might supply a precedent”; the Jews need authority or precedent to act with Gentiles (Derrett 1977, 149).

In comparing the two female characters, both are Gentiles and come from the same area. Zarephath is located part-way between Tyre and Sidon (Burkill 1972, 72). Neither the Greek Syrophoenician woman nor the widow of Zarephath appears to have an adult male in the household who could be sent to converse with a male Jewish prophet. Derrett notes that the same Greek word is used to describe the piece of furniture pictured in the healing scene of the offspring: κάλινη (‘couch/bed’) (3 Kgs 17:19 in LXX; Mk 7:30); this might indicate that both the widow and the Greek Syrophoenician woman are of the upper class. These similarities make the analogies between the two women even stronger. Both women accept the protocol of feeding the Jews first, and both they and their children benefit by it.

**ii) The healing of the centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10).** The story of the healing of the centurion’s servant is another passage that is compared to the story of the healing of the Greek Syrophoenician’s daughter. Both stories feature a Gentile intermediary coming to
ask for healing for one of their dependents, and that healing is done at a distance (Burkill 1972, 75).

Healing at a distance is a motif within the healing theme, not only within the Synoptic Gospels, but also within the Hebrew Scriptures. Pokorny (1995) reminds us that in 2 Kgs 5, the Gentile Aramean commander of the army, Naaman, is also healed at a distance, by the Jewish prophet Elisha (329). Distance healing in the gospel traditions is only done with Gentiles: the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter and the centurion’s servant (Pesch in Downing 1992, 135). The reason for a distance healing is not explored to any great extent; most interpreters assume that it is due to the dependent being Gentile, and therefore unclean for Jewish contact. This is not supportable. If Gentiles’ uncleanliness is meant to explain why they must be healed at a distance from the Jewish healer, how is this reconciled with the picture Jesus presents in the story immediately proceeding Mk 7:24-30 (in which Jesus declares all food clean, thereby removing a major impediment to Jew-Gentile contact) (Mk 7:1-23)? In Mark, Gentiles had already been healed by Jesus in person (3:8; 5:1-20). These distance healings require further examination before the reason for this form of healing is made clear. Perhaps distance healing involves the power of the spoken word (Alter 1981, 69). In both the Lukan and Matthean version of the centurion’s story and the Markan version of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story, reference is made to the word: the centurion says to Jesus, ἄλλα μόνον εἰπεῖ λόγῳ (‘but only speak the word’ Mt 8:8) or ἄλλα εἰπεῖ λόγῳ (‘but speak the word’ Lk 7:7); Jesus says to the woman, Διὰ τούτων τὸν λόγον (‘for saying that’ Mk 7:29). The centurion knows that Jesus, like himself, can speak the word and the power that is invested in him gets the job done. Jesus knows the woman’s word has shown him that there is a place for the dogs/Gentiles.

There are also contrasts between the stories about the centurion and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. For example, the commander’s request for help is not rejected by Jesus. Gundry-Volf (1995) explains why this might be:
The woman’s gender may well play more of an influential role in the Markan story than some interpreters think.

c) Intertextual parallel

A ‘parallel’ is when the same story appears in more than one text; the versions usually differ to some degree. The intertextual parallel to Mk 7:24-30 is the Matthean story of Jesus and the Canaanite woman (15:21-28). Since the Matthean version was most likely written down in its present form after the Markan version, the parallel does not significantly influence my interpretation of Mark; I use the comparison between the two parallel versions to clarify certain aspects of Mk 7:24-30. In the Matthean and Markan versions of the story, five points of comparison are of most interest to me: the saying of Jesus; how the narrator refers to the woman; how the woman refers to Jesus; how the woman’s faith is portrayed; and how her speech affects her relationship to the reader. The Markan Jesus’ saying includes the Gentiles in his mission from the beginning, whereas the Matthean Jesus’ saying initially excludes the Gentiles from his mission; both stories end with the Gentile woman’s child healed, so some shift occurs in Jesus’ view in both versions. The narrators in the parallel stories both make it clear that the woman is Gentile, but each uses different descriptors: in Mark, she is ‘Greek Syrophoenician’ (7:26), while in Matthew, she is ‘Canaanite’ (15:22). The woman in Mark addresses Jesus as κύριε (‘Sir’) (7:28), and in Matthew as κύριε υἱὸς Δαυίδ (‘Lord, son of David’) (15:22) (Kraemer 1992, 132). In Mark, the woman’s faith is implicit in her actions and her words,
whereas in Matthew, her faith is explicitly commented on by Jesus (15:28) (Burkill 1972, 75; Mann 1986, 320).

Although the woman’s actions have an impact on Jesus, Dewey (1997) mentions that “rendering a character in direct speech makes him or her more vivid for the reader, but not necessarily more admirable. Mimetic emphasis is needed to render a woman visible at all. How she is visible depends on the content of the narrative, and may or may not serve patriarchal interests” (57). In both Matthew and Mark, the woman’s words to Jesus are directly quoted. For example, Matthew shows the woman to be less admirable (nagging Jesus to get a response, rather than speaking with intelligence and faith). This nagging may be a more acceptable portrayal of a woman in an androcentric culture (57). In the Markan version of that story, however, the woman is initially portrayed negatively but, as Markan theology tells us, the last can become first, and the woman is seen to be a positive role model due to her boldness and intelligence.

3. Narrative Components

As well as textual analogies, literary and narrative critics also discuss the themes and characterizations in Mk 7:24-30. To understand the meaning of a particular text, it is important not only to see what ideas, or themes, are expressed within it, but also to understand this story’s impact on the whole of the Markan narrative.

a) Themes developed within Mk 7:24-30

I divide the themes into major and minor, according to the extent and significance of their development within the pericope. The major themes are: healing, faith, Gentile mission and Gentile portrayal, conflict, clean/unclean, insider/outsider, eating and food, and gender. The
minor themes include: reciprocal visitation, house as private setting, Jesus' withdrawal, Jesus' identity, Jesus' power and authority, the suppliants as foils for the disciples, and followership.

(1) Major themes.

i) Healing. The healing theme sets the context for Mk 7:24-30. Healing is a Markan type-scene, and Mk 7:24-30 provides an example of this type-scene. Rhoads (1994) summarizes the healing type-scene conventions, and provides some insightful analysis of where the conventions are repeated and where they are varied in Mk 7:24-30 (349-352). The basic features of the Markan type-scene of healing are as follows: a setting of place and/or time; the suppliant having heard about Jesus; the narrator introducing the suppliant and the sickness; the suppliant (or their surrogate) coming to Jesus for healing; the suppliant kneeling before Jesus or falling at his feet; the suppliant overcoming an obstacle to get the request met; Jesus fulfilling the request; the healing occurring; Jesus giving a further command; the suppliant ignoring Jesus' command; the reaction of the observers (349-351). Of the variations introduced in the particular healing scene with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, the most significant are that the suppliant is obviously Gentile, that the obstacle is couched in a riddle, and that the woman obeys Jesus' command to 'go off'; and there is no reaction by observers, since the setting is private (Rhoads 1994, 351-352).

Of particular interest is that the healing is done at a distance, the only recorded instance of this in Mark (although, as mentioned earlier, there are examples of distance healing in the Synoptic Gospels and the Hebrew Scriptures) (Malbon 1983, 36-37; Grassi 1988, 11; Pokorny 1995, 329). Derrett (1977) points out that the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mark does not ask for absence healing; Jesus' use of this method does not imply any reluctance on Jesus' part to visit her daughter, as is often assumed (156). Not all scholars, however, believe that the Markan story is a healing at a distance. Taylor (1966) attributes Jesus' knowing about the demon leaving the daughter to his "supernatural knowledge" (348). Certainly, Jesus' knowing of what came
to pass is part of the mystery of this passage, yet Jesus’ role in the healing cannot be dismissed. As Taylor himself points out, in Mark healing is usually done by Jesus’ contact with the sufferer (1:31f; 3:10; 5:41; 6:5, 56, etc.) or by his commanding word (1:25; 5:8; 9:25) (348). The healings seem to be a result of the power that comes from the Markan God and is accessed through Jesus. Perhaps how the dogs are satisfied in the metaphor offers a parallel to how the daughter is healed. The dogs are not directly given food but, as part of the process of the children eating, the crumbs fall; the dogs are inadvertently satisfied by the crumbs of the children. Jesus does not need to directly heal the daughter; his being there and acknowledging that this is possible is enough to heal the child indirectly.

ii) Faith. In Mark, women have access to healing due to their faith in Jesus and his power (Kee 1977, 228-229). It is clear that the faith of both the healer and the suppliant are required for the healing to occur; faith in God can bring about great acts of power, and lack of faith can block acts of power (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 108, 131). The faith of those healed (or their intermediary) is often expressed in observable behaviour, with persistence as an overt sign of faith (131). The Greek Syrophoenician woman exhibits her faith implicitly simply by coming to Jesus for healing (130). Through her actions and her words, she becomes a female model of faith within Mark (Beavis 1988, 8).49

iii) Conflict. Although healing is the context for the scene, the controversy between Jesus and the woman becomes the focus of the scene. Conflict is central to many stories, including those within Mark.50 There are three Markan conflict plot lines: Jesus in conflict with suppliants, with the authorities, and with his disciples (Rhoads 1994, 346-347).51 These three plot lines intersect in Mk 7:24-30. Jesus is initially in conflict with the suppliant. His conflict with the authorities over purity (in the previous passage) is part of the background to Jesus’ response in this passage. The woman’s understanding of what Jesus says acts as a contrast to the disciples’ lack of understanding of what he says (358-359). As well, conflict need not refer to
external opposition only, but may refer to internal controversy (Burris 1992, 241). It is possible that Jesus himself was not yet sure how his interactions with this woman applied to Jew-Gentile relations. Since the woman's clever request honors all Jesus says and she does not directly shame him, Jesus could overcome his internal controversy and fulfill the woman's request (Rhoads 1994, 358).

iv) Gentile mission and Gentile portrayal. After the resolution of the conflict between Jesus and the woman, Jesus engages in other Gentile healings and miracles (7:31-8:10, 8:22-9:1). A whole range of opinions exists as to whether Jesus engaged in a Gentile mission during his lifetime. The opinions about how Mk 7:24-30 influences a Gentile mission range from one end of the spectrum to the other: at one end, the Greek Syrophoenician woman is considered the apostolic foremother of all Gentile Christians (Schüsler Fiorenza 1983, 138) and, at the other end, the extension of Jesus' ministry to the Gentiles is not the point of the narrative at all (since Jesus is considered not to have even taught on Gentile soil) (Hooker 1991, 181). In between these extremes are various positions: her story is the breakthrough to a mission among Gentiles (Rhoads 1994, 348); or it is one story in various degrees of expansion of the Gentile mission (Malbon 1992, 46); or the healing simply opens the way "in the long run" for Jesus' (and the Church's) Gentile mission (Ringe 1985, 65). Downing (1992) thinks that, as with "most issues of detailed interpretation, the discussion [about a Gentile mission] remains indecisive, lacking as it does sufficient contextual controls to enable an objective choice among the options canvassed" (138). I am not sure that an 'objective' choice can be made as to whether a mission occurred during Jesus' lifetime. Greater agreement might be possible if the interpreters focused on how a Gentile mission is portrayed in Mark. The Markan context is established by examining Jesus' activities among the Gentiles in Mark, taking into consideration the socio-historical context of the first century. Whether or not Jesus engaged in a Gentile mission in the real world, the Markan story world includes Jesus' interactions with Gentiles. The story of the Greek
Syrophoenician woman is seen by many interpreters as pivotal within the development of a Gentile mission within Mark.\textsuperscript{53}

Malbon (1992, 1993) and Rhoads (1994) both examine the development of the Gentile mission within Mark's story world. As mentioned above, Malbon thinks there are degrees of expansion of the Gentile mission and that Jesus shows an intent for that mission in chapters 5, 6, and 7, beginning with Jesus' healings of Legion, the Greek Syrophoenician's daughter, and the deaf mute, and continuing in chapter 8 with the feeding of the four thousand (1992, 46). These developments are reinforced with the recurring leitmotif of the disciples attempting to get to Bethsaida (a Gentile village at the north end of the Sea of Galilee). They do not get to Gentile Bethsaida (6:45) since they do not understand that the good news is extended to the Gentiles, which is implied in the healing of the Gerasene demoniac in chapter 5 (Malbon 1993, 229).\textsuperscript{54}

The disciples do, however, reach Bethsaida in 8:22, after the healing of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter in chapter 7 and the feeding of the four thousand earlier in chapter 8. I agree that chapters 5-8 are the central chapters in looking at the shift in Gentile mission and that this leitmotif is somehow involved in pointing out the shift in Gentile mission. I do think, however, it is necessary to trace its plot line throughout Mark to see the extent to which Gentiles are involved and how they are portrayed by the narrator.

Rhoads (1994) also examines the Gentile mission. Rhoads notes that Jesus was sent away from Decapolis in the story of the Gerasene demoniac and that, once the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s saying changes Jesus’ mind, Jesus then engages in a major ministry to the Gentiles, beginning in his return to Decapolis (7:31) (361-362). As mentioned previously in the review of the literature, Rhoads connects the three episodes of the Jewish feeding, the Greek Syrophoenician woman, and the Gentile feeding through the use of the verbal threads of ‘take,’ ‘bread,’ ‘be satisfied,’ and ‘eat’ (362-363). Through connecting the three episodes, Rhoads clearly believes that the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s saying is what changes Jesus’ mind and
causes a major change in his strategy about the Gentile mission. Although Rhoads thinks there is
a major shift in strategy, Jesus is still working within an eschatological framework; the work he
does among Gentiles “foreshadows a later Gentile mission projected into the future of the story
world” when, before the end time, the good news must be proclaimed to all the nations to the
ends of the earth (13:10, 27) (Rhoads 1994, 363). In looking at the development of that mission,
it is necessary to see whether this mission exists only in the future of the Markan story world, or
whether Jesus’ interactions with Gentiles show that the mission is already underway.

v) Clean/unclean. One significant boundary between Jews and Gentiles is based on what
is considered clean and unclean. The theme of clean/unclean is a thread that is woven into Mk
7:24-30 from the preceding passage.\textsuperscript{55} Mk 7:1-23 is about Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees
about what constitutes a defiled state. The cause of the dispute is the Pharisees seeing Jesus’
disciples eating with unwashed hands. The Jewish tradition is to avoid what is unclean by
washing, thereby removing any contact they have had with anything unclean (including Gentiles)
(Rhoads and Michie 1982, 82).\textsuperscript{56} Jesus believes that, if necessity demands, the oral tradition can
be ignored, but not the Torah (Mann 1986, 89).\textsuperscript{57} After Jesus berates the Pharisees for putting
their own traditions before God’s commandments, he tells the crowd a parable that “there is
nothing outside a person that by going in can defile, but the things that come out are what defile”
(Mk 7:15). He explains to his disciples that what comes into a person from the outside goes into
the stomach and not the heart, and therefore goes out into the sewer (thereby implying that all
food is clean); he explains that it is from the intentions within the human heart that evil comes.
As Hooker (1991) describes it, “cleanness depends on attitudes,” not on being Jew or Gentile
(181).

There seems to be a contradiction between Mk 7:1-23 and Mk 7:24-30: if Jesus declares
all food clean in the former story (removing a major barrier between Jews and Gentiles), why
does he seem to refer to the unclean status of the dog/woman in the latter story by putting the
dogs at a distance? If Jesus is not concerned with the physical uncleanness of the woman, is he worried about her spiritual uncleanness? Downing (1992) remarks that some critics ask “‘Why does a request for exorcism elicit a response in terms of food?’ . . . It should in fact be obvious that a woman, foreign, idolatrous, from a household with an unclean spirit, raises most forcefully issues of purity and distinctiveness, for which food is the symbolic focus” (138). The woman’s response seems to cause Jesus to re-evaluate his understanding of the Gentiles’ place in the kingdom of God, perhaps reminding him—and the reader—that cleanliness depends on the attitude in a person’s mind and body and not what passes through their body (as Jesus himself had taught his disciples in the passage just previous). The lack of cultic cleanliness of the Gentiles in the story held no barrier to their participation in the powers that work through Jesus; “as the beneficiary of that power, [the Greek Syrophoenician woman] becomes the symbol and prototype of other faithful Gentiles who will share in the benefits of the kingdom of God” (Kee 1977, 92). Jesus has authority over what is clean and unclean (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 105-106). His ministry can remove barriers between Jews and Gentiles (Guelich 1989, 388).

vi) Insider/outsider. The insider/outsider theme deals with the issue of boundaries, just as the clean/unclean theme does. Malbon (1993) notes that in Mark the roles of insider/outsider are not what you expect, since Mark is permeated by a “reversal of expectations [based on] historically conditioned expectations” (42-43). In Mark, to be an insider or outsider is not based on social status or role, but on the character’s response to Jesus. According to the Markan standards of judgment, an insider is one who ‘thinks the things of God’ rather than ‘thinking the things of people’ (Rhoads 1994, 365). An insider in Mark is one who sees, hears, and understands what Jesus communicates about the kingdom of God (Malbon 1992, 37). The minor characters—“the little ones who have faith”—share with Jesus the values of the kingdom of God (Rhoads 1994, 366). In particular, the Greek Syrophoenician woman embodies ‘the things of God’ in several ways: she shows her faith by coming to Jesus; she serves and brings life by
coming on her daughter's behalf; and she accepts being 'least' in her dialogue with Jesus by accepting being the 'dog' in Jesus' metaphor (Rhoads 1994, 366-367). By exhibiting that she embodies the things of God, she is then an insider in the kingdom that Jesus describes. As well, her faith and her understanding of what Jesus is saying about the kingdom make her an insider (Moore 1992, 24). The Greek Syrophoenician woman, in contrast to the disciples, begins as an outsider (being Gentile and a woman), and ends the story being an insider, understanding Jesus' metaphor and message.

vii) Eating and food. The theme of eating and food is traced through the use of the words ἄρτος ('bread'), τὸ έατὼ ('I eat'), and χορτάζω ('I satisfied'). As was mentioned in the vocabulary section, these words connect the stories concerning the feedings of the crowds (6:30-40; 8:1-9), the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30), and the disciples' understanding in relation to the feeding of the crowds (8:13-21). There is a leitmotif of residual superabundance that manifests itself in all of these stories: even after some are satisfied, there remains enough to satisfy others by the saving power of 'bread' (which symbolizes the power of God) (Burkill 1972, 82-87). There may also be an implicit reference in this story to the Jewish law that the remnants are to be left for the widow, the orphan, and the alien to eat (Lv 19:9-10; Dt 24:19; cf. Ru 2) (Pokorný 1995, 329).

viii) Gender. In discussing gender in the Gospel of Mark, many interpreters comment on how unusual the woman's actions are within a first century context. In general, women were considered subservient to men and were encouraged not to venture much beyond domestic boundaries. Several interpreters have undertaken to explore the pericope from the angle of gender and have provided more detailed analyses about its role within the story, as well as within Mark as a whole. Even though there are more male characters than female characters in Mark (Munro 1982, 226), the female characters do provide important criteria for followership, particularly in their willingness to serve, to be least, and to give of their lives (Malbon 1983, 34-
The Greek Syrophoenician woman resists the cultural norms in what she does: she approaches Jesus in a private house herself (rather than sending a male intermediary); she talks to him first; she challenges his words and as a result changes his mind.

Although Rhoads (1994) says gender is not an essential issue in Mk 7:24-30, he believes that the woman’s gender does make what happens remarkable, “it changes everything” (367). I find Rhoads’ comments confusing. Gender may not be essential, in that the healing does not centre on her female uncleanness (as with the hemorrhaging woman), but her gender, as he puts it, “changes everything.” Her gender is instrumental in showing how bold this woman is and how Jesus is willing to put the least first. To have a woman find Jesus, approach him in a private house, challenge his words, and get him to change his mind because of what she says, results in the conclusion for Rhoads that the Greek Syrophoenician woman is the “woman who paves the way for the whole mission to the Gentiles” (367). Although gender may not be essential to Mk 7:24-30, it is significant.

As far as gender portrayal in Mark is concerned, the narrator usually provides more character development for his male characters than his female characters (more ‘mimetic development,’ attempting to have them appear like people in real life). To have female exceptions to this trend is notable. The stories of the hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman are such exceptions (Dewey 1997, 56). As well as their mimetic development of female characters, each story has a feature not found in any of the male healing narratives: “The story of the woman with the hemorrhage is the only healing in which inside views of the minor characters are given . . . [while the Greek Syrophoenician] woman’s word gets Jesus to change his mind” (56). This unique aspect of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story results in Jesus altering his intended course of action; “in this story, the mimetic emphasis is not so much on Jesus’ healing act as in most healing narratives, as on the woman’s speech, making her rather than Jesus the central character of the episode” (56). I agree with Dewey that
the emphasis is on the dialogue and, more specifically, the impact of the woman’s speech (making her the central character in the episode).\footnote{This rationale suggests a need to focus on the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s characterization in Mk 7:24-30.}

\textit{(2) Minor themes.} The minor themes in this particular story are: reciprocal visitation, Jesus’ withdrawal, house as private setting, Jesus’ identity, Jesus’ power and authority, the suppliants as foils for the disciples, and followership.\footnote{The minor themes provide several relevant points. The setting in Tyre, in a house, shows not only that Jesus has withdrawn, but the house reminds the reader of its use as a place of private instruction (Malbon 1983, 40); the woman and Jesus both end up receiving instructions from each other (Guelich 1989, 388). In addition, Jesus’ identity, authority, and power influence the scene, and the woman comes to him as a healer (recognizing that his authority and power from God can heal her daughter, even from a distance). Furthermore, the woman shows herself, in her bold and active faith and in her understanding of Jesus’ metaphor, as a suitable foil to the disciples; the disciples often show their fear of Jesus’ acts of power and their lack of understanding of Jesus’ teachings and ability to feed them even with one loaf (4:13, 35-41; 6:50-52; 7:18) (Williams 1994, 125; Rhoads 1994, 346). As a foil for the disciples, the woman provides a positive example of what it means to be a follower (Malbon 1983, 35, 43).}

b) Characterization within Mk 7:24-30

In the area of characterization, most interpreters do not make an extensive evaluation of the characters in Mk 7:24-30. The main characters in the passage are Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. There are other less central characters mentioned, such as the daughter of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, the demon, and the metaphorical characters of the story within the story (the children and the dogs). The daughter and the demon are usually only briefly mentioned within the literature on this pericope. Daughters in that culture were not as greatly
valued as were sons, which makes it even more unusual that the mother in Mk 7:24-30 would have sought healing for her daughter (Ringe 1985, 70-71). The daughter is briefly compared to Jairus' daughter, since that is another occasion of a parent seeking Jesus' help for a sick child. In Mk 7:24-30, the daughter is described as having an unclean spirit, a demon; women "are virtually never possessed by demons in the gospel tradition, with two exceptions"—namely, the Lukan story of the seven demons being driven out of Mary Magdala and the story about the daughter of the Gentile woman (Kraemer 1992, 134). The demon is successfully exorcized from the daughter and, as a result, the daughter is thrown onto the bed (7:30); "[p]robably the cure had been attended by violent convulsions, as in other cases of the same kind in the Gospels" (Mk 1:26; 9:20, 26) (Gould 1961, 137; cf. The Companion Bible [1990], 1399). The demon, like other demons within the narrative, is seen as an unclean spirit over which Jesus has control.

Although a number of interpreters comment on aspects of the characters of Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman, several have engaged in more in-depth evaluations of these two characters (Rhoads and Michie 1982, Downing 1992, Williams 1994, Rhoads 1994, and Dewey 1997).

(1) The character of Jesus. The Markan narrator intentionally introduces the characters in an order and their placement within the plot serves a rhetorical purpose (Williams 1994, 81). This is clear in the narrator's first words, which establish Jesus as the central, heroic figure of Mark (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 103). The narrator shows him to be a reliable character, an authoritative communicator of the gospel of God, who demands repentance and faith (Williams 1994, 92). His words and actions exemplify the values of God, setting the standard by which to judge other characters' words and actions. He is the anointed one, the son of God, not a divine being but a human being, given authority by God to establish the new order of God on earth (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 104). Rhoads and Michie point out a very interesting trait: "[t]here is a mysterious quality about Jesus and his actions which overwhelms others and makes it
difficult for them to understand him” (107); in the story with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, however, she is able to decipher and understand what he says. Within his role, Jesus has authority over what is clean and unclean, and so is able to heal (through physical contact) a leper, a hemorrhaging woman, and a dead girl; later he even eats with a Gentile crowd in the desert (105-106). Jesus is described as a ‘round’ character, who has many varied traits: bold, authoritative, determined, and mysterious (105-107). “Jesus is a person of integrity who lives out the standards of his own teaching” (104).

Since Jesus does not have control over people, he needs to make them understand with words and actions, and sometimes when he cannot, he gets frustrated, and can be harsh, impatient and angry (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 104). Interpreters often seek ways to downplay Jesus’ harsh response to the Greek Syrophoenician woman (Downing 1992, 136). There are various interpretations to explain Jesus’ response to the woman’s request for help. Theissen (1991) classifies them into three different categories: biographical, paradigmatic (as a trial of faith), and salvation-historical (62-65). Could Jesus’ mood on that day of his life explain his ill temper? Was Jesus offering the woman some obstacle to overcome in which she can exhibit her faith in him (as is the style in a rabbinic dialogue)? Is there salvation-historical symbolism, in which Jesus goes from being unwilling to minister to Gentiles, to opening up a mission to the Gentiles? Theissen, however, thinks that none of these three approaches is persuasive:

The difficulty remains: How can one refuse a request for the healing of a child by saying that children are to be preferred to dogs? How can we avoid being caught in the contradiction that children are given a higher value within the image presented, but in reality a suffering child is being denied help? . . . Jesus’ cynical response can more readily be understood if we keep in mind the historical situation of the region in which the story is located. Jesus’ rejection of the woman expresses a bitterness that had built up within the relationships between Jews and Gentiles in the border regions between Tyre and Galilee. The first tellers and hearers of this story would have been familiar with the situation in this region, so that, on the basis of that familiarity, they would have felt Jesus’ sharp rejection of the woman seeking his help to be ‘true to life.’ (65)

Jesus’ response accurately reflects the Jewish attitude to Gentiles at that time (Mann 1986, 319).
Although he begins by denying the woman assistance, the whole point of the passage is
the change in Jesus’ behaviour (Bultmann 1963, 38). He responds not only by healing the
woman’s daughter, but by expanding the scope of his ministry to include all Gentiles (Rhoads
1994, 361). This is counter-cultural on Jesus’ part (Dewey 1993, 189). As a result of the faith of
the Greek Syrophoenician woman, Jesus discovers “that his authority extends beyond Israel, and
that [G]entiles too will receive bread before the children of Israel are fully satisfied” (Rhoads and
Michie 1982, 104). Jesus serves God first, then, under God’s authority, he serves his neighbour
as himself (109).

(2) The character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Although Jesus is the leading
character in the Markan narrative, the woman is clearly the protagonist in this scene (Ringe
1985, 70; Downing 1992, 133; Dewey 1997, 56). Of the many minor characters in the Markan
gospel, the Greek Syrophoenician woman is one of the remarkable ones. The most in-depth
analyses of this character are provided by Rhoads (1994, 359-361) and Williams (1994, 118-
121), with good overviews also by Ringe (1985, 65, 70-71) and Downing (1992, 133-141).
Interpreters focus on her foreignness (being both Greek and Syrophoenician), her faith, her being
a woman, her wit/intelligence/understanding, and her bold acts as a woman in the first century.68
Downing (1992) notes that “interpreters do realize that it is a female person who approaches
Jesus, but most find it quite unremarkable, and prefer to stress her foreignness. In the story it is
her femaleness that is emphasized. Her religio-cultural and ethnic otherness are important other
factors” (133). I believe that her gender and her religio-cultural and ethnic otherness are all
remarkable. I would not agree that her being a woman is emphasized above her being foreign.
The narrator certainly describes her as ‘woman’ more often, but this is because, without a name,
it is a way to identify her. Describing her as ‘Greek’ and ‘Syrophoenician’ is done only once,
and it is the only time in Mark anyone is described this way. The rarity of these designations
adds impact when they are used in Mk 7:24-30.
There is some controversy over whether the woman's faith or her wit is central to the story. I think it is too simplistic to say that it is either her faith or her wit that gets her request granted; both contribute. Faith is necessary for healing, but in the case of Mk 7:24-30, it is the woman's speaking out, and her intelligence and wit, that cause Jesus to change his mind and heal her daughter. I shall discuss this in greater depth in chapter 3. Downing (1992) suggests that, due to the woman's intelligence and wit, she is a female philosopher, and even hypothesizes that she is a female Cynic (145-146). As Cynics did, she accepts being called a dog; as philosophers did, she comes back with a winning retort in public (144-145). It is clear that these traits make her an uncommon female figure for her time period, because she is willing not only to accept Jesus' insult (calling her a dog), but then—like a woman philosopher—to engage in a debate with this teacher/healer and win it through her witty repartée. She shares the traits of many of the minor characters in Mark—a childlike persistent faith, a disregard for power or status, and a capacity for sacrificial service—and thereby exemplifies the values of the rule of God (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 129; Rhoads 1982, 419).

Rhoads (1994) classifies the Greek Syrophoenician woman as one of the 'stock' characters, a 'suppliant with faith' (361). In defining a 'stock' character, Rhoads says he or she basically has one consistent trait, making the character very predictable; for a 'suppliant with faith,' the major trait is faith (359). Yet Rhoads seems to contradict himself when he says that the Greek Syrophoenician character "is remarkably developed. . . . She is a rather complex stock character!" (361). This kind of character classification system does not satisfactorily address the subtleties and the many qualities of her character that have been recognized by interpreters.69 Another classification system is needed to address these nuances in the Markan minor characters.

As well as the woman's traits and character classification, a few interpreters discuss techniques the narrator uses in the woman's characterization; these include two-step progression (Rhoads 1994, 353), irony (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 102; Camery-Hoggatt 1992, 149-151), and
the use of direct speech (Mally 1968, 37; Downing 1992, 129, 134; Pokorny 1995, 328; Dewey 1997, 56-57). The narrator's stylistic device of two-step progression has begun to be analyzed and should be further explored. Two-step progression is the most pervasive stylistic feature in Mark, in which “[it] is no mere repetition, for the second part adds precision and clarifies the first part” (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 47). The second step also usually contains a crucial element (Rhoads 1994, 353). Rhoads discusses this device’s appearance in Mk 7:26, where the narrator describes the woman as ‘Greek, Syrophoenician by birth’ (352). Rhoads concludes that “the narrative leads the hearer to notice that the supplicant was not only Greek-speaking, but more specifically a Gentile by birth and by race - unquestionably not a Jew, but an outsider” (1994, 353). Despite this fact, this woman is generally referred to in the literature as ‘the Syrophoenician woman,’ thereby glossing over one of two major descriptors of her character. Certainly the two-step progression emphasizes her otherness to Jesus, but is there any specific reason why the narrator describes her as Greek and Syrophoenician? Theissen (1991) understands the two steps to mean that a Hellenist was able to communicate with Jesus because she was bilingual; not only could she speak Greek, but as a native Syrophoenician she also speaks Aramaic (just as Jesus did) (69). Theissen offers one possible explanation for the second step. Who were the Syrophoenicians? As I asked earlier, what was their relationship to the Jews? Did they have any specific connection to dogs? These questions prompt further exploration as to how these descriptions might be connected to the contents of the story.

Irony is a common compositional technique in Mark (Tannehill 1979, 88; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 1, 59). Irony is found in Mk 7:24-30 in three ways: dramatic irony, verbal irony, and characterization irony. First, there is dramatic (or situational) irony when Jesus originally rejects the woman, and then he goes into an extended Gentile mission. Second, there is verbal irony with Jesus’ metaphor. The construction of the saying involves wordplay: ‘children’ being the Jewish term, and ‘dogs’ being “the Jewish epithet for Gentiles.” It is “a riddle to be solved, a
witticism requiring a wittier response” (Camery-Hoggatt 1992, 151). This verbal irony involves “a discrepancy between what is said and what is really meant” (Baldick 1990, 114). The reader discovers that, although the initial impression is that to be a ‘dog’ is a negative, lowly thing, an outcast of the household, this impression can be altered depending on how one draws the picture. The woman shows how ‘the dogs outside’ become ‘the dogs inside’ in the household of God. Third, the characterization irony comes when the woman (whom the reader is encouraged to reject) is shown to best Jesus in a debate and get her request satisfied; this characterization irony is implicitly recognized by interpreters but is not explicitly labeled as such in the literature on this passage. The least become first, and the outsiders can become insiders depending on their response to Jesus’ words.

The narrator’s use of speech representation in this story is notable. Both the instances of indirect and direct speech are unique within Mark. The first dialogue between Jesus and the woman is not direct, but indirect; the narrator describes that the woman begs Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter (Mk 7:26). Even in this indirect form, the narrator has this woman speaking first to Jesus, before he even addresses her. Downing (1992) points out that “it is in fact difficult in antiquity (even in the Christian tradition it is difficult) to find other stories where a woman approaches a strange man and opens a conversation with him, rather than waiting to be spoken to. There’s no other in Mark” (133-134). He lists other passages from the Hebrew Bible when women speak first to men, but only when in extreme need, when there is no male representative to speak for them (2 Sm 14:4; 2 Kgs 4:2); as he says, “it remains uncommon, unexpected” (Downing 1992, 134). Downing points out that there are “very few instances indeed where a woman wins an argument with a man (or, for that matter, where a teacher loses a debate to any but a fellow teacher)” (129). Theissen (1991) addresses the unusual skill with which the woman in Mk 7:24-30 wins that debate: “[t]he Syrophoenician woman accomplishes something that for us today seems at least as marvelous as the miracle itself: she takes a cynical
image and 'restructures' it in such a way that it permits a new view of the situation and breaks through walls that divide people, walls that are strengthened by prejudice' (79-80). She accomplishes this restructuring by doing two things. She takes the positive image of the children from Jesus' own remark in Mk 7:27 and 'plays off' the positive aspect against the need of her own child: "[i]n formal terms, she plays off the image against the content" (80). The second thing she does is give positive value to the negative word 'dog.' She pictures the dogs not at a distance, but under the table, thereby including them within the household. They are therefore subject to the will of their master, not eating anything that would be considered a loss to the children.

In my initial review of the literature in 1995, no one had mentioned that this story is the only place in the Gospel of Mark that a woman's dialogue with Jesus is directly quoted by the narrator. A recent article by Dewey (1997) recognizes the importance of direct speech within narrative, and mentions the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman as an example of the significance of direct speech in the narrator's attempt to influence the reader (54). Dewey does recognize that this woman is the only one who has direct speech within the healing narratives, but she does not provide details of all the individual instances of women's speech representations in Mark. Dewey does provide an overall evaluation of the Synoptic Gospels: women are often seen but not heard (1997, 53, 56). The Greek Syrophoenician woman is an anomaly, since she is seen where she should not be and heard and understood in a way few women are in either the Hebrew Scriptures or in the Synoptic Gospels. The role of speech representation, therefore, is an important rhetorical device to examine.
III. Conclusion

A. Summary of the Field

A review of the exegetical literature on Mk 7:24-30 offers information found through a variety of methods: textual, source, redaction, and form criticisms; historical, feminist, and social criticisms; and literary, structural, narrative, and reader-response criticisms. Most interpreters agree that Mk 7:24-30 is a unitary composition, with no traces of later redactional activity. It is unclear, however, whether the story is based on an event that occurred during Jesus’ lifetime or during the early Christian Church’s struggle with Jew-Gentile relations within the Church. Certain features in the pericope suggest that, due to its counter-cultural content, the story would not have been included in Mark unless it was founded on some historical incident.

Jesus’ saying and the story as a whole have been classified in various ways in form criticism, indicating perhaps that elements from more than one form are inherent within the pericope. Although the healing is the context for the scene, the controversy dialogue between Jesus and the woman is its central focus. Jesus’ metaphor in that dialogue has vocabulary that must be deciphered. Its Hebrew Scriptural images represent the children as the descendants of the house of Israel (the Jews); they have the bread first (access to God’s life-giving power), before the dogs (the lowly scavengers, a term often used to refer to the Gentiles).

Within this metaphor, there is an inherent status difference between the children and the dogs. This differentiation appears not only because the woman crosses the boundaries between Jews and Gentiles, but also because she crosses the boundaries between men and women. She acts against the cultural norms for women’s behaviour for the first century by doing the following: approaching Jesus without a male intermediary, speaking to Jesus first, responding after his initial rejection, besting him in an argument, and changing his mind. Being Tyrian, the first-century reader might connect Jesus’ metaphor with the real-life situation in which the Tyrians took advantage of the Galilean peasants who produced their food; Jesus’ metaphor
becomes more poignant, therefore, because it presents the Galilean Jews getting the food before
the Tyrian Gentiles. Subsequently, due to the words and actions of the Gentile woman within the
scene, Jesus accepts the Gentiles’ access to God’s life-sustaining power. This shift makes Mk
7:24-30 crucial within the development of Jew-Gentile relations and the Gentile mission within
the Markan narrative.

Mk 7:24-30 is part of the larger section of Mark 4-8. Various themes and intratextual
analogues help to place this pericope within this section, as well as within the Gospel of Mark as
a whole. The major themes include: healing, faith, Gentile mission and Gentile portrayal,
conflict, clean/unclean, insider/outsider, eating and food, and gender. The minor themes include:
reciprocal visitation, house as private setting, Jesus’ withdrawal, Jesus’ identity, Jesus’ power
and authority, the suppliants as foils for the disciples, and followership. The major themes show
that Mk 7:24-30 fits as a Markan type-scene of healing (with some variations). These variations
are put there by the narrator to get the reader questioning what this scene is about, alerting
him/her to the fact that the conflict within it is what makes the scene significant. Faith is
necessary for the healing, and by her actions and words, the Greek Syrophoenician woman
becomes a female model of faith within Mark. A whole range of opinions exists about Gentile
mission within Mark; the discussion lacks contextual controls at this point. The Gentile woman
in Mk 7:24-30 may initially be seen as an unclean outsider by Jesus, but she is ultimately shown
to be a clean insider.

As well as the themes within Mark, analogues are another way that the narrator gets the
reader to compare this pericope with other stories, thereby highlighting certain aspects of it. The
intratextual analogues that are often compared to Mk 7:24-30 are the healings of Jairus’ daughter
(Mk 5:21-24, 35-43), the hemorrhaging woman (Mk 5:25-34), and the deaf mute (Mk 7:31-37).
These healing stories share some of the basic patterns of suppliants’ actions towards a healer; the
hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman are remarkable since they both step
outside accepted social boundaries to gain healing from Jesus. The intertextual analogues to Mk 7:24-30 are the Hebrew Scriptural story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24), and the Synoptic Gospel story of the healing of the centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10). The widow and the Markan woman both accept that the Jews are fed first, so that their Gentile children and themselves can be assisted by a Jewish prophet afterwards. The centurion and the Markan woman both act as intermediaries for other Gentiles; in both instances, distance healing is the mode of healing in the scene. The parallel to Mk 7:24-30 is Mt 15:21-28. The Matthean version has a different description of the woman (Canaanite), a different way for the woman to refer to Jesus (Lord, son of David), and a different way for Jesus to acknowledge the woman’s faith (explicitly in Matthew as opposed to implicitly in Mark). The saying of Jesus in both stories shares some common wording, but also includes other phrases that make it clear Mark includes the Gentiles from the beginning (while Matthew does not).

The main characters in Mk 7:24-30 are Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. While Jesus’ characterization has been examined in detail, the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s characterization is just beginning to be examined in more depth. Jesus’ response to the woman creates a harsh image of Jesus. This reliable central character has a caustic side, and interpreters often try to downplay it. There are three types of explanations for Jesus’ harsh response: biographical, paradigmatic as a trial of faith, and salvation-historical. None of these three types of explanations seems feasible. The narrator’s portrayal of Jesus’ initial reaction to the woman is more likely based on socio-historical context. Jesus’ reaction shifts, however, due to her words and actions. The Greek Syrophoenician woman is usually thought to be a representative of the Gentiles (without much investigation into the subtleties within the narrator’s description of her). Interpreters often focus on her foreignness, her faith, her intelligence, and her bold actions (as a woman in the first century). Both her faith and her witty philosophizing are necessary to cause Jesus to change his mind and heal the woman’s daughter. The narrator uses various stylistic
devices in the woman's characterization, such as two-step progression, irony, and the use of direct speech.

The methods that have been applied in exegeses of Mk 7:24-30 have illuminated many aspects of the text. Consensus is not always reached about the passage, except to say that it addresses Jew-Gentile relations and that the woman's actions and words are unusual, particularly from within the first century. The four areas in the field of exegesis of Mk 7:24-30 that would benefit from further investigation are: the significant vocabulary in the story; the type-scenes used in the story; the cultural relations between Jesus and the woman (including Jew-Gentile relations and male-female relations); and the characterization of the woman in the story. Since it is not possible to examine these four areas in-depth within this thesis, I shall focus on the fourth: the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, the protagonist in the scene.

B. Hypothesis and Choice of Method

1. Hypothesis

Analyzing the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is integral in an exegesis of Mk 7:24-30, since her character is pivotal in expanding Jesus' activities among the Gentiles. This analysis unlocks nuances within the story that have yet to be fully explored by interpreters of this pericope. The narrator's use of speech representation in the scene, in particular, merits attention, since this woman is the only female character whom the Markan narrator directly quotes in a dialogue with Jesus.

2. Choice of method

Since the characterization of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 is the focus of my exegesis of Mk 7:24-30, narrative criticism will prove useful for my central method. Narrative criticism
benefits from the application of historical and cultural knowledge in reconstructing the Markan story world, so my method shall be informed by social, feminist, and historical discussions. I shall support my ideas from existing works in the field of New Testament studies, and draw from other fields when answers cannot be found in New Testament studies. Rather than trying to pronounce a last word about this passage, I aim to create a coherent and informed interpretation of Mk 7:24-30, based on my encounter with the text.
Chapter 1

1 My review of the literature arranges interpreters’ comments according to the method used. This is done in an effort to contextualize their comments and to acknowledge the influence method has on interpretation.

2 All the English translations in this thesis of Mk 7:24-30 come from my translation (see Appendix A). For the English translations for the other parts of Mark, I basically agree with the translation found in the New Revised Standard Version (NRSV) (Metzger and Murphy, 1991); where I have disagreed with their translation, I have made the appropriate changes and indicate that it is my translation.

3 The ‘mirror’ and ‘window’ metaphors originate with literary critic Krieger (1964), whose notion of contextualism was to see the meaning both ‘in’ and ‘through’ the text (39); for further discussion of the use of these metaphors in narrative criticism, see Petersen (1978, 19, 24-25) and Donahue (1995, 3-4, 8).

4 Aland et al. (1983) provide a reliable Greek text of Mk 7:24-30 (150-51). Taylor (1966) and Metzger (1971) also supply helpful discussions of the Greek text of Mk 7:24-30.

5 Metzger’s (1971) committee expressed some doubt about including Κύριε, but did decide to include it in their Greek text of Mark (95). This is the only occurrence of Κύριε in the vocative address in most Markan manuscripts; some manuscripts include it in 1:40 and 10:51 (Mann 1986, 321; Lane 1974, 259).

6 Other interpreters are undecided about the story’s historicity within Jesus’ lifetime, but do state that the story at least existed within the traditions of the Jesus movement (Hooker 1991, 181; Schüessler Fiorenza in Kraemer 1992, 132).

7 Bultmann (1963) goes further, suggesting that the whole sentence, Ἀφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα (‘Permit the children to be satisfied first’), is possibly a later addition to Mark’s text (my translation, 38). The phrase in question, however, seems pertinent to the flow of the overall narrative and is therefore likely to have been part of Mark’s original text; this shall become clear in my analysis of the text in chapter 3.

8 The saying might be a chreia (an anecdote based on a concise statement or action attributed to a specific person, applied to its usefulness for living); this form originates from Greco-Roman literature (Beavis 1988, 5). Downing (1992) suggests that there is a spectrum of chreia, with “verbal chreia” at one end, “tacit action chreia” at the other end, and “mixed word-and-deed chreia” in between; he sees Mk 7:24-30 as a mixed word-and-deed chreia (132-133). The saying could also be an apophthegm (a saying set in a brief context), also originating from Greek literature (Bultmann 1963, 11, 38). The apophthegm is not tied to a particular place and time so the setting is seen as a later addition by the writer of Mark (Bultmann 1963, 63-64).

9 As far as forms of the story itself, Mack defines this pericope as a pronouncement story: Jesus is in a setting, in conversation with others, where he is “answering questions, addressing issues, parrying criticisms, and offering instruction” (Mack 1988, 172). In 1981, Robert
Tannehill and a working group from the Society of Biblical Literature also assigned Mk 7:24-30 the classification of a pronouncement story (in Mack 1988, 381). Although they adopted Taylor's category of pronouncement story, Taylor (1966) himself thinks that the pericope is more akin to the 'stories about Jesus' (81). Scholars who classify this passage as a 'miracle story' include Wrede (1971, 17) and Achtemeier (in Kee 1977, 32; in Selvidge 1990, 28). Theissen includes the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman among the healing stories (in Downing 1992, 132, 147). Bultmann (1963) places the emphasis on the controversy of the dialogue between Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman, and designates this pericope as a controversy dialogue (41).

Classification may be helpful in forming an hypothesis of the story's 'Sitz im Leben' (their seat—or situation—in life); the form of the story may have been adopted or developed to address the needs of the early Christian community. Their discussion is useful to my analysis because it focuses attention on the dialogue, which is set in a healing context.

When I mention the first century in this paper, I am referring to the first century C.E. When there is a need to distinguish between the period 'before the common era' (B.C.E.) and the 'common era' (C.E.), I shall include these two designations.


Gundry-Volf (1995) quotes from Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Jesus Son of Sirach) about how men should not meet strange women (509). This text was written c. 180 B.C.E. and was included among other Hebrew religious writings until 90 C.E., when the final section of the Hebrew Biblical canon was decided upon ('The Writings'); Ecclesiasticus was not included in this canon (Gottwald 1985, 454, 109). The text would, however, have been in use during Jesus' lifetime (c. 6 B.C.E. - 30 C.E.) and would probably be regarded as one of several books on wisdom.

Tufariua (1990) refers to the rabbinical Jewish prayer in which men thanked God for not making them women but fails to acknowledge the source of this prayer. This Jewish prayer is from Tosefta Berakot 7.18; pBerakot 9.2 (Osiek and Balch 1997, 56).

Of the chreiai in Greek and Roman literature, only three are catalogued that involve women and these pertain to matters such as facing the deaths of sons and husbands (Beavis 1988, 5-6).

In stratextual' refers to a comparison of two or more stories that appear in the same text or piece of literature (in this case, comparing stories that appear in the Gospel of Mark); 'intertextual' refers to a comparison of two or more stories that appear in different texts or pieces of literature (Malbon 1993, 213). The intertextual comparison is presumably intentional though not necessarily explicit on the part of the narrator (Donahue 1995).

Literary critics use various words to describe the process of comparing texts (Williams 1994, 38; Baldick 1990, 9). I have chosen the word 'analogue' to indicate that there is some correspondence or similarity between specific stories and also that the narrator has intentionally directed the reader to another text or story so that the reader may draw inferences from it and apply them in understanding the main text (Baldick 1990, 9). I shall use 'analogy' to refer to a similar idea or aspect between stories, such as vocabulary that links stories. A 'parallel' is when the same story appears in more than one text; the versions usually differ to some degree.
In 1970, Achtemeier suggested that the writer of Mark used two existing sets of miracle stories as a source in writing his gospel (in Mack 1988, 216-219; Kee 1977, 32-33; Selvidge 1990, 28). The miracle chains each consisted of five stories, the first being a sea-crossing miracle and the last being an account of feeding of the multitudes; the first chain encompassed Mk 4:35-6:44 and the second Mk 6:45-8:10 (Mack 1988, 216 fig.12). Selvidge (1990) supports Achtemeier in her analysis of the story of the hemorrhaging woman (Mk 5:24-34). She believes Achtemeier's hypothesis links the stories of the hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman, and that he "admits the possibility of having these two miracle stories read at an Eucharistic setting" (28). Whether there were pre-existing miracle catenae is impossible to prove without further evidence, which is not available at this time. What is available, however, is the text of Mark itself and how the writer uses the miracles and references to bread and feeding to convey a message.

Burkill's (1972) structure has two parallel cycles between 6:31-7:37 and 8:1-26 (48). He fits Mk 7:24-30 into Mark's larger "theologico-literary scheme" by mentioning the five principal motifs that appear in the pericope as well as elsewhere in Mark: defilement, residual superabundance, bread of life, reciprocal visitation, and Jesus as Lord (71).

Grassi (1988) divides the gospel into three acts. Rather than concentrating on the themes within the work, he concentrates on the notable women that appear in each of the acts. The Greek Syrophoenician woman's story falls into Act II (3:7-12:44), along with the raising of the daughter of Jairus, and the woman with the incurable hemorrhage. Grassi discusses how, although the men disciples have outer activities of discipleship, the women disciples have the inner understanding.

Malbon's article (1993) "Echoes and Foreshadowing in Mark 4-8: Reading and Rereading" charts out the comparable components within this section; it contains sea incidents, feeding stories, and a group of healing stories. The echoes she hears within the healings include, in each group, a healing of a girl and a healing of both Gentile and Jew. The healing of a girl in the first group is Jairus' daughter, and then second the Greek Syrophoenician woman's daughter (221). In this way, she briefly links the Greek Syrophoenician woman's story with Jairus' daughter's healing.

Williams (1994) also places Mk 7:24-30 within Mark 4.1-8:21; his interest is in the minor characters and how they relate within the various sections of Mark. Within this section, there are four passages that present minor characters: the deliverance of the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20), the intercalated stories of Jairus and the hemorrhaging woman (5:21-43), the deliverance of the Greek Syrophoenician woman's daughter (7:24-30), and the healing of the deaf man (7:31-37) (44). He draws on the structural analysis of the work of both Malbon and Petersen. Williams builds on Malbon's work, which juxtaposes these four into two pairs: an exorcism with intercalated healing stories in chapter 5, and an exorcism and a healing story in chapter 7 (thereby grouping together similar stories dealing with minor characters) (45). Another connection is made in that the first and last are set in relation to the Decapolis, leaving the middle stories together for comparison (which Williams shows are linked through similar characterization) (1994, 45-46). Mark 4-8 is built around the three boat scenes in which disciples respond to Jesus with a lack of courage, faith, or understanding (4:35-41; 6:45-52; 8:14-21) (104). The disciples' responses form a contrast to the courageous faith of the Syrophoenician woman and her understanding of Jesus' metaphor about the children/dogs/bread.

Interpreters' Hebrew Scriptural references to the Jews as 'the children' include: Ex 4:22; Dt 14:1, 32:6; Is 1.2; Jer 31:9; Hos 1:10, 11:1 (Taylor 1966, 350; Mally 1968, 37; Burkill 1972, 109; Lane 1974, 261 n. 61; Derrett 1977, 147 n. 5). They also list New Testament
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references:  Lk 15:31; Acts 3:25; Rom 9:4 (Taylor 1966, 350; Mally 1968, 37; Lane 1974, 261 n. 61; Derrett 1977, 147 n. 5). Derrett lists other intertextual references as well: 1 QM 17:3; Mishnah, ‘Avot 3:14 (R. ‘Aqiba) Shab. 14:4 (1977, 147 n. 5). Some of these references include the use of Greek words besides τέκνα that also describe children (such as νέος, ‘son’). In the Septuagint, τέκνον represents eleven Hebrew words that describe children; although this Greek word does not distinguish sex, in the Septuagint it frequently is used in translation for the Hebrew ben (‘son’) (G. Braumann, “τέκνον,” in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology).

16 The final term ἄπιος is a diminutive. If diminutives were used by the writer intentionally (although that is questionable), it is echoing the narrator’s diminutive of ‘little daughter’ from the beginning of the story (θυγατρινή, 7:25). It also draws together the picture of the diminutive of dog in the metaphor (κυνάρια) with the diminutive child, who has her need for healing satisfied just as the dog is satisfied from the crumbs from the children. As I shall discuss, it is debatable whether the diminutives in this story have any impact. Mark does not use the regular form of either παις (‘child’) or κύων (‘dog’) in his narrative, so it is difficult to build an argument on this point. It is interesting, however, that the narrator himself includes the diminutive form of θυγατρινή (7:25). It is the first designation for the child, indicating immediately that the child is young and dependent, and is the woman’s daughter.

17 Interpreters’ Hebrew Scriptural references to ‘dogs’ include: Ex 22:31; Dt 23:19; 1 Sm 17:43; 24:14; 2 Sm 9:8; 16:9; 2 Kgs 8:13; Prv 26:11; Sir 13:18 (Burkill 1972, 109; Guelich 1989, 386; Pokorny 1995, 324). The rabbinic references include the following: “Ps xxii 17 (Targum); Midr. on Psalms, Ps. 22, para. 26 (gentiles), Is. Ivi II (Targum)” (Derrett 1977, 147 n. 3); Rabbi Eliezer ‘He who eats with an idolater is like unto one who eats with a dog’ (Wellhausen in Taylor 1966, 350; Lane 1974, 261; Downing 1992, 137). R. Joshua ben Levi compares the righteous to the guests invited to the king’s table, and the wicked heathen to the dogs who obtain the crumbs that fall from it (Lach in Downing 1992, 127). TB Hagigah 13a is “As the sacred food was intended for men, but not for the dogs, the Torah was intended to be given to the Chosen People, but not to the Gentiles”(Lane 1974, 261). Ex Rabba IX.2 on 7:9: “The ungodly are like dogs” (Lane 1974, 261). The rabbinic references deserve further investigation to determine the weight they might carry in this comparison. The Talmud, or codified oral law, developed from ca. 250 B.C.E. to 500 C.E.; they were codified in the Halakah of the Mishnah in 180 C.E. in Hebrew, but even the Aramaic commentary on the Mishnah continued until c. 550 C.E.; the Haggadah found their way into the Mishnah in commentaries on biblical books, written from 150 to 1300 C.E. (Gottwald 1985, 91-92). Therefore, since these comments may have come into existence anywhere between 250 B.C.E. to 1300 C.E., it is necessary to research these references to ascertain the extent of their possible connection to Mk 7:24-30 (which was written c. 65-75 C.E.). The relationship between the rabbinic references to ‘dogs’ and the Markan reference to ‘dogs’ is an area for future research.

18 Dufton (1989) believes that Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman use the word κυνάρια “in different senses, arising from their different cultural backgrounds. Jesus’ use of the word implies ‘dogs outside,’ while the woman means by the same word ‘dogs inside’” (417). Greeks had a special fondness for dogs and were used to having them in the house (including under their tables) (Dufton 1989, 417). Whether this was the case is contested: Derrett (1977)
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states that “whether Jews had pet dogs, toy dogs in our sense is not known; and whether Greeks were more friendly to house-dogs that Jews were is also unknown” (151 n. 4).

19 Of the two examples of dogs at the table, one comes from the Jewish tradition and the other from the Greek. As mentioned above, R. Joshua ben Levi compares the righteous to the guests invited to the king’s table, and the wicked heathen to the dogs who obtain the crumbs that fall from it (Lach in Downing 1992, 137). Philo states quotes a critic of Damis (Apollonius’ original biographer): “The critic allowed that Damis had recorded well enough specimens of his master’s sayings and opinions. But collecting such trifles ‘reminded one of dogs who pick up and eat the fragments which fall from a feast’” (Downing 1992, 139-140).

20 Of the many examples Downing (1992) provides in his text and in his Appendix 2, I think these five quotes hold the most weight:
1. [Crates writes to his woman, Hipparchia:] Stand fast, live the Cynic life with us, for you are not by nature inferior to us [males]. Bitches are not by nature inferior to dogs.
2. Do not turn back, even if they call you dog.
3. Leucus, if you have any scraps of bread, give them to these dogs [the Cynics who have come to the feast].
4. It is the custom to throw the remnants to the dogs, as Euripides said [again, the Cynics present are being discussed].
5. ...our contemporary Cynics, “dogs round the table, round the gates” (140-141, 148). These five comments come from the following sources, respectively: pseudo-Diogenes 44; pseudo-Crates 29; Athenaeus, Deipnosophists 6.270cd.; Athenaeus, Deipnosophists 3.96f-97a; Epictetus, Dissertation 3.22.80 (Downing 1992, 140-141, 148).

21 Three examples make it is clear that the Cynics were not bothered when others called them dogs, but often came back with witty rejoinders:
2. Asked what he did to be called a dog, he said, “It’s by fawning on those who give, yapping at those who don’t, and sinking my teeth into wrong uns [sic]” (DL 6.60).
3. When taxed for behaving like a dog, he would jokingly reply, “Well, dogs follow people along to festivals, without doing them any wrong. They bark and attack rogues and thieves, and when their masters are in a drunken stupor stay awake and guard them” (Dio of Prusa, Discourse 9.3; cf. 9.7) (Downing 1992, 147-149).

22 It is also possible that κυνάρια is simply the expression for ‘dog’ in Koine Greek (Pokorný 324). Taylor (1966) suggests that the use of the diminutive in Greek softens the insult, so that rather than Jesus calling the woman a ‘dog’ (κυνός), he is calling her a ‘little puppy’ (κυνάρια) (350). Many scholars do not agree that the diminutive softens the harshness of the insult (Burkell 1972, 109-110; Mann 1986, 321; Hooker 1991, 183, Derrett 1977, 151). Ringe (1985) sums it up well when she says, “Metaphor or not, Jesus is depicted as comparing the woman and her daughter to dogs! No churchly or scholarly gymnastics are able to get around that problem. To note that the Greek word is a diminutive, meaning ‘puppies,’ or ‘little dogs,’ does not soften the saying, for as Burkell points out, ‘As in English, so in other languages, to call a woman ‘a little bitch’ is no less abusive than to call her ‘a bitch’ without qualification’” (68-

23 Derrett (1977) mentions that the idea of provisions going to the Jews first, and also to the Gentiles, exists in other New Testament passages as well, such as Rom 1:16, 2:9-10, and Act 3:26, 13:46 (1977, 166). The reference in Paul of Tarsus’ letter to the Rom discusses who gets priority in ministry: “To the Jew first and also to the Greek” (Rom 1:16) (Harmon 1951, 755). This Pauline intertextual reference subscribes to putting the Jews first and also includes the needs of the Greeks/Gentiles as well as the Jews; it does imply attending to the Jew’s needs first. Another intertextual reference exists from the Hebrew Bible, namely, the story about Elijah and the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24); this story may have influenced Jesus and the Markan narrator, so it shall be explored in the section on analogues.

24 Although I am in agreement with Rhoads that the woman’s saying influences Jesus, and that Mk 7:24-30 is pivotal within Jewish-Gentile relations in Mark, there was, however, an existing relationship between Jesus and Gentiles; that relationship needs to be further explored to properly establish the place of Mk 7:24-30 within the overall Markan narrative. I shall explore Jew-Gentile relations further in chapter 3.

25 The first Markan story about bread is the Sabbath-day controversy, when Jesus’ disciples are caught plucking heads of grain (from which bread is made) (Mk 2:23-28); Jesus defends them to the Pharisees by recalling that when David was in need he ate the bread of the Presence. The last reference to bread is at the Passover meal, the last supper, when Jesus takes the loaf and says, “Take, eat: this is my body” (Mk 14:22); for Drury, “all the other loaves lead to that” (1987, 416).

26 The disputes with the Jewish leaders, particularly the Pharisees, are found in the following Markan passages: 2:15-17, eating with sinners; 2:18, not fasting; 2:23-27, plucking grain; 7:1-8, eating unwashed; 8:15, the leaven of the Pharisees and Herodians (Malbon 1986, 122).

27 “Mark stresses the woman’s status as a Gentile by pointing out that she is Greek, presumably in language and culture, and Syrophoenician by race (7:26)” (Williams 1994, 118). The various sources that remark on Mark’s emphasis on the Gentile character of the woman, include: commentaries on Mark by Cranfield, Guelich, Hurtada (in Williams 1994, 119 n. 2); Lane (1974, 260); and Williams (1994, 118). Downing agrees that “[l]he woman is quite clearly Greek in culture and religion as well as language . . . [and that] Ἐλληνίς probably indicates social status, too; from a free citizen family” (1992, 138). Sugirtharajah’s (1996) references about Ἐλληνίς come from Nineham (‘Ἐλληνίς refers to the woman’s religious status) and Theissen (‘Ἐλληνίς refers to the woman being Greek-speaking and therefore of the Syrian upper class) (14). Downing, Rhoads, and Gundry-Volf rely on Theissen’s evaluation (Downing 1992, 138; Rhoads 1994, 370; Gundry-Volf 1995, 516).

28 Concerning the controversy about whether Ἐλληνίς was the original term, the term might have been ‘a pagan woman’ or ‘a widow’ rather than ‘Greek.’ Vermes suggests that the original story was in Aramaic, which would have described the woman simply as arammitha (‘pagan woman’); the Greek, ἦ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἐλληνίς, Συροφοινίκισσα τοῦ γένετ, (‘the woman was Greek, a Syrophoenician by race’) represents “an exegetical paraphrase” when the work
moved from Galilean Aramaic to Greek (in Burkill 1972, 72 n. 2). Couchard traces the reading of ‘widow’ to a Sinaite Syriac version of the story; this term would link Mk 7:24-30 with the story of the Zarephath widow and the prophet Elijah in 1 Kgs 17:8-24 (in Derrett 1977, 146). Burkill (1972) thinks the reading of ‘widow’ may come through confusing arammitha (‘pagan woman’) with armalita (‘widow’), as well as through the influence of the story of the widow of Zarephath, which also takes place near Sidon (72). Goppelt (1982) also refers to the Elijah story, but he thinks ‘widow’ is unlikely to have appeared in the Markan original (74); Guelich (1989) agrees with that (386). There does not seem adequate evidence at this time to conclude, as Vermes does, that the original was in Aramaic. It is possible that there was some confusion during the translation to the Syriac and that, as Burkill suggests, ‘a pagan woman’ became ‘a widow.’ The most interesting aspect in the controversy is the connection between the Markan story and the story about Elijah and the widow in 1 Kings. A comparison is made between these two stories in the following section on intertextual analogues.

Several interpreters recognize and comment on the distinction between the Syrian Phoenicians and the Carthaginian or Libyan Phoenicians (Taylor 1966, 349; Burkill 1972; Derrett 1977, 145).

Lane (1974) concurs that Kúrie “probably should be translated ‘sir,’ recognizing a formula of deep respect” (259). Burkill (1972) champions the translation of ‘Lord,’ believing that the woman’s recognition of Jesus as ‘Son of God’ anticipates the Roman centurion’s later confession of 15:39 (89). Lane points out that “[t]his is unlikely since Mark never uses ὁ Κύριος of Jesus in narrative sections” (259). Sugirtharajah (1986) also does not think that it is a reference to ‘Lord,’ but a general comment that the woman makes to the healer; she seeks him out because of his reputation as a healer (15). With this in mind, Kúrie is understood as a term of respect (‘sir’); I translate it as such in Appendix A.

Other major Phoenician centres were Arrad, Gebal, Sidon, and Tripolis (Odelain and Séguineau 1981, 306).

There were good relations between Tyre and Israel during the time of David and Solomon, who were friends with Hiram of Tyre (1 Sm 5:11; 1 Chr 14:1; 1 Kgs 5:15-16; 7:13-47; 9:10-14; cf. Am 1:9) (Odelain and Séguineau 1981, 376).

Hebrew Biblical references represent Tyre (often coupled with Sidon to the north) as “a Gentile people who had achieved a proud power and superior wealth by harshly oppressing their Jewish neighbours (Isa 23; Joel 3:4-8; Zech 9:2-4)” (Heil 1992, 160).

Although Williams (1994) uses the word ‘analogy,’ I shall use the term analogue during the discussion of his findings because of its more specific inference to the intentional correspondence between stories (as I discussed in the preceding definitions of analogue and analogy, see n. 13).

Malbon (1983) also links the hemorrhaging woman and Syrophoenician woman since both benefit from Jesus’ healing power because of their “bold and active faith” (35).

Although the widow of Zarephath is of the upper class, she is presumably without food when Elijah comes to her due to the drought brought on by God’s disapproval of the idolatry in
Israel (1 Kgs 17:1); the area of Syria depended on Israel for food, especially during periods of shortage.

37 The story of the healing of the centurion’s servant was most likely written down in its present form in Matthew and in Luke after the Markan story of the woman, making it unlikely that the Markan narrator would intentionally be drawing an analogy between the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman and the story of the centurion. Since many interpreters refer to this analogue, I include it in the review of the literature. It is the only other distance healing story in the New Testament gospels, so it serves as a contrast to highlight certain aspects of the distance healing of the woman’s daughter. Scholars who compare the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman and the story of the centurion’s servant in Matthew and Luke include Taylor (1966, 348), Burkill (1972, 75), Mann (1986, 319), and Mack (1988, 221).

38 Gundry-Volf (1995) is examining only the Matthean version of the centurion’s servant healing. It is interesting that in the Lukan version of that story the centurion is portrayed as having contributed to the Synagogue, therefore showing his support for the Jewish faith; he also does not approach Jesus directly but sends his Jewish friends to ask Jesus’ assistance. In comparing the Lukan version with the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story, then, perhaps, her religious affiliation and her forwardness might also be further distinctions between her and the centurion. Jesus might be portrayed as more willing to help a Gentile who has previously shown his support for the Jewish faith, than to help a Gentile who has not, and who is bold in approaching a Jew.

39 Many interpreters make comparisons between the story of Jesus and the Gentile woman as it appears in Mark and in Matthew. Those whose comparisons are the most thorough are Burkill (1972, 74-79), Ringe (1985, 66-68), Mann (1986, 319-321), and Dewey (1997, 56-57). Other comparisons between the Markan and Matthean versions of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story are made by Hasler (1933-34, 459), Harmon (1951, 754), Goppelt (1982, 74), and Kraemer (1992, 132). Any discussion about the Markan and Matthean versions of this story is affected by which gospel the scholar believes was written first. Those who believe that Mark was the first gospel written, and that the writer of Matthew reworked the Markan version of the story, include Bultmann (1963, 38), Burkill (1972, vii), and Ringe (1985, 67). Those who argue that Matthew uses an earlier version of the story include Streeter and Farmer (in Burkill 1972, 74); Mann (1986) also thinks Matthew was the first gospel written, but thinks both Matthew and Mark drew from a common source for this story (319). Since a comparison of the two parallel texts is not within the scope of my thesis (which is, namely, an exegesis of Mk 7:24-30), I direct you to the above scholars’ works for a thorough exploration of that comparison.

40 Hasler (1933-34) states that Jesus’ saying is almost word for word in both versions of the story, although the woman’s reply is different (459). Certainly part of Jesus’ saying is almost identical in Matthew as in Mark, but what Hasler fails to mention (but which Burkill picks up on) is that Jesus’ saying in Mark begins with Ἀφες πρῶτον χορτασθήναι τὰ τέκνα (“Permit the children to be satisfied first”) (7:26) (my translation, Burkill 1972, 75). In Matthew, however, Jesus begins with another saying that paints a different picture: Ὡκ ἀπεστάλην εἰ μὴ εἰς τὰ πρόβατα τὰ ἀπολολοῦτα δῶκον Ἰσραήλ (“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel”) (15:24). The Matthean Jesus states that he was sent to the Jews exclusively (Harmon 1951, 754; Mann 1986, 320).
Mimesis, the Greek word for ‘imitation’, has been a central term in literary theory since Aristotle. Any aspect of a literary work that attempts to reproduce reality is considered to be mimetic (Baldick 1990, 137). In Dewey’s article, she focuses on the mimetic development of characters to gauge the extent of their vividness in imitating real people.

Although many scholars examine the thematic content within Mk 7:24-30, the two most thorough are Rhoads (1994) and Burke (1972). Although Rhoads does not use the word ‘theme’ within his analysis (referring instead to ‘plot lines’ and ‘settings’), he does seem to infer the concept of ‘theme.’ Rather than the term ‘theme,’ Burke (1972) uses the term ‘motifs’ (71). I shall provide definitions for the terms ‘theme’, ‘plot’, ‘plot line’, ‘motif,’ and ‘leitmotif’ in my chapter on method (chapter 2 n. 41).

Rhoads and Michie (1982) identify conflict as an area within narrative criticism, alongside plot, character, setting, narrator, point of view, standards of judgment, implied author, ideal reader, and the style and rhetorical techniques used by the author to influence the reader (412). Although Rhoads (1994) uses conflict analysis as a technique through which to evaluate the text, I think it is also possible to categorize conflict as a theme within Mark.

Those who deal with the healing theme in most detail are Munro (1982), Dewey (1993), and Rhoads (1994).

A type-scene is an episode with certain characters and interactions which is repeated throughout the narrative (Alter 1981, 50-51). Alter (1981) borrows the concept of the ‘type-scene’ from Walter Arend’s (1933) work on Homer: Die typischen Szenen bei Homer (50). Rhoads (1994) thinks there are various type-scenes within Mark: healings, exorcisms, nature miracles, conflicts with authorities, call scenes, etc. (351). Of the healing scenes, Rhoads identifies Mk 7:24-30 as one of eleven scenes of “A Suppliant with Faith.”

Several interpreters mention the woman προσέπεσαν (falling/bowing down) at Jesus’ feet. They generally agree that it is a sign of respect to Jesus (Taylor 1966, 349; Mann 1986, 320). It is also seen by some as a sign of her grief and distress (Taylor 1966, 349; Mann 1986, 320). Gundry-Volf (1995) interprets this body language as a sign that the woman is appealing to his mercy and also that she is worshipping Jesus in this way (519, 516-517). I interpret this more as a standard sign of the woman showing respect to Jesus as a healer and not as a divine figure; certainly in making such a gesture she may also be showing her great need.

I have already mentioned the distance healing of the centurion’s servant from the Synoptic Gospels (Mt 8:5-13 and Lk 7:1-10), as well as the healing of the Gentile Aramean commander, Naaman in the Hebrew Scriptures (2 Kgs 5). Concerning healing being done at a distance, Derrett (1977) notes that ‘absence healing’ (as he refers to it) is known in the woman’s cultural environment, but does not specify how it is known (156); it would be interesting to establish its context within the woman’s cultural environment, and in what way it resembles what happens in this story. This task lies outside the scope of this paper, but it is a possible topic for future research in this field.

It is possible, although the narrator does not explicitly mention a telepathic awareness, or extrasensory perception, of what is happening at a distance (Taylor 1966, 351; Mann 1986, 321). The narrator provides an example early in the narrative of Jesus’ ability to perceive what is happening in others’ hearts/minds. When the scribes were questioning in their hearts how Jesus...
can forgive the sins of the paralytic (since they believe that God alone can forgive sins), "[a]t once Jesus perceived in his spirit that they were discussing these questions among themselves" (2:8). It is also possible that in Mk 7:24-30, Jesus may simply believe that what he asks for will happen (like moving mountains) (11:23-24), which fits with the narrator's ideological point of view. Jesus does seem to have the power to read others' hearts/minds, and he also has made it clear that having faith can make things happen. Both provide a possible explanation for Mk 7:24-30; the former that Jesus knows it has already happened, and the latter as to why it has happened.

49 Beavis (1988) describes as models of faith in Mark the hemorrhaging woman (who conquers her fear and is an example of faith, 5:25-34); the Greek Syrophoenician woman (who boldly comes to Jesus so that her daughter may be healed, 7:24-30); the poor widow (who gives her whole livelihood to the temple treasury, 12:41-44); and the woman at Bethany (who prophetically anoints Jesus for burial, meriting fame in the world, 14:3-9) (8). These examples of women are positive examples of faith; only in the case of the hemorrhaging woman is her faith directly referred to, in the other cases the women's faith is implied.

50 Analyses that have already been done on conflict within Mark include Dewey (1973), Tannehill (1979), Malina (1988), Rhoads and Michie (1982), Malbon (1992), and Williams (1994). Those that analyzed conflict in Mk 7:24-30 include Bultmann (1963) and Rhoads (1994).

51 Malbon (1992) divides the Markan conflicts into four categories rather than three: conflict between the kingdom of God and other claims to power and authority; conflict between Jesus and the demons/unclean spirits; conflict between Jesus and the Jewish authorities about the authority and interpretation of law; and conflict between Jesus and the disciples about what it means to be the Messiah and his followers (33).

52 Hooker (1991) does not seem to be aware of the symbolism that suggests Mk 7:24 - 8:9, 22-38 occurs on Gentile territory. Some of this symbolism was discussed in the section on vocabulary, concerning the term 'bread.' I shall mention symbolism again when discussing how to identify Gentile territory (during my analysis of Gentile portrayal in chapter 3).


54 I believe that the disciples' inability to get to Bethsaida is not only linked with the Gerasene demoniac's healing, but is also due to their not understanding Jesus' power. He had just fed the five thousand (the Jews) (6:30-44) and walked on the water (6:47-50); the disciples are afraid, not understanding about Jesus walking on the water, nor his feeding the five thousand just prior to their attempt to go to Bethsaida. They obviously do not understand who Jesus is, or where his power comes from. Instead of landing in Bethsaida, they land in Jewish territory, in Gennesaret (6:51-53).

The Jewish tradition is to avoid what is unclean by cleansing hands (up to the elbow) before eating and also by washing food and utensils (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 82). By washing, they symbolically and literally remove any contact they have had with Gentiles and any other unclean items, such as might have occurred at the marketplace, so that they can worship their God in a pure state.

Gould (1961) believes, however, that Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees about what is clean and unclean “marks a crisis in his life” since the Markan narrator’s comment that Jesus is implying that all food is declared clean shows him against not only traditionalism but also the law (134); “it was no wonder that Jesus’ fate hastened to an end” when he is suggesting a breach of the law itself which specifies what is clean and unclean (125).

The idea of the Markan narrator’s point of view distinguishing between ‘thinking the things of God’ and ‘thinking the things of men’ comes from Norman Petersen (1978) (“Point of View in Mark’s Narrative,” Semeia 12:97-121) (in Malbon 1992, 30).

Schüssler Fiorenza (1983) refers to it as the messianic abundance of the Christian table community: “The gracious goodness of the God of Jesus is abundant enough to satisfy not only the Jews but also the Gentiles” (138). Another discussion of food and eating in Mark is found in Neufeld’s (1996) exploration of Mk 3:21; he outlines the various references to eating in Mark (including Mk 7:24-30) and places them within a socio-historical context. I shall discuss his findings in chapter 3.


Although Dewey (1997) states that in the case of this woman’s story its content is more remarkable than its mimesis (56), I would suggest that both are unusual and important, and that the mimetic development can give us clues to understand more fully the content of the story.

For more detailed discussions of these minor themes, refer to the following: reciprocal visitation (Burkill 1972, 87-88); Jesus’ withdrawal (Malbon 1986 112; Burkill 1972, 67-68; Mann 1986, 320); house as private setting (Munro 1982, 227; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 67; Wrede 1971, 142; Burkill 1972, 73; Lane 1974, 260; Malbon 1983, 400); Jesus’ identity (Burkill 1972, 66, 89-91; Sugirtharajah 1986, 15; Kee 1977; Malbon 1992, 39; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 105); Jesus’ power and authority (Derrett 1977, 158-159); the suppliants as foils for the disciples (Malbon 1986, 120-121; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 122-124, 130, 132; Williams 1994, 32, 118, 125; Rhoads 1994, 346-347); and followership (Malbon 1983, 37; Malbon 1986).

As mentioned, Malbon (1983) considers the Greek Syrophoenician woman as exemplifying followership because of the bold and active faith seen in her actions (35). Certainly, as Malbon says, faith, power, and service are necessary for followership; I would say that understanding is necessary as well.
Although Rhoads and Michie (1982) see Jesus as a human being given authority by God, there are various views about who Jesus is: divine Lord, healer, and/or prophet. To support their view, Rhoads and Michie turn to the superscription at the beginning of the Markan narrative, which identifies Jesus as ‘the anointed one, the son of God’ (1:1) (105). This is the narrator’s stylistic use of two-step progression, which is one of the Markan stylistic devices (48). This two-step progression is mirrored in the overall framework of the story: the first half of the narrative depicts Jesus as the anointed one (up to when Peter acknowledges Jesus as such, 8:29), and the second half depicts Jesus as the son of God (up to when the centurion identifies Jesus as such, 15:39) (48).

Besides the Greek Syrophoenician woman, there are other Markan characters with whom Jesus is harsh, impatient, and angry: Jesus rejects his mother and siblings when they come to restrain him, thinking that he is crazy (3:21, 31-35); he criticizes the Pharisees and scribes, calling them hypocrites (7:6); he calls his own disciple “Satan” when Peter rebukes him for describing that the Son of Man will be rejected by the Jewish leaders and be killed and then be resurrected (8:31-33); he calls his disciples and the crowd around them “you faithless generation” when the disciples are unable to heal an epileptic child (9:19); he expresses his impatience and rebukes this child’s father when the father wonders whether Jesus is able to help the boy (9:22-23); he even curses a fig tree that did not give him fruit, even though it was not the season for figs (11:13,14,21).

Of the biographical explanations, one is that Jesus’ wish to be hid prepares the way for what follows, when he shows an unreadiness to help her (Gould 1961, 135). His churlishness certainly comes across in this scene (Hooker 1991, 182). It might be due to a tension in Jesus’ mind concerning the scope of his ministry (Taylor 1966, 350). Another biographical way to understand his harsh saying is that he intends his reply to be understood ironically, since “he feels the irony of the situation that makes the Jew plume himself on his superiority to the Gentile” and that the woman “feels the sympathy veiled in [Jesus’ words]” (Gould 1961, 133). Certainly irony is used in Mark (Camery-Hoggatt 1992), but this seems to me a simple answer to a complex portrayal of Jesus. The Markan narrator portrays Jesus as offending people who he feels are not responding to him as they should. It seems more significant to ask why he is offended by the woman and her behaviour and words, and also why the narrator has Jesus change his attitude during the course of the story.

It is Harmon’s suggestion (1951) that Jesus, by speaking to her the way he did, was offering the woman some obstacle to overcome so that she could exhibit her faith (753). It can also be interpreted that “Jesus, disappointed by his own flock, was rude to her to test her faith” (Derrett 1977, 144). I would agree that there is a comparison between the faith of the woman and that of his disciples, but I would not agree that Jesus’ rudeness was a test. It seems to me more an expression of the relations between Jews and Gentiles in that time period.

Those that comment on her foreignness include Williams (1994, 118), Ringe (1985, 70), and Downing (1992, 133, 138). Williams lists various sources that emphasize the Gentile character of the woman (1994, 119 n. 2).

Those scholars mentioning the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s faith include: Gould (1961, 133), Burkill (1972, 63), Rhoads and Michie (1982, 131), Grassi (1988, 11), Beavis (1988, 8), Kee (1977, 92), Heil (1992, 163), Rhoads (1994, 360), Williams (1994, 120 n. 2), and Gundry-Volf (1995, 520). Grassi thinks that Mark emphasizes the faith and humility of the woman “who trusted despite Jesus’ apparent refusal”; her deep faith is a model for the gospel’s...
audience (1988, 11). Several others are not so convinced that the woman’s response points to her faith: Downing (1992, 138-139), Mann (1986, 321), Sugirtharajah (1986, 14). Those that explore her remarkable ableness from the angle of her gender include: Munro (1982), Schüssler Fiorenza (1982, 1984), Ringe (1985, 70-71), Beavis (1988), Dewey (1993, 189; 1997), and Rhoads (1994). For further exploration of her wit/intelligence/understanding, refer to the following: understanding (Williams 1994, 120 n. 2), wit (Gould 1961, 133; Ringe 1985, 65; Dewey 1993, 189; Mann 1986, 321; Downing 1992, 145; Rhoads 1994, 360-361); intelligence (Burkill 1972, 63; Dewey 1993, 189; Rhoads 1994, 360-361). Those that refer to the woman’s insightfulness include the following: Ringe (1985, 65), Williams (1994, 120), and Rhoads (1994, 360-361). Sugitharajah refers to her as ingenious (1986, 14), while Rhoads also describes her as clever (1994, 360-361). Scholars who comment on the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s boldness include Malbon (1983, 37), Ringe (1985, 65), Mann (1986, 321), Downing (1992, 145), and Williams (1994, 120). Related traits include her gutsiness (Ringe 1985, 65), her risk-taking (Kopas 1985, 916), and her strength (Downing 1992, 145). It is clear that she is bold in both action and word (Malbon 1983, 37). For those describing the woman as humble, see Tufariua (1990, 49-50), Rhoads (1994, 361), and Williams (1994, 120 n. 2). Those describing the woman as persistent include: Derrett (1977, 153), Mann (1986, 321), Rhoads (1994, 361), Williams (1994, 120 n. 2). Persistence is an overt sign of faith (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 131). She also shows endurance in the face of an insult (Downing 1992, 145).

The classification system that categorizes characters as ‘round,’ ‘flat,’ and ‘stock’ characters is based on Forster’s (1974) system that first appeared in 1927 in English literary studies (xvii). This system shall be discussed in further detail in my chapter on method (chapter 2).

As well as the more strict classification of characters, others have considered her a model for different things: a model for action (Heil 1992, 162); a model for faith (Beavis 1988, 8); as a model for Mark’s secret heroine, who models an ideal disciple (Grassi 1988, 10-11); she is also seen as an example of ‘the dregs of the dregs’ (the marginalized whom Jesus helps) (Kraemer 1992, 133). Malbon (1994) describes her as one of many minor characters who act as ‘exemplars’ in the Markan gospel; the Greek Syrophoenician woman is an exemplar of a ‘Bold and Faithful Woman’ (69 n. 3).

Irony can be defined as “a subtly humorous perception of inconsistency, in which an apparently straightforward statement or event is undermined by its context so as to give it a very different significance” (Balick 1990, 114).

The dramatic irony is connected to the story being set in a series of affirmations of Gentile mission, yet Jesus initially refuses to help the Gentile woman. This provides dramatic irony in the narrative, since the reader anticipates a certain outcome (given Jesus’ negative response to the woman), and yet that initial response is not what effects the final outcome. Jesus ends up moving into a Gentile mission as a result of encountering her.

Camery-Hoggatt (1992) describes Jesus’ saying to the woman as ironic, “to be read as a bit of tongue-in-cheek” (150). This is a special kind of irony: “[p]eirastic irony--from
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*πειράζειν*—is a form of verbal challenge intended to test the other’s response. It may in fact declare the opposite of the speaker’s actual intentions*” (150).

73 In the literature on Mk 7:24-30, various terms are used to describe the narrator’s representation of characters speaking in the text (direct discourse/speech, indirect discourse/speech). ‘Discourse theory’ is the term often used to describe this field of study. ‘Discourse’ is a term already in use in narrative criticism to describe the manner in which the narrator describes the events in the story world; this distinguishes ‘discourse’ from the ‘story,’ since the ‘story’ is understood as the events themselves in the story world. Since ‘discourse’ is already in use, I shall refer to how a narrator represents speech by the characters as ‘speech representation.’ I shall continue to use the terms direct speech and indirect speech in this chapter, but shall suggest more appropriate terms in the chapter on method (chapter 2).

74 “Among strangers the conventional etiquette holds [of a woman waiting to be spoken to by a strange man] as expressed in 1 Corinthians 14:34-35; 1 Timothy 2:11-12; Plutarch *Contingalia praecepta* 31 (142D)” (Downing 1992, 133-134).

75 In the area of vocabulary analysis, some key-words have been quite thoroughly examined within the literature on Mk 7:24-30. These words include the following: τέκνα/παιδία (‘children’), ἔρπος (‘the bread’), χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’), and Κύριε (‘Lord/Sir’). With other vocabulary, there have been mixed results. The three words, κυνάρια (‘dogs’), πρώτον (‘first’), and Ελληνίς (‘Greek’), have only been examined to a certain extent. The terms Συροφοινίκισσα (‘Syrophoenician’) and τὰ ὅρια Τύρου (‘the region of Tyre’) have been examined somewhat. The term λόγος (‘word’) has barely been examined at all within the context of the exegesis of Mk 7:24-30.

There are two type-scenes in use in Mk 7:24-30: a healing type-scene and a controversy dialogue type-scene. Rhoads (1994) provides a useful analysis of the Markan type-scene of healing for suppliants in general (348-352). In the commentaries on Mk 7:24-30 that I reviewed, there are no references to any overall analyses of the Gentile healings unto themselves, nor any comparing the different examples of distance healings. Doing such an analysis may prove useful, and combined with the analyses of the healings involving women, insights can be gained about this particular healing of a Gentile female. Bultmann (1963) begins the process of analyzing Mk 7:24-30 as a controversy dialogue (39-54). Rhoads (1994) continues that process by analyzing it as a riddle (355-357). An examination of the controversy dialogues within Markan is needed. Bultmann provides the basic components for a controversy dialogue (39-54). How this form fits into the Markan examples of controversy dialogues might provide the basis for creating a controversy dialogue type-scene for Mark.

The historicity of the story is another area that could benefit from further investigation; it has been discussed to quite a degree by both source and redaction critics, with a great variety of responses. It is quite possible that Mk 7:24-30 developed out of an oral tradition, but still the story’s authenticity is under question. Although it is not within the scope of this thesis to further investigate the story’s historicity within Jesus’ life, the story is clearly congruent with the social and literary context of the larger Markan narrative, and further narrative analysis may more completely support Mk 7:24-30 as being congruent with what we know of Jesus’ teachings and life. I shall leave that investigation to others. For discussions of the historicity of Mk 7:24-30, please refer to the following: those against the idea of its historicity include Bultmann (1963, 38-39) and Burkill (1972, 111, 960); those who entertain the idea of its historicity include Ringe...
(1985, 69) and Kraemer (1992, 132); and those who support its historicity include Dewey (1993, 189) and Downing (1992, 143).
CHAPTER 2

METHOD

The work done in narrative criticism over the past twenty years shows the merit of applying it to the Gospel of Mark.\(^1\) Narrative criticism provides a process for analyzing the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. The autonomy of the Markan story world does not, however, reject the application of historical and cultural knowledge to help to reconstruct it, since such socio-historical research has indeed clarified and strengthened a modern reader’s understanding of a first-century story world. Therefore, my method shall be informed by insights from social, historical, and feminist studies. I also use theories of speech representation from non-biblical literary criticism and linguistics. Since there is a need for more theoretical understanding when using narrative criticism (Moore 1989, 177-178), I have researched the sources from non-biblical literary criticism often used by New Testament narrative critics.

There are two parts to this chapter. Part I supplies an overview of narrative criticism. After briefly discussing its basic areas, I shall discuss its approach to character and characterization. The relevant theorists shall be introduced, both from non-biblical and biblical fields. Part II describes my method for investigating Mk 7:24-30. I shall focus on the area of characterization and provide a detailed description of the specific steps that I shall employ in my examination of the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. In keeping with the need for ‘methodological self-consciousness,’ further discussion of narrative criticism can be
found in Appendix B (including its development as a biblical discipline, its assumptions, its strengths and weaknesses, as well as how it incorporates insights about a first-century story world that arise from historical, social, and feminist discussions); further discussion of characterization and speech representation theory can be found in Appendix C.

I. Overview of Narrative Criticism

A. Basic Areas of Narrative Criticism

Narrative criticism is the literary study of narrative. It investigates the formal features of narrative, including “aspects of the story-world of the narrative and the rhetorical techniques employed in the story” (Rhoads 1982, 411-412). Rhoads describes the basic areas of narrative criticism as plot, conflict, character, setting, narrator, point of view, standards of judgment, the implied author, the ideal reader, the style, and the rhetorical techniques used by the author to influence the reader (412). I would add to this list both theme and motif, which are mentioned by other narrative critics, and are even implied by Rhoads himself (Burkill 1972, 71; Rhoads 1994, 343). Rhoads explains how these features of narrative criticism show themselves in the Markan narrative:

Analyses of the formal features of the Gospel of Mark have shown this narrative to be of remarkably whole cloth: the narrator maintains a unifying point of view; the standards of judgment are uniform; the plot is coherent; the characters are introduced and developed with consistency; stylistic patterns persist through the story; and there is a satisfying overall rhetorical effect. Recurring designs, overlapping patterns, and interwoven motifs produce a rich texture of narrative . . . . Joanna Dewey’s description of the Gospel of Mark as an ‘interwoven tapestry’ is quite apt [1991]. (343)
B. Overview of Character and Characterization

1. Character and Characterization

Characters are a central element in the story world, and are integrally related to the plot (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 101). A character is "an agent who takes plot-significant action" (Rhoads 1982, 419). A character is an autonomous being in the story world, one who is then described by the narrator in a certain way within the narrative itself (Chatman 1978, 119). This description involves the use of characterization. Characterization refers to the way a narrator brings characters to life in a narrative: what specific information the narrator chooses to tell the reader about that character, and the kind of rhetorical techniques that are used to convey that information.

Readers in past times--ancient, medieval, and early modern--"tended to understand texts in terms of character, among other things, and that when character was read, it was read in terms of motivation" (Hochman 1985, 28-29). The challenge is how to bring anachronistic notions of character to bear on texts from the first century (54). To paint a more complete picture of both ancient and modern approaches to character analysis, I shall briefly describe some of the major players in this field.

2. Overview of Approaches to Character and Characterization

a) Ancient approaches to character

The ancients approached texts through analyzing their characters. Referring to both Homer and the Bible, Hochman (1985) says, "The canonical texts of the Western literary tradition have seemed to readers to deal with people and to project powerful images of discrete human beings. Indeed, the characters who figure in the classical texts have elicited responses
that are closely analogous to the responses people have had to other real people contemporary or historical” (22).

Literary critics link New Testament characterization to both Greco-Roman literature and Hebrew literature. In both there is an ‘opaqueness of character,’ in which the information provided does not clearly communicate the nature of that character, leaving the reader to interpret for him/herself these oblique references (Scholes and Kellog 1966, 166). The narrator intentionally does not always provide explicit information about the character. The methods of characterization in Greco-Roman \textit{biography}, in Hebrew Scripture, and in New Testament gospels are indirect; they use speech and actions instead of direct description to convey information about the characters (Burridge 1992, 175-176, 205). The ancient narrators use rhetoric, in which “words are artfully deployed so as to move the reader or audience by focusing on [him/her] and [his/her] responses” (Scholes and Kellog 1966, 185).

Although there are similarities between Greco-Roman and Hebraic characterization, there are also dissimilarities. Auerbach’s (1957) view is that the Greek classics are more externalized and specific in their depiction of the characters, while the Hebrew Bible and New Testament tend more towards including only those specifics needed for the purpose of the narrative; the other character inferences in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament are obscure, suggesting multilayeredness and thereby creating mystery and suspense (9-10). Alter (1981) supports Auerbach’s view in his analysis of Hebrew Biblical characters: “the underlying biblical conception of character as often unpredictable, in some ways impenetrable, constantly emerging from and slipping back into a penumbra of ambiguity, in fact has greater affinity with dominant modern notions than do the habits of conceiving character typical of the Greek epics” (129). It is clear from this brief overview of the ancients’ approach and depiction of characterization that the
New Testament holds something in common with both Greek and Hebrew characterization, but that it may have more in common with the characterization in the Hebrew Bible.\(^6\)

There has been some controversy in modern times about analyzing texts through their characters.\(^7\) There is support, however, for approaching the New Testament gospels through character analysis. Weeden (1971) describes how in the Greek and Roman educational approach to a classical text (between the first century B.C.E. and second century C.E.), the pupil was taught not to look for historical accuracy but instead to examine the characters in the story to judge how best to live a moral life (14-18).\(^8\) The narrator would reshape and rewrite the lives of the actual historical personages so as to make a moral point (16). In school, the pupil was taught to examine the characters in detail (their words, their actions, and all the details that the narrator provided) (Weeden 1971, 13). Weeden argues that the reader and narrator of Mark would probably have had a Hellenistic education and would likely have been approaching the Gospel of Mark with a similar understanding:

Thus we are on fairly safe ground in assuming that the first reader would have instinctively turned to the Markan characters, their portrayal, and the events which engulfed them as the starting point for understanding the composition. From careful reflection upon the attitudes, speeches, and behaviour of these characters [he/she] would have extrapolated insights which would have guided [him/her] in understanding the intention and message of the writer . . . [To start where a first century reader might have,] the twentieth century reader must start with the Markan characters. They hold the key to the mystery surrounding the creation of the Gospel. (18)\(^9\)

b) Modern approaches to character

Various approaches to character and characterization exist in the modern era. As I mentioned, New Testament critics need more theoretical understanding when using narrative criticism (Moore 1989, 177-178). I have, therefore, referred back to the original sources, which are often cited by New Testament narrative critics, to build a firmer foundation for a theory of characterization. I shall mention several non-biblical approaches to character and
characterization, as well as several biblical theories of characterization (for the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament, focusing particularly on Markan studies); these particular character theorists are discussed because they provide many of the resources for the method that I have assembled.


i) E.M. Forster. Forster’s (1974) categories for characters as ‘flat’ or ‘round’ are often referred to in New Testament studies. These distinctions were first presented at his 1927 Clark lectures and were not offered as exclusive categories (xvii). Forster describes flat characters as “sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed round a single idea or quality; when there is more than one factor in them, we get the beginning of the curve towards the round” (46). Round characters cannot be summed up in one phrase, but pass through scenes and are modified by those scenes, waxing and waning with facets like human beings (48). What New Testament critics do not acknowledge is that these distinctions are not mutually exclusive, since a character can go from being flat, to round, and then flat again (50-52). Even in the introduction to the 1974 edition of Forster’s lecture notes, Stallybrass refers to “the notorious distinction between flat and round characters . . . [as being] shaky” (in Forster 1974, xiv).

ii) Seymour Chatman. As mentioned earlier, Chatman’s (1978) work on narrative structure in film and fiction is often referred to in New Testament narrative criticism. Chatman
argues for the ‘open theory of character,’ in which characters are seen as autonomous beings within the story world and not mere functions of the plot (119, 132). Character is “reconstructed by the audience from evidence that is announced or implicit in an original construction and communicated by the discourse” (119). Not only are the characters’ actions important—characters have traits, as real people do.\(^\text{13}\) For Chatman, then, character is “a paradigm of traits” (126). It is not clear, however, how to arrive at these traits. Even Chatman admits that the assigning of traits is often done through inference (125). This may result in each reader interpreting character’s actions as implying different traits. Since Chatman’s analysis of character is tied to the trait system, his analysis is bound to “the verbal surface of the text” (Hochman 1985, 36). Chatman recognizes that “much work remains to be done on character, whatever the basis for its analysis: in particular the conventions relating to traits (or whatever they shall be called) need the same close historical examination as do those relating to event-sequence. In both instances, the broader semantic implications will have to be worked out, as well as subclassifications of kinds of plots and characters” (263). Chatman provides the basic ideas for a theory about character and characterization, such as characters’ autonomy in the story world, the importance of not only their actions but also their traits in their impact on the narrative, the need for historical context for traits and events in the story, and the need for the classification of characters.

**iii) Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan.** Rimmon-Kenan (1983) incorporates reader-response criticism in an approach to character. For Rimmon-Kenan, character is part of the story, and characterization belongs to the text. Story is the narrated events abstracted out and reconstructed into chronological order, and character participates in these events. Text is the discourse that relates events (not necessarily in order). All discourse is filtered through a particular perspective. The reader reconstructs the character from the various indicators dispersed throughout the text,
and the reconstruction may be influenced by the sequence of indicators in the text (Rimmon-

iv) Baruch Hochman. Hochman (1985), like Chatman, believes characters have more in
common with people in life than contemporary critical discussion suggests (7). There is a
congruity between the ways the reader apprehends characters in literature and people in life,
including the clues the reader takes to construct character’s image (36). The reader does,
however, need to distinguish sharply between characters in literature and people in life.
Hochman does this through his labels ‘homo fictus’ and ‘homo sapiens’ (58). 14 In the process of
examining characters in literature, the interpreter goes through a process of abstracting the
information about the character out of the text, and constructing the character in his/her
consciousness. It is important for the interpreter to resolve that character back into the text in
question, so as to complete the process of examining the character’s impact within the narrative.
Hochman offers excellent observations on the assumptions underlying characterization theory,
many of which I shall discuss in more detail in my method. As well, he recognizes the process
that the interpreter goes through in abstracting the character out of the text, and then resolving it
back into the text again.

(2) Hebrew Biblical approaches to character. Both Alter (1981, 1992) and Sternberg
(1985) investigate the components of Hebrew Biblical narratives. Since many of their
observations about characterization apply to the Gospel of Mark, I use elements of their
approaches within my own method.

i) Robert Alter. Alter (1981) focuses on the use of conventions in the Hebrew Bible, and
the “manifold variations upon a pattern that any system of literary convention elicits” (47-48).
This applies to many parts of the narrative, including characterization. Characterization in the
Hebrew Bible is about “the art of reticence,” where biblical characters remain elusive and
contradictory (1981, 114; 1992, 149). There is a subtle definition of characters, relations, and motives mainly through dialogue (1981, 176): “The primacy of dialogue is so pronounced . . . [that narrative takes a] highly subsidiary role . . . in comparison to direct speech by the characters” (65). Especially in dialogue, there is verbatim repetition with minute but significant changes introduced. How and when information about the character is introduced also plays an important role; sometimes the narrator withholds information initially so that it can be used at an influential point later in the story (80-81). The information that the narrator provides about the character is not always explicit; how that information is communicated may affect its certainty in conveying motives, attitudes, and the moral nature of that character (166).

ii) Meir Sternberg. For Sternberg, the all-embracing principle for biblical narrative art is that it “turns on authoritative relations between the told and the withheld, from the interpreter’s viewpoint, the given and the hypothetical: between the truth and the whole truth” (1985, 321). As far as character is concerned, the ‘truth’ is the explicit statements made about the character initially by the narrator; the ‘whole truth’ is the secrets and consequences of the character which are inferred from his/her ensuing action, which reveal a deeper sense of the character to the reader (321). Character portrayal is “a distributed, often oblique and tortuous unfolding of features. So reading a character becomes a process of discovery, attended by all the biblical hallmarks: progressive reconstruction, tentative closure of discontinuities, frequent and sometimes painful reshaping in the face of the unexpected, and intractable pockets of darkness to the very end” (323-324). It is clear that for Sternberg, the Hebrew Bible is a theological document; this must be taken into account in understanding how the narrator approaches character and characterization. The most significant feature of Sternberg’s approach for my method is that there is a progressive development of the character: the initial epithet may give
way, through the actions of the character, to a fuller understanding of not only the character but also the plot, and therefore the theological message being given to the reader.\textsuperscript{15}

c) Modern New Testament approaches to character


New Testament exploration of character and characterization is influenced by some of the non-biblical and biblical theorists just mentioned. Rhoads and Michie (1982), Malbon (1989, 1994), Williams (1994), and Rhoads (1994) all apply Forster's and Chatman's approaches; Williams (1994) also refers to the character theories proposed by Rimmon-Kenan (1983) and Sternberg (1985). Using Forster's categories, Rhoads (1994) considers that Jesus and the disciples are 'round' characters, the authorities are 'flat,' and the minor characters are usually 'stock' characters (359). In discussing Forster's categories, Malbon (1989) distinguishes between the classic use of type characters and the New Testament use of exceptional characters who work to prevent the type from becoming a stereotype (279-280). Malbon (1994) suggests that the flat/round distinction "forces us to consider each character in relation to all other characters. Flat and round are relative--and thus relational--terms" (82 n.6). Tannehill's (1979) excellent early narrative critical analysis of Mark shows how there are narrative compositional techniques at work and that the narrator is leading readers into a revelation about themselves.\textsuperscript{16} Williams (1994) draws not only on Chatman's basic premises (1978), but also on the works of Tannehill (1979), Rhoads and Michie (1982), and Rimmon-Kenan (1983). Williams focuses on the minor characters in Mark, incorporating into narrative criticism a more reader-oriented
Williams suggests that the Markan narrator uses eleven literary devices for characterization (60-67); I shall elaborate these below in my method. In Williams' analytical process of observing the minor characters in Mark, he begins by placing the particular episode within the larger narrative section, paying close attention to the sequential flow of the narrative. Next, he uses other minor character episodes as analogues to the story in question. Following that, he analyzes the characterization of the particular minor character in that story, yielding traits and discussing any symbols that are involved. Finally, he discusses the function of that episode within the narrative (again paying attention to the sequence of the presentation of events).

Rhoads and Michie (1982) and Rhoads (1982) provide a basic framework to begin to understand the process of characterization within Mark (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 101-136; Rhoads 1982, 417-419). In breaking down the process of Markan characterization, it is important to distinguish between the 'what' and the 'how' of characterization. Characterization involves both 'what' the narrator tells us about the character and 'how' he tells us. The 'what' refers to the information provided about the character within the narrative, and the 'how' refers to the rhetorical techniques used by the narrator to convey this information. The 'how' of characterization includes the narrator's various stylistic techniques, including the use of speech representation, two-step progression, irony, transitional episodes, and the order of presentation of character information. The 'what' of characterization involves the narrator both telling us and showing us different things about the character. The narrator either 'tells' the reader directly what the characters are like, or 'shows' the reader indirectly. The narrator can 'show' us the characters through their words and actions, by what others say about them, and by how others react to them. The Markan narrator "primarily shows the characters to the reader rather than telling about them . . . by evoking pictures suggesting images," so that as the story unfolds, the characters are gradually revealed (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 101).
Since Rhoads (1982) believes that the development of plot is more important than the
development of character within Mark, he suggests that the interpreter needs to evaluate the
function of the characters’ actions in relation to the plot of the story (417). I believe that the
characters or the plot can be in the foreground or background in an analysis (Hochman 1985,
172). In either case, the interpreter needs to look at characterization with links to development of
plot and the themes expressed within it; this is done by resolving the character back into the text.

Although Dewey (1997) refers to some of the sources mentioned above, she also
develops her own approach to characterization. In agreement with other narrative critics, she
believes there is a vividness of character in the gospels that comes through the narrator
‘showing’ the reader the character versus ‘telling’ the reader about him/her. For Dewey,
however, the ‘showing’ comes through the mimetic development of the character. Dewey’s
contribution is particularly useful to my method since she highlights character development; not
only does she distinguish between the three Synoptic Gospels, but she also examines character
development according to gender. In Dewey’s summary of her analysis, she states, “[a]ll three
Gospels are androcentric in their narrative portrayal, describing male characters with more detail
than female characters, portraying males speaking to Jesus and being addressed by Jesus more
often than female characters. The other stories present an interesting picture: the woman acts,
and then others, usually men, discuss her behavior” (53). In looking at the healing narratives
specifically, Mark’s are the longest and most mimetically developed, and the men are indeed
presented with greater mimetic development than the women (55). The Greek Syrophoenician
woman is an exception, having both mimetic development and a speech which changes Jesus’
mind. If this woman’s word has such an impact, it is useful to analyze not only overall mimetic
development in Mk 7:24-30, but also the speech representation within the text. Dewey draws
attention to the significance of direct speech within the literary devices used by the narrator, a device heretofore rarely explored in New Testament character analysis.

Analyses of Markan characters usually focus on major characters, or on groups of characters as they appear throughout the narrative. There have been several exceptions. Rhoads analyzes one particular passage, namely Mk 7:24-30 (1994). This analysis was the first narrative study of an individual episode (Rhoads 1994, 343). Since Rhoads’ purpose is to “interpret the episode of the Syrophoenician woman as an integral part of the whole narrative,” his analysis of her character and Jesus’ character is only part of that overall purpose (359-363). Although his analysis of that pericope is commendable, it does not exhaust the unexplained aspects of the text. Another exception to the usual focus on major Markan characters is Williams’ (1994) analysis of the minor characters within the Markan gospel. Both Williams’ and Rhoads’ analyses provide crucial resources from which to build a method for examining the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

II. Method

After reviewing the various approaches that have been applied to analyses of character and characterization, I have assembled a method for interpreting the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. While I rely mostly on biblical scholars, when little is available on a given topic in these resources I draw on outside resources (such as non-biblical literary critics and linguists). In this section, I shall introduce my method by stating my assumptions about character and characterization and defining some relevant terms, and then I shall discuss the process for examining her character.
A. Introduction

1. My Assumptions About Character

Most of my assumptions about character stem from the observations of Hochman (1985). Since the Gospel of Mark was written almost two thousand years ago, I must attempt to understand the words and the concepts of character used within the context of their original epoch (Hochman 1985, 55). Ancient literature was read/heard in terms of character, with regards to characters' motivation (29). Yet, as modern readers, we construct images of the characters in terms of our own knowledge and experience (56). Hochman suggests that any method that discusses character should include: being conscious of the hypothetical and constructed nature of literature; the difficulty in retrieving any 'original' meaning or context for a text (both ancient or modern); and not conferring on the character any more reality (verisimilitude) than the text allows for them (30). There is a link, however, in our response to people and to characters. We go through a similar process, accessing both people and characters in terms of human behaviour. (This process shall be discussed when I describe how the reader abstracts a character from a text.)

There are some basic things that can be said about character (Hochman 1985, 31-32, 166). It is an aspect of the surface structure of the text. The means of generating images of characters from this surface structure do not constitute character, they signify it. The character is subsequently retrieved by our consciousness. Our experience of character, therefore, is the end product in a process implicit in reading. We are then abstracting the character from the text; the text gives us words that signify the character from its surface structure, and we, in the process of reading, create that abstract character through our own consciousness.
Besides the role of the reader in creating a character, there is, of course, the role of the narrator. The text, or discourse, is filtered through the perspective of the narrator. The narrator, consciously or unconsciously, uses certain devices to influence the reader’s perception of that character. Some of these devices and their intended effects shall be described when I specify those used by the Markan narrator in Mk 7:24-30.

Having stated my assumptions about character and characterization, permit me to pose some crucial questions that need to be addressed in my method (Williams 1994, 55; Hochman 1985, 166). What is character? How are characters inferred from a narrative text? How are characters abstracted from the text? How are characters resolved back into the text? What methods of characterization are used by the Markan narrator?

2. Definition of Terms

To answer the question, what is character, I must define several terms that are closely linked in my method: character, trait, and characterization. Character is a network of traits and attributive propositions, constructed by the reader during the reading process from various indicators dispersed throughout the text (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 36; Burnett 1993, 16). The traits may appear in the text, or else, they are inferred from various character indicators distributed along the text-continuum; these indicators are the method of characterization used by the narrator (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 59). A trait is “a narrative adjective [or abstract noun] out of the vernacular labeling a personal quality of a character as it persists over part or whole of the story” (Chatman 1978, 125; Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 59). The character, therefore, exists within the abstracted story; the story exists inside the consciousness of the reader. Characterization refers to the way a narrator communicates information about that character to the reader; the narrator chooses specific indicators and rhetorical devices to convey character information to the reader.
This characterization of persons in narrative works "may include direct methods like the attribution of qualities in description or commentary, and indirect (or 'dramatic') methods inviting readers to infer qualities from characters' actions, speech, or appearance" (Baldick 1990, 34).

3. How Are Characters Inferred From a Narrative?

As readers, we infer a character from the text by examining the various indicators the narrator disperses throughout the text. As mentioned above, the narrator uses both direct and indirect methods to communicate character to the reader. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) describes these two basic types of textual character indicators: 1. direct presentation, in which a trait is named by adjective, an abstract noun, or some other kind of noun or part of; 2. indirect presentation, which displays or exemplifies the trait so the reader must infer the quality (59).

Indirect presentation can be done through action, speech, external appearance, or environment. Rimmon-Kenan reminds us that "[t]he transition from textual element to abstracted trait or attributive proposition . . . is often mediated by various degrees of generalization" (37).

Besides direct and indirect methods of communicating character to a reader, the narrator also uses analogy to reinforce what has already been communicated about the character. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) explains that analogy is usually used to reinforce what the narrator has already indicated about the character; it does not provide new information and it is not a separate type of character indicator (67). Narrative analogies "show similarity in plot, character, setting, theme or terminology" (Williams 1994, 40). Analogies shall be discussed in further detail in the section on resolving the character back into the text.
4. How Are Characters Abstracted From a Narrative?

Hochman (1985) refers to the abstracting of a character from the text as a necessary part of the reading process:

The act of abstraction is a legitimate, though controlled, aspect of our relation to literature. . . . [L]iterary texts demand that we abstract the characters from them in the course of analyzing them in order to grasp the implicit or explicit logic of their actions, their worlds, their thematic concerns. Even the very language of literature remains incomprehensible if we carry too far the view that characters of literature are not hes, shes, thems, but rather its. Reference of pronouns, in a work that generates characters, remains incomprehensible unless we posit--and abstract--the figment to which it refers, however ambiguously. (166)

To abstract the character, the reader analyzes the character's actions and words and the information that the narrator supplies about them, including the themes and images connected with them; the reader does so in order to discover the logic behind this information, which is usually a message the narrator is trying to communicate to the reader through his choice and presentation of that information. How is this abstraction performed? As I mentioned in my assumptions, Hochman (1985) provides a sequence of steps (40-41). First, we notice how the character is inferred in the text. Second, we abstract the character from the text, noticing that we analyze the data after we have received it, and that the data falls into familiar patterns. Third, we reduce characters to what is their essential meaning or animating principle. This meaning is usually connected to thematic content; how these themes develop gives us a clearer idea of the message the narrator is trying to communicate to the reader. When we begin to discuss thematic content, we also begin the process of resolving the character back into the text.

4. How Are Characters Resolved Back Into the Text?

Resolving the character back into the text is "possible, legitimate, and often desirable" (Hochman 1985, 176). In the resolution process, the character becomes background and the plot becomes foreground: "we subordinate the characters themselves to such elements as imagery or
thematic structures” or through other aspects of the text (172). The resolution can be thematic, imaginistic, psychological, sociological, formal, or linguistic (168). I shall discuss how Hochman’s resolution process applies to the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman later in this chapter.

Having discussed in general terms what a character is, how a character is inferred and abstracted from the text, and how he/she is resolved back into the text, I shall now provide the detailed process for examining the Markan narrator’s characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

B. The Abstraction of the Character

The abstraction of the character from the text involves several steps, as has already been mentioned: inferring information about that character from what is included in the text; analyzing that data into traits and behaviour patterns; evaluating how the narrator’s stylistic devices affect this process; and translating the character information and traits to character categories (so as to link the character with thematic content). Once these categories have been established, it is easier to resolve the character back into the text.

a) Infer the character from the text

In the text, the narrator provides information about the character to the reader. To discover what character indicators are provided by the Markan narrator about the Greek Syrophoenician woman, I shall focus on two different approaches: the eleven Markan characterization devices and the criteria for mimetic development. Two additional approaches
support these approaches: the interlocking features of characterization and the certainty of character information scale. These four methods of evaluation shall provide me with the raw material from which the character can be inferred.

(1) Eleven Markan characterization devices. Williams (1994) discovers that the Markan narrator uses eleven literary devices for characterization (60). In brief, here are Williams’ devices, beginning with the most explicit means of characterization and going to the most implicit means of characterization:

1. The narrator directly states traits (through adjectives).
2. The narrator indirectly expresses an evaluation (without an adjective).
3. Another character directly states traits of a character.
4. Another character indirectly evaluates a character (with a grammatical structure other than an adjective).
5. Another character evaluates a character through a drastic action.
6. The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s inward thoughts.
7. The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s actions.
8. The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s speech.
9. The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s appearance.
10. The narrator highlights traits through the use of analogy.
11. The narrator may influence the reconstruction of traits through the order of presentation of information in the narrative. (60-67)

Williams’ analysis is one of the most comprehensive and explicit of all the methods of characterization analysis in New Testament studies. I shall evaluate which of these literary characterization devices apply to the woman in Mk 7:24-30. The Markan narrator rarely provides traits directly, preferring to ‘show’ aspects of the character from which the traits must
be inferred. The process, therefore, shall involve first extracting the character indicators from the text, and then placing them within their literary and socio-historical context. Within that context, the interpreter can make inferences about the traits the narrator is trying to establish for the character.

(2) Mimetic development criteria. Dewey's (1997) article on the portrayal of men and women in the Synoptic Gospels is the one New Testament study that highlights the importance of the mimetic development of characters. The extent of a character's mimetic development is established according to four criteria:

1. The quantity of information about the character that the narrator provides
2. The amount of concrete details provided that are not necessary for the plot
3. The use of direct discourse
4. The inclusion of the internal views of the character (54)

Using these criteria, Dewey concludes that the greater the mimetic effect (that is, the more vividly the character resembles real people), the greater the reader's identification with the narrative and the more influential the character in the narrative seems to be (53-54). This is an exciting article, since it provides support for my view that character development (including direct speech) has an impact not only within the development of a particular story, but also within the development of the larger Markan narrative.

The other approaches that can support these first two cover much of the same territory as Williams' characterization devices. Sternberg's (1985) interlocking features of characterization highlight certain kinds of information that the narrator provides about the character. Alter's (1981) scale of the certainty of information shows how there is a difference in the certainty of information provided by the narrator and information provided by the character him/herself or by other characters. In my analysis of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, as I progress through
Williams’ framework for characterization devices, I shall include observations from these two approaches.

(3) **Five interlocking character features.** For Sternberg (1985), a character portrait consists of five interlocking sets of features:

1. Physical
2. Social (i.e., relation to others in the story)
3. Singular or concretizing (i.e., a name or trade)
4. Moral and ideological
5. Psychological in a wide sense (326-7)

The first two features (the externals) are subordinate to the final two features (the internals), especially given the theological concerns of the Bible. The Bible specifies the externals by way of introduction to the character. Both the externals’ and the internals’ significance can be reversed at will within the theological developments of the narrative. The internals are “opaque and penetrable, if at all, by trial and error” (32).

Sternberg (1985) believes that Hebrew Biblical characterization is often done initially by epithet. These initial epithets, both external and internal, can turn out to be misleading in relation to subsequent disclosures during the narrative (327). This can result in a clash between the impression produced by the character’s first appearance and the one left after his last: “[o]n the whole, the givenness of character stands in inverse proportion to the ultimate characterological relevance or centrality of the given character traits” (327).

(4) **Scale for the certainty of character information.** Alter (1981) approaches the scale of characterization tools by including not only explicitness, but also including the certainty of the information for conveying motives, attitudes, and the moral nature of the character:

1. There is *certainty* in the narrator’s statements about the attitudes and intentions of the
character.

2. There are *conscious intentions* expressed through the character’s inward speech.

3. There must be *a weighing of claims* when there is direct speech by the character and when there is another character’s comments on the character.

4. There is only *inference* when information is provided about the character’s appearance, gesture, posture, and costume, and when there is a report of the character’s actions. (my emphases, Alter 1981, 116)

In weighing the information that the narrator provides, therefore, I must decide how reliable that information is.

In my analysis of Mk 7:24-30, I shall apply Williams’ process for analyzing Markan characterization, and Dewey’s criteria for mimetic development; while doing so, I shall include observations derived from Sternberg’s five interlocking character features, and Alter’s scale about the certainty of character information. Further work can be done on both Williams’ and Dewey’s approaches. For example, how exactly are traits arrived at? What is the function of direct versus indirect speech in the narrative? What is the function of an analogue, and what kind of analogues does Mark include? What stylistic devices is the Markan narrator using in Mk 7:24-30? For example, how does the narrator use order of presentation to influence the reader’s understanding of a character? The answers to these questions help to flesh out my method for analyzing character.

b) How traits are arrived at

Now that I have looked at how to infer character information from the text, how do I turn these character indicators into traits? Work remains to be done in particular on the conventions relating to traits (Chatman 1978, 263). As I have already mentioned while discussing Chatman
and Sternberg, the process of arriving at traits is often through inference and, in the case of biblical narrative, the initial epithets may be misleading (Chatman 1978, 125; Sternberg 1985, 327). Not only may different readers interpret character’s actions as implying different traits, but their choice of these traits may change as the story unfolds. The verbal surface is the place to begin to look for information about the character from which to build traits. Rimmon-Kenan begins by looking closely at the various indicators dispersed throughout the text; based on the reader’s conception of people, the reader infers a set of traits for the character from these indicators (in Williams 1994, 59-60). Combining the four methods of evaluation that were discussed earlier (from Williams, Dewey, Sternberg, and Alter), I shall discover the character indicators for the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Placing these indicators within their literary and socio-historical contexts gives a modern reader a clearer understanding of what traits can be assigned. The traits I propose shall then be compared with the findings of other interpreters.

c) Evaluating the narrator’s stylistic devices

The Markan narrator uses four stylistic devices in Mk 7:24-30 that have not been adequately explored. These are two-step progression, the order of presentation of character information, speech representation, and transitional episodes. Each has an influence on the reader.

(1) Two-step progression. Rhoads (1994) discusses the use of two-step progression in Mark and how “a single instance of the two-step progression can be significant, but the accumulative impact of many occurrences leads the hearer to linger attentively for a repetition” (353). In two-step progression, the narrator uses two stages for the development of a theme, motif, or character. For a character, similar yet not identical words describe that character (in adjective or action). In two-step progression, the second part does not merely repeat what has
already been said, but it clarifies the first part (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 47). As I mentioned in my review of the literature, two-step progression is commented upon in reference to Mk 7:24-30 (Rhoads 1994, 353). The woman being described as both Greek and Syrophoenician needs further investigation. It is clear that the narrator wants to highlight that she was non-Jewish, but why are both descriptive words included? What are the differences between them? How do these words connect this story to the rest of the Markan narrative? This investigation links the characterization of the woman with the narrative analogies from Hebrew Biblical sources, where I shall look to find information on these terms.

(2) Order of presentation of character information. A narrative is intended to influence a reader, not just to tell a story. This is particularly the case with the Synoptic Gospels and, in this case, with the Gospel of Mark. Mark uses literary techniques that highlight “the temporal nature of reading and the sequential flow of the narrative”; the ordering of elements in narrative is one of the chief literary techniques that a narrator may use to influence the reader’s perception of the story (Williams 1994, 78, 80). The Markan narrator may influence the reconstruction of traits through the order of presentation of information in the narrative (Williams 1994, 66-67). I shall explore how this stylistic device affects the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30 in two ways. The first way is to discuss the type of expository information that the narrator provides (and when he provides it).

i) Expository information. First impressions are important, and they are controlled by the narrator (Williams 1994, 66-67). Expository information has a critical impact on the reader. Such information can include the name of the character, geographical location, signs of identity and kinship relations—in some instances even moral, social, or physical characterization of the protagonist (Alter 1981, 80). The narrator also plays with how to introduce a character to the reader. The way the narrator introduces the character indicates whether or not the character is
considered reliable (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 40). Sometimes the narrator surprises the reader, making them think about their presuppositions by having their perception of the character shift from the initial introduction to how the character appears later in the story (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 40). Although the character may initially be described by the narrator in a certain way, more information may be yet to come: “[s]maller pieces of exposition are withheld to be revealed at some appropriate moment in the midst of the tale” (Alter 1981, 80-81). I shall examine how the narrator introduces the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

ii) The reader is drawn to self-evaluation when normal expectations must give over to the will of the divine. The second way that the order of presentation of information affects Mk 7:24-30 is in how the reader is drawn to self-evaluation due to the characterization reversals within the narrative. This reversal occurs when the reader’s normal expectations must give over to divine standards. While analyzing the role of the disciples in Mark, Tannehill (1977) discusses a common story technique for getting the reader to evaluate him/herself (393). As mentioned earlier, the narrator develops characters for the reader to admire and identify with, so as to create a model for the reader to emulate. In Mark, the character of Jesus is such a model. In the case of some other characters, however, the narrator develops the story so there is a reversal, and the characters show themselves not to be admirable; this is the case at times with the disciples. The reader must re-evaluate his/her relation to those characters according to how Jesus responds to these characters: “[t]his tension between identification and repulsion can lead the sensitive reader beyond a naively positive view of himself [or herself] to self-criticism and repentance” (393).

In the Gospel of Mark, “we enter a world full of conflict and suspense, a world of surprising reversals and strange ironies, a world of riddles and hidden meanings” (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 1). In the Gospel of Mark, as in the Hebrew Bible, there is a “reversal of normal
probabilities built into God’s operations on history, the weakness (‘handicapped’) promises to become a source of strength and the omen marking the hero bodes ill for the antagonist” (Sternberg 1985, 333). Sternberg’s “reversal of normal probabilities” applies to Mk 7:24-30. How the narrator describes the character can be a set-up for this type of reversal: “[a] biblical epithet serves at least two functions, one bearing directly on the character it qualifies and the other bearing indirectly on the plot where [he/she] figures as agent or patient . . . . It shapes the sequence of our expectations (as a foreshadowing device) because it is bound to shape the sequence of events . . . . [The] seeming discontinuity between the initial epithet and its consequences brings out in miniature how normal expectations must give place to the divinely informed” (Sternberg 1985, 337-339). Sternberg recognizes that there is a shift from the initial information given about the character to the final impression. He considers that it is action that bridges the initial truth and the whole truth: “From given character to action provoked to deeper character implied” (342). The narrator initially gives the reader some description of the character, which sets up the reader’s expectation that the story will evolve in a certain way; but then the character’s action provokes the reader to consider some deeper sense of the character, usually with the result that their expectations must give over to an increased sense of divine meaning or understanding.

Williams (1994) applies Tannehill’s and Sternberg’s insights about rhetorical tools of characterization to how Markan minor characters influence the reader (71, 77-78). The reader often becomes sympathetic to the minor characters after they have initially been portrayed negatively; this reversal is often due to Jesus’ compassion for them and his desire to help them (104). For example, Williams believes that the reader starts out identifying with the disciples, but identification gradually shifts during the story, with the identification with the disciples wavering and the sympathy for the minor characters increasing. Although the Greek
Syrophoenician woman is not an example considered in any detail by Tannehill or Williams, applying their process for examining the reader's response to the woman is appropriate.

(3) **Speech representation.** One way that a narrator communicates character information to the reader is through the speech of that character. Since the dialogue between Jesus and the woman in Mk 7:24-30 forms the central focus of the scene, I wish to explore the function of speech within characterization and narrative. In my method, I draw on sources beyond New Testament critics, since not much is available on a practical level in this area besides Dewey's analysis (1997). I look to English literary critics, sociologists, and linguists for discussions of speech within narrative. I shall discuss categories and linguistic features of speech, the function of speech representation within narrative, and then the relationship between direct speech and gender within the Gospel of Mark.²⁹

i) **Categories and linguistic features of speech representation.** Tannen (1986), a conversational analyst, argues that the term "reported speech is a misnomer ... what is commonly referred to as reported speech or direct quotation in conversation is constructed dialogue" (311). Instead, Tannen suggests the use of the terms 'first-person dialogue' instead of direct speech, and 'third-person dialogue' instead of indirect speech (311).³⁰ Banfield (1973) defines these two categories (17-18). Third-person dialogue can be identified when a verb of communication takes a sentence complement as a direct object, wherein the speech act and its content are only reported, not reproduced. First-person dialogue consists of two successive independent sentences in discourse, which are distinguished by the pronominalization and the demonstrative object of the communication verb; in first-person dialogue, the quoted speaker's own expression appears after the verb of communication. Genette (1980) has a third category for character's speech: 'narratized, or narrated, speech' (in which speech is implied within the narrative rather than any specific words being provided) (171).³¹ In keeping with Tannen's
terms, I shall refer to this third form as 'narratized dialogue.' These three terms draw attention to the narrator's active role in constructing the dialogue and clarify his choices for communicating that dialogue has occurred.

There are linguistic features of speech representation that help us to identify and to find the function behind the various types. Linguistic features of speech representation include the following: a reported verb of communication (say, think, ask), with some conjunction for third-person dialogue (like 'that' in English); tense-scheme of the verb(s); personal and possessive pronouns; deictics (i.e., demonstrative expressions); questions; vocatives, interjections, lexical registers or dialectical features (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 111-113). These terms, definitions, and linguistic features shall be applied in my analysis of types of speech representation in Mk 7:24-30.

ii) Functions of speech representation. Besides being interested in the grammatical characteristics of speech, it is important to recognize the role of speech in communication, including both the role of the narrator and the character speaking. What is the speech intended to do within the narrative, and what does it in fact do (Chatman 1978, 161)?

First-person dialogue communicates a seemingly more authentic piece of information than third-person dialogue in the sense that first-person dialogue “implies a greater fidelity to the source of information” (Li 1986, 30). First-person dialogue is also characterized by its “theatrical” nature (Li 1986, 41). Due to its dramatic presentation, unlike third-person dialogue, first-person dialogue “is the most common mode of expression at the peak of oral narrative in many languages” (40). Tannen (1986) concurs that speech representation “makes story into drama, and that through such drama talk builds on and creates interpersonal involvement [for the reader/hearer]” (330). Many researchers have observed that “narrative is more vivid when speech is presented as first-person dialogue . . . rather than third-person report” (311). There is
an immediacy about reading dialogue, as if it were occurring at the time of reading/telling; dialogue is more integrated (packing more information into fewer words) and therefore involves the reader/hearer in the process of making sense of the story (323-324). Features that contribute to involvement by the reader/hearer are:

1) repetition
2) direct quotation in reported speech
   a) dialogue exchanged
   b) thoughts of speaker
   c) thoughts of [the other character]
3) historical present verbs
4) ellipsis
   a) deletion of verb of saying
   b) deletion of copula
   c) deletion of comment or proposition
5) sound words
6) second person singular
7) minimal external evaluation. (Tannen 1986, 324)35

I shall see how the linguists’ features of speech representation apply to Mk 7:24-30, looking not only at the grammatical indicators, but also how speech representation is used by the narrator. Does the dialogue seem to give more authentic information? Does the speech representation appear at the peak of the narrative? Does its theatrical nature create a more interpersonal involvement for the reader in making sense of the story? If so, what features of the speech representation contribute to this involvement?

Besides the functions of speech representation that have been identified by linguists, narrative critics have also described some of its functions. Tannehill (1977) discusses how “[t]he use of dialogue in a dramatic scene . . . [expands] the amount of space in a writing given to a segment of time in the story, compared to the alternative possibility of presenting an event or series of events in a brief summary. Thus dialogue in a dramatic scene emphasizes, while summary narration of events gives them a subordinate position” (391). Alter (1981) believes that there is in biblical literature a bias of stylization in narrating through dialogue, “because
words underlie reality" within the biblical world view—with words God called the world into being (1981, 69). Since Jesus uses his divinely-drawn power in words to effect miracles and healings, this seems applicable to Mark as well. Speech representation, therefore, is used to slow down the tempo of a narrative, with dialogue emphasizing the content; the spoken word can hold creative power.

Alter (1981) makes general observations about the use of dialogue in scriptural narratives (1981, 74-75). At the beginning of any story, the point where dialogue is introduced is important, especially when it involves the exposition of character. If dialogue is used often, ask why dialogue is used rather than narrative. Since dialogue may affirm or expose that character's relationship to God through the force of language, what is said or left unsaid is equally important. It is also significant how characters reveal themselves through what they repeat, report, or distort of the speeches of others. Third-person dialogue is used to avoid excessive repetition, to show a devaluation of what is said, to move a scene along rapidly, and when there is some consideration of concealment or of propriety (78). I shall apply these observations to the use of dialogue in Mk 7:24-30.

iii) First-person dialogue and gender in Mark. As I mentioned above, Dewey's (1997) work on gender characterization in the Synoptic Gospels mentions how first-person dialogue affects character development in the mind of the reader (53-54). Dewey has done the most work on the area of speech representation and gender in the Synoptic Gospels. At this point, I focus on those comments that pertain to the Gospel of Mark. In her analysis of first-person dialogue in the Markan healing narratives, men speak twice as often as women, and Jesus speaks more to men than to women (55). In these narratives, the Markan female minor characters are shown talking half as much as the male minor characters. In Mark, “of the three women [involved in
healings], one speaks once, one speaks once to herself, and one does not speak at all” (55).

Dewey asks whether the reason women talk less is literary or historical:

Is the pattern of the women speaking less than the men to be attributed to the literary activity of the evangelists or to the actual behaviour of women in the culture which did not encourage their speaking? . . . In the healing narrative, we are sometimes told the women actually speak, but we are not shown them speaking in direct discourse [e.g., Mk 5:33, 7:26; Lk 8:47, 13:13]. . . . The synoptic evangelists could portray women speaking as often as men but they did not. (58)

When a woman does speak, therefore, it is significant. As mentioned in chapter 1, however, “rendering a character in direct speech makes him or her more vivid for the reader, but not necessarily more admirable. . . . Mimetic emphasis is needed to render a woman visible at all. How she is visible depends on the content of the narrative, and may or may not serve patriarchal interests” (57).

The Greek Syrophoenician woman not only speaks, but unlike any Markan stories, what she says changes Jesus’ mind: “Thus, in this story, the mimetic emphasis is not so much on Jesus’ healing act as in most healing narrative, as on the woman’s speech” (Dewey 1997, 56). If this is the case, it is crucial to look at her speech within the context of speech representation in general. Not only is she the only woman in a healing narrative where the Markan narrator uses first-person dialogue in her interchange with Jesus, but she is the only woman in Mark whose words are directly given by the narrator in a dialogue with Jesus. Although Dewey recognizes the importance of first-person dialogue, she does not discuss in any depth how the various other forms of dialogue are used, and how these forms can affect the reader. She also does not discuss in any detail the speech representation of the other female characters in Mark outside of the healing narratives.

(4) Transitional episodes. Another Markan literary device is the use of transitional episodes. A transitional passage both connects to the preceding material as well as contrasts to
it, thereby encouraging the reader to anticipate the following narratives (Williams 1994, 129). The passage is transitional in both geography and content; it aids the development of characterization among Markan characters, and it changes the reader’s relationship with these characters (167). Within this passage, there is often a transitional figure who serves in this process of change. Although Williams does not include the Greek Syrophoenician woman within his list of transitional figures in Mark, given his criteria, I shall show in my analysis that she is a transitional figure within the theme of Gentile mission.38

Two-step progression, order of presentation of character information, speech representation, and transitional episodes are only four of the many narrative devices at work in Mk 7:24-30. These four shall be analyzed since they are closely linked to the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

d) Categorization of characters

Besides methods of characterization, interpreters also look at how to categorize characters. There are a number of different New Testament approaches to classifying characters. Characters can be examined according to the extent of their involvement and significance within the plot. They are then referred to as major or minor characters. Jesus is, of course, the most dominant character in the Markan narrative, making him a major character. Other major characters include the authorities and the disciples; although they are groups, each group has distinctive qualities and can be treated as a single character. Among the minor characters there is also a group (‘the crowd’), and there are other individual minor characters.

Besides looking at them as major and minor characters, characters can be classified according to the degree of their development as unique personalities. As mentioned in the earlier section on non-biblical theories on characterization, the literary critic Forster (1974) categorized
characters as being either 'round,' 'flat,' or 'stock' characters (46-54). New Testament scholars refer back to Forster’s categories. A ‘round’ character has many complex and/or conflicting traits, so that the character is unpredictable; this character type is considered dynamic (i.e., subject to development) (Rhoads 1994, 359; Baldick 1990, 34). A ‘flat’ character has several consistent traits and is generally predictable and unchanging. A ‘stock’ character basically has one consistent trait, making the character very predictable. As I mentioned in the review of the literature, Rhoads (1994) categorizes the Greek Syrophoenician woman as a ‘stock’ character, with this particular ‘stock’ character being a ‘suppliant with faith’; he does contradict himself, however, when he says that she is “a rather complex stock character!” (361). Certainly it is reasonable to develop a class of minor characters who are ‘suppliants with faith,’ who share ‘faith’ as a trait, and to include this woman in this class. As I said earlier, Forster’s system is not adequate to classify the characters that appear in the Markan narrative, and I believe another way of approaching characters is in order.

Besides categorizing characters according to the extent of their characterization, scholars have simply put them into groups according to shared traits and shared character indicators. The categorization of a character is done in order to find analogies with other characters from that category and to link the character to the appropriate themes and plot lines in the narrative. Within that context, the function of the Greek Syrophoenician woman within the plot of Mark should become clearer, in particular, her impact on Jesus and his subsequent actions. I shall explain how to link her with that larger Markan context; namely, how to resolve her character back into the text.
C. The Resolution of the Character Back into the Narrative

For the purposes of analyzing Mk 7:24-30, the resolution of the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman shall begin by linking her character indicators to other areas of Mark through vocabulary, sociological relations, and themes. The resolution continues when two of the categories assigned to the character elicit their corresponding Markan analogues; the two significant categories for this character are ‘female’ and ‘Gentile.’ These analogues shall link Mk 7:24-30 through the characters and the themes discussed within these analogues. Where deemed significant, I shall also include intertextual analogues to highlight traits or themes connected to the Greek Syrophoenician woman. I shall now briefly discuss the implications of this resolution process by looking at analogues, themes, vocabulary, and sociological relations.40

1. Resolution Through Analogues

In Williams’ (1994) list of Markan characterization devices, the tenth device is described as ‘the narrator highlighting traits through the use of analogy’ (65). Analogy is not a separate character indicator, providing information with which to create basic facts about the character; instead, analogy highlights traits that have already been revealed about the character (through both similarities and differences) (Williams 1994, 65; Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 67). When the analogy involves comparing two stories, it becomes a narrative analogue. Analogues are “two or more texts in a narrative that show similarity in plot, character, setting, theme or vocabulary. Through this similarity, the narrator implies a connection and encourages the reader to compare the texts as a way of better understanding each passage . . . . A comparison of analogous episodes in a narrative may reveal important differences which lead to a clearer understanding of each episode” (Williams 1994, 40). The narrator uses analogues for a number of reasons: to
highlight variations; to have differences signal new development in character and plot; to emphasize matters important to understanding the story; and to create expectations within the reader of what may happen next (52-54). When the narrator shows two different characters in similar situations, the similarities and differences in their responses emphasize the distinctive traits of both characters (65). This is a less explicit way of providing information about characters, since the reader needs to make inferences concerning the actions and words of both characters.

It has been demonstrated that in the Markan scenes involving minor characters the narrator uses repetition and variation (Williams 1994). These scenes emphasize the matters that are important to a proper understanding of the story, most particularly observed through the characterization of these minor characters (52-53). There is a rhetorical function in the flow of the minor character pattern in Mark. Williams looks at how “the order in which Mark introduces different minor characters and their placement within the flow of the plot serves a rhetorical purpose. A careful examination of Mark’s order of presenting minor characters shows that he is encouraging a proper response to Jesus while causing the reader to reflect on improper responses to Jesus” (81). It shall be important, therefore, to look at the order of these Markan analogues involving minor characters, particularly in comparing their characterizations with the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, Derrett (1977) suggests that when there are dissonances or inconsistencies within a Markan story, the interpreter should consider the interaction of the New Testament story with Hebrew Biblical stories; the latter may provide a ‘midrashic explanation’ for any confusing elements within the former. Analyzing the dissonances and inconsistencies within Mk 7:24-30 with ‘midrashic explanations’ in mind might
prove useful; therefore Hebrew Biblical analogues shall be included. I shall also consider other non-biblical analogues to Mk 7:24-30.

2. Resolution Through Themes

In my review of the literature, I began to examine both major and minor themes of Mk 7:24-30. The major Markan themes that do not receive adequate attention in conjunction with this pericope are Gentile portrayal and Gentile mission, and gender. I shall examine these themes to see how the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman influences their development within the larger Markan narrative.41

3. Resolution Through Vocabulary

Key-words play a central role in the development of characterization and of thematic argument: when they are purposefully repeated in a particular story, they emphasize a point the narrator is trying to make (often through subtle variations in meaning); when they appear in various parts of the larger narrative, they “connect seemingly disparate episodes” (Alter 1981, 92). The key-words within Mk 7:24-30 have a connection to the Greek Syrophoenician woman. As I mentioned in the review of the literature, these key-words have been analyzed to varying degrees. There are some questions about this vocabulary that are left unanswered after a review of the literature on Mk 7:24-30. What are the cultural differences between Jewish and Greek attitudes to ‘dogs’? What are the intertextual and intratextual references to ‘first’? What is the literary and socio-historical significance of ‘Greek’ and ‘Syrophoenician,’ and ‘the region of Tyre’ (particularly within a Jewish understanding)? Bringing our increased understanding of the woman’s character to these questions may help us to answer these concerns. The key-words that are connected to the character indicators of the woman shall be explored in depth when those
indicators are investigated in the process of determining her traits; they shall also be discussed during the resolution of her character through narrative analogues.

4. Resolution Through Sociological Relationships

Through analyzing the sociological relationships in the Markan story world between males and females, and Jews and Gentiles, the interpreter may better understand the dynamics of the relationship between Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

b) Male-female relations

To fully understand Mk 7:24-30, the interpreter needs to understand how male-female relations factor into the religio-cultural differences between Jesus and the woman. What might have been the different expectations of the two characters in encountering each other? We get some sense of what Jesus’ expectations might have been (being Jewish and male), but what might have been the woman’s expectations (being Gentile and female)? Are there distinctions between Jewish culture and Greco-Roman culture that may explain either Jesus’ rebuff or the bold behaviour of the woman? I shall investigate intratextual, intertextual, and extratextual references to attempt to answer these questions. In doing so, I shall pay close attention to both prescriptive laws and also to the actual social reality of male-female relations of the first century. Prescriptive laws against women are found in Judaism; what is found in the Greco-Roman culture? How might their male-female relations be affected if she is from a wealthier class and a free citizen? This a rich area for exploration and, although I shall not attempt to fully mine it in depth for the purposes of this thesis, I shall attempt to point in the direction of where future research is needed. Male-female relations influence how I understand her character indicator as ‘a woman,’ as well as how I explore these relations within the analogues.
b) Jew-Gentile relations

The cultural relations between Jesus and the woman play a significant role in Mk 7:24-30. Jew-Gentile relations are important to understand since the Markan gospel suggests that there is a shift in those relations within the Jesus movement, with Mk 7:24-30 being pivotal in the development of Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles (Rhoads 1994, 363). In the analogue section of chapter 3, I shall trace that development by examining the presentation of Gentiles within Mark.

The insights from the examination of the analogues to Mk 7:24-30 shall be applied in highlighting traits of the Greek Syrophoenician woman and in resolving the character back into the larger Markan narrative.

III Summary

I have chosen narrative criticism to analyze the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. My specific method of analyzing her characterization focuses on a two-step process. The first step abstracts the character from the text into the story world consciousness of the reader. This involves noticing how the character is inferred from the textual indicators, and analyzing these indicators in their literary and socio-historical contexts. I shall see how the reader may be influenced by this character, in particular by the speech representation in the scene as well as by other stylistic devices (two-step progression, order of presentation of information, and transitional episodes). This abstraction of the character from the text shall begin to clarify what traits may be attributed to her and how these traits help to categorize her as a character.
The second step of the method involves resolving the character back into the text. The resolution occurs through linking the Greek Syrophoenician character to the larger Markan narrative. The various categories in which she can be included connect her to other Markan characters and themes; the stories that include these characters and themes are the analogues to Mk 7:24-30. The analogues link her to themes, significant vocabulary in the story, and sociological relationships (male-female, Jew-Gentile). A thorough investigation into each of these areas is not within the scope of this paper. I shall only attempt to begin to resolve her character back into Mark through two significant categories: female and Gentile. Once I have begun the resolution process, I shall be able to discuss the function this character has not only in Mk 7:24-30, but also in the larger Markan narrative; these discussions shall be included in my conclusions in chapter four. The method that has been laid out in this chapter shall be applied in the next chapter: my analysis of the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.
Chapter 2

For a brief history of narrative criticism, see Appendix B.

A narrative is "a telling of some true or fictitious event or connected sequence of events, recounted by a narrator to a narratee... A narrative will consist of a set of events (the story) recounted in a process of narration (or discourse), in which the events are selected and arranged in a particular order" (Baldick 1990, 145).

'Point of view' indicates the "position or vantage-point from which the events of a story seem to be observed and presented to us" (Baldick 1990 173). The point of view most often given in the Gospel of Mark is the narrator's since that text is written in third-person narrative. The Markan narrator is omniscient, reliable, and consistent. 'Standards of judgment' are the ideological aspects revealed in the narrator's point of view; they create a system of values and beliefs that are implicit in how the narrator judges and evaluates the characters and events he presents in the narrative. For a discussion of implied author and implied reader, see Appendix B, n. 1.

Modern narrators tend to focus on communicating the psychology of the character, rather than on influencing the reader in a certain way. Scholes and Kellog (1966) here define psychology as "a real attempt to reproduce mental verbal process--words deployed in patterns referable not to verbal artistry but to actual thought, focusing not on the audience but on the character" (185).

When Auerbach (1957) speaks of the 'Greek classics,' he is here referring to the works of Homer (9-10).

I believe that the characterization in the Gospel of Mark has much in common with the characterization within parts of the Hebrew Bible; this shall become clearer when I discuss Sternberg's (1985) and Alter's (1981) analyses on Hebrew Biblical characterization in the upcoming section, and when I investigate the nuanced characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in chapter 3.

For further discussion of the controversy surrounding the use of character analysis, see Appendix C.

Weeden (1971) uses as the basis for this argument Marrou's book A History of Education in Antiquity (12-14). Marrou believes that interest in character was particularly pronounced in ancient education. This view was held in antiquity, as well, by the Roman historian Livy (59 B.C.E. - 17 C.E.); in the preface to his Ab Urbe Condita (The History of Rome), he says:

Here are the questions to which I would have every reader give his close attention --what life and morals were like; through what men and by what policies, in peace and war, empire was established and enlarged; then let him know how ... morals first gave way ... sank lower and lower .... What chiefly makes the study of history wholesome and profitable is this,
that you behold lessons of every kind of experience set forth as on a conspicuous monument; from these you may choose for yourself and for your own state what to imitate, from these mark for avoidance, what is shameful in the conception and shameful in the result. (15)

For a summary of Weeden’s views, see Malbon (1989, 260-261).

9 Although it is impossible to know whether the real author and the real reader of first century would have had a Hellenistic education, it is reasonable to assume that they might have, since Greek influence was felt in both Jewish and Roman cultures throughout the Mediterranean region.

10 For example, Rhoads and Michie, Malbon, and Rhoads all use Forster’s ‘flat’ and ‘round’ categories for characters (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 102-103; Rhoads 1982, 417; Rhoads 1994, 349; Malbon 1989, 277, 280; Malbon 1992, 29).

11 Forster (1974) provides an example of a character going from being flat to round to flat again when he discusses Lady Bertram in Jane Austen’s novel Persuasion: “[Lady Bertram] has in a single sentence been inflated into a round character and collapsed back into a flat one” (51).

12 Hochman (1985) also questions the distinction between round and flat characters: “It seems to me that the sharp dichotomy that we tend to posit between the richness and ‘roundness’ of our subjectivity and the schematism and reductiveness of our perception of others is as fallacious (if also as convenient at times) as the dichotomy between round characters and flat ones, or between tragic characters and comic ones. For it seems to me that we ‘read’ ourselves as we ‘read’ others” (44). Although some character theorists have insisted on the type origins of characters in literature and the individual nature of people in life, Hochman argues that we categorize people in life just as we do people in literature (45).

13 Chatman (1978) bases his ideas about traits on psychologist Gordon W. Allport’s trait theory (125).

14 The idea of distinguishing between ‘homo fictus’ and ‘homo sapiens’ is found earlier in Forster’s 1927 lectures (1974, 38-39).

15 An epithet is “an adjective or other descriptive word expressing a quality or attribute, especially used with or as a name” (Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 8th ed., s.v. “epithet”).

16 Tannehill’s (1979) work, The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology, builds from the ideas in his (1977) article, “The Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role.” In that article, Tannehill observes that what the narrator reveals to the reader about the disciples provokes the reader into self-evaluation (389, 405).

17 For further discussion of findings about Markan minor characters, see Appendix C.

18 ‘Showing’ is a convenient term, but it is not completely accurate, since the narrator is not really ‘showing’ the character to us (as one could in film for example), but is instead representing the character by various degrees of telling (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 108). Rhoads’
Chapter 2

'telling' and Rimmon-Kenan's direct presentation, and Rhoads’ ‘showing’ and Rimmon-Kenan’s indirect presentation, express similar ideas (Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 59; Rhoads 1982, 417).

Analyses of Markan characters include the following: Jesus, the authorities, the disciples, and minor characters as a group (Rhoads and Michie 1982); the disciples (Tannehill, 1977); the disciples and the crowd (Malbon 1986), and Jewish leaders (Malbon 1989); Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman (Rhoads 1994). For a discussion of the crowds, see Malbon (1986); Williams (1994). For works on those involved with healings, see Rhoads and Michie (1982); Dewey (1993); Rhoads (1994). Williams (1994) also provides a useful survey of recent research on minor characters in general (13-14). General analysis of biblical characterization can be found in *Semeia* 63 (specifically the articles by Bach, Burnett, Fowler, and Rashkow). For a survey of approaches to character among literary critics in general in the twentieth century, see Hochman (1985, 13-40).

The direct use of an adjective in describing a character is fine when it comes from a reliable source, such as the narrator, but may be questionable when it comes from an unreliable source within the narrative.

To arrive at these eleven Markan characterization devices, Williams (1994) expands on Rhoads’ and Michie’s (1982) views and includes ideas from Tannehill (1979) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983).

As mentioned in the review of the literature, irony is also used in Mk 7:24-30; this stylistic device has already been adequately explored in chapter 1.

Rhoads (1994) includes a number of examples of two-step progressions in Mark: “when it was evening, when the sun set” (1:32); “everywhere, throughout the whole country” (1:28); “outside, in deserted places” (1:45); “to the other side, to Gennesaret” (6:53); “in Bethany, at the house of Simon the Leper” (14:3) (353). “Such two-step progressions pervade every level of the narrative” (353). See chapter 1 n. 64 for Rhoads and Michie’s discussion of how two-step progression of the narrator’s introduction to Jesus, ‘the anointed one, the son of God’ (1:1), sets up the structure of the whole narrative (1982, 104-105).

Williams (1994) draws from Sternberg’s (1985) character analysis of the Hebrew Scriptures to understand how the order of presentation can affect the reader’s perception of Markan minor characters (Williams 1994, 42, 56).

Alter (1981) mentions how biblical narrative does not use fixed epithets (‘sagacious Moses’) but uses instead relational epithets (‘daughter of Saul’) (126); this seems to hold true also for the Markan narrative, although there are occasions where other descriptive words are used for a character.

Sternberg (1985) mentions that “the action figures as vital bridge or mediating term between direct and indirect characterization: the need to make psychological sense of it, whether as scenario or as accomplished fact, impels the interpreter to look around for features that will close in retrospect the gaps of character left open by the initial exposition” (344).
Rhoads and Michie’s (1982) comment seems to support this view: “The narrator of Mark’s story cleverly reveals the characters in such a way that the readers are constantly expanding or shifting their impressions of those characters as the story develops” (103).

For Williams (1994), the pivotal scene is with blind Bartimaeus (Mark 10:46-52), who he sees as being first negatively and then very positively portrayed (203). After that point, the minor characters are portrayed more positively than the disciples. In the final section, however, the minor characters are not positively portrayed either (such as the group of women who run away and tell no one of what they have seen in the tomb after Jesus’ death) (Mark 16:1-8).

For historical background to speech representation theory, see Appendix C.

I used the terms ‘direct speech’ and ‘indirect speech’ in chapter 1, and up until this point in chapter two. After having introduced Tannen’s (1986) terms of ‘first-person dialogue’ and ‘third-person dialogue’ I shall use these terms from this point on in the paper. I use the term ‘speech representation’ as a general term for all speech within a narrative, including when speech is only implied rather than articulated.

Genette (1980) uses other labels for the two forms of speech already described by Tannen (1986): transposed speech and reported speech (Genette 1980, 71). Transposed speech is another term for third-person dialogue and reported speech is another term for first-person dialogue.

Deictics include expressions such as the following: ‘now,’ ‘today,’ ‘tomorrow,’ ‘here,’ in first-person dialogue; these become ‘then,’ ‘that day,’ ‘the next day,’ ‘there,’ in third-person dialogue. Rimmon-Kenan’s (1983) analysis is from English novels, but these basic linguistic features of speech representation also apply to the Koine Greek that is used in the Gospel of Mark. Banfield (1973) also includes constructions that appear in first-person dialogue only: incomplete sentences, and speech in a different language or dialect from the introductory clause (6). Li (1986) simplifies the differences between first-person dialogue and third-person dialogue to three essentials: pronouns change; tenses change; and the complimentizer ‘that’ may be included in third-person dialogue only (29).

Speech act theorists refer to what sentences intend to do as the illocutionary aspect and what the sentences in fact do as the perlocutionary aspect (Chatman 1978, 161). Although I have chosen to use narrative method, speech act theory is applicable within a discussion of dialogue within narrative. It is not within the purview of this paper to apply speech act theory to Mk 7:24-30, but simply to consider how this basic premise affects the dialogue within this narrative.

The observation that first-person dialogue comes at the peak of folk narratives comes from the project “Study of Discourse from Folk literature in Aboriginal Languages of Columbia, Panama, and Ecuador” (in Li 1986, 40). Although such a conclusion about folk literature from another region must be applied with caution to the New Testament gospels, it is worthwhile considering whether this observation does apply in the case of Mk 7:24-30.

Both Li’s (1986) and Tannen’s (1986) linguistical analyses of folk literature have some implications for analyses of New Testament gospel narratives. Meier (1992), who analyzes the use of first-person dialogue in the Hebrew Bible, refers to both the work of Li and Tannen to...
support his understanding of first-person dialogue (4). The pronounced role that first-person dialogue plays in Hebrew biblical literature is seen in other semantic literature, such as Akkadian and Ugaritic (5). Auerbach (1957) sees a connection between Hebrew Biblical and New Testament use of speech representation (40); see Appendix C for his point of view. Since the Hebrew Biblical storytelling is one of the influences on the New Testament gospels, and since Li’s and Tannen’s analyses have been applied to Hebrew Biblical speech representation, I believe it is acceptable to apply their findings about speech representation to these gospels and see how useful they are.

A copula is a connecting word, especially a part of the verb ‘be,’ which connects a subject and predicate (The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English, 8th ed., s.v. “copula”). These typical features come from an analysis of modern Greek storytelling, but some of these features also apply to the ancient Greek storytelling found in Mk 7:24-30. For that reason, they are included in my method.

Jesus often uses words to effect miracles and healings (i.e., 1:25, 41; 2:5, 11; 3:5; 4:39; 5:8, 41; 7:34; 9:25; 11:14, 21).

“Jesus speaks appreciably more often to men—an average of 2.1 times versus 1.33 times to the women” (Dewey 1997, 55).

For Williams (1994), Bartimaeus is the major transitional figure, but he also lists others: “At the transition between Jesus’ work in Galilee and the beginning if his travel to Jerusalem, Jesus heals the blind man of Bethsaida. At the transition between Jesus’ journey to Jerusalem and his arrival in that city, Bartimaeus receives his sight and follows Jesus. At the beginning of Mark’s passion narrative, a woman anoints Jesus’ head with costly perfume. At the end of Mark’s Gospel, after the desertion of the disciples and after the death and resurrection of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James and Salome come to the empty tomb” (13-14). Although Williams does not identify the Greek Syrophoenician woman as a transitional figure, Rhoads (1994) does. As mentioned in the review of the literature, he believes that the Greek Syrophoenician woman is the pivotal character in Jesus’ transition to a Gentile mission (36).

As mentioned earlier, Forster’s (1974) categorization system for characters has been adopted by several New Testament scholars (e.g., Rhoads and Michie 1982; Rhoads 1982, 1994; and Malbon 1989, 1992, 1994).

I shall not be discussing forms at this time, but shall leave it for future research. As mentioned in chapter 1, the form that merits further investigation is the type-scene. Rhoads (1994) has already discussed the use of the type-scene of healing in Mk 7:24-30 (349-352). The type-scene of the controversy dialogue is an area for future research.

Interpreters of Mk 7:24-30 use a variety of words when describing the ideas and events that recur during the text of the Gospel of Mark: plot, subject, theme, motif. There is no consistent use of these terms within narrative criticism. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms supplies definitions for these terms, and I shall provide illustrations from the Gospel of Mark, when appropriate (Baldick 1990). ‘Plot’ refers to the “pattern of events and situations in a narrative . . . as selected and arranged both to emphasize relationships--usually
cause and effect—between incidents and to elicit a particular kind of interest in the reader... the plot is the selected version of events as presented to the reader or audience in a certain order and duration” (170). A ‘plot line’ follows the events of certain characters or certain types of events. For example, Rhoads (1994) identifies the three main plot lines in Mark: “Jesus in conflict with suppliants and demons; Jesus in conflict with the authorities; and Jesus in conflict with his disciples” (346); Mk 7:24-30 is an episode within the plot line of “Jesus in conflict with suppliants and demons.” The ‘subject’ of the work is described concretely in terms of its action. In the Gospel of Mark, the subject is Jesus proclaiming the good news of the “establishment of God’s rule over the world” (345). While ‘subject’ is described concretely, the works’ ‘themes’ are described in more abstract terms. ‘Theme’ refers to a “salient abstract idea that emerges from a literary work’s treatment of its subject-matter. . . . The theme of a work may be announced explicitly, but more often it emerges indirectly through the recurrence of motifs” (Baldick 1990, 225). ‘Motif’ refers to “a situation, incident, idea, image, or character-type that is found in many different literary works, folktales, or myths; or any element of a work that is elaborated into a more general theme” (142). There is a term related to ‘motif,’ namely, ‘leitmotif’ (meaning a ‘leading motif’): “Where an image, incident, or other element is repeated significantly within a single work, it is more commonly referred to as a leitmotif” (142, 121). There are many themes, motifs, and leitmotifs within Mark, although they have rarely been discussed using these terms. I have categorized those ideas to which interpreters have referred in their reviews of Mk 7:24-30, as ‘themes,’ since they address abstract ideas that come out of the subject-matter; ‘motifs’ and ‘leitmotifs’ also seem to appear within some themes, and I have already commented on some of these during the discussion of the themes in the review of the literature.

42Extratextual refers to non-textual materials; these materials may illuminate information from the original text (without the narrator implying that reference). In this case, such extratextual resources are provided by archaeological finds from around that era (e.g., epitaphs and inscriptions).
CHAPTER 3
AN ANALYSIS OF THE MARKAN CHARACTERIZATION
OF THE GREEK SYROPHOENICIAN WOMAN

Perhaps the most apt description of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30 is that “we know at once very little and a lot about her” (Ringe 1985, 70-71). Some analyses have been done on minor characters, particularly those that appear in groups (such as the crowds, and those characters involved with healings). As seen in the review of the literature in chapter 1, some commendable work has been done on Mk 7:24-30, and on the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman (particularly in Rhoads 1994). The field has not, however, been exhausted. By analyzing the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s characterization, I hope to shed light on some of the subtleties that have yet to be adequately explained. I shall examine in detail what is known about her and what else can be discovered about this remarkable female character. My analysis of the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is conducted in two parts. The first part is the abstraction of the character from the text. The second part is the resolution of that character back into the text.

I. The Abstraction of the Character of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman from Mk 7:24-30

A. The Character Indicators in Mk 7:24-30

By looking at the process of Markan characterization, I shall extract the character indicators concerning the Greek Syrophoenician woman from Mk 7:24-30. I shall search out the character indicators in this section, and discuss the full implications of these indicators in the following section on traits.
1. Markan Characterization Devices

According to Williams’ (1994) analysis, the Markan narrator uses eleven literary devices for characterization (60-67). The list of these devices begins with the most explicit devices for characterization and goes to the most implicit devices. The Markan narrator uses seven of these eleven devices in his characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.² Two of the seven devices used shall be discussed later. The device about the order of presentation of information in the narrative shall be discussed when the indicators are placed in their literary and socio-historical contexts. Since the use of analogy as a device only highlights existing traits, I shall discuss that device once her traits have been established. Five characterization devices remain to be discussed at this point.

a) The narrator indirectly expresses an evaluation (without an adjective)

The Markan narrator indirectly communicates to the reader what the character is like by using a grammatical construction other than an adjective. The narrator’s evaluation advances the plot as well as the characteristics of the person. Often when a character is first introduced, Mark gives a brief introduction, conveying information about the character without directly stating his/her character traits (Williams 1994, 62). In Mk 7:24-30, the narrator describes the character in two ways: as γυνή ... ἡς εἶχεν τὸ θυγάτριον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον (‘a woman ... whose little daughter had an unclean spirit’); and as ἡ γυνή ἦν Ἑλληνίς, Συροφωνικίσσα τῷ γένει (‘the woman was Greek, Syrophoenician by race’).³ Since there was a previous scene with parents who have sick children (Jairus, his wife, and their daughter 5:21-24, 35-43), as well as scenes with people who had unclean spirits (1:21-28; 3:10-12; 5:1-20), the reader has some context for the first description of the woman. This first description includes information about the woman’s only social relation: she is the mother of a daughter.⁴
There is not, however, much that is explicit in the text to show an evaluation of what it means for the woman to be Greek and Syrophoenician. The narrator mentions these indicators only once about the woman, and no other Markan character is described by these terms. The narrator often includes concrete details about the character that are not needed for the plot (what might initially be considered unnecessary detail) (Dewey 1997, 53-54). The narrator includes excess description of the woman by stating that she is “not only Greek, but a Syrophoenician by birth” (Dewey 1997, 56). Why does the narrator include both adjectives, when one of the two adjectives would make it clear enough that she is Gentile? These two adjectives are “indispensable since otherwise verses 25 and 26 say the same thing—they stress the role of the mother in a typical motherly role as protector of the child and mediator of help” (Pokorný 1995, 323). Mk 7:26 provides the two most concrete and unique features of this character: she is Greek and Syrophoenician.

b) Another character indirectly evaluates a character (with a grammatical structure other than an adjective)

In Mk 7:24-30, Jesus is the only character who indirectly evaluates the woman’s character, and he does so twice. The first time is when he compares this Gentile woman and her daughter to dogs (through a metaphor, rather than an adjective). The second time is when he says that due to her words she can go home, the demon has left her daughter. When another character (Jesus) evaluates the character in question (the Greek Syrophoenician woman), it is important to consider the reliability of the speaker, since his reliability may influence how he describes her character. His words must be weighed against who he is and what his relationship is with the character in question. Jesus is seen as a reliable character, so his words about the other characters are usually regarded as trustworthy (Tannehill 1977, 391; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 40; Williams 1994, 92). What he says about the Greek Syrophoenician woman, therefore,
would influence the reader’s understanding of her moral nature. Jesus begins by comparing the woman unfavourably to a dog. Since the woman does not dispute Jesus’ reference to her as a dog, it appears to the reader that his comparison may have some merit. The woman shows, however, that what it means to be a dog is somewhat different to what Jesus thinks. The second thing Jesus says to her (‘For saying that, go home, the demon has left your daughter’) makes it clear that the woman’s words have had an impact on his opinion of her, and he is now willing to help her. This is the only time in Mark when Jesus’ reliability, although not damaged, is compromised. The woman’s response to Jesus indicates to the reader that Jesus does not always have access to the complete picture (i.e., who the dogs are and their place in God’s household). The reader must weigh what Jesus initially says about the woman and recognize the change in Jesus’ opinion of her, and the reader must also shift his/her own opinion of her. The woman’s moral nature in Jesus’ eyes (and in the eyes of the reader) has changed from being thought of as an unclean scavenger, to an accepted member of the household who has access to its life-giving sustenance.

c) Another character evaluates a character through a drastic action

The drastic action is the distance healing that occurs through Jesus (the only example of a distance healing in Mark). Often, deeds versus words communicate one character’s understanding of another. In this particular case, the drastic action is not explicitly shown, but is implied in Jesus’ response (Mk 7:29). This healing occurs due to Jesus’ acceptance of the woman’s portrayal of the children and the dogs in her metaphor. Jesus’ drastic action indicates the extent to which he is positively influenced by the woman’s words and actions.
d) The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s actions

In Mk 7:24-30, the narrator describes the woman’s actions in the following words:

1. ἀκούσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ (‘after having heard about him’) (7:25)
2. ἐλθοῦσα (‘and having come’) (7:25)
3. προσέπεσεν πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ (‘prostrated herself at his feet’) (7:25)
4. ἤρωτα αὐτῶν (‘she asked him’) (7:26)
5. η δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ (‘but she answered, and she said to him’) (7:28)
6. ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν οἶκον (‘after having gone away to her house’) (7:30)
7. εὗρεν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην (‘she found the child having been thrown onto the bed’) (7:30)

The reader must make inferences about the woman’s traits when the narrator ‘shows’ rather than ‘tells’ traits about her through her actions. Although it is possible at this point to discuss some of the traits that can be inferred by her actions, I shall leave that discussion until her character indicators have been placed within their literary and socio-historical contexts in the following section.

e) The narrator shows traits through presenting the character’s speech

The narrator has the woman speaking in two instances. The first time, what she says is given indirectly by the narrator, as third-person dialogue. At that point, the narrator indicates that ἤρωτα αὐτῶν ἵνα τὸ διαμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς (‘she asked him whether he might cast the demon out of her daughter’) (7:26). In response to Jesus’ metaphor about the children and the dogs, the woman answers in first-person dialogue: Κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσθίουσιν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχῶν τῶν παιδίων (‘Sir, even the dogs under the table eat from the children’s scraps’) (7:28). By what the woman says, it is clear
that she understands Jesus’ metaphor, and that she is able to use it to her own advantage. What
she says changes Jesus’ mind, because when he replies to the woman, he has agreed to help her:
\[
\Delta \tau \tau \nu t \omega n \tau o \nu \lambda \delta \sigma i o n \upsilon \pi a \gamma e, \varepsilon \zeta e l \eta \lambda \mu \theta \nu e n \varepsilon k \tau \eta \varepsilon \theta \gamma \alpha \alpha \tau \rho \alpha \zeta \varsigma \omega \nu \tau \delta \alpha \iota \mu \omicron \nu \iota \omicron \nu (‘For saying
that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter’) (Mk 7:29). Since what she says has
changed Jesus’ mind, and since her speech as a female is so unique within Mark, it is worthy of
detailed analysis. I shall discuss it in the section on traits.

These five characterization devices indicate that the most explicit information given by
the narrator is that the woman has a daughter with an unclean spirit and that the woman is Greek
and Syrophoenician. The descriptors Greek and Syrophoenician are her most concrete features.
Having Jesus refer to the woman as a dog seems initially like a reliable evaluation; the
implications of being a dog, however, change. Since Jesus changes his mind and heals the
woman’s daughter, her actions and particularly her words have an impact on him.

2. Mimetic Development

Relatively speaking, for a minor female character, the Greek Syrophoenician woman is
well-developed mimetically. Three of the four criteria that measure the mimetic development of
a character apply to the woman in Mk 7:24-30: the quantity of information provided about the
character, the inclusion of concrete detail about that character, and the use of direct speech by the
character (Dewey 1997, 53-54). Mk 7:24-30 is fairly typical of stories with mimetic
development. For a minor character, there is a fair amount of information provided about the
woman (56). Besides the concrete details of her being Greek and Syrophoenician, there is much
about the character that can be inferred by her actions, her words, and Jesus’ reaction to her. The
criterion that really sets this character apart within Mark is the use of first-person dialogue. As
mentioned in chapter 1, the mimetic emphasis for the woman’s character is on her speech
(Dewey 1997, 56). Because of the mimetic development of this character, the reader becomes
involved in the story. When the reader does get involved, that character becomes influential within the narrative (53-54). Given the androcentric bias of mimetic development in Mark, this mimetically-developed woman is worthy of notice. The inferences the reader can make about the woman, and her impact on that larger narrative, shall be discussed in this next section.

Having applied different types of methods for analyzing the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30, I have extracted her character indicators. These character indicators shall be evaluated to discover what they communicate about the traits of this woman.

B. The Character Traits of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman

The narrator may provide the reader with traits about a character, both directly and indirectly. In the case of the woman in Mk 7:24-30, no traits are provided directly, either by the narrator or by another character. Traits are only arrived at indirectly by the reader through analyzing the character indicators; this analysis is furthered by placing these indicators within a larger literary and socio-historical context. The following character indicators are examined: a woman; a woman with a daughter who has an unclean spirit; Greek; Syrophoenician by race; dogs (and their relation to the children who eat first); the actions of the woman; and the speech of the woman.

1. Turning Character Indicators into Character Traits

a) A woman

How does it affect the story for this character to be a woman? To understand Jesus' responses to her, and her responses to him, the reader should understand the social relations of men and woman in the first century, both within Jewish and the Gentile cultures and within the
Markan story world. What would be a first-century reader’s expectations of how a Jewish male might react to a Gentile woman, or how a Gentile woman might react to a Jewish male?

In the first century, patriarchy existed, with males generally given superior status and therefore having more power than females. The issue in Greco-Roman cultural constructions of gender is not so much the equality between the sexes (although men certainly believed only men were their equals); the issue is the role assigned to each sex: “To go outside the limits of these predetermined social roles is to risk disapproval and rejection by the very people upon whose approval the person depends not only for affirmation but for identity” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 41). For a Greek woman to approach a foreigner, she would be stepping outside expectations of her social role within her own culture. The woman in Mk 7:24-30 would not be alone in doing so. There are instances even in that time period of outstanding women who broke the molds that society tried to impose on them. The laws were changing so that positions available to women were being expanded, particularly for free-born citizen women of the upper classes who were heads of their own households. As has been mentioned, it is important to look beyond the prescriptive laws to other kinds of evidence: “There is no doubt from literary and epigraphical evidence that women participated fully and publicly in Greco-Roman society, even as more conservative male voices tried to pretend they did not. They were not invisible, but on the contrary, very visible, even as the language of male discourse and political structures tried not to acknowledge that visibility, but rather to render women socially invisible” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 58). In Greco-Roman cities, there are instances of women who were upwardly mobile (through marriage and trade), serving as founders and patrons of men’s clubs and being involved with religious cults (Meeks 1983, 23). So, although women might have been considered inferior in nature and subordinate in status in Greek, Roman, Jewish, and Christian prescriptive evidence, there is descriptive evidence that some upper-class women were independent and had status and influence. Since the Greek Syrophoenician woman is portrayed as being from the
upper class, perhaps this explains her bold behaviour with Jesus. Although she might have been stepping outside the boundaries of the typical social role for a woman of her culture, her upper-class status might have made such confident, independent behaviour part of her regular experience.

A first-century reader would perhaps not have been surprised by Jesus’ initial reaction to the Gentile woman. Within the Jewish tradition, women were generally subservient to men. As far as gender differences under Jewish law and custom, “in virtually every case the female comes off worse than the male” (Harris 1984, 70). In the Hebrew Bible, there are both positive and negative depictions of women; mostly they are negative, with relatively few positive examples (Harris 1984, 33-35). A woman’s place is often: to accept being inferior; to bear children and bring them up well; and to be commodities (to be given away in marriage, owned outside of marriage, and offered up as sex objects for others’ use and abuse) (Harris 1984). Although there are occasionally women presented who are:

“brave, strong, wise, fair and pious, the bible tends to highlight other characteristics when it comes to concentrate on women. . . . [I]t is much more the case that women are portrayed as stupid, as having a marked propensity to nag and prattle, as weak and cowardly, and as possessing an evil influence and power capable of leading men astray. They are also variously depicted as potentially evil, as the source of filth and sin, as the curse of the world.” (Harris 1984, 77)

There is even a rabbinical Jewish prayer “by which a man expressed gratitude to God for being made neither Gentile nor woman nor [poor]/slave” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 56). Being both Gentile and female would have put the woman in Mk 7:24-30 even lower in status within Jewish culture. Within a Jewish male mind-set, the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30 was at a distinct disadvantage when she approached Jesus: “Jewish men were supposed to avoid contact with women, who were seen to pose a threat of seduction. Even conversation with one was dangerous: ‘Meet not a strange woman, lest you fall into her nets. . . . By the comeliness of a woman many have been ruined’ (Sir. 9:3-9)” (Gundry-Volf 1995, 509). This passage does not
forbid men to talk to women in general, but suggests that they keep away from strange, loose, adulterous women (Prv 2:16-19, and 5-7). Since Jews were discouraged from marrying foreigners, contact with foreign women would of course have been discouraged as well, since they were often seen as the cause of men being led away from devotion to Yahweh (Brenner 1985 117, 94). Jesus, as a Jewish male, would have been discouraged from speaking to a foreign woman.

What is understandable from Hebrew Biblical influence is the depiction of Jesus’ recognition and acceptance of wise words and positive influence from a woman. In the relatively few positive depictions of women in Hebrew Biblical literary tradition, women are “[p]rophetesses, female writers, female orators, and female public leaders” (Brenner 1985, 132). Of the various positive literary types in the Hebrew Bible, those of the wise woman and the foreign woman are most applicable when examining Mk 7:24-30. The wise women are known for their “good sense, rhetorical prowess, psychological insight, and involvement in the life of their community” (2 Sm 14; 20:14-22) (44-45). The literary type of the ‘foreign woman’ has both positive and negative representations: “the two versions share some basic features of circumstances and behaviour, but differ in motivation and conduct” (90). The positive representation of the foreign woman is a husbandless foreigner who wants male offspring and is a successful manipulator of men (e.g., Ruth, Tamar, Jael, and Lot’s daughters). The negative presentation of the foreign woman is one who is a married adulterer (motivated by lust and/or foreign fertility cult practices) and who is not always successful in trying to manipulate men (e.g., Pontiphar’s wife, the foreign woman from Proverbs, and Samson’s wives). In looking at the implications of these types for Mk 7:24-30, given the hostility between the regions of Tyre and Galilee (Theissen 1991, 61-80), it appears that the Markan narrator initially affiliates the Greek Syrophoenician woman with the negative presentation of the foreign woman. The foreign woman as a negative prototype is the kind of woman who is depicted as being
immoral, corrupt, and corrupting, and who is a faithless liar (Brenner 1985, 44). The wise women who are in the Hebrew Bible and the type of the foreign woman share one trait: “persuasive eloquence” (45). The negative Hebrew Biblical presentations of foreign women provide examples of why Jesus might have initially been suspicious of this foreign woman in Mark; the positive presentations of the foreign women and the wise women provide examples of why Jesus allowed himself to be persuaded by her eloquence once it was clear that she was not going to lead him astray (sexually or religiously). In the Hebrew Bible, there are cases of women approaching men and speaking to them first (even if they has a husband): in the case with the married Shunamitess, she approaches the prophet Elisha herself and invites him to have a meal and then to stay with them whenever he passes that way (2 Kgs 4:8-9). For a woman to go out without her husband’s knowledge and without a chaperon “is a measure of her status and relative independence” (39).20

Besides these positive intertextual examples, there are also extratextual examples of Jewish women’s independence and positive influence. As within Greco-Roman sources, Christian and Jewish sources provide examples of women as leaders of households and religious groups as well as benefactresses (Burrus 1992, 240). The Jewish legal texts that provide negative connotations of women use “prescriptive language” (providing idealized standards) rather than “descriptive language,” which is found, for example, in letter fragments and ancient economic texts (240). These literary and socio-historical contexts help to inform the interpreter about the various responses possible within the Markan story world, making it understandable why, once the woman has shown herself to be worthy, Jesus can assist her.

As to Mk 7:24-30 specifically, Ringe (1985) believes that “according to the customs of first-century Palestinian society, this woman should have been invisible. No Jewish man, especially one with a religious task or vocation, expected to be approached by a woman (Jew or Gentile), except perhaps by one of the many lone women reduced to prostitution to support
themselves” (70). Although Ringe’s comments hold true for first-century women in general, what she says does not take into account the sources of these comments and the exceptions within women’s roles. The prescriptive texts describe what the expected role of women should be (in both Jewish and Greco-Roman societies). The descriptive evidence shows the exceptions to these roles. These exceptions occur in both Greek and Jewish cultures (in stories and in life): in Greco-Roman culture, with upper-class women especially; and in Jewish culture, with women who are inspired by their God. Distinctions must be made between what was expected of women within the two cultures. Perhaps Jesus, as a Jewish male, would not have been expecting a Gentile woman to approach him. For an upper-class Greek woman, it might not have been such an unusual action. The Greek Syrophoenician woman, as do many characters in Mark (including Jesus), steps outside predetermined social roles to get what she believes is necessary for healing. The reader is given a clue that she has stepped outside those boundaries when Jesus initially refuses to assist her and her daughter. It is also clear, in examples within Mark as well as within other literature of that time, women were known to be independent, intelligent, and influential.

b) A woman with a daughter who has an unclean spirit

Within the Markan context, this story is about the marginality of those that Jesus included, “the dregs of the dregs”: “The one who here seeks Jesus is not only a Gentile, not only a woman. She is also presented without the respectability of a husband, and as the mother not of a son, but of a daughter, a condition sometimes so lamented in the ancient world that people who only had daughters were considered childless” (Kraemer 1992, 133). Under Jewish law, “a mother takes twice as long to become purified when she gives birth to a daughter than she does when she gives birth to a son” (Lv. 12:1-5) (Harris 1984, 74). A daughter was a liability, costing money (i.e., for a dowry), and was considered troublesome until she could be married off to a
suitable husband (Ringe 1985, 70). Having a woman entreating for help on behalf of another female would have put the Greek Syrophoenician woman at "a double gender disadvantage in the context of male-female relations of the day" (Gundry-Volf 1995, 519). Yet these social conditions do not deter the woman from going to great lengths to get healing for her daughter, including accepting being labeled a 'dog' and having to convince the healer that she and her daughter were worthy of his attention and help. She shows herself to be a concerned mother, persistent in her quest for help for her daughter, and ingenious in her ability to convince the healer to help them.

c) Greek

The woman's foreignness is certainly one of the central features of her character within the story: she is not what Jesus is. She is not only foreign in the sense that she is non-Jewish (that is, Gentile), but she is described as both Greek and Syrophoenician. Although most scholars believe that the term 'Ελληνιςτής informs the reader that the woman is a Gentile, this term holds other connotations as well.21 Due to the Hellenization of the ancient world by Alexander the Great (from 338 to 146 B.C.E.), the term 'Greek' "became somewhat of a cultural designation, referring to anyone who accepted Greek culture and spoke the language" even if they were of a different ethnic origin; the Greek language "was the lingua franca of the empire from the time of Alexander to Constantine, replacing the Aramaic tongue used by the Persians" (John McRay, "Greece," in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). In the Greek cities that arose in Syria and Israel, the upper strata spoke Greek; it was also the language of trade and eventually was used by some in the lower classes as well (H. Bietenhard, "Ελληνιςτής," in The New International Dictionary of the New Testament).22 Mk 7:26 is the only time the Markan narrator describes any character as 'Ελληνιςτής ('Greek').23 In this instance, the expression is "ambiguous":

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it may denote the non-Jewish, Greek language and civilization of the locality and of the woman herself. Or it may be a religious term for a Gentile, whether a Greek or a Hellenized Syrophoenician. . . . In any case, the non-Jewish descent of the woman is emphasized (Mk 7:27f.). Since Mark does not use the term again, it is hard to decide the question. We may simply say that the sense of Gentile is suggested, and if so, this is the oldest example of this specific use. Nevertheless, the ethnographical interpretation is more likely.  

Downing (1992) thinks that “Ελληνίς probably indicates social status, too; from a free citizen family” (138).  

The New Testament evangelists use the term ‘Ελληνίς in different ways: as non-Jews who are believers in the one true God; as Gentiles who are polytheists; and as Jews who come from the Diaspora.  

There seems to be support for various ways of understanding the term. It seems unlikely that Greek is meant solely as a term for Gentile; it does, however, clearly mean a person of Greek culture and speech.

The reader is told by the narrator that the woman is Greek. How does Jesus know that she is Greek? Is it because she acts and dresses as an upper-class woman would, or is it because she speaks Greek to him? The reader is not told. Would being Greek provide a reason for a Jewish male to rebuff a woman? Not necessarily, since Hellenization influenced Judaism as well. Although Hellenistic Judaism rejected the mythology and cult of the Hellenes, it appropriated the language, philosophy, and external culture; besides the Greek translation of the Bible (the Septuagint), there was permission within the Jewish community to learn Greek, read Homer, and assimilate Greek wisdom.  

Is it possible that Jesus also spoke Greek and was familiar with Greek philosophy? If he was, he would have been able to converse with her in Greek and may have been able to identify her as a Cynic (if she was one). Mk 7:24-30 does not provide any explicit answers to these questions.

I agree that the non-Jewish descent of the woman is definitely emphasized and that her language, religion, and social status may also be indicated by this term. The Markan narrator describes the woman as both Greek and Syrophoenician to make it clear that, although she was Syrophoenician by birth, she was one of those ‘Hellenes’ of the upper class, a free citizen who
would be educated in Greek culture and language, and possibly also a follower of some Greek religion. The potential causes for conflict between Jesus and the woman would have been social status and religious affiliation. The woman was of the upper class and Jesus was an itinerant preacher (Theissen 1991, 79). If the woman had heard about Jesus and his healing powers, she would probably have been aware of his religious affiliation. Did Jesus wonder whether she recognized as the ultimate authority the God of the Israelites or one of the Greek gods? It is possible that the social and religious differences between the woman and Jesus are emphasized through the use of the term ‘Greek,’ but do they completely explain why Jesus would refuse to heal her daughter? He had dealt with others of the upper class (Jairus) and had healed other Gentiles (the crowds in Mk 3:8 and the Gerasene demoniac). There must be other reasons why he would not assist her. Perhaps combining these insights from the term ‘Greek’ with those about the term ‘Syrophoenician in race’ shall provide the reasons.

d) Syrophoenician by race

\[\text{Syrophoiníkíssσσα τῷ γένει (‘Syrophoenician by race’)}\] is the only mention of Syrophoenicia in Mark (7:26).\(^{28}\) “Her birth information [being Syrophoenician from the region of Tyre] is given because to ancient readers it encoded all of the status information necessary to understand interactions with her” (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 225, 192).

Phoenicia was the Greek name for the land along the coast north of Israel comprising part of the Roman province of Syria (Malbon 1992, 44).\(^{29}\) “Phoenicia was neither a country not a nation but a conglomerate of city-states that was distinguished from adjacent areas by its habitual outreach into the Mediterranean world and by its preferred dealings with Indo-Europeans and Greeks. Its history consists in the contribution of these individual cities and their dominions to the civilization and gradual maturation of the Mediterranean world” (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Syrophoenicia was “noted for its
antiquity, wealth and civilization, which had remained practically independent of Jewish, Greek, and Assyrian rule, though subject to the Romans since the time of Augustus” (Gould 1961, 134). As I mentioned in the review of the literature, little is thought of the woman being described as ‘Syrophoenician by race,’ except to emphasize that she is a local inhabitant, likely a Gentile, and able to speak Aramaic (just as Jesus did) (Theissen 1991, 69). The woman would have been bilingual, and it is quite possible that Jesus himself was bilingual as well (Greek and Aramaic). It is possible that the reason she is described as Syrophoenician is to show that she could speak the same language as Jesus (Aramaic); it also reinforces her being Gentile. The need for the Gentile suppliant to speak the same language as Jesus does not come up, however, in any of the other healings with Gentiles. Jesus even uses Aramaic while healing the deaf man in the Decapolis region (7:34). It does not seem to me that language is the only reason to describe her as Syrophoenician, since it seems common to have people who were bilingual in Aramaic and Greek in that time period.

Does any other reason for the woman being described as Syrophoenician link up with the contents of the story? By implication, she is also a resident of the region of Tyre. Geographically, Tyre is a city in the southern part of Syria. It is “tangent to Galilee, some twenty miles northwest of Capernaum. . . . It is impossible to know how far [Jesus] penetrated . . . since ‘the region of Tyre’ simply designates the district of which Tyre was the metropolitan centre” (Lane 1974, 260). This region is considered by most scholars to be a Gentile region, so the woman is a foreigner to Jesus in an ethnic sense (Ringe 1985, 70). Downing (1992), however, states that “the area is mixed, not as clearly ‘heathen’ as Mark indicates” (138).

The text says Jesus goes away to the region of Tyre and, entering a house, does not want anyone to know he is there. Why does Jesus go to the region of Tyre in the first place? Why does he withdraw and hide in a house? Tyre’s coins refer to it as a ‘city of refuge,’ and these coins were well-circulated in Israel. Perhaps Jesus goes there to take refuge. Jesus’
movements are often as a result of complications and conflicts (which he is unable to control or prevent) (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 69); he has just been in conflict with the Pharisees and the scribes over purity issues (Mk 7:1-23). There are numerous examples of Jesus’ withdrawal or retiring in Mark, and he withdraws for various reasons: for reflection, for privacy, and for secrecy (Burkill 1972, 67-68; Mann 1986, 320). I think that Jesus’ withdrawal to Tyre in this scene is for privacy, possibly for reflection, and in this case it is clearly under the guise of secrecy (since he does not want anyone to know he is there). Jesus’ withdrawals, however, are not always successful, as in the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman (Burkill 1972, 64). He wanted to escape the notice of people but “[t]his proved impossible, for he had already had contact with a delegation from Tyre and Sidon (ch. 3:8) and the fame of his power over sickness and demonic possession had preceded him” (Lane 1974, 260). “The gossip network,” prevalent in the ancient Mediterranean agrarian world, informed others by word of mouth about a person’s honour status (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 185). This network made Jesus’ presence and status known to the Greek Syrophoenician woman; this is not unusual since gossip “was primarily associated with women, whose role it was to monitor social behavior” (185, 224). Jesus’ broken incognito is used as a narrative strategy “signaling the coming conflict between Jesus’ intention and its transformation in v.28” (Pokorny 1995, 322).

When Jesus went to Tyre (Mk 7:24), certain socio-religious boundaries were encountered. As a Jew, Jesus would have been aware of the long, and mixed, history of the relationship between Syrophoenicians and Jews (as well as the relationship between Tyrians and Galileans). Historically, the Jews had both positive and negative relations with the Tyrians. It is clear that the attitude of the biblical writers towards the Phoenicians of Tyre and Sidon vary according to the various historical situations they are describing. There seems to be not only a recognition of the friendships that had occurred between Hiram (king of Tyre) and David and Solomon (kings of Israel), but also enmity that affects the two races. There is admiration on
the part of the Jews for the Phoenicians’ achievements in trade, culture, and finances,\textsuperscript{39} and hatred on the part of the Galileans for the Tyrians’ oppression and threat of territorial expansion (Gundry-Volf 1995, 516).\textsuperscript{40} Having Jesus journey to that region of Tyre and Sidon “underscores the opposition between Canaan—of which the Phoenicians are a part . . . and the house of Israel . . . between the pagans and the chosen people” (Odelain and Ségufneau 1981, 377). As mentioned in the review of the literature, Tyre and Galilee had past and current disagreements about food production, with Tyre most often benefiting (Downing 1992, 138). When Jesus meets an upper-class Tyrian woman, from a region who scavenged for food from the poor Galileans when even they did not have enough to feed themselves, it is understandable why the narrator would portray Jesus rejecting her (Theissen 1991, 78-79). Taking into account the socio-political context of the border region between Tyre and Galilee, Jesus’ words in Mk 7:27 have a powerful impact:

This saying, which at first is so offensive, would have to awaken the following associations: ‘First let the poor people in the Jewish rural areas be satisfied. For it is not good to take poor people’s food and throw it to the rich Gentiles in the cities.’ Let us be clear: we are not saying that Jesus’ words had that intention. The denotative kernel of this saying only maintains that, just as one prefers children to dogs, so his first concern is for the Jews. But surrounding this denotative kernel is an associative field conditioned by the historical situation. It is evoked by the choice of image: when people mentioned food in the border regions of Tyre and Galilee, and also spoke of children (= Jews) and dogs (= Gentiles), they simultaneously addressed the general economic situation, determined by a clear hierarchy that was just as clearly reversed by Jesus’ words. (Theissen 1991, 75)\textsuperscript{41}

Another possible connection between the region and the contents of the story is found in the Greco-Roman houses in that area (Osiek and Balch 1997, 13-14). The upper class of that region had mosaic floors (which were found through archaeological digs of private houses in the Roman and Byzantine periods). These elaborate mosaic floors “were especially adorned, often with drinking or eating themes” (13-14).\textsuperscript{42} These houses stood in sharp contrast to the humble houses in the Galilean fishing villages (which Jesus would have come from).\textsuperscript{43} Is it any wonder that the Markan narrator uses a metaphor that involves an image of food?
It has not yet been established how the woman’s religion is implicated in the conflict between herself and Jesus. The Phoenicians were known in the Hebrew Bible as worshippers of Baal and his consort (known variously as Astarte, Ashtoreth, and Asherah); the Phoenicians are depicted as drawing the Israelites away from Yahweh to worship their gods instead. A prime example is Ahab (king of Israel) marrying Jezebel (princess of Phoenicia) and turning to worshipping Baal and Asherah (1 Kgs 16:29-33). It is quite possible that the Tyrians followed the Mesopotamian practice of having the King as high priest of the goddess cult; he then made his daughter high priestess of the god cult (Brenner 1985, 24). Since Josephus writes that King Ethbaal was priest to Ashtoreth/Astarte, it is likely that Jezebel was priestess to Baal (23). Knowing that the woman in Mk 7:24-30 was Greek, Syrophoenician, and Tyrian, the reader would assume that not only do these three social indicators confirm her non-Jewish status, they confirm her religious affiliation with groups that are abhorrent to an Israelite.

In looking at the implications of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 being Syrophoenician, and a resident of Tyre, reasons emerge as to why Jesus might have initially rejected her. The most significant differences between Jesus and the woman emerge from their social status and their religious affiliations. Initially, Jesus might have seen the woman as an oppressor (thinking of herself as superior) and a worshipper of idols (Baal and his consort).

The character indicators of the woman being Greek and Syrophoenician are also significant because they point out two stylistic devices that the Markan narrator uses: two-step progression and the ordering of information in the narrative (particularly expository information). These two devices help to highlight certain traits of the woman in Mk 7:24-30.

(1) Two-step progression. In two-step progression, the second part clarifies the first part and contains a crucial element for the story (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 47; Rhoads 1994, 353). In Mk 7:24-30, two-step progression is used when the narrator describes the woman as ‘Greek, Syrophoenician by race.’ ‘Greek’ means that she is from the upper class, she knows the Greek
language and culture, and that her religious affiliation was likely non-Jewish. As I mentioned in the review of the literature, Theissen (1991) suggests that the second part of the progression, ‘Syrophoenician’ indicates that this ‘Greek-speaker’ also spoke Aramaic and so was able to communicate with Jesus (69). Her being able to communicate with Jesus, however, is a positive implication of her being Syrophoenician and is unlikely to have caused Jesus to refuse her assistance. There are at least two reasons why being Syrophoenician in Tyre would have negative implications (both to a first-century reader and to Jesus): Tyrian oppression of Galileans, and pagan religious affiliation. These two factors might explain why the narrator chose to use two-step progression in building an initially negative impression of the woman. The first term, ‘Greek,’ sets the woman up as from the upper class, and the second term, ‘Syrophoenician’ (from Tyre), clinches her negative position in Jesus’ eyes by emphasizing her position as an oppressor and a worshipper of idols. The more negative implications of the second term explain why the narrator includes these two terms in that particular order; this two-step progression sets up why Jesus initially refuses to help the woman.

(2) Presentation of expository information in the narrative. How does the Markan narrator choose to introduce the woman’s character in Mk 7:24-30? The character is described by the narrator initially as a woman who has a daughter with an unclean spirit. This is not the piece of information, however, that influences the course of the scene; “[s]maller pieces of exposition are withheld to be revealed at some appropriate moment in the midst of the tale” (Alter 1981, 80-81). Picture, if you will, how the narrator introduces the reader to the woman. The woman comes to Jesus on her own (rather than getting a male relative to do it). Then she prostrates herself at Jesus’ feet; it is at this point that the narrator chooses to inform the reader that the woman is Greek and Syrophoenician. It would seem that the narrator timed the release of this information to have the greatest impact on the reader. The narrator could have easily informed the reader that the woman was Greek and Syrophoenician when he first mentions her,
but instead he waits and supplies this information when she is in a position of supplication before Jesus. What more significant picture could be created than to have a woman of the upper class (from a Gentile region that oppresses Galilee) prostrating herself at the feel of an itinerant Jewish prophet from Galilee? These physical positions in the mind's eye of the reader would support the idea that this is in some way an issue of status and power that is not made explicit by the narrator. The terms 'Greek' and 'Syrophoenician' are key to the interactions between Jesus and the woman, as well as the fact that she is female; the fact that she is Tyrian also factors into the power struggle. Obviously these character indicators have significance, for when the woman proceeds to asks Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter, he does not immediately consent, as he does in other cases. Instead he replies with a metaphor, implying that it is not appropriate that he should heal one whom he compares to a dog. This is a prime example of how the order of presentation of information can affect the impact on this information of the reader.

The woman’s traits in Jesus’ eyes are highlighted through the use of these stylistic devices. Two-step progression shows to the reader (and to Jesus) that she is not only from the upper class, but that she may be an oppressor of those in need of bread; not only is she Hellenized culturally, but she is likely an idolater. The presentation of expository information strengthens the impact of these realizations; she is not just another suppliant in need of assistance. The reversed positions in which the narrator places Jesus and the woman, and then the way she is described by the narrator, create an irony in the power struggle that ensues in their dialogue.

e) ‘Dogs’

In the dialogue, Jesus uses a metaphor in which he makes an implicit comparison between the woman, her daughter and ‘dogs.’ The woman accepts this comparison. The narrator makes a subtle distinction, however, between the way that dogs are portrayed by Jesus
and by the woman. Jesus uses the term as ‘dogs outside’ while the woman uses the term as ‘dogs inside’ (Dufton 1989, 417). The picture Jesus creates puts the dogs at a distance, with the food being tossed to them. The picture the woman creates has the dogs nearby, under the table, satisfied by the scraps that fall from the table. Perhaps the narrator makes this distinction because of differences in attitudes towards dogs in Jewish and in Greco-Syrophoenician societies.

(1) ‘Dogs’ from a Jewish viewpoint. When any Jew refers to a dog, a first-century reader of Mark would likely be reminded of how dogs are portrayed in the Hebrew Scriptures. On the literal level, dogs are mostly portrayed as pariah-dogs who eat what is unclean (France 1986, 50); there are stories about those who go against God’s will and die in such a way that these scavengers will eat their flesh and lick up their blood. Although most of the literal references to dogs in the Hebrew Bible are negative, there are several positive references (e.g., some Israelites using shepherd dogs) (Jehuda Feliks, “Dogs,” in Encyclopedia Judaica). Figurative allusions to dogs are made under various circumstances: to reproach someone for his/her actions, as a way to describe evildoers, or as a term of self-abasement (to show humility). This self-deprecating humility could be shown by an Israelite or even by a Syrian. The Hebrew term keleb (‘dog’) in Dt 23:19 is interpreted figuratively as a term for a male cultic functionary in a pagan temple; it could also be interpreted as an attendant of the dogs involved in the pagan healing rituals. In the Hebrew Bible, it is clear that dogs are mainly spoken about with contempt (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

With these references in mind, it is understandable why the character of Jesus initially compares the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter to ‘dogs’ and places the dogs outside in the metaphor. Although in most interpretations of Mk 7:24-30 the reference to dogs is believed to refer to the Gentiles, it is limiting to consider it a direct comparison. The Hebrew Scriptural figurative references indicate that any person (Jew or Gentile) whose immoral nature
is commented upon could be labeled a ‘dog’; likewise any person (Jew or Gentile) could show his/her humility to another person by applying the label of ‘dog’ to him/herself. Both figurative uses of the label ‘dog’ puts the person in a low-status position. Labeling a person a ‘dog’ seems connected to the individual’s response to God’s will.

(2) ‘Dogs’ from a Greek viewpoint. What cultural associations would the woman have to being labeled a ‘dog’? As mentioned in the review of the literature, some interpreters speculate about whether Greeks viewed dogs as house pets (since this Greek character portrays the dogs inside the house, under the table). Although this may be contested historically (Derrett 1977, 151), it is probable that the Greeks had a closer relationship to dogs than the Jews. In classical Greek society, on the literal level, dogs were often greatly appreciated, as beloved pets, as guardians, and as hunting dogs; the so-called Alexander Sarcophagus depicts Alexander the Great and the client-king of Phoenicia engaging in a hunt, with a hound helping them attack a lion (Stager 1991, 33, 38). This does not preclude the Greeks from using the term ‘dogs’ on a figurative level in a pejorative way. There are examples of Greeks unfavourably comparing Cynics to dogs, as was mentioned in the review of the literature (Downing 1992). From Downing’s (1992) article, several things are clear: ‘giving scraps to the dogs’ was a known metaphorical way of insulting the Cynics (who were at the feasting table); Cynics were not rebuffed by these insults and did provide witty responses; and a woman could be a Cynic. Even though the Cynics might have turned the insults around to their advantage, it does not remove the stigma from the term. Both the Jews and the Greeks use the term ‘dog’ in a figurative way to insult someone, as well as for someone to insult themselves. Although both Jews and Greeks use the term ‘dog’ pejoratively, the Greeks also have some positive associations with the term. These positive associations from the woman’s cultural background might explain her shifting the dogs’ position to that of being ‘under the table eating the scraps.’ These Greek intertextual references about Cynics remind the reader that within any honour-shame society in the Mediterranean,
challenge-riposte was one way of acquiring honour (and turning around shame) (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 213-214, 188); the woman can accept Jesus’ comparison of herself and her daughter to dogs under the table (receiving the remnants), and then have the courage and ability to respond with a witty rejoinder. Are there associations that the woman might have with the term ‘dogs’ from her Phoenician cultural background?

(3) ‘Dogs’ from a Syrophoenician viewpoint. There is some information that makes tentative connections between Phoenicians, dogs, and healing rituals (Stager 1991; Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). There are three different kinds of findings about dogs and Phoenicians. The first has the most direct connection to the contents of Mk 7:24-30. A dog cemetery was discovered in Ashkelon, dating from the fifth century B.C.E. This city was ruled politically by Persian kings in that period, but it was governed by a Phoenician, a Tyrian in fact; although it was a cosmopolitan port, it was dominated by Phoenician culture (Stager 1991, 28, 39). Stager (1991) proposes that the Phoenicians were responsible for the dog burials at Ashkelon, and that the Phoenicians regarded the dogs as sacred animals, involving them in healing rituals (38-39).56 Dogs were involved in healing cults in many different cultures in antiquity: “their association with temples and healing deities was rather widespread in the ancient Mediterranean and Near Eastern worlds, whether it be Gula in Mesopotamia, Asklepios in Greece, Eshmun in Phoenicia, Mukol or Resheph-Mukol in Phoenician Cyprus” (39). It is not clear which deity the dogs in the cemetery at Ashkelon were associated with, but “in the end, a common theme emerges--deities with healing powers are often associated with dogs” (40-41).57 The archaeological findings from Ashkelon suggest a possible connection between the context of healing in Mk 7:24-30 and the inclusion of the term ‘dogs.’ The second finding is that there is a Phoenician reference on the Kiton plaque to ‘dog,’ like the Deuteronomical reference in the Hebrew Scriptures; it is understood as a technical term for a cultic functionary, possibly for an attendant for the dogs of a healing cult. The third finding is
references to the use of dogs and pigs in religious rituals in the ancient Near East (ANE), in which these animals (or images of them) are used in exorcisms, often concerning young children.  

Is it possible that a connection was known in the general public about Phoenicians, dogs, and healings (exorcisms in particular)? Although this is a tentative connection at best, it might serve as an explanation as to why, of all the different metaphors that Jesus might have used when encountering a Syrophoenician woman in Tyre (who wanted an exorcism for her daughter), he should choose to relate a picture of children and dogs. As with the connection between the Tyrians and food, the associative field around the term ‘dogs’ is evoked by the narrator’s inclusion of the term in Mk 7:24-30; this field is conditioned by the socio-historical context. First, when dogs are mentioned in a healing story, along with a Greek Syrophoenician woman, the first-century reader might think of the dogs’ involvement with healings in pagan temples. Second, for a Jew to mention dogs in this story might indicate his ridicule of that pagan practice (since for him it is only Yahweh who has the power to do the healing). Dogs were considered unclean animals by Jews, so they would not have used by them in any sacred rites, even for sacrifices to Yahweh. Third, the reader might understand how a Hellene would accept a dog under her table, since the upper-class Greeks had more positive affiliations with dogs. Fourth, the reader might understand why this Greek Syrophoenician woman would describe herself as a ‘dog’ since this was one of the labels used in the ANE as a “formula expressing humility” (G. Johannes Botterweck, “keleb,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament). The differences in cultural associations with the term ‘dogs’ for Jesus and for the woman in Mk 7:24-30 are better understood within this socio-historical context. This context connects the term ‘dogs’ to the healing and to the woman’s humility in a way that would not otherwise be readily observable.
Since in the story previous to this one Jesus has declared all foods clean (Mk 7:1-23), there is no longer the sharp distinction between table fellowship with Jews and Gentiles. The threat of contamination remains if a Jew is around a Gentile, however, since that Jew may stray from his/her religious devotion to Yahweh. The woman, therefore, as a ‘dog,’ is not just a scavenger, but is also initially seen by Jesus as pagan and therefore unworthy to receive God’s gifts. Jesus morally evaluates the woman and her daughter. The traits that Jesus might ascribe to the woman initially, therefore, might include ‘unworthy pagan scavenger.’ If the woman shares some traits with the Cynics, they would include being witty and resilient. By her accepting being labeled a ‘dog’ and by using the label herself, she shows herself to be humble as well.

(5) ‘Dogs’ and ‘children’ within the metaphor. While looking at the character indicators that apply to the woman in Mk 7:24-30, it is necessary to address the term ‘dogs,’ in relation to other terms in the metaphor that Jesus uses: ‘children,’ ‘first,’ and ‘eating.’ What is ‘children’ referring to? What is the relationship between the ‘dogs’ and the ‘children’? What role does the activity of ‘eating’ play in their interaction?

τέκνα literally refers to descendants, denoting membership in a particular group (from the standpoint of origin). In Mark, τέκνα appears nine times. Mk 7:27 is the only time it is used to distinguish one group from another, when it refers to the descendants of Israel. As mentioned in the review of the literature, there are numerous references from the Hebrew Scriptures describing the Jews as ‘the children.’ Within the Jewish world-view, a child was a gift from God, a guarantee of God’s covenant with Israel; the immortality of the people of Israel was carried on through their children (Joseph A. Grassi, “Child, Children,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

There are other Greek words that denote the concept of ‘children.’ As mentioned in the review of the literature, Pokorný points out that there are several different words within Mk 7:24-30 that describe children: τέκνα (v.27), παιδία (v. 28, 30), and two words describing the
daughter (θυγάτριον, v.25; θυγάτηρ, vv. 26, 29). Through the use of these different terms, the
reader shifts his/her understanding of who the bread is for: the bread is initially for the Jews, and
it ends up being for those who are dependent and immature (such as the Gentile woman’s little
daughter) (Pokorny 1995, 337). Παιδίον also serves to link Mk 7:24-30 with other stories in
Mark. Παιδίον appears twelve times within Mark: in the story of Jairus’ daughter (5:39, 40, 40,
41); in the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:28, 30); with the man who has a
possessed son (9:24); when Jesus takes a child and says to his followers that when they welcome
this child in his name, they welcome the one who sent him (9:36, 37); as well as when Jesus tells
his followers to let the little children come to him, for the kingdom of God belongs to those who
are just like these little children (10:13, 14, 15) (Aland 1983, 1077). Obviously, these stories
show us that the healing of children is possible through Jesus, and that one must have faith to
receive this healing (5:36; 9:23-23). Perhaps the woman’s response in chapter 7 shows Jesus that
Gentile children are dependent on Yahweh for life-giving sustenance. In chapters 9 and 10,
Jesus then teaches others that children (those who are helpless and dependent) are a reminder of
how one is to respond to God, that one is to depend on Him (C. Brown, “Παιζ,” in The New
International Dictionary of New Testament Theology). These two stories about Jesus and
children “form an important literary frame for illustrating true discipleship” (Joseph A. Grassi,

i) ‘Dogs’ and ‘children’ and who comes ‘first.’ After having examined ‘dogs’ and
‘children,’ what is their relationship in Jesus’ metaphor (Mk 7:27)? The ‘children’ come ‘first’
(πρῶτον). The narrator is implying that there is an appropriate order to who receives the
privileges of God. As mentioned in the review of the literature, it is possible that the background
to this comes from the Hebrew Bible story of Elijah and the widow of Zarephath, in which the
Israelite prophet directs the woman to feed him first and then herself and her Gentile son (1 Kgs
17:13). In the Markan context, there are two types of references to ‘first’ that are applicable in looking at Mk 7:24-30: parables that describe explicitly how one must act in order to be part of the kingdom of God; and a reference to the signs of the coming of God’s kingdom. In using the term πρῶτος in Mk 7:27, Jesus is implying the Israelites’ exclusive privilege, but the woman’s response indicates that the dogs do get the scraps, not later, but during the meal. Her response about the lowly ‘dogs’ receiving benefits from God’s household perhaps causes Jesus to shift his view of the children. He later explains to the disciples how one must act to be part of God’s kingdom—"Εἰ τις θέλει πρῶτος εἶναι, ἡσταὶ πάντων ἐσχατός καὶ πάντων διάκονος ("Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all") (9:35)—and then he takes a child (παιδίον) into his arms and says “Whoever welcomes one such child in my name welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me welcomes not me but the one who sent me” (9:37). The connections of the terms ‘children’ and ‘first’ between Mk 7:24-30 and Mk 9:35-37 show a change in Jesus’ idea of who comes first: those who are dependent (like the children) come first. These later references to ‘first’ in Mark show how the theological message of ‘the first will be last and the last will be first’ in God’s kingdom has become more explicit (9:35; 10:31, 44). The last mention of ‘first’ in Mark is that the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations as a sign that the end of the age is come (13:10). If this is Jesus’ view about the future, then surely those who are dependent (like the children) come first, regardless of whether they are Jew or Gentile. This Gentile woman is dependent on God’s power for the healing of her child; she is worthy, as one of the last, to be first in God’s kingdom.

ii) ‘Dogs’ and ‘children’ and ‘eating.’ The symbolic function of meals is also necessary to consider when discussing Jesus’ metaphor. Neufeld discusses the literature on the themes of eating and food in Mark: “eating and food are significant themes developed by the author to advance the issue of discipleship and understanding. . . . There are 158 occurrences of ἐσθιον (‘eating’) in the Second Testament, of which 27 are found in the Gospel of Mark. . . . In almost
every instance the eating narratives lead to a controversy” (Neufeld 1996, 158).68 The Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story is one of the thirteen Markan eating controversies (158).69 Neufeld’s (1996) analysis includes the following observations from anthropologists and sociologists about the function of eating in the first century:

What one eats and with whom, not eating either through fasting, avoidance, or abstinence—all these were direct expressions of social, political, and religious relationships (Malina 1986: 193). . . . Eating therefore involved more than simply ingesting comestibles. It symbolized a complex set of relationships and feelings, it mediated social status and power, and it expressed the boundaries of group identity (Klosinski: 56; Neyrey: 361-87). (159)

Certainly eating and food are significant within Mark, particularly with the boundaries of group identity between Jews and Gentiles (as has been mentioned in the review of the literature). In Mk 7:24-30, Jesus’ metaphor provides clues to first-century Mediterranean eating and meals, such as the social status of those involved, their social grouping, and the divinity’s presence.70 By having the obvious division of social groupings, of Jews as the children at the table and of Gentiles as the dogs under the table, the social status of the Jews is obviously far above the Gentiles (in Jesus’ estimation). Since a divinity was acknowledged at a meal (through prayer or libation), it would be expected that both Jesus and the woman would consider the role of the divine in providing sustenance. “Jesus’ declaration that nothing external is unclean [Mk 7:1-23] amounts to a rejection of kosher practices (see Leviticus 11; Deuteronomy 14)” (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 221); therefore status and acknowledgment of the divine would be his major concerns in Mk 7:24-30. The woman’s response to Jesus’ cues about the metaphorical meal show that she steps outside the old Greek customs (in which the women would be segregated during formal meals) and she adopts more of the independence of the Roman custom of women being present; she includes herself and her daughter (as dogs) at the meal.71 The woman does not switch positions of status or social groupings that Jesus portrays in his metaphor, she simply brings the dogs in under the table. She concedes that Jews have the superior status position at the table and that Gentiles can be satisfied with crumbs under the table.
Derrett (1977) provides a midrashic explanation for the image of being under the table eating crumbs in Mk 7:28. This image also appears in Jgs 1:7, when the Canaanite, Adonibezek, explains that prior to his capture by Judah and Simeon he had seventy kings under his table gathering crumbs (155). It is not specifically just the Jews that are pictured at the table in this parallel, but a Gentile king, with other Gentiles underneath him. The image of being under a table is one that expresses low status and subservience rather than simply an image describing Jew-Gentile relations in particular. The status of who sits at or below the table, however, seems of small consequence when mere crumbs are enough to satisfy one's needs. The woman in Mk 7:24-30 recognizes the Jewish divinity's presence and power to satisfy, and that acknowledgment is enough to get Jesus to concede to help her. She is willing to be subservient, once she has established that she is allowed at the meal in some capacity.

f) The actions of the woman

What can we infer about this woman from her actions? What do the actions imply about her motives, attitudes, and moral nature? At the beginning of the scene, after she hears about Jesus, she comes to a man whom she does not know and who does not want to be discovered. Since Jews were not encouraged to have interactions with even unknown Jewish women, it was also bold of her, a Gentile woman, to approach a Jewish man (Gundry-Volf 1995, 509). It is possible that this upper-class Tyrian woman was accustomed to having dealings with men due to having no male representative in her house and/or due to her being one of the independent woman of that era. Although such contact was unusual, it may simply point out the unusual position she held within first-century society. The woman's persistence is apparent since she sees Jesus despite his desire to go unnoticed (Malbon 1992, 44). The reader may infer that she is a compassionate, concerned mother who takes whatever measures are needed to get help for her daughter.
Having come, she shows her respect for Jesus by prostrating herself at his feet, putting herself into a humble position (a common position for suppliants to put themselves in to request assistance) (Downing 1992, 136). Within the patronage system that existed in that era, this is also “the gesture of a client seeking a favour from a patron or broker” (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 225); within that system, Jesus is portrayed in Mark as acting as God’s broker, with God as the ultimate patron (235-237). The woman proceeds to speak to Jesus herself (again, not through a male relative). When she begs Jesus to cast out the demon, it is clear that she believes Jesus has the power and authority to be able to do so, and she has faith in the power that comes through him. After hearing his humiliating rebuff, she answers him with words of her own; this shows her courage and her “unusual trust in Jesus as God’s broker” (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 225, 236). Finally, after hearing Jesus’ response to her metaphor, she obediently follows his instructions to go home; the reader can infer that the woman trusts Jesus’ word that the demon has left (even though the child was not even present with them at the time of his saying so). When she arrives home, it is as Jesus had described it: she finds that her daughter has been thrown onto the bed in the process of the demon having come out of her.

There are certainly many traits that can be inferred from this woman’s actions: she is in need, compassionate and concerned (to be doing this on behalf of her daughter), independent, bold, courageous, respectful, humble, trusting, persevering, has faith in Jesus’ power and authority as God’s broker, and is obedient to his instructions.

g) The speech of the woman

Since the woman’s speech is so unique in Mark, it merits detailed analysis. The use of speech representation in general is remarkable within Mk 7:24-30. In this passage, all three types of speech representation are used by the narrator: first-person dialogue, third-person
dialogue, and narratized dialogue. I shall examine the speech representation in this pericope by looking at its linguistic features, its function, and its relationship to gender.

(1) Linguistic features of speech representation. There are linguistic features of speech representation that help to distinguish third-person dialogue from first-person dialogue (Banfield 1973, 6, 17-18, 27; Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 111-113). Mk 7:26 is clearly third-person dialogue: ἡρώτα αὐτὸν ἵνα ("she was asking him that"). The verb of speaking is followed by a subordinator (ἵνα, 'that'), which marks her dialogue as indirect. It is clear that the narrator is describing what the woman says rather than providing her exact words of speech. The verb of communication, ἡρώτα, takes the sentence complement as a direct object. Also, the pronominalization indicates that it is an indirect representation (τὸ δαμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς, 'he might cast the demon out of her daughter,' in contrast to direct speech 'you might cast the demon out of my daughter'). The other three speech representations in Mk 7:27-29 do not include a subordinate, instead having the verbs of speaking followed directly by a comma: ἐλέγεν αὐτῇ, ('he said to her,' 7:27); ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, ('she answered and she said to him,' 7:28); ἐπεν ἀυτῇ, ('he said to her,' 7:29). These clearly are constructs that appear to directly quote the speakers. The verbs serve to separate the two successive independent sentences in the discourse, with the quoted speaker's own expression appearing after the verb of communication. The verbs of communication also differ in tense from the verbs within the speech representation. Verbs within speech representation allow for the present tense (ὑπάγε 'go' 7:29). The pronominalization also indicates that these are instances of first-person dialogue. The woman's inclusion of a vocative noun, Κύριε ('Sir'), also shows the reader that this is to appear as first-person dialogue from the woman.
(2) Functions of speech representation. Dialogue provides a method of communication between two characters. Having considered the grammatical composition of these sentences and what the words in these sentences mean, what is it that the sentences intend to 'do' and what do they in fact 'do'? To figure out what the sentences 'mean' as a function of what they 'do' in the context of the action, the reader can assign a verb to help "divine for [himself/herself] the illocutionary force of the sentences spoken by the characters to each other" (Chatman 1978, 175-176). Although the woman 'begs' Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter, her speech act is not effective. Jesus instead 'dictates' that the children must be satisfied first and that it is not fair to take their food and throw it to the dogs; by the use of this metaphor, he implies that he will not heal her daughter. He intends to 'rebuff' her with this metaphor, but he is not successful. The woman 'asserts' that even the dogs under the table eat the crumbs from the children. She intends to give Jesus another angle from which to look at the situation, and the reader knows she is successful when Jesus 'concludes' by responding, "For saying that, you may go—the demon has left your daughter." This process addresses what one character intends to 'do' to another character.

In looking at the illocutionary force of these sentences, it is also necessary to consider what the narrator intends to 'do,' or communicate, to the reader. When the narrator indicates that there is speech represented within the narrative, those words must be weighed carefully. Although the Markan narrator's words are reliable, the character's words may not be. What the woman says must be weighed against who she is and what her relationship is with Jesus. Although she is reported to speak twice in the scene, it is only the second time when first-person dialogue is provided; the first time, it is only third-person dialogue (in which the narrator describes to us what she says). What she says directly to Jesus is what shifts Jesus' understanding in regards to the place of the dogs in the household.
There are different functions for different types of speech representation. The first indication of speech in the narrative begins with the most distant form, a 'narratized dialogue.' The narrator informs the reader that “Jesus did not want anyone to know [he was there]” (Mk 7:24): is this a thought Jesus has or is it something he conveys to his host in the house? The narrator does not clarify whether it is an internal thought or an outer exchange of dialogue. Another instance of narratized dialogue follows, when the woman hears about Jesus; obviously someone in the gossip network must have spoken to her about his presence in the region, but again the narrator does not include this exchange. In neither of these instances does the narrator provide the words used or context in which the exchange took place (i.e., to whom, where, when). Obviously this information is not crucial to the narrative, so it can be more easily conveyed in narratized form.

The next form used is third-person dialogue. Only Mally notes that the Greek Syrophoenician woman does not use first-person dialogue when she asks for help from Jesus (which is also unusual in the healing narratives) (Mally 1968, 37). The narrator may have chosen to have the woman ask Jesus for help in third-person dialogue form, since the narrator has already let the reader know that she has a daughter with an unclean spirit; in this way, repetition is avoided. As well, using this form initially in the scene focuses more attention on what is said later between them.

The narrator uses first-person dialogue in the remaining three instances of speech representation within Mk 7:24-30. These three instances form the nucleus of the scene. It makes sense that the Markan narrator should choose to have Jesus and the woman using first-person dialogue since this form implies an authenticity to what is said, and what the woman says changes Jesus’ mind. The dramatic representation of first-person dialogue lends impact to what Jesus says, and sharpness and clarity as well to the woman’s rebuttal and Jesus’ response. This
First-person dialogue forms the peak of the narrative of Mk 7:24-30, with the rebuttal of the Greek Syrophoenician woman at its centre.

First-person dialogue (especially an exchange of dialogue) involves the reader/hearer in making sense of the story which is an integral part of storytelling. The other features in Mk 7:24-30 that encourage the reader's involvement include: the repetition of words in the narrative (woman, daughter, unclean spirit/demon, children, dogs); the deletion of any comment or explanation (neither Jesus nor the narrator provide an explanation about who the children and the dogs are); and minimal external evaluation (the narrator does not say why a woman who is Greek and Syrophoenician should initially be refused help by a man who has not refused to help anyone up to this point in the narrative).

There are other features of speech representation that the narrator can use to communicate information to the reader. The point at which dialogue is introduced is important: in Mk 7:24-30 it does not start until the woman is at Jesus' feet and the reader knows that she is Greek and Syrophoenician (which is likely to cause a problem); then the narrator tells us that the woman begs Jesus to cast the demon out of her daughter. It is in response to her request that the first-person dialogue begins. Speech representation is used here to slow down the tempo of the narrative, with first-person dialogue emphasizing the content. Jesus' response to her request is a metaphor, and Jesus provides no explanation of who the children are or of who the dogs are. Dialogue exposes both Jesus' and the woman's relationship with God, so what is said or left unsaid are equally important. Certainly what is said by Jesus about the woman is not immediately understandable to a modern reader (although it might have been to a first-century reader, who would have found it insulting to the woman). What is not explained by Jesus tests this woman's understanding of her relationship with God. The woman must discover for herself the meaning of the metaphor, and show a non-offensive role for the dogs if she is going to be able to reverse Jesus' stand. "Two verbs (ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει) introduce the [woman's] answer..."
in an almost solemn style; and the time of telling the story slows down compared with the real
time of the event—a signal that the key scene is coming” (Pokorný 1995, 328). This is unusual, since the narrative mainly uses the imperfect tense to introduce dialogue, such as Jesus did in speaking to her (εἶπεν, ‘he said’) (7:27). The historic present verb, λέγει, helps draw attention to the immediacy of what she is about to say.78 The woman presents herself well in how she responds to Jesus’ metaphor. She accepts the basic picture he presents; this is reinforced by her repeating Jesus’ word κυνάρια (‘dogs’). She does, however, adjust Jesus’ picture by creating a place for the dependent dogs so that their needs are satisfied without any harm or loss to the children. This adjustment is noticeable due to three changes she makes to Jesus’ metaphor: she changes Jesus’ word for ‘children’ from τέκνα (‘descendants’) to παιδία (‘dependent little children’); she brings the dogs from outside to inside the house (under the table); and she does not picture the dogs becoming ‘satisfied’ (as the children are) but only that the dogs can ‘eat’ something (the scraps).

Dialogue is used in this instance rather than narrative because the woman’s λόγος (‘word’) changes the situation in Mk 7:29. Due to the woman’s word, the reader knows that the spoken word can hold creative power. Derrett (1977) suggests that this is a midrashic explanation for being cured by a word: in Ps 107:20, the Lord sends out his word and heals the ones who were sick (due to their sinful ways) (160). It is interesting to note that Philo of Alexander, a Hellenistic Jewish philosopher and writer (c. 20 B.C.E. - c. 50 C.E.), "accorded a central place to the Logos (word) as the creative power which orders the world and the intermediary which enables men to know God” (H. Bietenhard, “Ελάλην,” in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology).79 I am not implying that Jesus (or the
Markan narrator) is directly referring to Philo's ideas; the belief that spoken words are a creative power, particularly as a way to express and know God's will, is found within the Hebrew Bible as well as within the New Testament (Alter 1981, 69). It is therefore reasonable to assume that Jesus' referring to her 'word' also holds the connotation of creative power. Her 'word' seems to have led Jesus to a fuller understanding of God's kingdom and the place of the Gentiles within it; after their discussion, Jesus' activities among the Gentiles markedly increase (7:31-8:10, 8:22-9:1).

Dialogue is also an important part of an honour-shame society, such as is found in the first-century Mediterranean area. Honour can be ascribed or acquired: it is ascribed from birth (with certain families) and it is acquired "in the result of skill in the never-ending game of challenge and response" (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 213). The game of challenge-riposte must be played out in public: "[i]t consists of a challenge (almost any word, gesture, or action) that seeks to undermine the honor of another person and a response that answers in equal measure or ups the ante (and thereby challenges in return). Both positive (gifts, compliments) and negative (insults, dares) challenges must be answered to avoid a serious loss of face" (188).

In the challenge-riposte in Mk 7:24-30, Jesus' word challenges the woman and undermines her honour; she is able to respond to him in such a way as to uphold his honour while still re-establishing her own (even though she maintains an inferior position). Her inferior position is in keeping with the client-broker-patron relationship that provides her with access to God's favours (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 225, 235-237).

(3) Speech representation and gender. In Markan healing narratives, the Greek Syrophoenician woman is the only female who uses first-person dialogue in her interchange with Jesus; she is also the only woman in all of Mark who has this kind of direct exchange with Jesus.

One woman speaks only in narratized dialogue form (3:31). Of the nine women whom the narrator has speaking in Mark, only two speak to Jesus directly: the hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. The narrator uses the narratized dialogue form to describe that the hemorrhaging woman talks to Jesus: ηλθεν και προσέπεσεν αυτῷ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ πᾶσαν τὴν ἀληθείαν ('she came and fell down before him, and told him the whole truth') (5:33). This seems appropriate, since her action is what is most important in the scene, not her words. In the second instance in Mark when the Greek Syrophoenician woman speaks to Jesus, it is her word that is crucial to the scene (Dewey 1997, 56). As mentioned in chapter 1, the Greek Syrophoenician woman takes the alienating image that Jesus presents in his metaphor and restructures it (Theissen 1991, 80). She takes the positive value given to the image of the children and plays it off the need of her own child, so that she is able to give positive value to the negative word ‘dog.’

As far as Jesus’ relationship to women, he speaks to four individual female characters: the hemorrhaging woman (5:34), Jairus’ daughter (5:41), Jairus’ wife (5:43), and the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:27, 29). He speaks to three of them in first-person dialogue form: the hemorrhaging woman, Jairus’ daughter, and the Greek Syrophoenician woman. He says to the hemorrhaging woman: θυγάτηρ, ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκεν σε ὑπάγε εἰς εἰρήνην, καὶ ἵσθι υγίης ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγος σου ('Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease') (5:34). He tells Jairus’ daughter, in Aramaic: ταλιθα κομψ ('get up') (5:41). These two examples relate to Jesus’ healing of these two female characters. The dialogue between Jesus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman holds particular interest because it is the only example in Mark of a female character to whom Jesus speaks in first-person dialogue, who then answers him in first-person dialogue. The form of first-person dialogue helps the reader focus on the content of their speeches.
As mentioned in chapter 1, first-person dialogue makes a character visible, but not necessarily more admirable: "how [a female character] is visible depends on the content of the narrative, and may or may not serve patriarchal purposes" (Dewey 1997, 57). As far as the contents of women's first-person dialogue in Mark, what impression is the reader left with? There are both negative and positive pictures of women. On the negative side, Jesus' mother and his sisters come and call to Jesus because they want to restrain him, thinking he is insane. Herodias advises her daughter to have John the Baptist beheaded, and her daughter requests this of Herod. The servant girl repeatedly accuses Peter of being with Jesus (which Peter denies). Even the positive picture of the three women going to anoint Jesus' corpse turns negative. The three women wonder aloud to each other who will roll away the stone that is at the entrance to the tomb (15:3). When the heavenly messenger explains to them that Jesus has been raised from the dead, and that the women should go tell his disciples that he will meet them all in Galilee, the women flee in terror and amazement: καὶ οὐδὲν οὐδὲν εἶπαν ἐφοβοῦντο γὰρ ('and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid') (16:8). When women are finally told to say something vital, due to their fear and amazement, they are not able to do so. The two positive images of women's words come from the hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman; both go against the patriarchal norms of the Markan storyworld. The unclean hemorrhaging woman says to herself: Ἐὰν ἐγώ μαί κἀν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτῶν σωθήσομαι ('If I but touch his clothes, I will be made well') (5:28). The Greek Syrophoenician has to go one step further in her faith and convince Jesus that what she wants is all right within God's kingdom; she is successful. She provides a model of a witty suppliant with faith, who uses her words wisely and successfully; she is admirable despite her counter-cultural actions.

(4) Conclusions about the speech representation within Mk 7:24-30. The speech representation in Mk 7:24-30 draws attention to the intentions of the characters. Jesus tries to rebuff the woman, yet she persuades him to heal her daughter. The narrator also uses the various
forms of speech representation to influence the reading of the story. It is interesting that the forms of speech used in Mk 7:24-30 progress from being distant and most indirect to being most immediate and direct. This progression makes the dramatic exchange between Jesus and the woman the focus of the scene and brings the narrative to a peak at the sentence that is most crucial in the scene; namely, the woman’s response. The use of speech representation, among other features, involves the reader/hearer more in the story, requiring her/him to make sense of the dialogue. The initial portrayal of the woman may be negative, but this changes once her actual words are heard. In this unique instance in Mark, the narrator puts a woman’s words in first-person dialogue format in her dialogue with Jesus. Speech representation, within the context of gender in the Gospel of Mark, shows that the Greek Syrophoenician woman makes the most of what words she does say, and the narrator makes sure that the reader is aware of the unique qualities of this first-person dialogue between this remarkable woman and Jesus.

The woman attains her goal “because of her speaking up and out” (Malbon 1983, 37). Through her speech, the woman in Mk 7:24-30 shows that she is both brave in speaking to a Jewish stranger and intelligent in her response. There are three things about this woman’s dialogue with Jesus that make it noteworthy. First, this woman is the only female in all of Mark who speaks in first-person dialogue with Jesus (Mk 7:28). Second, her words result in Jesus changing his mind and altering his intended course of action; this is the only instance in Mark in which someone changes Jesus’ mind (Dewey 1997, 56). Third, since Jesus changes his mind, it is clear that the woman has bested him in debate making this the only example of anyone winning an argument with Jesus. Jesus speaks; the woman hears, accepts, thinks, and then speaks. I infer from the woman’s speech that she is unique, brave, intelligent, witty, understanding, and sensitive to the situation in which Jesus finds himself.
h) The order of presentation of information in the narrative

After discussing the character indicators of Greek and Syrophoenician, I explored two-step progression and the expository information about the woman in Mk 7:24-30. These two devices have already highlighted certain traits about the woman. The other way to evaluate how order of presentation of information influences the reconstruction of traits is to consider how the reader’s evaluation of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 is affected. The order of presentation of information about the character not only has an influence on the reader’s understanding of the character, but subsequently of him/herself. The narrator intends for the reader to be drawn into self-evaluation in the process of reading Mk 7:24-30. How does the reader relate to the Greek Syrophoenician woman? The initial information given about the character can cause either an association or dissociation with that character, according to the expectations of the reader. The reader imagines that this will just be another suppliant (like the many others the reader has encountered up to this point in the story). While the woman is at Jesus’ feet, the narrator informs the reader by epithets that the woman is Greek and Syrophoenician by race. These epithets not only distinguish the character they describe, but they have an indirect influence on the plot; they shape the reader’s expectations (as a foreshadowing device). Since a first-century reader would probably have understood these epithets to mean that the Greek Syrophoenician woman would be viewed negatively by Jesus (which is reinforced by his comparing her to a dog), the reader is being encouraged by the narrator to dissociate from her character. The actions of the character, however, may lead the reader to re-evaluate his/her understanding of the character, and also re-evaluate his/her understanding of the message of the story and its impact on his/her own understanding of the divine. Through the woman’s action (speaking out), the picture Jesus paints of what it means to be a dog changes. The reader understands that it will not negatively infringe upon the rights of the children/Jews to have the dogs/Gentiles in the picture; the dogs/Gentiles will benefit from the crumbs/extra power that would not be missed by the children/Jews in any
event. The dogs/Gentiles are then accepted into the household/kingdom, and therefore the power to heal, that is available through Jesus, is available to the woman’s child. Since Jesus helps the woman, the reader is then called upon to question Jesus’ reversal of position and to examine how this woman’s actions measure up to the teachings and example of Jesus. As Sternberg (1985) says, “from given character to action provoked to deeper character implied . . . whereby the action mediates between the truth and the whole truth” (346); the woman’s action (speaking out) reveals her deeper character (that of a believer in Jesus as God’s agent). The order of presentation of information certainly requires that there be a reconstruction of the woman’s traits. The initial epithets were misleading in relation to subsequent disclosures during the narrative. The initial ‘truth’ that Jesus stands by in his metaphor (that Gentiles are dogs) is transformed by the woman’s action into a ‘whole truth’ about the nature of God’s power and how it can assist them all (both Jew and Gentile). Due to her action, there is a shift in Jesus’ (and the reader’s) understanding of the woman’s moral nature. Even Jesus’ opinion about a character’s moral nature can change according to how he/she responds to him and what he/she says. In the structure of Mk 7:24-30, the reader is initially given ‘certainty’ about who this woman is; the inferences surrounding the actions of the woman, and the weighing of claims between hers and Jesus’ words, allow that ‘certainty’ to shift. Even when she is in a powerless position before Jesus, her moral nature shines through: strength, courage, understanding, compassion, faith, and obedience. Mark’s theological theme that “God reverses human expectations by working through the powerless, children and little ones” is supported within the outcome of Mk 7:24-30 (Joseph A. Grassi, “Child, Children,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

In evaluating Jesus’ change in how he views the woman, the reader questions his/her understanding of the character as well as his/her own understanding of God’s message. Perhaps the reader can come to associate him/herself with the woman, imitate her actions (boldness,
belief in God’s power through Jesus, intelligence, understanding, willingness to put oneself last), and thereby use her as a Gentile female model to emulate.\textsuperscript{84}

2. \textit{Summary of Her Traits}

Her traits have already been briefly discussed, both in the review of the literature and, to some extent, in the discussion about character indicators.\textsuperscript{85} Inference is required in the process of transforming character indicator information (from its literary and socio-historical context) into adjectives to describe the woman (Chatman 1978, 125). The following are traits often ascribed to her, and I shall evaluate them and add some traits that have come from my own analysis.

a) Faith

Many interpreters focus on faith as the central characteristic of the woman (Rhoads 1994, 360). I think it is too simplistic to say that this one trait gets the woman what she wants (namely, the healing of her daughter). Faith is necessary for healing; the woman, by coming to Jesus and asking for assistance for her daughter, is exhibiting faith implicitly. However, faith is not the central point of the story (Downing 1992, 136-139).\textsuperscript{86} Even Jesus indicates the significance of the ‘word’ said by the woman and that her response was what got her daughter healed (Rhoads 1994, 360). Faith, then, is necessary for the healing, but in the case of Mk 7:24-30, it is the woman’s speaking out, and her intelligence and wit to figure out the right words to say, that also contribute to Jesus changing his mind and entering into the healing.

b) Intelligence and wit

As mentioned in the review of the literature, interpreters ascribe various traits to the woman to explain her ability to reply to Jesus. These traits include intelligence, understanding,
insightfulness, wit, ingeniousness, cleverness, and excellence. There are slightly different nuances in the meanings behind some of these words when looking at the character's role in the story. Certainly the words that are used most commonly in this way to describe her are understanding, wit, and intelligence. I would conjecture that it is due to her overall intelligence that the other traits follow. She shows her understanding and insightfulness when she understands the metaphor that Jesus uses. This is in contrast to the lack of understanding that the disciples often show. Being witty/ingenious/clever, she uses her skill in challenge-riposte: she takes Jesus' metaphor and twists it to her own benefit, returning it to him with persuasive eloquence. Jesus accepts her 'word' and her daughter is healed. It is clear that she bests Jesus in the debate (Ringe 1985, 71; Perkins 1988, 43; Downing 1992, 134, 138-139). In the woman's reaction to Jesus' metaphor, Downing (1992) comments on her excellence, showing by her response how she is a woman philosopher (145).

c) Boldness

Another aspect that is often commented on is the woman's boldness. For her daughter's sake, she broke custom and stood up to a visiting rabbi and miracle worker (Ringe 1985, 71). So despite racial, religious, and gender barriers, and despite Jesus' initial rebuff, she perseveres in trying to get her daughter healed (Grassi 1988, 11; Malbon 1992, 44). Related traits include her gutsiness (Ringe 1985, 65), her risk-taking (Kopas 1985, 916), and her strength (Downing 1992, 145). It is clear that she is bold in both action and word (Malbon 1983, 37).

d) Other traits

What other traits can be attributed to the Greek Syrophoenician woman? There are those traits that seem most linked to her own person: independence, confidence, self-possession and courage (Ringe 1985, 65, 72; Tufariua 1990, 50). There are traits that come out of her actions to
heal her daughter, such as her loyalty, compassion, a capacity for sacrificial service, and maternal care for her daughter (Rhoads 1994, 361; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 129; Heil 1992, 163). There are also traits that are connected with her interactions with Jesus: she is seen as needy, and trusting of Jesus (Williams 1994, 121; Kopas 1985, 917). She is respectful when she prostrates herself at Jesus’ feet. A first-century reader may look through Jesus’ eyes and initially ascribe other traits to the woman (since she is a Greek Syrophoenician woman from Tyre): oppressive, superior, idolatrous, unworthy scavenger. She is then rejected by Jesus (Williams 1994, 121). She shows humility and subservience in accepting his comparison of her and her daughter to dogs. Measuring up to the Markan standard of judgment of being least, she “willingly lowers herself to the status of a dog in order that the demon might be exorcised from her daughter” (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 131). As with many minor characters in Mark, she has a disregard for status; she is willing to show that she is dependent on Yahweh for help, and willing to put herself last: in so doing, she is worthy to be put first and included in His kingdom (Rhoads 1982, 419). She shows sensitivity to the situation in which Jesus finds himself, yet displays persistence and strength and resilience in not giving up even when she is initially rejected. She shows that she has influence when she changes Jesus’ mind. She also shows obedience by following Jesus’ command to go home; she does not question the fact that the daughter could be made well when she was not even present at their discussion.

e) Her traits are useful when comparing her to other characters

The traits attributed to the Greek Syrophoenician woman describe the kind of character the reader encounters in the narrative. Going through the process of ascribing traits to her character is beneficial not just so the interpreter has words to describe her, but because the interpreter finds words with which to compare her with other characters within Mark and within other pieces of literature. These texts serve as analogues to Mk 7:24-30 and provide
comparisons between this woman and other characters. Her faith links her with other suppliant and followers of Jesus. In conjunction with her character indicators, her traits link her with other women, other parents, and other Gentiles (both those involved with healings and those who are not). Her intelligence (her 'word' and her wit) connect this passage with other controversy dialogues; as a debater of Jesus, she reigns supreme within Mark. Her boldness suggests that, within the first-century context, she is an unusual woman; it bears comparing her with other women in Mark and even with excellent philosophizing women from other literary contexts.

C. The Categorization of the Character of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman

Traits are a useful way to link the woman not only with other characters but also with themes that are developed within the larger narrative. These connections serve to create classifications for Markan characters. The Greek Syrophoenician woman can be classified according to some of her dominant character indicators and traits. The following are categories for the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30: a minor character, a female, a suppliant with faith, Gentile (Greek and Syrophoenician), and a debater with Jesus. These categories can connect her with some of the themes and the sociological relationships within Mark. As a female, she is related to male-female relations as well as to other females in Mark. As a suppliant with faith, she is related to the themes of healing and faith in Mark, as well as to the different subgroups of suppliant (females, Gentiles, parents). As a Gentile, she is related to the other Gentiles portrayed in the larger narrative, to the issue of Jew-Gentile relations within Mark, and to the themes of clean/unclean and insider/outsider. As a minor character, she can be compared with the other minor characters (what kinds of traits do they share, what traits are different between them); she can also be compared with the major characters, such as the
disciples. Many of these areas have already been discussed in existing literature. Analyzing her through these categories, in conjunction with the other characters, themes, and sociological relationships is a way to resolve the Greek Syrophoenician woman back into the larger Markan narrative. It is not within the scope of this paper to include all of these areas of comparison. What is important about this character’s influence on the Gospel of Mark is that she is Gentile (which is why Jesus initially rebuffs her) and she is female (which is what makes her response to this rebuff so remarkable within a first-century context). Therefore, I shall focus on these two categories, which when combined, make her character unique in Mark. I shall discuss the analogues to Mk 7:24-30 that are associated with these two categories. These analogues highlight certain of her traits; they also tie her into the Markan themes of gender, Gentile portrayal, and Gentile mission, and the sociological relations between males and females, and Jews and Gentiles.

II. The Resolution of the Character of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman Back into the Markan Narrative

Analyzing the narrative analogues that are connected with a certain story or character is an important step in the process of character analysis. It allows the interpreter to compare and contrast his/her insights about the ‘abstracted’ character against other stories within the larger narrative to verify if his/her conclusions make sense within that context. Prior to Mk 7:24-30, the narrator includes stories in which Jesus has encounters with suppliants who are female, Gentile, or have come on behalf of another person. In the review of the literature, both intratextual and intertextual analogues were discussed. Because of these analogues, interpreters have highlighted certain traits about the woman: she is in need, is a concerned parent, has faith in Jesus’ power, is courageous, is willing to step outside social boundaries, and has
understanding about what Jesus is trying to convey about God’s message (even though she initially appears to be an outsider). In this section of the paper, I shall focus on the analogues associated with the Greek Syrophoenician woman being female and Gentile. It is not in the purview of this paper to provide an exhaustive analysis of these analogues, but I shall point the way for future analyses by providing some initial comments. Using the information gleaned about the ‘abstracted’ character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman helps me understand the variety of connections that are possible with other characters and themes within the Gospel of Mark. These connections shall be explored as I begin to resolve her character back into the larger narrative.

A. Female

Setting up analogues for Mk 7:24-30 involves looking at the overall male-female relations in Mark. It also involves examining other depictions of women, including several from Mark as well as a few from the literature of the first century.

1. Male-Female Relations in Mark

Male-female relations in Mark have already been mentioned when discussing the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s character indicators. The Markan story world is clearly androcentric. Its social structure is male-dominated, although positive value can be assigned to women (Kee 1992, 230). The Gospel of Mark is similar to the other Synoptic Gospels, which “are androcentric in their narrative portrayal, describing male characters with more detail than female characters” (Dewey 1997, 53). Even though patriarchal norms are evident in the Markan narrative, these norms are called into question. The narrative includes material that is contrary to first-century cultural norms, such as Jesus having public contact with women and the portrayal of
women in language that is used to depict discipleship (Rhoads 1994, 367-368). In this way, Mark is anti-patriarchal. Although Jesus initially rebuffs the woman, he does then listen to her and allow her to influence him. Women are shown to be models of faith through serving, being least, and giving their lives (Rhoads 1994, 368; Beavis 1988).

2. Female Characters

As mentioned in the review of the literature, other studies have begun to explore the area of women in Mark. There are sixteen individual female characters in Mark. For this paper, I shall focus on those that are most pertinent for understanding the Greek Syrophoenician woman. These characters are women involved with healings, and the mothers of daughters.

a) Female characters involved in Markan healings

Several studies have discussed females involved with healings (Munro 1982; Selvidge 1990; Dewey 1993; Rhoads 1994). Four Markan stories involve women and healings: Simon’s mother-in-law (1:29-31); Jairus’ daughter (5:21-24, 35-43); the hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34); and the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30). These stories provide various examples of the extent to which women conform to cultural standards.

1) Simon’s mother-in-law (Mk 1:29-31). This is the first Markan healing involving a woman. There are few counter-cultural elements in this story; after the woman is healed, she serves the men, “restored to her proper role (in cooking and serving food) in a peasant patriarchal household” (Dewey 1993, 186). She does not even speak, and the only action she takes of her own accord is to serve. This is in contrast with the woman in Mk 7:24-30, who is counter-cultural not only in her approaching and speaking to a Jewish male, but also in her winning a debate with him.
2) Hemorrhaging woman (Mk 5:25-34). The stories of the hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman share common qualities, due to their both being healing narratives. Mark's initial description of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is reminiscent of the hemorrhaging woman (Williams 1994, 46). Both women have heard of Jesus (5:25-37; 7:25), and both characters fall at Jesus' feet (5:33; 7:25). The two women differ, however, in the characterization devices the narrator chooses to use. Unlike with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, the narrator includes considerable information about the background, thoughts, and feelings of the hemorrhaging woman. Although the hemorrhaging woman speaks to Jesus, her speech representation is through narratized dialogue (she "told him the whole truth") (5:33). The details of the woman's speech are not important, since it is her subversive actions that have an impact on the story. The other women up to this point in the narrative have simply served Jesus; in the unusual case of the hemorrhaging woman, she touches him stealthily, but she only approaches him openly when he suggests it (Dewey 1993, 185). This is contrary to the Greek Syrophoenician woman, who approaches him openly of her own accord, and whose speech has impact on his actions.

A feature unique to these two healing narratives is that the two women act counter-culturally by first-century standards (Dewey 1993, 190). The hemorrhaging woman "acts shamelessly" by touching Jesus' garment while she is in an unclean state, as well as by talking in public (188). Jesus, however, does not reject her; he welcomes her as his kin, referring to her as his daughter; he compounds the public dishonour and the shame of the woman's actions by welcoming her as kin (Dewey 1993, 188). He also explicitly mentions her faith (5:34). The Markan text about the hemorrhaging woman gives no explicit explanation of the woman's impure status or of the other counter-cultural aspects of the story; it shows Jesus affirming this woman in her counter-cultural actions (188). In the story about the Greek Syrophoenician woman, it is unclear whether there is a purity issue for Jesus; in his metaphor he places the dogs
at a distance to the children. Is this due to the dogs’ impure state or is Jesus concerned about the idolatrous influence that the ‘pagan dogs’ may have on the ‘Jewish children’? Since in Mk 7:1-23 Jesus rejected the idea that impurities enter from outside the body, it is more likely in Mk 7:24-30 that he is concerned with the impurities coming inside the heart and mind due to the influences of idolatry. Unlike with the hemorrhaging woman, Jesus does not initially support the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s brazen actions in approaching him. This may be due to the religious affiliations of the two women: the hemorrhaging woman is Jewish, while the Greek Syrophoenician woman is Gentile. When the Greek Syrophoenician woman shows how her request for assistance is acceptable within God’s kingdom, Jesus does accept her; at the end of this story, he affirms this woman’s counter-cultural words and actions by healing her daughter. The hemorrhaging woman and the Greek Syrophoenician woman both benefit from Jesus’ healing power because of their “bold and active faith” (Malbon 1983, 35).

3) Jairus’ wife and his daughter (Mk 5:21 - 24, 35-43). As mentioned in the review of the literature, there are similarities and differences between Jairus’ story and the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story. Since both these stories involve daughters, they share some vocabulary. The diminutive of ‘daughter,’ θυγατρίου (‘little daughter’), is only used in Mark in these two stories (5:23; 7:25). In the story with Jairus, Jesus and the narrator refer to the daughter as a ουγκατρίου (5:39, 40, 40); Jesus also refers to her as a κοράσιον (‘maid’) (5:41,42). Although οιδιον often refers to small children (up to age seven), the reader is told specifically that this girl is twelve years old (5:42). It is possible, therefore, that the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter could be anywhere from a young child to at least a twelve-year-old.

There are contrasts between the parents involved in the two stories, such as how strictly they adhere to cultural norms and how their faith is portrayed. The wife’s actions are within the realm of cultural norms. There is very little information provided about her, except that she was taken by Jesus, along with her husband and some of Jesus’ disciples, into the room where their
daughter was. She, along with these others, witnesses Jesus heal the girl (5:42); Jesus orders them not to tell anyone and to give the girl something to eat. This task of serving the girl would come under the mother’s role (just as it did for Simon’s mother-in-law to serve Jesus and some of his disciples, 1:31). When Jairus is told that his daughter is dead, Jesus says to Jairus, “Do not fear, only believe” (5:36). When Jesus does raise the girl and she gets up and walks around, Jairus and his wife and Jesus’ disciples are “overcome with amazement” (5:42). In Mk 7:24-30, the narrator does not describe the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s reaction when she sees that her daughter is healed.

With this Markan analogue of parents, it is clear that the Gentile mother shows more faith than the narrator grants the two Jewish parents. The Greek Syrophoenician woman does not express amazement that Jesus healed her daughter, unlike the other two parents; she believes in Jesus’ power to heal, even over distance. In fact, she even convinces Jesus that his power can extend to her and her daughter. The woman’s implicit faith in Jesus is highlighted.

b) Another Markan mother and daughter

There are four stories that include mothers with daughters in Mark: Jesus’ mother and sisters (3:31-35); Jairus’ wife and daughter (5:22-24, 35-43); Herodias and her daughter (6:17-29); and the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30). There is very little information provided about the first two mothers. It is clear that Jesus connects motherhood with being least, being a servant to others, and, above all else, doing the will of God. The third story is a prime example of a mother and daughter who contrast sharply with Jesus’ idea of motherhood, and it serves as a useful analogue to Mk 7:24-30.

1) Herodias and her daughter (Mk 6:17-29). The story of Herod, his wife Herodias, and their daughter appears before Mk 7:24-30. Jesus has just sent out his disciples to heal others. Herod hears of the activities of Jesus and thinks, “John whom I beheaded, has been raised”
(6:14-15). The narrator then takes the reader on a flashback and tells the story of how John the Baptist was beheaded at the request of Herodias and her daughter (6:16-29). In the mind of the first-century reader, Herod Antipas and Herodias could be considered as either Jewish or Gentile; it is safe to say that the reader would at least have considered them ‘bad’ Jews (those that are portrayed as going against the wishes of God). The reader is not told of John’s reaction, nor of Jesus’ reaction, so why did the narrator include this story (including details about Herodias and her daughter and the exact circumstances under which John was beheaded)? It would appear that the narrator includes this story to explain the deeds of Herod, Hérodias, and her daughter.

Herod had married Herodias (his brother’s wife) and John had told him that that was not lawful (6:18); for this reason, Herodias carried a grudge against John and wanted him killed. Herod would not kill John because he “feared John, knowing that he was a righteous and holy man, and he protected him” (6:20). When Herodias’ daughter pleased Herod by dancing for him at his birthday banquet, he told her that she could ask for whatever she wished from him (6:21-22). The girl, not knowing what to ask for, asked her mother’s advice; Herodias told the girl to ask for John the Baptist’s head. Although Herod was “deeply grieved,” he held to his oath and had John beheaded, delivering the head to the girl (who gave it to her mother) (6:26-28). This story sets a precedent for the reader that there are mothers and daughters who can harm a man of God (thereby going against God’s will).

In comparing the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter with Herodias and her daughter, it is clear that the former pair had ‘the things of God’ in their minds and hearts, and the latter pair did not. Herodias disobeys God’s law by marrying Herod and actively seeks revenge for John the Baptist’s judgment of her and her husband (6:19). She uses the opportunity of her daughter pleasing Herod as the way to get her revenge, but this action goes against the will of God. Not only is one not supposed to murder anyone (Exodus 20:13), it is bad judgment on Herodias’ part to kill someone who so obviously is recognized, even by her husband, as a holy
and righteous man (6:20). Herodias does not consider the welfare of her daughter, nor what might benefit her daughter most, but only considers her own desires. Herodias gets what she wants, but in the process she excludes herself from God’s kingdom. When Herod offers his daughter anything she wants, his daughter also has an opportunity to do good; she does not, however, use that opportunity to grow into the wisdom of womanhood, but instead relies on the distorted judgment of her mother. The next Markan example of motherhood is the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter. The mother in this story acts on her daughter’s behalf, seeking healing for her. She shows, by her response to Jesus, that she has an understanding of the kingdom of God, that she accepts the way this man of God portrays her place in it, and that she is obedient to his command. Like Herodias, she also uses an opportunity that arises to get what she wants, but to unselfish ends, so that her daughter’s needs are satisfied. In this regard, one could even compare Herodias’ daughter and the Greek Syrophoenician woman: it is clear that the latter acts out of wisdom, relying on her own judgment and acting out of compassion for her daughter’s welfare (Kopas 1985, 917). The traits of the Greek Syrophoenician woman highlighted in this comparison are that she is selfless, has faith, and is compassionate and obedient (unlike Herodias), and that she is independent and wise (unlike Herodias’ daughter).

c) Other female characters from intratextual analogues

Intertextual analogues are included in examining Mk 7:24-30 since these stories offer insights into what a first-century reader might expect of a Greek Syrophoenician female character. What other strong female characters exist whose stories might echo in the mind of the reader when he/she reads about the Greek Syrophoenician woman? How do their characterizations compare with that of the woman in Mk 7:24-30? I shall discuss two women whose stories are previously unexplored analogues to the Markan story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman. These women are both Gentile. Jezebel, who appears in the Hebrew
Bible, is one of the women (1 Kgs 16:28 - 2 Kgs 9:37). Eumetis, who appears in a Greek source, is the other (from Plutarch's Dinner of the Seven Wise Men, Loeb Classical Library 148C-155E).

1) Jezebel and Ahab (1 Kgs 16:28 - 2 Kgs 9:37). While discussing the significance of the term ‘Phoenician’ in the Hebrew Scriptures, I mentioned the character of Jezebel. She is a Syrian princess who marries Ahab, king of Israel: “Ahab son of Omri did evil in the sight of the Lord more than all who were before him ... he took as his wife Jezebel daughter of King Ethbaal of the Sidonians, and went and served Baal, and worshipped him” (1 Kgs 16:30-31).

Her father was the king of both Tyre and Sidon. Jezebel is not only a woman of the Syrian coast, but she is of the upper-class nobility, a partner in government with her husband Ahab; she is a powerful and resourceful woman, full of initiative and vigour (even to the point of aggression) (Brenner 1985, 19-22).

As I mentioned earlier, the Phoenician religion is referred to in the Hebrew Scriptures as the worship of Baal and his consort. In Hebrew Biblical accounts, Baal worship was promulgated in Israel due to Arab’s marriage to Jezebel (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary); as mentioned earlier, it is quite possible that Jezebel served as both High Priestess and patroness of the Baal cult (although the biblical narrators are not explicit about these roles) (Brenner 1985, 28).

After the Israelite prophet Elijah wins a contest against the prophets of Baal (1 Kgs 18:1-46), Elijah kills these prophets. When Jezebel hears about this she threatens to kill Elijah, so Elijah is afraid and flees for his life (1 Kgs 19:1-2). Ahab, who went against Yahweh’s law by worshipping Baal (among many evils), meets his demise in battle against the Arameans/Syrians (interestingly enough), and the dogs lick up his blood (1 Kgs 22:38). Later, Jezebel is killed as a result of the work of Elijah’s successor, Elisha, to avenge her idolatry, and she is eaten by dogs (2 Kgs 9:10, 33-37).

These analogues give pause for thought and comparison. The stories of Jezebel and Ahab not only combine the Syrians and the Israelites, but also includes the work of a man of God
and several references to dogs. There is another mention of Syrians, Israelites, and dogs in the narrative about Jezebel. Hazael compares himself to a dog when Elisha says Hazael would cause damage to Israel once he became king of Aram/Syria: “What is your servant, who is a mere dog, that he should do this great thing?” (2 Kgs 8:13). Hazael becomes the reigning king of Aram/Syria, and is so when the story of Jezebel’s demise is recounted. According to Yahweh’s plan, Hazael wins against Israel and Judah to avenge the people’s worship of Baal.

Is it possible that the reference in Mk 7:24-30 of the woman being Greek and Syrophoenician, and being compared to a dog, is intended to remind the reader of the stories of Jezebel? The women presumably share the Phoenician religion and are both of the upper class; they both take bold action and are influential, causing strong reactions against them from Yahweh’s prophets. The Markan narrator would not be making an explicit comparison between these stories, but perhaps offering an implicit reminder that a bold Syrian woman who believes in a foreign god can wreak havoc, particularly when threatening the life of an Israelite prophet. The scavenging unclean dogs in Jezebel’s story and the humble low status adopted by Hazael are both images of dogs that the reader sees again in Mk 7:24-30.

Perhaps the characterization of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 is a combination of two Syrian women with whom Elijah had dealings: Jezebel (with her dogs) and the widow of Zarephath (and her son). These two Hebrew Biblical stories offer a midrashic explanation for some of the incongruities in Jesus’ reaction to the woman in Mark: Jesus is first harsh to the woman and then agrees to help her. On the one hand, Jesus’ harsh behaviour could be explained by the oppressive socio-economic relationship between Tyre and Galilee, and Jesus’ change toward the woman could result from her acceptance of his view of the kingdom of God. On the other hand, Jesus’ behaviour could be explained by examining the stories from 1 and 2 Kings in a midrashic way; these Hebrew Biblical stories offer a literary precedent for Mk 7:24-30. In 1 Kings, the narrator introduces Ahab and Jezebel (and describes their idolatry and Yahweh’s disapproval),
then introduces Elijah and the widow of Zarephath. The widow feeds Elijah, he feeds both of them through his power to make their food last, and then Elijah saves her son. Elijah goes from that event to winning a contest against the Baal priests and killing them and, as a result, is then threatened by Jezebel. The widow’s story is intercalated between the introduction of Jezebel and Ahab and their subsequent atrocities and deaths. In Mark, Jesus encountering an upper-class Phoenician woman might have evoked memories of Jezebel in a first-century reader’s mind; both women are upper-class Phoenician idolaters. In the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s reply, the reader (and Jesus) become sure that the woman does believe in the power of the man of God (and is, therefore, more like the widow than like Jezebel). It is clear that, in the stories about Jezebel, the widow of Zarephath, and the Greek Syrophoenician woman, God can make use of either a Syrian or an Israelite towards His ends; if a person follows God’s will, he/she will get their needs met, and, if not, he/she will be punished.

2) Eumetis (Dinner of the Seven Wise Men 148C-155E). Although it was rare for a woman to speak out in a male-dominated society, there are examples of witty women doing just that. Plutarch’s story of Eumetis is such an example. Eumetis is the daughter of Cleobulus of Lindos on Rhodos, one of the seven sages. She is described as “wise and far-famed Eumetis . . . [with a] cleverness and skill that she shows in her riddles . . . for these she uses like dice as a means of occasional amusement, and risks an encounter with all comers. But she is also possessed of wonderful sense, a statesman’s mind, and an amiable character, and she has influence with her father so that his government of the citizens has become milder and more popular” (148D-E). Both Eumetis and the Greek Syrophoenician woman indicate that there are examples of women having witty discussions and influencing how men respond to the world. Eumetis is an example, therefore, of a remarkable, independent, and counter-cultural female character, on which to base comparisons with the Greek Syrophoenician woman.
Although the stories of Eumetis and the Greek Syrophoenician woman both involve customs of eating, the portrayal of the two women by their respective narrators differs in this respect: in Mk 7:24-30, the reader is given an example of the woman’s wit, while in Plutarch’s story, Eumetis’ cleverness is just referred to by the men. Corley, who discusses customs of eating, points out that it was unusual for women to remain after dinner for the symposium, and, if they did, they rarely spoke (in Osiek and Balch 1997, 128-129). Aune (1978) notes that “Plutarch, who violates custom by having a woman (non-prostitute) present at a symposium, is nevertheless careful to have her remain silent in spite of his views on the equality of those present at symposia and his notion that all present should participate” (98). The Markan narrator takes a risk, however, and portrays the Greek Syrophoenician woman as speaking out. The narrator also diverges from customs of eating (by Jewish standards) when the Greek Syrophoenician woman moves the dogs in under the table, indicating in this way that the Gentiles now have fellowship with the Jews in accessing the life-sustaining power of the Israelite God.

B. Gentile

In comparing analogues to Mk 7:24-30, those that involve the Gentiles are some of the most crucial for understanding how the Greek Syrophoenician woman affects the larger Markan narrative. There are three parts to this comparison: the issue of Jew-Gentile relations within Mark, how other Gentiles are portrayed within Mark, and the related theme of Gentile mission.

1. Jew-Gentile Relations

There is a shift in Jew-Gentile relations within the Markan gospel. Just as Jesus warns, “many who are first will be last, and the last will be first” (10:31); Gentiles, and particularly
Gentile women, are the last within the first-century Jewish world (Malbon 1983, 42). The Greek Syrophoenician woman is pivotal in the development of Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles, so that the ‘last’ may also be ‘first’ (Rhoads 1994, 363).

Jew-Gentile relations are obviously integral to Mk 7:24-30, since Jesus is in Gentile territory and therefore has a greater likelihood of coming into contact with Gentiles. As mentioned in the review of the literature, there was a fundamental social boundary between Jews and Gentiles in the first century (Dewy 1993, 189). That boundary was required by Jewish laws to guard against uncleanness. In various parts of Mark, the narrator is concerned with purity issues, one example being Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees: Jesus concludes that what defiles enters from the heart and not the stomach (7:19). Therefore the purity rules that separate the Jews and Gentiles are rejected by the Markan Jesus. “Redefinition of new purity rules such as Mark describes here . . . can be thus construed as redefinition of a group and its boundaries. Insider clarification is essential” (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 222). After Mk 7:1-23, the story about a female Gentile provides an opportunity to begin to clarify who is considered an insider and in so doing the Markan Jesus begins to establish new boundaries: acceptance as an insider is conditional on the person’s acceptance of Yahweh, with Jesus as his broker. In many stories in Mark, Jesus disregards the ‘maps’ laid out to establish the boundaries of what is pure and impure in all areas—times, places, persons, things, meals, and ‘others’ that pollute by contact; “[b]y disregarding such maps the Jesus movement asserts a clear rejection of the established Temple purity system” (222-224). Within the Markan story world, gender and ethnic boundaries (along with many other boundaries) were definitely crossed by Jesus and by the Gentiles who came to Jesus for assistance.
2. Gentile Portrayal in Mark

Comparing the portrayal of the Greek Syrophoenician woman with other Gentiles in Mark helps clarify aspects of her characterization as well as the function her character plays within the theme of Gentile mission. In the Markan narrative, Jews and the other non-Jews are not specifically identified as separate groups, but rather are identified through location (and the details included within those stories). The Greek Syrophoenician woman is the only Markan character clearly identified as non-Jewish: she is identified as both Greek and Syrophoenician. Through identifying Gentiles by location, seven individuals and five groups of people are found in Mark; there are also five references to an abstract entity \( \text{Ov\nu} \) ('the nations'), which would include Gentiles. The first Markan reference to Gentiles is the multitude that comes to Jesus to be healed (including both Jews and Gentiles) (3:8). Next is the Gerasene demoniac, along with the swineherders and others from the neighbourhood (5:1-20). After the food-laws controversy section (in which Jesus declares all foods clean), Jesus goes back to a Gentile area. That is where the Greek Syrophoenician woman comes to him on behalf of her daughter (7:24-30). After the daughter is healed, Jesus goes into other Gentile areas, healing a deaf man with a speech impediment (7:31-37), feeding a group of four thousand (8:1-10), healing the blind man from Bethsaida (8:22-26), and then teaching the crowd in Caesarea Philippi (8:34 - 9:1). Although these are the miracles, healings, and teachings that Jesus does among the Gentiles, he also makes several allusions to \( \text{Ov\nu} \) ('the nations') (which could include both Jews and Gentiles) (10:33; 10:41-45; 11:17; 13:8, 10). Later in the narrative, he encounters Pilate (15:1-15), the soldiers who mock him and crucify him (15:16-24), and the centurion who sees Jesus breathe his last breath (15:39, 44-45). An in-depth analysis of Gentile portrayal is warranted, but that task is outside the range of this paper. I shall discuss five analogues that clarify Jesus' interactions with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, and whose character portrayals help to highlight certain traits about that woman. These five stories are about: the
crowd that includes those from Tyre; the Gerasene demoniac and the people from that
neighbourhood; the deaf man with the speech impediment from the Decapolis; the feeding of the
four thousand; and the blind man from Bethsaida. I shall mention the other Gentile characters in
my summary of Markan Gentile portrayal.

a) The great multitude (Jews and Gentiles) (Mk 3:7-12)

The first instance of Gentile healing appears early on in Mark, when a “great multitude
from Galilee . . . hearing all that [Jesus] was doing they came to him in great numbers from
Judea, Jerusalem, Idumea, beyond the Jordan, and the region around Tyre and Sidon”(3:7-8).
Like the Greek Syrophoenician woman (as with many suppliants), people hear about Jesus and
come to seek healing, believing that Jesus has the power to help them. There is an element of
secrecy in this story, just as there is in Jesus’ coming to Tyre: he asked the disciples to have a
boat ready because “he had cured many, so that all who had diseases pressed upon him to touch
him. Whenever the unclean spirits saw him, they fell down before him and shouted, ‘You are the
Son of God!’ But he sternly ordered them not to make him known” (3:7-12). The only
concern Jesus expresses is that he might get crushed; he does not insult the Gentiles, he does not
rebuff them, he heals them (3:10).

Tyre is mentioned three times in Mark: once in this story (3:8), once in the story about
the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:24), and once immediately after her story, as Jesus leaves to
go on his way to the Decapolis (7:31). Burkill suggests that Jesus going to Tyre in 7:24 is part
of the theme of ‘reciprocal visitation’ (1972, 87-88); Jesus visits the various places from which
the multitudes of people came in 3:7-12. Jesus does not visit the crowd, however, in his
reciprocal visitation to Tyre; he hides from them (Wrede 1971, 141-142). Obviously, the
narrator has a plan when he portrays Jesus going to those areas that are mentioned, since a
mission is created in those places and to those peoples. In the case of Mk 7:24-30, however,
there are some barriers to that visitation. These barriers explain why the woman from Tyre is rejected by Jesus later in the narrative. The next appearance by a Gentile in Mark provides the reader with some understanding as to why these barriers exist.

b) Gerasene demoniac, the swineherders, and others from the neighbourhood (Mk 5:1-20)

Legion, of Gerasenes, is the first healing of an individual Gentile in Mark. The narrator intimates to the reader that this story takes place in Gentile territory due to the swine herd there (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 208). Swine were considered unclean animals by the Jews, and would therefore not be in Jewish territory (Malbon 1992, 38). This healing of this Gentile demoniac is an obvious healing to compare with the healing of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter (7:24-30); this has been touched on in the review of the literature. What is often overlooked is how the other Gentiles in the healing of the Gerasene demoniac affect Jesus’ response to Gentiles. The swineherders would be Gentile, since Jews consider pigs unclean. When Jesus grants the wish of the unclean spirits, and allows them to enter the swine, this would be appropriate from a Jewish perspective, but not necessarily from a Gentile one. When the unclean spirits enter the swine, the herd “rushed down the steep bank into the sea, and were drowned” (5:13). The swineherders told others in the city and in the country what had happened (5:14); when these other people from the neighbourhood saw the demoniac sitting there, healed, and heard what happened to the swine, they were afraid and begged Jesus to leave the neighbourhood (5:17). For the Gentiles, the loss of a swineherd would have been a financial loss. Jesus was the cause of this loss; therefore, he posed a threat to the neighbourhood. Malina and Rohrbaugh (1992) suggest that the allusion to a Roman ‘legion’ in the name of the demoniac may also explain the neighbourhood’s reaction: “Jesus frightened them, perhaps implying by his act a disruptive threat to the established Roman order in the region” (208). Whether because of their economic loss, their fear of his disruption of political order, or his powerful influence on the
demoniac, these Gentiles ask Jesus to leave their neighbourhood.\textsuperscript{122} If this is Jesus’ first major foray into Gentile territory, what kind of impression is he left with, as far as serving these Gentiles? I would suggest that it is a negative impression. A little while later in the narrative, he gives his disciples “authority over the unclean spirits” (6:7), and he instructs his disciples about what to do when they are out proclaiming God’s message: “If any place will not welcome you and they refuse to hear you, as you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet as a testimony against them” (6:11). Jesus’ comments obviously are linked to the story just previous, which describes his negative experience in his hometown of Nazareth (6:1-6), where the people there took offense at him (6:3). Do these comments also apply to his experience among the Gerasenes (5:17)? If so, the reader would know that Jesus and his followers can have negative experiences among both Gentiles (in the country of the Gerasenes) and Jews (in Nazareth).

The story of the Gerasene demoniac sets up the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30. Jesus’ initial rejection of the woman’s request may be partially explained by his negative response from the Gerasene neighbourhood. It takes the woman’s faith, wit, and understanding to shift Jesus’ view of Gentiles. Jesus’ view of the woman’s traits when he first realizes she is Gentile may be that she will be ungrateful, and unbelieving and unclear about the nature of his authority (just as the Gerasene people were afraid of Jesus’ acts of power in their neighbourhood). When he has a dialogue with the woman, however, he recognizes that she is not like these people, that she does believe, and that she does understand his power and authority. Mk 7:24-30 not only renews Jesus’ activities among the Gentiles, but expands the scope of his ministry among them.

c) Deaf man with a speech impediment (Mk 7:31-37)

After Mk 7:24-30, Jesus’ next activity is a healing of a deaf man with a speech impediment, in the region of the Decapolis (7:31-37). Mk 7:24-30 and 7:31-37 convey a similar
concept (ἀκούω ‘I hear’) and use the same key-word βάλλω (‘I throw’). In stories preceding and subsequent to Mk 7:24-30, Jesus encourages people ‘to hear’ his teachings (7:14-16). At the end of his healing of the deaf and dumb man in the region of Decapolis, the people respond, “He has done everything well; he even makes the deaf to hear and the mute to speak” (7:37). In the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, she not only literally ‘hears’ about Jesus (7:25), she figuratively ‘hears’ (understands) Jesus; she speaks out to convince him that Gentiles have a place in God’s kingdom. After that, Jesus immediately heals a Gentile man so that he can hear and speak. The other vocabulary shared by the two stories is the use of the verb βάλλω (‘I throw’). The daughter of the Greek Syrophoenician woman had been thrown (βεβλημένον) on the bed when she was delivered from demonic possession through Jesus’ power (7:30). Jesus threw (ἐβάλεν) his fingers into the deaf man’s ears (7:33). Williams (1994) draws an interesting analogy: “Mark’s choice of wording in both places may have been influenced by Jesus’ parable that involves throwing (βαλέτην 7:27) the children’s bread to the dogs” (122).

The major contrast between these two stories is in Jesus’ healing method. With the deaf and dumb man, Jesus puts his fingers in the man’s ears and uses his own spit to touch the man’s tongue (7:33). With the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter, Jesus is not even in the same location as she is, so he does not touch her or speak to her. In both stories, however, words have an impact. As well as touch, Jesus speaks an Aramaic word to heal the deaf mute: Ἐφάθη (‘be opened’) (7:34). In Mk 7:28, the woman’s words affect Jesus; Jesus’ words bring about the daughter’s healing. As with the Gerasene demoniac, it seems Jesus’ word is enough (5:13, 7:29).
d) The feeding of the four thousand (Mk 8:1-9)

Immediately after the deaf mute is healed, Jesus is surrounded by a great crowd from that Gentile area of the Decapolis. The last feeding is a “common meal of Jews and [Gentiles] from Decapolis (7:31), and from a ‘great distance (μακρόθεν)’” (Pokorny 1995, 335). Jesus has compassion for them, since they have been with him for three days (8:3). Jesus feeds the crowd of four thousand from seven loaves and a few small fish (8:5, 7). After all had eaten and were satisfied, there were seven baskets of remnants left over (8:8). As mentioned earlier, the number seven is a sacred number of fulfilment, which Drury (1987) believes clearly indicates this crowd is Gentile (414-416).

As mentioned in the review of the literature, the terms ἄρτος (‘bread’) and χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’) link Mk 7:24-30 with the two feedings of the multitudes (Mk 6:35-44 and 8:1-10) (Rhoads 1994, 361-363; Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983, 138). Rhoads (1994) goes beyond these two terms, believing that the verbal threads of ‘take,’ ‘bread,’ ‘be satisfied,’ and ‘eat’ all connect these three episodes; I would add to this list the concept of ‘scraps/remnants.’ In 6:42, the Jewish crowd of five thousand was satisfied with bread and fish, with remnants left over; this feeding story happened on the west (Jewish) side of the Sea of Galilee (Malbon 1992, 45). Next, in 7:24-30, Jesus requires that the children be satisfied first; the woman points out that the dogs can be fed just on the scraps (implying that the children would still be satisfied regardless of what the dogs ate); both Jesus and the woman use the image of the bread and the bits left over. In 8:8, the Gentile crowd of four thousand is satisfied with bread and fish, with remnants left over; this feeding happens on the east (Gentile) side of the sea (Malbon 1992, 45). These verbal threads about food and eating help to link the three episodes in the reader’s mind, showing the major change of strategy that has occurred in Jesus’ mission among the Gentiles (Rhoads 1994, 361-363). Even though Jesus initially had reservations about ‘feeding the dogs,’ after speaking to the woman in Mk 7:24-30 he goes on to feed four thousand Gentiles/dogs. The woman’s
message of Gentile inclusion (for those who recognize Jesus’ authority) helps to bring about that feeding. In the case of the feeding of the Jews, “the Markan Jesus’ compassion is linked to the people being like sheep without a shepherd, an image from the Hebrew Bible. In the [Gentile feeding story], Jesus’ compassion is linked to their hunger, a universal problem” (Malbon 1992, 45). God’s power, which is available through Jesus, satisfies all: the Jews first, and then the Gentiles. Even the ‘crumbs’ bring about miracles. The Greek Syrophoenician woman’s traits of understanding and faith help lead Jesus to the feeding of the four thousand. Mk 7:24-30 “looks very much like a story which we ought to take into account. Then, between it and the second miraculous meal, Jesus opens the ears and looses the tongue of a deaf and dumb man. The channels of understanding are cleared and liberated” (Drury 1987, 415).

e) The blind man of Bethsaida (Mk 8:22-26)

The blind man, like the Greek Syrophoenician woman, has a dialogue with Jesus; but in this case, the dialogue is prompted by Jesus (8:23-24). The blind man of Bethsaida “has striking parallels with the healing of the deaf man in 7.31-37 ... both men suffer communicative disorders; both healings are quite physical ... the second story becomes the first story in a new echoing” (Malbon 1994, 76 n.5). In both cases as well the men’s friends beg Jesus to touch the disabled men (7:32, 8:22). In the case of the blind man, Jesus takes him by the hand, leads him out of the village, and puts his own saliva on the man’s eyes (8:23); when that does not quite heal the man, Jesus lays his hands on the man’s eyes (8:24). The power in Jesus’ physical contact connects this Gentile healing with the one with the deaf and dumb man, while the power of Jesus’ word connects the story of the Gerasene demoniac with the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.128
f) Gentile portrayal in Mark: a summary

In discussing how the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s character fits into the larger Markan narrative, it is useful to summarize how Gentiles are portrayed in Mark. There are definite similarities in how Gentiles respond to Jesus, and how Jews respond to him. Analyzing the portrayal of Gentiles shows that there is a development in Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles, and the Greek Syrophoenician woman plays a transitional role within that development.

In the Markan story world, there is a similar pattern of response to Jesus by Jews and Gentiles. Rhoads and Michie (1982) describe this pattern as follows: “great popularity, intense opposition, withdrawal from opposition, healing and proclaiming which leads to even larger crowds, crowds in the desert, little privacy for Jesus, and Jesus’ efforts to keep people quiet producing the opposite effect” (70). It is certainly true to say that Jesus’ interactions with the Gentile and Jewish crowds are very similar. Gentiles, like Jews, come to Jesus for healing and for teaching, and are healed and taught and fed by Jesus. It is clear from his teachings that Gentiles, as well as Jews, can be his followers; to be his follower involves putting oneself last, being a servant to others, and putting ‘the things of God’ before ‘the things of man.’ Both Gentiles and Jews, however, can be led astray from what they know is true. A Gentile (Pilate, 15:1-15), like a Jew (Peter in the high priests’ courtyard, 14:53-54, 66-72), can be intimidated by a public situation. Each succumbed to the temptation to take the easy way out (crucify Jesus/deny Jesus) rather than proclaim what they knew was the truth about Jesus (he had done nothing wrong/he was Peter’s master, the Messiah). Although it is often presumed that one side or the other is responsible for Jesus’ demise, it is clear that both are involved. Both Gentiles and Jews mock and physically hurt Jesus. Gentiles kill Jesus (15:23, 37), following the wishes of the Jerusalem crowd (who presumably are mainly Jews, although there may have been a few Gentiles there) (15:11-15). Despite these actions, Gentiles and Jews are able to belong to those that understand Jesus’ significance, and to be included in the future about which he preaches.
Gentile (the centurion), like a Jew (Peter), can recognize Jesus as an important religious figure (the Son of God/the Messiah) (15:39; 8:29). When Jesus speaks about the future, he says that the nations should have access to the Temple as a house of prayer (11:7); that the good news he has brought should be proclaimed to all the nations (13:10); that nation will rise against nation (13:8); and the elect will be gathered from the ends of the earth (13:24-27). He includes people of all nations in this future, both Jew and Gentile. The Gentiles are not seen only as outsiders. God is portrayed as inspiring Gentiles as well as Jews; the Roman centurion identifies Jesus as a son of God (15:39) (Derrett 1977, 156), and the Greek Syrophoenician woman speaks out and, in so doing, helps Jesus expand his mission among the Gentiles.133

3. Gentile Mission in Mark

There is a development within Jesus’ interactions with the Gentiles. Looking at the development of the Gentile mission in Mark may explain Jesus’ reaction to the woman in Mk 7:24-30. It is clear that, from the beginning of the narrative, Jesus has contact with Gentiles. Analysis of the portrayal of Gentiles shows Jesus’ activities among them mirroring his activities among the Jews in many aspects. Jews and Gentiles are part of this ministry and mission. Early in the Markan narrative, Jesus heals Gentiles as well as Jews (3:8). After Jesus heals the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20), the Gentiles in the neighbourhood send him away because they are afraid. He goes back into Jewish territory and heals the hemorrhaging woman and Jairus’ daughter. He then has a negative experience among Jews in his hometown of Nazareth (6:1-6). Although he continues teaching (6:6), he sends out his disciples to do healing as well (6:7-13). After Jesus teaches and feeds the five thousand Jews, he and his disciples unsuccessfully attempt to go to Gentile Bethsaida, ending up instead in Jewish Gennesaret. It is there that the Pharisees and scribes (from Jerusalem) question Jesus about the traditions of what is clean and unclean. After arguing with them, Jesus implies that all food is clean (breaking down a major barrier
between Jews and Gentiles). It is then that he wishes to be hid, and so goes into the Gentile region of Tyre. In his encounter with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, she points out that Gentiles can have remnants and be satisfied without undue loss to the Jews. I agree with Rhoads (1994) that the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story is a turning point in the Gentile mission, not because it creates it, but because it gives Jesus renewed faith in including the Gentiles in his work (after his negative experience among the Gerasenes). After his encounter with the Greek Syrophoenician woman, Jesus goes into other Gentile areas, healing, feeding and teaching (7:32-37; 8:1-10). Jesus does return to Jewish territory after working with the Gentiles. The Pharisees, however, ask for a sign; Jesus seems to get exasperated, saying no sign will be given, and proceeds to go back to the other (Gentile) side. The disciples show they do not understand Jesus’ power when they are concerned about one loaf being enough (despite their having witnessed Jesus feeding the five thousand and the four thousand). After Jesus questions their lack of understanding, he and the disciples finally reach Gentile Bethsaida, where he heals the blind man so that he can see (8:22-26). Jesus goes on to the villages of Caesarea Philippi and teaches the predominantly Gentile crowd there what it means to be his followers (to deny themselves and take up their cross and follow him) (8:34 - 9:1). After he has given this teaching about followership to the Gentiles, Jesus returns to Jewish territory and, after several more Jewish healings and teachings to his disciples, he turns toward Jerusalem. During his time in Jerusalem, some of his other teachings include the Gentiles, such as when he talks about the nations. These references are both positive and negative.¹³⁴ Other Gentile characters appear near the end of the narrative: Pilate turns Jesus over to be crucified (15:1-15); the soldiers then mock Jesus, spit on him, and crucify him, dividing his clothes among themselves (15:17-20, 24); and the centurion who sees Jesus breathe his last, recognizes that “Truly this man was God’s Son!” (15:39). When Pilate asks him, the centurion confirms that Jesus is dead (15:44-45).
What does this examination of the Gentile mission tell us about Mk 7:24-30? This pericope is a transitional episode within the theme of Gentile mission. This passage has connections with the preceding material, being similar in characterization and type to both the healing of Jairus’ daughter and the hemorrhaging woman (5:21-43). This passage also addresses the implications of Jesus’ teaching in the scene immediately before about the food-laws and purity (7:1-23); if food does not make one unclean, then having contact with Gentiles is also acceptable. It is acceptable, but only if Gentiles do not lead Jews away from Yahweh. This story clarifies the boundaries as to who can be an insider: when the Greek Syrophoenician woman indicates to Jesus by her response that she recognizes the power of the Jewish God and is willing to be least, he is willing to include her (and subsequently other Gentiles) in God’s household. Parts of Mk 7:24-30 also contrast with preceding material. The woman’s understanding of Jesus’ metaphor (without his having to explain it) is in contrast to the disciples’ lack of understanding about Jesus’ parable (so that Jesus has to explain it). The passage is transitional in geography: Jesus comes from a Jewish area (Gennesaret) into a Gentile region (the region of Tyre); from there he continues on to other Gentile places (the region of the Decapolis). The passage is transitional in content as well. The preceding passages dealt with the Gerasene demoniac’s group rejecting Jesus, and Jews being taught, healed, and fed by the thousands. In Mk 7:24-30, the woman accepts Jesus’ authority and power and is not shown to be disturbed by it, but begs for it. After the passage in question, Jesus deals with Gentiles to a greater extent. As well as healing Gentiles, Jesus now also feeds them, teaches them about followership, and includes them in the future of God’s kingdom.

A transitional passage often features a transitional character who serves to help in this process of change. The Greek Syrophoenician woman is a transitional character in expanding the nature of Jesus’ activities among the Gentiles. Although Jesus has had contact with Gentiles before, this woman helps Jesus see Gentiles and their place in God’s kingdom in a different way,
and in so doing opens the way for Jesus to return to activities among the Gentiles. The woman, like other Gentile suppliants, shows faith in Jesus’ power (which comes from God). Like the centurion, she is inspired by God and is able to speak the truth. She serves to alert the reader that, although the narrator may initially give a negative view of a character (or positive, for that matter, as in the case of the disciples), that can all change depending on that character’s attitude toward and understanding of Jesus and his message.

III. Summary

The abstraction and resolution of the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman has illuminated many aspects of Mk 7:24-30. By placing information about her abstracted character within its literary and socio-historical context, the reader sees how his or her ideas about this character change over the course of the story; the stylistic devices used are crucial in leading the reader through this process. Character traits and categories assigned to this character link her story to its analogues. The relationships between males and females and between Jews and Gentiles, and the themes of Gentile portrayal and Gentile mission, reinforce some of the assumptions made earlier about the character as well as clarify her function within the text: she serves as a transitional character within the Markan Gentile mission. In the next chapter, conclusions shall be drawn about this abstraction and resolution process, and its implications for understanding Mk 7:24-30.
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1 See chapter 2, n. 19 for a list of these analyses, as well as Appendix C for further discussion of analyses of minor characters.

2 Four devices are not used in her characterization: neither the narrator nor any other character directly states personal qualities about her, nor does the narrator give information on her inward thoughts or on her appearance. He does not supply any information about this particular character’s appearance, other than the fact that she is a woman. The reader can infer that her outward appearance was one clue that permitted Jesus to know she was a foreigner, a Gentile (since he is not told it otherwise). Perhaps her outward appearance (her clothing, physicality, or complexion) or the way she speaks indicates in some way that she is Greek and Syrophoenician. How exactly Jesus knows she is a Gentile is not made clear by the narrator.

3 In this device, the Markan narrator uses verbs with an intransitive sense to express these traits. In Mk 7:24-30, no trait is directly given, but instead the narrator says who this woman is (Greek and Syrophoenician).

4 If the only social relation given is that she is the mother of a daughter, the reader assumes that, since she has come herself, there is no male within her household that exists or is willing to come on her daughter’s behalf.

5 Having concrete details about the character is one of the criteria required for evaluating a character’s mimetic development (Dewey 1997, 53-54). The singular or concretizing information about the character is also one of Sternberg’s (1985) five characterization features (326-327). In Mark, there are other parents who come for help for their children (Jairus, and the man with the epileptic son) and there are two other women with daughters (Jairus’ wife and her daughter, and Herodias and her daughter). However, there is no other Markan character whom the narrator specifies as Greek and Syrophoenician.

6 Jesus’ moral evaluation of her as a ‘dog’ would be more important than her external features (i.e., being a mother of a possessed daughter, and being Greek and Syrophoenician).

7 Distance healing was already discussed within the analogues section of chapter 1, in reference to the story of the healing of the Centurion’s servant (Mt 8:5-13; Lk 7:1-10).

8 The last criteria, namely, the inclusion of an internal view of her character, does not apply to the woman in Mk 7:24-30.

9 “Each sex is assigned a role with regard to the other and to the ordering of tasks, both physical and psychosocial, that must be done to sustain the life of the social group. The central issues are how social subgroups perform their assigned role, and how persons within those subgroups conform to the expectations of the group. . . . Family and social traditions dictate what men and women are to be in each stage of the life cycle: child, initiand, young adult, husband or wife, father or mother, widow or widower, elder. Persons in this kind of culture generally spend their lives meeting those expectations as communicated through parents, other adults, peers, and religious and political ideology” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 41).
There were writers within the Greco-Roman culture—such as Plato and Socrates—who affirmed that women were equal in nature and capacity for virtue (while still suggesting that women were weaker and less intelligent) (Osiek and Balch 1997, 55). Plutarch, in *On the Bravery of Women*, assembles traditional stories to demonstrate that men’s and women’s capacity for virtue is the same; the tales “feature women as heroines in military situations, escaping from enemies, betraying tyrants, and the like, where the men who should rightly be acting do not” (55). Plutarch lived c. 46-125 C.E. and is presumed to have written this work c. 115-125 C.E. (Wicker 1978, 106). Although Plutarch’s work was written post-Mark (which was written c. 65-75 C.E.), Plutarch’s writing expresses the thoughts and values of classical Greek culture and is therefore a useful resource for evaluating how Greek culture might have influenced the Markan story world.

As far as the legal status of women, the male wielded power over women, children, slaves, and property in all ancient Mediterranean societies. More independence and control was acquired for women under Augustus’ rule, when he abolished male guardianship “as a reward for those freeborn citizen women who had borne three children . . . and freedwomen who had borne four”; later in the first century, Claudius abolished male guardianship altogether, essentially doing away with male control of the property of citizen women (Osiek and Balch 1997, 57). Although this was a rare exception in Mediterranean culture, it shows that there was a shift in women’s rights and roles during the time in which Jesus lived.

Within Roman cities are archeological inscriptions that establish that there were women who were independent, “whose inscriptions do not defer to any male authority figure, running their businesses, exercising their feminine influence within their own households and in the city” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 28-29). The examples given come from the households in Pompeii of Eumachia and of Julia Felix. Eumachia’s influence ran from Pompeii (her home) to as far away as Africa (where she did business) (28-29).

Harris (1984) compares the gender differences in Hebrew Biblical laws involving vows, inheritance, slavery, infidelity, and purity (69-75). Kee notes that women were not in the official cult, but were assigned a position only in the outer court of the Temple; they were not even found within the community at Qumran (1992, 226-227). Women were kept on the fringes of official sacral activities in the Temple not only due to their gender, but also because of their monthly cycles of menstruation (Lv 15:19-30) (Selvidge 1990, 90). Men with discharges are also considered unclean (Lv 15:2-18), yet the men’s court at the Temple is closer to its sacral activities.

For Harris’ (1984) Hebrew Biblical references to how women are portrayed see: silly prattlers and naggers (Prv 19:13; 21:9, 19; 27:15-16); cowardly (Gn 3:14-15; Jer 50:37, 51:30, 48:40-41, 49:22, 24, 50:43); temptresses and betrayers such as Eve (Gn 3:6, 11-12), Delilah (Jgs 16:15-19), Potiphar’s wife (Gn 39:5-20), Lot’s daughters (Gn 19:31-36), Jezebel (1 Kgs 21:8-15); source of evil doings (Jb 15:14, 25:4); effect of adulterous women (Prv 5:1-11, 7:24-27, 22:14); virgins are virtuous, whores are evil (Dt 22:20-21, 23:17; Lv 21:7, 10-14). For another useful discussion of the portrayal of women in the Hebrew Bible, see Brenner (1985, esp. 132-134).

The rabbinical Jewish prayer is from Tosefta Berakot 7.18; pBerakot 9.2; cf. bMenahot 436; this Jewish prayer “is in fact an echo of a common Hellenistic motif in which the first
contrast is Greek and not barbarian” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 56). The Greek saying is attributed to Socrates and Thales by Diogenes Laertius, *Lives of the Philosophers* 1.33; to Plato by Lanctantius, *Institutes* 3.19; and to Marius by Plutarch, *Marius* 46.1 (Meeks in Osiek and Balch 1997, 242).

16Ezr 9-10 and Neh 13:23ff addresses the problem of mixed marriages (Brenner 1985, 116). Although intermarriage was both “natural and politically expedient . . . foreign wives cause their menfolk to deviate from the right path and follow their pagan ways” (117); this is seen in the examples of the Israelite kings Solomon (1 Kgs 11:1-5; Neh. 13:25-26) and Ahab (1 Kgs 16: 31ff, esp. 1 Kgs 21:25-26) (89, 96-98).

The proper name for the God of Israel is ‘Yahweh.’ Its meaning is uncertain: “Although the original Hebrew text did not write vowels and only wrote the four consonants Yahweh (the tetragrammaton or ‘Four Letters’), we can vocalize these consonants with fair reliability based on early Greek transcriptions. Late in the biblical period, the name became so sacred that its pronunciation was avoided. Late texts preferred such phrases as the ‘God of Heaven’ or ‘My Lord’ (Hebrew ‘Adonai’) rather than the sacred ‘Yahweh’ ” (Dick 1988, 39). Since this thesis is a written text, rather than an oral presentation, I shall be using ‘Yahweh,’ or ‘God,’ to refer to the Israelite divinity.

17Brenner (1985) discusses the positive roles for women implicit in the Hebrew Bible stories. There are prophetesses such as: Huldah (2 Kgs 22:14-20; 2 Chr 34:22-28); Noadiah (Neh 6:14); Miriam (Ex 15; Nm 12); Deborah (Jgs 4-5) (59-66). There are women poets and authors: Miriam (Ex 15) and Deborah (Jgs 4-5); Deborah was also a judge and a planner of military strategy (55). There is also evidence that there were strong female political leaders, whom the Biblical writers do not consent to call ‘queens’ because they were foreigners (17-20). Harris (1984) also talks about the type of the ‘good woman’ who serves her husband (Prv 12:4) “and is manifested loyalty, fidelity, piety, and the ability to keep house and rear children properly (Prv 31:10-31) (107-109).

18The wise women in the Hebrew Bible are the woman of Tekoa (2 Sm 14) and the woman of Abel-beth-maacah (2 Sm 20:14-22) (Brenner 1985, 34-37).

19For the discussion of the representations of ‘the foreign woman’ in the Hebrew Bible, see Brenner (1985, 113-114). Foreign women that are in the Hebrew Bible are also listed; only Jezebel and Athaliah are described as ‘Phoenician’ (115).

20There are even examples of upper-class foreign women offering Jewish prophets their hospitality (the widow of Zarephath, 1 Kgs 17:8-24; the woman of Shunem, 2 Kgs 4:8-37); in both cases the prophets heal the women’s child.

21It is debated whether the term ‘Ελληνίς is intended to be understood as ‘Gentile’: “The sense of ‘Gentile’ cannot be proved, then, either from Hellenistic Judaism or the New Testament” (Hans Windisch, “Ελλην, Ελλάς, Ελληνικός, Ελληνίς, Ελληνιστός, Ελληνιστή,” in *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*). Windisch believes that only later, when nationalistic distinctions drop, is there a definite sense of the term ‘Gentile’; this is found later, when Christianity is more firmly rooted in Greek soil.
“Knowledge of Greek language and culture point to a member of the upper class, since Hellenization had first affected the people of high status everywhere. And for a long time there would be many among the simple people who did not understand Greek. . . . Certainly, knowledge of Greek had also penetrated the lower classes: otherwise, the Greek inscriptions in Palestine forbidding grave-robbing would make no sense” (Theissen 1991, 70-71).

In fact, there is no listing of the male term for Greek Ἐλλην in any of the Synoptic Gospels; the feminine form Ἐλληνίς appears only in Mk 7:26 and in Acts 17:12.

This quote is by Junther, in Hans Windisch, “Ἐλλην, Ἑλλάς, Ἑλληνικός, Ἑλληνίς, Ἑλληνιστός, Ἑλληνιστή,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. Taylor (1966) believes that Ἐλληνίς refers to her religious status; he refers to Acts 17:12 to support this (349). Taylor does not explain the reference in Acts, so let me pursue it. This intertextual reference places the term Ἐλληνιος in a first-century literary context. Acts 17:12 mentions Paul and Silas being in Beroea, a city of Macedonia, where some Jews came to believe in their message, as well as “not a few Greek women and men of high standing” (καὶ ἔν τῶν Ἐλληνίδων γυναικῶν τῶν ἐδεχθέντων καὶ ἰδιότων οὐκ ὀλίγων). The references in Acts puts the term ‘Greek’ into a religious context, contrasting it with the religious classification ‘Jew.’ It is conjectured that Acts was written sometime between 65-80 C.E. (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 160 NT), which puts it quite close chronologically to the probable writing of Mark (c. 70 C.E.).

In the Hellenistic city-states the ‘Greeks’ made up the free citizenry. Education and civic status were closely connected, and the gymnasium was the precondition for full citizenship (Theissen 1991, 72). H. Bengtson surmises that ‘Hellenes’ refers to “all the men and women in the Syrian/Phoenician cities who belonged to the privileged upper class of civic society, the ‘Hellenes,’ without regard to their ethnic origin or descent (in Theissen 1991, 72). When Mk 7:26 speaks of a ‘Greek woman’ who is Syrophoenician by birth, the only explanation for this contrast is that the woman belonged to the privileged group of ‘Hellenes’ although she was by birth a Syrophoenician” (72).


Hans Windisch, “Ἐλλην, Ἑλλάς, Ἑλληνικός, Ἑλληνίς, Ἑλληνιστός, Ἑλληνιστή,” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. “The Jews had translated the Hebrew into Greek as early as the [third] century B.C.E. in Alexandria, and most of the Apocrypha was written in that language” (John McRay, “Greece,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Certainly there were different responses to the term Ἐλληνιος during different periods in Jewish history. It became a religious matter during the rule of Antiochus IV Epiphanes, when he imposed pagan ritual upon the Jews. The Jews resisted and, as documented in 2 Mc 4:36, 11:2, the term ‘Greek’ was associated with anti-Jewish sentiments (H. Bietenhard, “Ἐλλην,” in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology). Later, however, Jewish writers such as Josephus and Philo distinguished between the various types of Gentiles (ἑθνη), such as the Ἐλληνιος, Ἀγυπτιοι, Χαλδαιοι (Greeks, Egyptians, and Chaldeans) (Hans Windisch,
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28 Syria is mentioned only once in each of the other Synoptic Gospels: in Mt 4:24 and in Lk 4:27. In the other books of the New Testament, it is mentioned five times in Acts (15:23, 41; 18:18; 20:3; 21:3) and once in Galatians (1:21) (Aland 1983, 1236).

29 As mentioned in chapter 1, the prefix denotes that part of Phoenicia that belonged to Syria, “in distinction from Libophoenicia, of the Carthaginian district in the north of Africa” (Gould 1961, 135; Pokorny 1995, 323). ‘Phoenicia’ meant ‘dark red’ and applied to the people and the region known for dyes of this colour (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

30 Judean sources from the sixth century B.C.E. praise Phoenicians for their economic and cultural superiority, often including them with the Greeks. These Judean references include: Gn 10:4; Jer 2:10, 31:10; Ez 27:6; Nm 24:24; Is 23:1,12; Dn 11:30; 1 Mc 1:1, 8:5 (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

31 ‘Syria’ comes from the Greek, while the Hebrew word is ‘Aram (referring to the people as the Arameans) (Odelain and Ségineau 1981, 35). The Arameans are said to be originally from Kir, which is perhaps identical to Ur in Lower Mesopotamia; their language is Aramaic (Odelain and Ségineau 1981, 34). After the Israelites returned from their exile in Babylon (538 B.C.E.), “the Aramaic language (the language of Syria) came into common use among the Jews of Palestine . . . and thus was the medium in which Jesus spoke. . . . Hebrew was largely superseded by Aramaic” (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 491 OT, NRSV 2 Kgs 18:26). It is generally accepted that Jesus spoke in Aramaic due to the use of Aramaic words in the Markan text (which appear in Greek transliteration): Ταλίθα κομή (‘Little girl, get up!’) to Jairus’ daughter (5:41); Εὔφαγεν (‘Be opened’) to the deaf man with the speech impediment—who was presumably a Gentile (since he was in the region of the Decapolis) (7:34); Ἀββᾶ (‘Father’) to God while Jesus prayed (14:36); Ελων ἐλοι λέμα σαβάχθαι (‘My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?’) to God while Jesus is hanging on the cross (15:34)—which is the Aramaic translation of the Hebrew Ps 22:1.

32 Tyre “derives its name from the rocky island on which it is located” (Odelain and Ségineau 1981, 376). Biblical references to Tyre’s locations are found in Ez 26:4-5, 14; cf. 27:3-4,32 (Odelain and Ségineau 1981, 376).

33 Some think that τὰ οἵτινες meant boundary only and that Jesus is not in the Gentile territory, but that is not its use elsewhere in the New Testament; Mk 7:31 shows Jesus in Gentile territory by including καὶ Σιδῶνος (Gould 1961, 134). When Tyre and Sidon are named together, “the two cities designate first of all a region, namely, the Phoenician coast 2 S 24:6-7; 1 Ch 22:4; Ezr 3:7; Jdt 2:28; 1 M 5:15; Is 23:1-12; Jr 47:4; Ezek 27:8; Jl 4:4; Ze 9:2-3; Acts 12:20, whose kings are sometimes called kings of Tyre, 1 S 5:11, sometimes kings of the Sidonians, 1 K 16:31 sometimes kings of Tyre and Sidon, Jr 25:22; 27:3” (Odelain and Ségineau 1981, 376).

34 There may be a desire on the part of the narrator to show Jesus, the Messiah, visiting Tyre; Psalms 45 and 87, and 1 Kgs 9:1-14 connect the Jews with that area (Derrett 1977, 146; Gundry-Volf 1995, 516). Ps 87:4 talks of the citizens of Zion (the Jews) who live in every country, including Tyre; presumably Jesus is staying at the house of a fellow Jew.
35Since Tyre was a rich commercial city and minted its own coinage, “their coins during the Greco-Roman period featured a wreathed head of Baal-Melqart on their obverse, and a leftward striding eagle on the reverse (with the inscription TYROU HIERAS KAI ASYLLOU, ‘Tyre, the holy city of refuge’)” (G.L. Archer Jr., “χρημα,” in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology). The Tyrian shekel was generally preferred in Palestine due to its silver content and standardized weight and was used in daily life and in business transactions; these coins were not accepted for use in worship at the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem due to their idolatrous images.

36Scholars list many references in Mark to Jesus’ withdrawal or retiring (Burkill 1972, 63; The Companion Bible [1990], 1387; Malbon 1986, 111-112). Burkill (1972) sees Jesus’ retreating as a persistent motif in 6:31-8:26, and give examples of what Jesus does in each instance: to pray privately and to extend the field of ministry (1:35-39, 6:45f); to withdraw from multitude to preach elsewhere (4:35f; 5:19f); to rest and eat (6:31, 3:20); and to privately instruct disciples (9:30) (63). Malbon (1986) focuses on the withdrawal Jesus does with his disciples (111-112). Kee (1977) thinks Jesus is seeking in this scene a period of retreat and renewal (such as found in cases of prophetic vocation, such as Elijah in 1 Kgs 19) (69).

37For a discussion about the relationship between Tyre and Israel as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, refer to the following: Odelain and Séguineau 1991, 376; Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary. There were good relations between Tyre and Israel during the time of David and Solomon, who were friends with Hiram of Tyre (1 Sm 5:11; 1 Chr 14:1; 1 Kgs 5:15-16; 7:13-47; 9:10-14; cf. Am 1:9). The wealth, wisdom, and world-renown that Ezekiel admired in the king of Tyre was ascribed to Solomon (1 Kgs 3:1-15; 5:1-14; Ez 28:1-5).

The relations between these two countries were consummated in the marriage between Ahab and the Tyrian princess, Jezebel (1 Kgs 16:31). Other royal connections between Tyre and Israel are discussed in Psalm 45: v. 12 describes how the daughter of Tyre will sue for the Lord’s favour; v. 13 discusses Tyre’s grandeur and wealth. This psalm is presumably an ode for a royal wedding between a Phoenician queen and a Jewish king.

38It would be a misconception to think that there were not also times of conflict between the two regions in that time period. The Arameans “appear in almost constant conflict with Israel: even back in the time of the Conquest . . . and later under David, 2 Sm 10:15-18 . . . 1 Chr 19: 16-19; cf. 2 Sm 8:12; and at the time of the destruction of Jerusalem, 2 Kgs 24:2; Jer 35:11” (Odelain and Séguineau 1981, 34). Pss 83:8 and 87:4, and Jer 25:22, associate Tyre with Israel’s traditional enemies (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

In the first mention of a particular Phoenician city in the Hebrew Scriptures (Ez 26-28), Ezekiel describes an imagined capture and destruction of Tyre and the effect it would have on Mediterranean trade and the Phoenician way of life. When Tyre’s fall is predicted by the prophets, it is because Tyre was trying to include Israel in military alliances of which Yahweh disproved, and because Tyre rejoiced at the fall of Jerusalem. For the prophetic fall of Tyre, see Is 23; Ez 26-28; cf. 29:18; Jer 47:4. For further explanation as to why it fell, see Ez 26:2; cf. Ps 83:8; Am 1:9-10 (Odelain and Séguineau 1981, 376). Tyre regains its wealth, however (Is 23:17-18), and “it is won over to [H]ellenism in the time of the Maccabees, 2 M 4:18; cf. 4:44, 49” (376).
39 See Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary. Because Tyre stands at the edge of the sea, and has extensive trade, it is a city of great wealth. Biblical references to Tyre’s wealth include Is 23:3; Ez 27:3, 9, 12-25; 28:4-5, 13, 16; Zec 9:3; cf. Ps 45:12 (Daughter of Tyre); Neh 12:16; 2 Mc 4:32; Acts 12:20. Tyre is compared to ‘a ship perfect in beauty,’ Ez 27:3-9 (Odelain and Séguineau 1981, 376). Josephus, the Jewish historian, ascribes preeminence to Tyre among Phoenician cities (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

40 Gundry-Volf (1995) explains further:

The Galilean back-country and rural regions around Tyre, where Jewish farmers could be found, produced most of the food for the city-dwellers. But the latter bought up and stored so much of the harvest for themselves each season and during times of crisis that the countryfolk did not have enough. Tyre and Sidon also posed a political threat to the Jews because the cities pursued a policy of territorial expansion to the south and to the east, which at times proved successful. So when a Syrophoenician Hellenist woman from this region seeks out help from Jesus, who has deliberately withdrawn from the public eye, her mission seems doomed from the start. (516)

Gundry-Volf’s sources for these comments include Josephus’ Ap 1.110; Bell 3.35; 4.105 with Ant 13.13.154; in the Roman period, Ant 18.153 (1995, 516). She also lists 1 Kgs 9:10-14, but as I mentioned before, this passage seems simply to indicate that there were times when there was commercial exchange between King Solomon and King Hiram of Tyre; the story shows that there was territorial exchange between the two countries and, although Hiram complained about the quality of the cities, no threat was incurred between the two because of it.

41 For an in-depth examination of the relationship between the border regions of Tyre and Galilee, see Theissen (1991) and Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary.

42 The elaborate mosaic floor of the triclinium were found in archaeological digs in both Sepphoris in central Galilee, as well as in Daphne (a suburb of Antioch) (Osiek and Balch 1997, 13-14). Since Jesus’ chosen centre of ministry was Capernaum (which stands on a main trade route between Egypt and Syria), he certainly had contacts with the wider world (seen in his travels to Tyre, Caesarea Philippi, and the region of the Decapolis).

43 These upper-class elaborate private homes would have stood in stark contrast with the “humble houses like those in a Galilean fishing village exposed by the excavations at the house of Peter in Capernaum, on the northwestern corner of the Lake of Galilee” (Osiek and Balch 1997, 14).

44 The Hebrew Bible refers to the Phoenician religion as the worship of Baal and his consort; for a discussion of this, refer to John Day, “Asherah” and “Ashtoreth,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary. The Canaanite goddesses Asherah and Ashtoreth (more commonly known as Astarte) are both mentioned in the Hebrew Bible in connection with Baal. Prior to the discovery of some Ugaritic texts, some scholars wrongly equated Asherah and Astarte. These two goddesses, along with the goddess Anath, are all portrayed at times as Baal’s consort: Anath “plays the preponderant role as Baal’s consort in the Ugaritic texts,” Astarte plays that role in the
Hebrew Bible and in Phoenician inscriptions, and Ashtoreth is also featured in that role in the Hebrew Bible.

There are many Hebrew Biblical references to the Israelites turning away from Yahweh and worshipping the foreign gods of the Canaanites; Canaan is "an area of the Palestino-Phoenician coast, former name of the Promised Land, which became the land of: ISRAEL. . . . The territory of Canaan extends from southern Phoenicia . . . that is, from the region of Tyre and Sidon . . . to the Negreb" (Odelain and Séguineau 79). Jgs 2:11-14 mentions how, after the time of Joshua, the Israelites were influenced by the Canaanites, and turned away from worshipping Yahweh, to worshipping Baal and his consort, Astarte. 1 Kgs 11:5 says how Solomon followed Astarte/Ashtoreth, the goddess of the Sidonians/Phoenicians (Brenner 1985, 23).

The Elijah narrative (1 Kgs 18:20) refers to the 450 prophets of Baal and 450 of Asherah who eat at Jezebel’s table (a princess of Syria and the queen of Israel) (Philip C. Schmitz, “Phoenician Religion,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Brenner (1985) notes that by their sitting at ‘Jezebel’s table’ (rather than Ahab’s) she is associated as the patroness of these cults (22).

From archaeological evidence, the Tyrians are shown to be remarkably eclectic in religious matters; until the end of the millennium, they worshipped Egyptian and Greek gods as well as indigenous gods (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Greek sources describe the coastal cities as having an eclectic system derived from Greek theogony and oriental cosmology. In Tyre the main worship was of Baal (god of earth) and his consort Astarte. Indigenous gods included Ata and Sasam, as well other gods such as Horon (lord of death). Odelain and Séguineau (1981) lists the gods of Phoenicia as Anath, Astarte, Baal, Baal-shamem, El, Hadad, Hadad-Rimmon, Horon, and Melkart (306); Melkart is the local god of Tyre (377).

"The relative position of a stasis statement of a trait may turn out to be significant at the event-level as well" (Chatman 1978, 130). What the woman ‘is’--Greek and Syrophoenician by race--has a significant impact on Jesus’ response to her.

Some interpreters think that Jesus portrays the dogs as being domestic animals. Pokorny (1995) thinks in Jesus’ metaphor the dogs belong to the children as tolerated members of the same household (in spite of their low status) (325); Taylor (1966) is of the same opinion (350). Mann (1986) suggests that the use of the diminutive is a way of saying they are domestic animals (321). Jesus’ initial view of dogs does not include them as domestic animals but instead places them at a distance from the table; his view changes due to the woman’s saying, and he accepts them as a tolerated part of the household.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, dogs are portrayed as scavengers that prowl about the outskirts of towns as well as in town (Ps 59:6, 14; 1 Kgs 14:11), that eat their own vomit (Prv 26:11), that eat what is unclean (Ex 22:31), that eat human flesh (1 Kgs 14:11; 16:4; 21:23-24; 2 Kgs 9:10, 36; Jer 15:3), and that lick up the blood of those that die (including the kings of Israel who go against God’s will) (1 Kgs 21:19; 22:38; Ps 68:23).

Shepherd dogs being bred and used is described in the Hebrew Bible in Is 56:10, 11 and Jb 30:1 (Jehuda Feliks, “Dogs,” in Encyclopedia Judaica; France 1986, 50). “Divergent views were expressed by the sages on the rearing of dogs. The Mishnah says: ‘One should not rear a
dog unless it is kept on a chain' (Bk 7.7). There was also opposition to rearing dogs in Erez Israel, R. Eleazar declaring that 'he who rears dogs is like one who rears swine' (ibib. TB 83a)” (Jehuda Feliks, “Dogs,” in Encyclopedia Judaica). Despite these prescriptive comments, there exists descriptive archaeological evidence that dogs were used by some Jews: “[t]he use of hunting dogs is attested by an ivory comb from Megiddo showing a dog hunting a mountain goat. Mosaics dating from mishnaic and talmudic times also depict dogs” (Jehuda Feliks, “Dogs,” in Encyclopedia Judaica).


This show of humility is done by Israelites (David before Saul in 1 Sm 24:14; Mephibosheth before David in 2 Sm 9:8), as well as by individuals from other ethnic groups. Hazael, a Syrian, is portrayed as insulting himself by describing himself as a ‘dog’ before the Israelite prophet Elijah (2 Kgs 8:13); this reference shall be discussed in the section on analogues.

In the Hebrew Scriptures, the word keleb (‘dog’) may have been a technical term for a cultic functionary (Dt 23:19) (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary); more specifically, it may have meant a male cultic prostitute, although this is debatable (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 248 OT; Stager 1991; Elaine Adler Goodfriend, “Prostitution (OT),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). In the ancient Near East (ANE) there are ‘dog’ references that mean a ‘faithful servant,’ which could include the technical term for a cultic functionary (Elaine Adler Goodfriend, “Prostitution (OT),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Although some believe there is no conclusive extrabiblical proof of a ‘dog’ referring to male cultic prostitutes, it is arguable that Dt 23:18 could refer to either a cultic servant or a literal canine (Elaine Adler Goodfriend, “Prostitution (OT),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Stager (1991) suggests that this passage in Deuteronomy needs to be taken in context with the mid-fifth century B.C.E. plaque found in the Phoenician port city of Kition; the plaque lists temple personnel, including klbm (the Phoenician term for ‘dogs’) (40-41). Stager argues that, in light of the Kition plaque, Dt 23:18 refers to the “dogs and puppies (or better, their attendants) [who] were thus paid a sum for services rendered, probably in the temples of Mukol” for the healings in which the dogs were involved (41). The money received for this kind of work (‘the wages of a dog’ Dt 23:18) would understandably not be welcome in the Temple of Yahweh.

The Alexander sarcophagus is from Sidon, in the late fourth century B.C.E. In ancient Greece, special burials were done for beloved pets, with inscriptions such as this one penned by the poet Tymnes in about 300 B.C.E.: “The stone tells that it [the grave] contains here the white Milesian dog, Eumelos’ faithful guardian. They called him ‘Bull’ while he lived, but now the silent paths of night possess his voice” (Stager 1991, 38).
Although it is unclear whether Jesus’ character recognizes traits in the woman that suggest that she is a Cynic/dog (which is what Downing (1992) suggests), it is reasonable within that culture that this upper-class woman (if she was a Cynic) would have the skills to respond to Jesus’ metaphorical insult. There skills, however, do not just come with being a Cynic; they exist as necessary requirements within an honour-shame society, which uses the game of challenge-riposte as a method to uphold/regain one’s honour. The game of challenge-riposte shall be discussed in the section on speech representation.

The unexplained dog cemetery that was uncovered at Ashkelon is from the Persian period (500-450 B.C.E.). Seven hundred partial or complete dog carcasses were found, with sixty to seventy percent of the animals being puppies: “Each dog carcass was carefully and individually placed in a shallow pit dug into the fill of what had previously been a warehouse” (Stager 1991, 30-31). The dogs died of natural causes and not by butchering, nor does it appear that they were eaten or sacrificed (Stager 1991, 31-32). Due to the special burials that they received, and the fact that even puppies were included, Stager (1991) believes that the Phoenicians considered the dogs sacred. Since part of the area that contains the Ashkelon dog cemetery has eroded into the sea, it is possible “that it was originally much larger, with dog burials probably numbering in the thousands. This is by far the largest animal cemetery of any kind known in the ancient world” (30). After considering the other cultures in this cosmopolitan centre, he concludes that “[t]he only people with sufficient authority and a large enough population to account for so many dog burials in such a short time (fifty years) were the Phoenicians. . . . Presumably the dog became associated with healing because of the curative powers evident from licking its own wounds or sores” (Stager 1991, 39).

Although there are no known burial pits among “either the Philistines, who continued to live in the city at this time, or among the Phoenicians, who ruled the city in behalf of the Persian empire, although seven dog burials from the same period were uncovered at neighboring Ashdod” (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary), several dogs were found buried at Gezer, in the Hellenistic period (Stager 1991, 39). Thirty-three dog burials were also found at Isin (in Mesopotamia), under the ramp leading to the temple of Gula (the goddess of healing); these dogs were buried in much the same manner as the Ashkelon dogs and had a similar mortality profile (42). Therefore, it is probable that the Ashkelon dogs roamed around the temple of a healing deity and were involved in the healing cult, just as were the dogs in Isin (42).

Stager (1991) makes an interesting survey of the various healing deities associated with dogs (40-41). One neo-Assyrian text in cuneiform suggests that even touching the sacred dog was sufficient to heal: “If a man goes to the temple . . . if he touches the dog of Gula (the goddess of healing), he is clean” (39). The Greek god Asklepios’ healing cult at Epidaurus had a dormitory, where clients hoped in the night to have Asklepios appear to them in a dream and cure them, or that they might be visited by sacred dogs or snakes, whose tongues were believed to have healing powers (41). The Kition plaque, which was mentioned earlier, is contemporaneous to the dog and puppy burials at Ashkelon. This plaque, from the Phoenician port city of Kition, lists personnel associated with the temples of Astarte, the goddess of fertility, and the plague and healing god Mukol; listed among the personnel are klbm (Phoenician for ‘dogs’). With this in mind, Stager suggests that it is possible that the dogs in Ashkelon were paid for services rendered for healing, “probably in the temples of Mukol or Resheph-Mukol” (41); he is clear that until a temple or other cultic architecture is found on the site, his hypothesis must be “regarded as unconfirmed” (42). Botterweck also refers to ‘the dog’ symbolizing two

58 Both Phoenicians and Hittites used the term ‘dog’ in a religious context (Jakob-Rost in Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). See n. 53 for further discussion of this term.

59 In an example of “one exorcism type, an image of Lamastu is made, then the offerer places the heart of a young pig in its mouth. She is given a black dog as her servant and is told to go off to the mountains to hunt young animals instead of children”; Lamastu is given various provisions (including bread) and is banished to the underworld (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). For Mesopotamians, “Lamastu was the female demon of sickness and fever responsible for the death of children, on whose flesh and blood she was thought to feed” (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Dogs are associated with exorcisms in the ANE, especially with little children. Dogs and pigs were both scavengers in the ancient world. Firmage provides other examples from the ANE in regards to dogs and religious ritual: “Dogs, and particularly puppies, played a role in rites for the elimination of impurity and disease in both Anatolia and Mesopotamia. . . . In the Tunnawi ritual, a pig and a dog are waived over a patient in order to absorb his illness before they are burned”; in the Hittite and Assyrian rituals, the images of dogs were used to exorcise evil spirits from the royal palaces (Edwin Firmage, “Zoology (Fauna),” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). Further research into the connection between healings/exorcisms and dogs would be required to establish a strong connection in the case of an exegesis of Mk 7:24-30, but these three findings point the way for that research.

60 Is 66:3 implies that dogs were used in idolatrous “Canaanitish” sacrifices (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 957 OT n. 66:3-4). In Judaism, dogs are seen as unclean creatures and therefore unacceptable for sacrificial purposes.

61 In Mesopotamian literature, the term ‘dog’ was one of many expressions of modesty in letters (e.g., ‘slave,’ ‘dust of your feet,’ ‘clay on which you step,’ ‘groom’); these terms are most appropriately understood as “humility formulas” (G. Johannes Botterweck, “keleb,” in Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament).


64 Immortality was carried on through one’s children, since they carried on the family lineage (Gn 48:16). A favorite image was that of father, mother, and many children around the table, showing the prosperity of the family due to the blessings of God (Ps 128:3-4) (Joseph A. Grassi, “Child, Children,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary). (The Septuagint version of Ps 128:3-4 uses the Greek term οἱ νεόντες—‘the sons’—to describe the children that are around the
table, since it is the sons who would continue to provide the material prosperity for the family.) Although there was special esteem for children (blessings were given to them before the parents' death), they were low in social status; older people had the high status. The scriptures indicate that, even though the oldest son is typically the one to inherit the place of head of the household, God acts in surprising ways through a younger child; examples of this are found in the stories of Joseph, David, and Solomon—the last can come first.

65 For a discussion of the meanings for the words used for children, see the following: A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature, 2nd ed., s.v. “παῖς, παιδίον, νεοῦ, τό” and “παιδίον, παιδίς, ὁ ὄρη”; Albrecht Oepke, “παις, παιδίον, παιδάριον, τέκνον, τεκνίον, βρέφος” in Theological Dictionary of the New Testament. παιδίον is the diminutive form for παις. παιδίον is often thought to refer to a young child, from an newborn child up to the age of seven. In the case of Mark, however, the term παις (which is often the term used for age seven to fourteen), is not in use (Aland 1983, 1077).


67 Guelich (1989) believes that πρώτον is a “later, temporal qualification” since the woman’s reply does not include a temporal reference, but she understands that Jesus’ refusal of help is “due to Israel’s privilege exclusively” (387). I disagree, since the woman’s answer does not address when the dogs get the bread, but that even the dogs get the crumbs and that it is during the meal.

68 Neufeld’s (1996) analysis is focused on Mk 3:21 but provides an overview of the literature on eating and food in Mark.


70 Most meals were ceremonies that indicated existing social groups, and would include some form of religious rite, usually prayer or libation to a divinity (Osiek and Balch 1997, 45). Although food purity was a concern, particularly for the Jews, the general urban population was more concerned about “who would share the common table and where in terms of status ranking the guests would be placed” (46).

71 For more informal, intimate family meals, probably both women and children were present with men. For formal meals, the sexes were usually seated in separate areas; this was more of a Greek custom, and in those areas under Roman custom and influence, married women would often eat with their husbands (Osiek and Balch 1997, 45, 59). Perhaps being of a household where no appropriate male seems to be the head, she shows herself to be independent in her actions (more along the lines of Roman custom).

72 προσπιπτω means “[I] prostrate [myself] before someone, implying supplication” (which is different to some extent from προσκυνεω “[I] prostrate [myself] before someone as an act of reverence, fear, or supplication”) (Louw and Nida 1988, 218). προσπιπτω appears in
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Mark when the unclean spirits from the crowd from all over—including Tyre—fall down before Jesus, crying out, “You are the Son of God” (3:11); and when the hemorrhaging woman falls down before Jesus (5:33); and when the Greek Syrophoenician woman falls down before Jesus (7:25). \( \pi ρ ο σ κυ νέ ω \) appears in Mark when the Gerasene demoniac calls Jesus ‘Son of God’ (5:6) and when the soldiers mock Jesus as King of the Jews and pretend to bend down on their knees to worship him (15:19). The term \( \pi ι π τ ι w \) also appears in Mark, when the seeds fall on the ground in the sower parable (4:4, 5, 7, 8); when Jairus falls at Jesus’ feet (5:22); when the epileptic boy falls on the ground (9:20); and when Jesus in Gethsemane falls on the ground to pray (14:35). Five of these cases involve suppliants, and three involve the suppliants (rather than the demons).

73 The gesture of kneeling at someone’s feet is also part of “the respect shown as fairly standard in an approach to a teacher with a reputation, as the normal way to ask for attention from an acknowledged superior” (Downing 1992, 136).

74 The other verbs within the speech representations are in a metaphorical saying and therefore could be in a present form in both the third-person as well as the first-person dialogue (\( o ν \ γ α ρ \ \varepsilon \sigma τ i n \ k a l ω n \) ‘for it is not good’ 7:27; \( \varepsilon \sigma θ i ου σ i n \), the dogs ‘eat’ 7:28).

75 The pronominalization is less clear in 7:27, since Jesus uses a metaphor rather than speaking to the woman directly; it is slightly more clear when she addresses him with a vocative, \( K ο ρ i e \) (‘Sir’) (7:28). The pronominalization clearly shows direct speech when Jesus responds to her comment by saying \( \ups i χ e \) and \( \tau η s \ \theta υ γ η α τ ρ ο s \) (‘you may go home’ and ‘your daughter’) (7:29).

76 There are three categories for discussing narrators’ and characters’ speech acts: locution (making a sentence according to rules of grammar); illocution (saying a sentence; i.e., commanding, predicting); and perlocution (if the intention of the illocution is accomplished; i.e., teach, persuade, amuse) (Austin in Chatman 1978, 161). It would seem that there are various illocutions, as I indicate with the verbs in single quotation marks, but few perlocutions; the woman has a perlocution in that she ‘persuades’ Jesus to heal her daughter.

77 The Companion Bible [1990] describes the phrase ‘answered and said’ as an idiom. An idiom is “the peculiar usage of words and phrases, as illustrated in the language peculiar to one nation or tribe, as opposed to other languages or dialects”; this idiom is considered “a Hebraism” (cf. Dt 1:41, Mt 15:26) (1399, 1344, app. 11). ‘He answered and he said’ is a fixed convention in biblical literature, “to indicate statement and response in dialogue” (Alter 1981, 65).

78 Tannen (1986) believes that verbs in the historic present draw attention to what is said in first-person dialogue (324). Zerwick and Grosvenor (1974), however, think that the “historic present [is] perhaps felt as more historic than present” (129).

79 In his system, Philo “sought to restate Jewish belief in terms of Greek philosophy” (H. Bietenhard, “Ελληνιζμός” in The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology). 80 The eight female characters who speak in first-person dialogue form to another character in Mark are as follows: the hemorrhaging woman to herself (5:28); Herodias’ daughter to Herodias, then to Herod (6:24, 25); Herodias to her daughter (6:24); the Greek Syrophoenician
woman to Jesus (7:28); the high priest’s servant-girl to Peter (14:67, 69); and Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome to each other (16:3). Of those eight, besides first-person dialogue: the narrator uses the narratized dialogue form when the hemorrhaging woman speaks to Jesus (5:33); the Greek Syrophoenician woman uses third-person dialogue form when she first speaks to Jesus (7:26); and Herodias’ daughter and the high priest’s servant-girl both use first-person dialogue twice (6:24, 25; 16:67, 69).

81 The one woman who speaks in narratized dialogue form is Jesus’ mother (3:31); it is possible that his sisters were also there, sending to him to come out to see them (3:32) (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 52 NT). Jesus’ mother, sisters, and brothers call to him, when they are concerned about his sanity (3:21). The text is somewhat unclear as to who among the mother and the brothers did the calling: ἐξω στήκοντες ἀπέστειλαν πρὸς αὐτὸν καλοῦντες αὐτὸν (‘standing outside, they sent to him and called him’) (3:31). The narratized dialogue intimates that the mother and brothers spoke to someone and that that message was sent up to Jesus. They do not seem to speak to Jesus directly.

82 It appears that Jesus speaks in third-person dialogue form to both Jairus and his wife after their daughter gets up and walks about: καὶ διεστείλατο αὐτοῖς πολλὰ ἵνα μηδεὶς γνῶι τοῦτο, καὶ ἐπεν δοθῆναι αὐτῇ φαγεῖν (‘and he strictly ordered them that no one should know this, and told them to give her something to eat’) (5:43).

83 Jesus’ response to a character is considered a reliable source for the Markan reader (Williams 1994, 84); his initial negative response to the woman in Mk 7:24-30 encourages the reader to also view the woman negatively. What is clear is that the initial epithets (her being a Greek Syrophoenician mother with a possessed daughter, on her own without a male relative) are seen as negative. This negative view of her is supported by Jesus’ moral evaluation of her and her daughter as ‘dogs.’

84 Williams (1994) considers what happens if a character is initially positively viewed (association) and then negatively viewed (dissociation): the reader is called to judge not only the character’s inadequate response to Jesus, but his/her own response as well (87-88). Williams does not consider, however, what happens when a character is initially negatively viewed (dissociation) and then positively viewed (association). I would speculate that the initial dissociation of the reader with a character, then association (as in the case of the Greek Syrophoenician woman), may have a stronger positive impact on the reader than an initial association with a character, then dissociation (as in the case of the disciples). The final association leaves a more positive message about what can be done to be part of the kingdom of God. It still would involve the reader in self-evaluation (to see if the reader already measures up to the standards set by the woman), but at least in this case there are positive results to aspire to.

85 For the references for these traits in existing literature on Mk 7:24-30, see chapter 1, n. 68.

86 Faith is more the point of the story of the hemorrhaging woman, where it is explicitly commented upon (5:25-34).

87 Grassi (1988) also thinks that the woman has ‘special insight’ or ‘inside knowledge’ since she knows where Jesus is (11). I do not think that is necessarily valid. The woman ‘having heard’ (ἀκούσασα) about Jesus presumably is a result of contact with someone in ‘the gossip network’ who has told her that he is in the region and that he is a healer. The narrator does not...
inform us of the details, but it does not seem like a supernatural occurrence. If there is any 'special insight,' I would suggest that it is Jesus who exhibits it in the story, when he says that the demon has left the woman's daughter.

In building his argument about the woman in Mk 7:24-30 being a Cynic, Downing (1992) reviews a commentary on this story by the patristic father John Chrysostom, from chapter 52 of his Commentary on Matthew (from the end of the fourth century C.E.). The various adjectives that Chrysostom uses to describe the woman in the story were commonly used to describe Cynics at that time: boldness, endurance, excellence, understanding, and effective strength (145). These descriptions are apt for the woman, but the most important points come when Chrysostom describes her as having excellence and being a woman philosopher. Downing explains that "Cynics, and Cynic-tinged Stoics, of course, allow that excellence (aperen) is the same for women as for men, they are just as capable of 'philosophizing,' living and articulating life as it should be lived" (134); it was only the Cynics who had a tradition of women philosophizing in public (145).

Persistence is an overt sign of faith (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 131). She also shows endurance in the face of an insult (Downing 1992, 145). Mann (1986) thinks that besides the woman's wit, it is her persistence that results in her getting what she wants (321).

For further discussion on the following Markan topics, refer to these works: minor characters (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 129-136; Malbon 1986, 1994; Williams 1994; see also Appendix C for further discussion of minor characters); gender representation and male-female relations (Munro 1982; Malbon 1983; Kopas 1985; Grassi 1988; Beavis 1988; Tufariua 1990; Kee 1992; Dewey 1993, 1997); suppliants with faith (Beavis 1988; Rhoads 1994); healing in Mark (Dewey 1993; Rhoads 1994); how faith is portrayed (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 108, 130-131; Beavis 1988); the female subgroup of suppliants (Selvidge 1990; Dewey 1993); Jew-Gentile relations (Sandmel 1978; Theissen 1991; Malbon 1992; Rhoads 1994); clean/unclean (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 82, 105-106); insider/outsider (Malbon 1983, 42-43; Rhoads 1994, 365-366); debater with Jesus (Rhoads 1994). Being a minor character and a suppliant with faith are areas already well-explored in the literature on Mk 7:24-30. Being a debater with Jesus has not yet been sufficiently examined; this discussion should be done within the context of the other Markan controversy dialogues, so it awaits future research.

Although the woman is intentionally described by the Markan narrator as both 'Greek' and 'Syrophoenician,' she is the only one described that way. These two character indicators are significant for understanding the story within Mk 7:24-30. Yet for the purposes of resolving her character back into the larger Markan narrative, what is significant is that she is Gentile. It is therefore necessary to combine these two descriptors into the larger category of the woman being 'Gentile.'

Mark describes women in language that is also used to depict discipleship, particularly at the end when "the burden of proclaiming the good news is laid on the women when the twelve male disciples were nowhere to be found" (Rhoads 1994, 368). Although the women fail to proclaim the news in that instance, the Markan narrator suggests that it is acceptable for women to be asked to do so.

The female characters in Mark include the following: Simon's mother-in-law (1:30-31); Jesus' mother and sisters (3:31-35); Jairus' wife and daughter (5:22-24, 35-43); the
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hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34); Herodias and her daughter (6:17-29); the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30); the poor widow at the temple treasury (12:41-44); the woman who anoints Jesus (14:3-9); the high priest’s servant-girl (14:66-69); Mary Magdalene, Mary (mother of James the younger and of Joses), and Salome (15:40-41, 47, 16:1-8). Women are also likely to be in the crowds that are healed, fed, and taught by Jesus; they are also mentioned in parabolic and other teaching material (Munro 1982, 226). Munro (1982) mentions there being only thirteen female characters in Mark; since she does not list the actual characters, it is difficult to ascertain which of the above characters she does not include (226).

There are specific characters in the healing scenes who can be compared with the Greek Syrophoenician woman. They fall into the following subgroups: females, Gentiles, and parents. In this section, I focus on the females involved with healings. I shall discuss the Gentiles involved in healings stories within the analogue section on Gentiles. I make a few comments about these healings in n. 128.

Comparing healings involving parents is another area of future research. Besides the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30), these healings include the stories about Jairus, his wife and their daughter (5:21-24, 35-43) and the man with the epileptic son (9:14-29). The former has been touched on already in the review of the literature and in this chapter (while discussing Jesus’ dialogues with women in Mark). The latter story also serves as an analogue to the story about the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter, and this comparison is a topic for future research.

Besides serving Jesus and the disciples, Simon’s mother-in-law’s actions are passive: Jesus raises her from the bed by holding her hand, and the fever leaves her. The only speech in the scene is when the disciples tell Jesus about her (in third-person dialogue form); the narrator does not portray the mother-in-law speaking on her own behalf.

The reader is informed about the background of the hemorrhaging woman’s illness (5:25-26), about her thoughts (5:28), and about her feelings (“she felt in her body that she was healed of her disease” 5:29; the woman came “in fear and trembling” 5:33).

In the Hebrew Bible, a woman who is having a discharge of blood is considered unclean (Lv 15:19-30). For a detailed examination of the story about the hemorrhaging woman and its cultic implications, see Selvidge (1990).

As mentioned in the review of the literature, both Jairus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman come to Jesus with an entreaty on behalf of a needy daughter (5:23; 7:25), both Jairus and the Greek Syrophoenician woman fall at Jesus’ feet (5:22; 7:25).


The number of years that the woman hemorrhages in the previous scene (5:25), corresponds to the age of Jairus’ daughter (twelve) (5:42). Jesus stops the issuing of blood from one woman, and in the next story heals a young woman who will be able to live (and be able to menstruate). Unlike the hemorrhaging woman, the girl is portrayed as a stereotypical passive female; she is silent, and Jesus takes her hand, presumably to help her get up (Dewey 1993, 187).
Jesus’ mother and his sisters are the first mother and daughters that appear in Mark (3:31-35). The only information that the reader is given about them is that they are concerned about Jesus’ sanity, so they have come to restrain him (3:31-35). Jesus makes it clear that the only mother, and sister, and brother he recognizes are those that follow the will of God (3:34-35).

Herod Antipas and his ancestors were Idumeans. The Idumeans lived in the area south of Judea and converted to Judaism (Cohen 1988, 207). Herod Antipas’ father, Herod the Great, was depicted variously as “a Jew, a half-Jew, [or] a Gentile” (Cohen 1988, 207). Herod’s dynasty was not even considered Jewish by their opponents. Kopas (1985) mentions both Herodias and her daughter and the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter in her evaluation of the Markan women, but she does not compare them (916-917). Is the reader to understand that Herodias and her daughter are also Gentiles? If this was the opinion of most first-century readers, this would surely have an impact on the understanding of the relations between Jews and Gentiles within the Markan story world, but more specifically on creating a negative attitude towards the Greek Syrophoenician woman (who is the next Gentile woman to appear in Mark). Since only some of the population of first-century Israel would have considered Herod and his family as Gentiles, it is safer to compare Herodias and the Greek Syrophoenician woman on the basis of gender and on being mothers of daughters (rather than comparing them as being both Gentiles).

In comparing the two daughters, the Greek Syrophoenician’s daughter is not shown to hurt anyone even though she has a demon possessing her. In the story about the Gerasene demoniac, he is shown to hurt himself (5:3-5); the narrator does not mention to the reader whether the Greek Syrophoenician daughter hurts herself.

The narrator uses the same word to describe both Jairus’ daughter and Herodias’ daughter: κόρασιον (‘damsel/maid’) (5:41, 42; 6:22, 28, 28). An examination of ‘daughters’ in Mark is another area for future research.

As I mentioned earlier, there are both positive and negative presentations of foreign women in the Hebrew Bible. Due to the tensions that existed between the regions of Tyre and Galilee (Theissen 1991, 61-80), the Markan representation of a foreign woman from Tyre seems initially to be a negative one; due to this, I have chosen to compare the Greek Syrophoenician woman with Jezebel. Once the Markan woman shows her deeper nature as a character, a positive representation seems to be more appropriate and a comparison between the Markan woman and the widow of Zarephath is beneficial. The analogue about the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-24) has already been discussed in the review of the literature (in chapter 1). A few comments shall be made about the widow when I compare Jezebel to the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Comparisons between the Greek Syrophoenician woman and other positive representations of foreign women from the Hebrew Bible are also possible; this could prove an interesting area for future research.

As mentioned earlier (n. 10), Plutarch lived c. 46-125 C.E. It is unknown exactly when he wrote Dinner of the Seven Wise Men (Συμμόσιον τῶν ἐπτὰ σοφῶν)—which is part of the assembled works known as Moralia— but it would have been written post-Mark. This classic tale of the seven sages is retold by Plutarch, who adds in the female figure of Eumetis. Since Plutarch’s writing expresses the thoughts and values of classical Greek culture, it is a useful
resource for comparing a first-century Greek example of an influential and independent woman and the first-century Markan example of such a woman.

106 Another Phoenician princess who is portrayed as leading astray a king of Yahweh is Athaliah (2 Kgs 11=2 Chr 22-23:15); she was Joram’s wife, Judean king who was Ahab’s ally (Brenner 1985, 28). She is Ahab’s daughter, perhaps by Jezebel—making her half Israelite and half Tyrian (2 Kgs 8:18): “[i]t seems . . . that she was educated under the supervision of queen Jezebel and so influenced by that Tyrian princess. This makes plausible the character of Athaliah and her leanings to the Tyrian worship, which she witnessed daily in Samaria and later tried to introduce in Jerusalem” (28). Although her story is also about a powerful Phoenician woman, it reflects aspects already in Jezebel’s story; since it adds nothing significant as far as a comparison with the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s story, it shall not be explored further in this paper.

107 Although the Hebrew Scriptures only refer to Jezebel’s father being the king of Sidon, Josephus refers to him as being the king of Tyre as well (Brian Peckham, “Phoenicia, History of,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

108 Jezebel “was a partner in her husband’s reign. From the outset, her status was derived partly from the king’s delegation of governmental responsibilities to her, partly from her own personal authority. Some clues in the [Hebrew Bible] text, together with supporting evidence from elsewhere, hint that her religio-political power was anchored in Phoenician custom and was re-affirmed by Ahab after they became married. . . . The narrators were consistent in their attempts to minimize, even suppress, her important and well-established roles [princess/priestess/queen/queen-mother/regent/grand patroness of the Baal cult and prophets]” (Brenner 1985, 28). For further discussion about the information that indicates that Jezebel was recognized as a queen and a high priestess (even though the biblical narrators do not acknowledge her as such), see Brenner (1985, 19-26).

109 If Jezebel was indeed the high priestess and patroness of the Baal cult, she would wield substantial power (economic and political):

she could administer the expenditure and income of Baal’s central shrine in Samaria as well as temples in other localities. Regular sources of income such as tithes, vow-money, firstborn offerings, levies, voluntary contributions, and taxes made her into a person of considerable economic strength. She persecuted Yahweh’s prophets almost to the point of extinction (1 Kings 18.4, 13); it follows that she possessed the authority and means to carry out her wishes. Therefore Elijah himself escaped from her without delay (1 Kings 19.2-3). (Brenner 1985, 26)

110 When Elisha prophecizes about Jezebel’s demise, he says, “The dogs shall eat Jezebel in the territory of Jezreel, and no one shall bury her” (2 Kgs 9:10). It came to pass as Elisha had predicted; after she was killed, they went to bury her, but could only find her skull, her feet, and the palms of her hands: “In the territory of Jezreel the dogs shall eat the flesh of Jezebel; the corpse of Jezebel shall be like dung on the field in the territory of Jezreel, so that no one can say, This is Jezebel” (2 Kgs 9:36-37).

111 The structure of these two stories is as follows: Ahab and Jezebel are introduced to the reader as idolaters (1 Kgs 16:29-34); then Elijah is introduced as a prophet of Yahweh, and
Yahweh directs Elijah to tell Ahab that there shall be a drought (due to his idolatry) (1 Kgs 17:1); Elijah is directed to go to the desert and subsequently to the widow of Zarephath (1 Kgs 17:8-9); the story about Elijah and the widow occurs, in which the widow feeds Elijah, and then Elijah heals her son (1 Kgs 17:10-24); then Elijah is directed back to Ahab, and the reader is told how Jezebel has been killing off the prophets of Yahweh (1 Kgs 18:4); Elijah has a contest with the prophets of Baal and Asherah (who sit at Jezebel’s table), and after he wins he kills these other prophets (1 Kgs 18:17-41); when Jezebel hears about it, she threatens to kill Elijah (1 Kgs 19:1-3); Ahab is killed in battle against the Arameans/Syrians (1 Kgs 22:38); subsequently, Jezebel herself is killed, as was predicted by Elijah’s successor Elisha (2 Kgs 9:10, 33-37).

Eumetis is silent during the symposium, even when Cleodorus demeans her riddles; “to judge by her appearance, [she] would have liked to give him an answer, but restrained herself with all modesty,” so Aesop speaks out and successfully defends the wit of her riddles (154B-C).

Purity rules were obviously an issue for the later followers of Jesus, since the controversy over Jews sharing the table with Gentiles is described in Paul’s letter to the Galatians (2:11-14), written c. 50-60 C.E. (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983, 136; Harris 1988, 203).

Besides the Jesus movement ignoring the prescriptive laws against Jew-Gentile contact, these laws may not have been strictly adhered to in the real world by others as well. Since Jews in Galilee and Judea were living in Roman-governed provinces, they would have been in regular contact with Gentiles; as well, the Jews living in the Diaspora, including in the province of Syria (where Tyre is situated), would have been surrounded by Gentiles. As mentioned earlier, a codified law is more restrictive than what exists in social reality (Schüssler-Fiorenza 1983, 108-109). Historically, the Pharisees also left Jewish territory on embassies, holding conversations with non-Jews and coming into contact (if not physically then verbally) with prospective proselytes and semi-proselytes (Burkill 1972, 80). There was also “a lack of respect for ethnic boundaries in regard to healing . . . in the fact that professional (non-Jewish) magicians included Jesus’ name in their repertoires” (Dewey 1993, 190).

Rhoads and Michie (1982) look at the overall pattern of Jesus’ movement within Mark: Jesus moves from Galilee, to Gentile territory, and then on his journey to Jerusalem (68-70). Although that is the overall pattern in Jesus’ movement, he moves back and forth between Jewish and Gentile territory more frequently in chapters 5-8.

It is not always clear whether ἐθνοί (‘nations’) refers just to the Gentiles, or whether it includes the Jewish nations as well. Smith (1965) translates ἐθνοί both as ‘Gentiles’ (Mk 10:33, 42) and as ‘nation’ (Mark 11:7; 13:8, 8, 10) (99).

It is unclear whether the two bandits (who are crucified on either side of Jesus) are Jewish or Gentile (15:27). Caesar, the emperor, is also a Gentile character. He is only mentioned in passing, in a discussion about whether it is lawful to pay taxes to the emperor (12:13-17); Jesus responds, “Give to the emperor the things that are the emperor’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (12:13-17).

The crowd ‘hears’ about Jesus and responds (2:1-2; 3:8; 6:55). Individuals ‘hear’ about Jesus and respond: the hemorrhaging woman (5:27); the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:24-25); Bartimaeus (10:47). “Both the crowds and the disciples hear; both have difficulty
understanding” (Malbon 1986, 115); these three individuals, however, seem to be able to ‘hear’ and understand.

In Mk 3:12, the verb ‘to make known’ is different than the one used in Mk 7:28: the former uses φανερον (‘manifest/known’) while the latter uses γνωσις (‘to know’).

The third mention of Tyre in Mark indicates that Jesus goes from Tyre to another Gentile region—the area of the Decapolis. Jesus’ route, however, is not logical. Jesus travels “from the region of Tyre, and went by way of Sidon towards the Sea of Galilee, in the region of the Decapolis” (7:31). This route has Jesus going to Sidon (which is northerly) to get to the region of the Decapolis (which is in fact south of Tyre). This spatial shift is “the most confusing one in the entire Markan narrative”; the Gentile place names “are accumulated for emphasis” (Malbon 1992, 44). It is useful to think of the directions more as a way of indicating Jesus’ tendency to stay in the Gentile territories following his encounter with the Greek Syrophoenician woman. Tyre is mentioned three times as well in the other Synoptic Gospels: Mt 11:21, 22; 15:21; and Lk 6:17; 10:13, 14. Besides the Synoptic Gospels, it is only twice in the rest of the New Testament: in Acts 21:3, 7 (Aland 1983, 1270).

Burkill (1972) notes that Jesus makes ‘reciprocal visits’ during the course of the narrative to every place mentioned in 3:7-12, except Idumea; in this way, Burkill believes that Jesus is “anticipating and authenticating the church’s mission to the world” (87-88).

It is unclear from the text just who asks Jesus to leave the region: the swineherders, the people from the neighbourhood, or both (5:17).

Malbon (1992) notes that “[t]he healing is, for Mark’s Gospel, a particularly physical one (touching, spitting), but the techniques are common to healing in the Greco-Roman world” (44).

&phi;θαλα is the Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for ‘be opened’ (7:34).

Pokorny (1995) considers this common meal to represent “the Christian eucharist (8.6) in a Hellenistic setting” (335). It is one of the passages that the Christian movement later drew on to create their eucharistic ritual, but I think it would be premature to describe this common meal as the eucharist.

If seven is the sacred number of fulfillment, is there some connection to the seven thousand in 1 Kgs 19:18? In this passage, after Elijah has fled from Jezebel, Yahweh says to the prophet: “Yet I will leave seven thousand in Israel, all the knees that have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth that has not kissed him.” Metzger and Murphy (1991) note that in the passage from 1 Kings “[t]he words seven thousand express the idea of the righteous remnant, which appears again in Am 5.15, Isa 10.2; 11.11.” There appears to be a tentative connection again between the stories about Elijah and Jezebel and the Greek Syrophoenician woman and Jesus: in both cases, the women’s actions connect the Israelite prophets to some revelations involving the sacred number seven (righteous remnant/fulfilment). In the former, it appears that the righteous remnant would be only comprised of Jews; in the latter story, the fulfilment includes non-Jews who accept Jesus’ teaching about Yahweh’s kingdom.
Chapter 3

Just as the number twelve is considered a symbol for the Jews/Israelites, the number seven is understood in Acts 6 as a symbol for ‘the nations’ (the Gentiles): “at the instigation of the ‘Hellenists,’ seven deacons are chosen to assist the twelve apostles” (Malbon 1992, 45).

127 Although the word referring to the remnants of the food in Mk 6:43 and 8:8 is κλάσματα (‘fragments’), in Mk 7:28 it is ψώξεια (‘scraps’); “such a difference in terminology is almost necessary for the metaphorical character of both text units” (Pokorny 1995, 334).

128 In the literature on Mk 7:24-30 that I referred to, there are no references to any analyses of the Gentile healings unto themselves. An analysis of the Markan Gentile healings is needed; this would form a basis for comparing Jew and Gentile healings. Here are a few brief comments about Gentile healings from my analysis. Five stories describe Gentiles who are involved in healings: the mixed crowd of Jews and Gentiles (3:7-12), the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20), the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter (7:24-30), the deaf man with the speech impediment (7:31-37), and the blind man from Bethsaida (8:22-26). The Gentile healings affect both crowds and individuals; these healings occur in public and private. The healing of both Jews and Gentiles in the great multitude occurs in public (3:10-12). The exorcism of the Gerasene demoniac happens on the seaside, which is a public place; there is a definite public response to the healing (5:1-20). The encounter that results in the healing of the Greek Syrophoenician woman’s daughter is in a house, which is a private location; the actual healing is done at a distance, and the daughter is also located in a private house (7:24-30). Jesus takes the deaf man with the speech impediment away from the crowd to heal him privately (7:31-37). Jesus also leads the blind man from Bethsaida out of the village to heal him (8:22-26). Jesus heals Gentiles both through physical contact (even using spit) and through the power of his words.

129 Rhoads and Michie (1982) believe that despite the Gentile crowds’ mixed response to Jesus, the Markan narrator depicts Jesus as open and compassionate to Gentiles on the whole (70). This broad generalization does not acknowledge the development in Jesus’ interactions with Gentiles. In Mk 7:24-30, he is not initially compassionate to the Greek Syrophoenician woman and her daughter; he (and the narrator) definitely single out the woman as a Gentile.

130 As already mentioned, the Gentiles who seek healing and exorcisms from Jesus include those in Mk 3:7-12; 5:1-20; 7:24-30; 7:32-37; 8:22-26. The crowd of four thousand whom Jesus feeds are presumably also taught by him in the three days they spend together (8:1-9); as well, Jesus teaches the crowd at Caesarea Philippi about what it takes to be his followers (8:34-38).

131 The story about Peter in the high priest’s courtyard (14:53-72) is followed immediately by the story about Pilate (15:1-15), allowing for a comparison between this Jew and this Gentile. After Jesus is taken by the armed crowd to the high priest’s house, Peter courageously follows right into the courtyard; Jesus’ other followers had deserted Jesus and fled (Mk 14:50, 54). When Peter is questioned by the high priest’s servant-girl, he denies three times that he knows Jesus. In the next story, Jesus is taken to Pilate. Pilate tries to get at the truth by questioning Jesus, who he realized had been given to him because of the jealousy of the chief priests. Although he tries to get Jesus out of his predicament by asking the crowd whether they wanted Jesus released (since it was his custom to release one prisoner at the Passover festival), in the end Pilate gives in to the crowd’s choice of Barabbas, and sends Jesus away to be flogged and
crucified, even though Jesus has done no evil (15:14). Both Peter and Pilate try to do the right thing initially, but when they are faced with opposition, they deny the truth and give in to the demands of the moment.

132 References to Jesus being mocked and hurt by Gentiles and Jews are as follows: by Gentiles (15:17-20, 24, 32), by Jews (14:65; 15:29-32).

133 The translation of τιν θεον as 'a son of God' comes from the NRSV (15:39) (Metzger and Murphy 1991, 73 NT).

134 Jesus’ references to the nations are both positive and negative. The positive references are: the Temple shall be for all nations (11:17); and the good news shall go out to all nations (13:10). The negative references are: the Son of Man will be handed over to the nations and be mocked and killed (10:33); the nations’ rulers lord it over their subjects (10:42); and nation will rise against nation (13:8). In Mark, ἐθνη (‘the nations’) appears only in these passages (Aland 1983, 295).
CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

Analyzing the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is a beneficial way of understanding some of the unexplained nuances in Mk 7:24-30 that remain after a review of the literature. After establishing and applying a method for examining her characterization, I abstracted and then began to resolve her character back into the Markan narrative. I shall draw conclusions about this process and suggest areas of future research for the exegesis of Mk 7:24-30 and for narrative criticism.

I. Conclusions About the Characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman

A. The Abstracted Character of the Greek Syrophoenician Woman

After examining the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, it is clear that the abstraction process points to significant information about her character. Since this woman is a minor character, there are not many character indicators about her. Relatively speaking, for a female minor character, she is well-developed mimetically, particularly due to the inclusion of unneeded concrete details and the use of first-person dialogue. Given the lack of mimetic development of other women in Mark, the reader may take special note of this woman. The main concrete character indicators are that she is a woman, she has a daughter with an unclean spirit, and that she is ‘Greek’ and ‘Syrophoenician by race’; these indicators have certain associations within the Markan story world and within a first-century literary and socio-historical context. Although, as a woman, she acts in an unusual way according to first-century norms, descriptive literary and epigraphical evidence indicates that there were indeed influential upper-
class women in the first century who did act boldly and speak out. As a Gentile mother of a
possessed daughter, she is at a double gender disadvantage within first-century society
(particularly from a Jewish male’s perspective). That she is Greek and Syrophoenician informs a
reader from that time period that she is bilingual in Greek and Aramaic, that she is from the
upper class, and that she probably worships a divinity other than Yahweh (e.g., Baal and/or his
consort). Since the woman is a resident of Tyre, the first-century reader understands the conflict
between her and Jesus when she asks for assistance (since Tyrians often oppressed the Galileans,
taking food from them when the Galileans themselves did not have enough). There is also
conflict between them since Jesus considers her an idolater. The character indicator that must be
weighed carefully as to its influence in the scene is what it means for her to be labeled a ‘dog.’
A first-century reader could have both literal and figurative associations with this term; this
indicator about the woman requires that a modern reader makes some inferences about its
significance. From a Jewish perspective, to be called a dog associates the woman with an
unclean, subservient, unworthy scavenger, and her moral nature is therefore called into question.
From a Greco-Phoenician perspective, dogs could also be viewed as aggressive scavengers, but
they had other uses as well. Most relevant for this scene is that dogs were often associated with
deities with healing powers. In some ANE literature and archaeological findings, dogs are
depicted in a number of religious healing practices (some concerning exorcisms for children);
there is even a tentative connection between Phoenicians’ reverence for dogs and their possible
use of dogs in religious healing rituals. Considering the different associations Jesus and the
woman might each have about dogs provides further context for the use of the term ‘dog’ in this
scene. In Jesus’ metaphorical reference to the woman and her daughter as ‘dogs’ he might be
referring to them as unclean scavengers; but if the clean/unclean distinction is not significant for
Jesus, this association has less meaning for the scene. Jesus may be implicitly reproaching the
woman for coming to him to heal her daughter when she could go to her own idolatrous ‘dogs’ to
ask for assistance. The Greek Syrophoenician woman accepts Jesus’ figurative allusion to her being a ‘dog,’ but transforms Jesus' negative image of dogs to a positive image: they are acceptable within Yahweh’s household when they acknowledge their dependence on Him for sustenance, accept being subservient to His ‘children,’ and are satisfied by the remnants that fall under the table. The woman exhibits the traits of faith, intelligence and wit, boldness, persistence, humility, excellence, and persuasive eloquence (among many others).

B. Narrative Devices in Mk 7:24-30

The narrative devices found in Mk 7:24-30 include: two-step progression, order of presentation of information, speech representation, narrative analogy, and transitional episodes.

The two-step progression of the woman being ‘Greek’ and ‘Syrophoenician’ informs the reader about crucial reasons why Jesus would initially reject the woman. In both steps it is clear that the woman is Gentile; what happens in the progression from the first step to the second step is that she is shown not only to be culturally Hellenized from the upper class, but to be an idolatrous oppressor. The second step takes the woman from a slightly negative position (being Gentile), to a distinctly contrary position to Jesus; no wonder Jesus rejects her so harshly!

Within an intertextual context, if the reader remembers the Hebrew Biblical stories surrounding Jezebel in 1 Kings, the second descriptor of the woman (‘Syrophoenician by race’) may bring up other negative images: idolaters (Ahab and Jezebel) negatively influencing all of Israel; threats against one of Yahweh’s prophets (Elijah); and ‘dogs’ connected to gruesome deaths (for those who disobey Yahweh’s will). This second descriptor may bring up positive images once it is clear that the woman accepts Yahweh’s will: the widow of Zarephath helping Elijah; and Hazael helping Yahweh to avenge the idolatry in Israel.

These insights about the two-step progression are further reinforced by the order in which information is presented in this story. Expository information from the narrator informs the
reader of some of the most important indicators about the woman: while she is kneeling at
Jesus’ feet, the narrator tells the reader that she is Greek and Syrophoenician. This low-status
position is reinforced in Jesus’ metaphor. When her status changes in the story, due to her
speaking out, the reader is drawn into self-evaluation. The reader’s normal expectations (which
the narrator has encouraged in the story) must give over to divine standards. The negative
character inferences at the beginning of the story encourage the reader to dissociate from the
character. When Jesus provokes the woman into action, and she speaks out, what she says
provides the reader with a deeper understanding of her character. The order in which
information is presented in the narrative influences the reconstruction of her traits in the reader’s
mind: although the character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman is introduced as a needy
suppliant (like others who have gone before her in the narrative), she becomes an idolatrous
oppressor in Jesus’ eyes (creating the basis for the power struggle and the debate between herself
and Jesus), until she proves in her actions (and especially her words) that she is a Gentile model
of faith whom the reader can emulate.

The narrator uses three forms of speech representation in this story: narratized dialogue,
third-person dialogue, and first-person dialogue. Three instances of first-person dialogue form
the centre of the story, with the woman’s response at its narrative peak. The use of first-person
dialogue provides a sense of immediacy for the reader, and involves the reader/hearer in the
process of making sense of the story. The narrator’s choice of this form is appropriate since the
woman’s words change Jesus’ mind and have an impact on the remainder of the Markan
narrative. The Greek Syrophoenician woman’s spoken word has creative power; she is able to
restructure Jesus’ negative image of the dogs and give it positive value, leading Jesus to a fuller
understanding of God’s kingdom and the place of Gentiles within it.

The woman’s dialogue with Jesus is unique in Mark in three ways: it is the only example
of a female character speaking in first-person dialogue with Jesus; it is the only example of
anyone changing Jesus’ mind (and thereby influencing his subsequent actions); and it is the only example of anyone winning a debate with Jesus. The dialogue between the woman and Jesus challenges the reader to evaluate what each character says to the other and shifts his/her understanding of the woman’s moral nature accordingly. The boldness, courage, and humility of the woman’s actions assist the reader in coming to a positive evaluation of her.

The abstraction of her character provides information that helps to assign categories to her character; these categories provide the basis for exploring the narrative analogues that help resolve the character back into the larger Markan narrative. The categories that I assigned to the woman from Mk 7:24-30 are: a minor character, a female, a suppliant with faith, a Gentile, and a debater with Jesus. These classifications connect her to some of the other characters and themes within Mark.

To begin the process of resolving her character back into the text, two categories were selected to analyze: female and Gentile. As a female, her story must be put into the Markan context of male-female relations. It is clear that this is an androcentric story world. Its patriarchal norms are called into question, however, and women are shown having a positive influence in the Markan story world. As a Gentile, her story is placed in the Markan context of Jew-Gentile relations, Gentile portrayal, and the Gentile mission. It is clear that both Jews and Gentiles (as groups, as well as individuals) have similar responses to Jesus: both are healed, fed, and taught by Jesus; both can reject him and hurt him; both can believe in him and understand him. There is development in the theme of Gentile mission, and Mk 7:24-30 is a transitional passage within this theme.

Through analyzing several analogues associated with these categories and the characterizations of the minor characters within these analogues, I discovered traits of the Greek Syrophoenician woman that were highlighted; of these many traits, a number are significant. As a woman and a mother in Mark, she is a model of faith by serving and being least. Although
Jesus may at first have assumed that she was an outsider—an idolater (like Jezebel) not willing to accept the way things are in Yahweh’s kingdom (like Herodias)—the Greek Syrophoenician woman shows that she speaks ‘the things of God’ from her heart (as does the centurion at the foot of Jesus’ cross). Her bold and active faith is implicit in her story, just as is her belief in Jesus’ power (unlike the other parents in Mark). She is independent, witty, and influential (like the Greek woman, Eumetis). As a female suppliant, she is counter-cultural in her actions (like the hemorrhaging woman). As a Gentile, she acknowledges the authority of the Israelite God as found in the words and actions of Jesus. She proves that she is an insider, understanding what Jesus says about the kingdom of God and accepting the privilege of the Jews (while creating a place for the Gentiles within that kingdom). The analogues that involve women show how remarkable the Greek Syrophoenician woman is in this androcentric literary work, and the additional barriers she has to overcome to get what she needs. The analogues that involve Gentiles show how the Greek Syrophoenician woman influences the larger Markan narrative by expanding Jesus’ understanding of the Gentiles’ place in God’s world.

The analogues connect Mk 7:24-30 to the larger Markan narrative through the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, through the vocabulary, and through the themes that appear in the stories. As mentioned in the review of the literature, the verbal threads of ἄρτος (‘bread’), ἐσθίω (‘I eat’) and χορτάζω (‘I am satisfied’) show how Mk 7:24-30 is a link between the two feeding episodes (Mark 6:35-44; 8:1-10); other key-words such as ἀκούω (‘I hear’), θυγάτριον (‘little daughter’), παιδίον (‘child’), βάλλω (‘I throw’), λόγος (‘word’), and the concept of ‘scraps/remnants’ link Mk 7:24-30 with other Markan stories within the larger narrative. The themes of healing, Gentile portrayal, and Gentile mission provide ideas through which to place her character in relationship with other characters to see how she influences Markan male-female relations and Jew-Gentile relations. These verbal threads and thematic connections provide opportunities for comparison and connection of plot lines and
theological ideas, showing how Mk 7:24-30 fits into and develops the theological ideas of the narrator (e.g., God reversing human expectations by working through the powerless and the little children) (Joseph A. Grassi, “Child, Children,” in The Anchor Bible Dictionary).

The Greek Syrophoenician woman is a transitional character, serving as a connector to the other Gentiles within Mark; she does not initiate Jesus’ mission among the Gentiles, she brings Jesus back to (and more committed to) including Gentiles in his mission. Jesus already had connections to Gentiles before the Greek Syrophoenician woman approaches him. Due to her specific features (Greek, Syrophoenician, Tyrian), she had barriers to overcome. When she shows Jesus that, unlike the people in the Gerasene neighbourhood, she is not afraid of his power over unclean spirits, and that she accepts who he is and what he says, Jesus agrees to help her. This woman connects those Gentile characters who come before her (who are shown to reject Jesus) with the Gentile characters who come after her (who are shown to be healed, fed, and taught by Jesus).

The character of the woman in Mk 7:24-30 is unique. Not only is she the only Greek and Syrophoenician character in Mark, she is a bold, independent woman in an androcentric first-century story world who crosses gender and religious boundaries to get her daughter healed. The most noteworthy characterization device is the woman’s speech representation: the Greek Syrophoenician woman is the only female character in Mark who speaks to Jesus using first-person dialogue. Her mimetic development involves the reader in what she says and does, so that she influences the reader’s conception of upper-class Gentile women (thereby influencing his/her interest in and understanding of the Gentile mission in the larger Markan narrative).

In moving from the abstracted character of the Greek Syrophoenician woman (in which she is in the foreground of my attention) to resolving her back into the text (in which she becomes the background to thematic and plot concerns), I note a few adjustments to her characterization. The uniqueness of her speaking out and taking bold action is reinforced. Her
faith is repeatedly reinforced (e.g., in contrast to the Jewish parents, the disciples, Herodias, and Jezebel). Even though her faith is only one of the reasons for Jesus to change his mind and assist her (her wit and intelligence being other contributors), this trait of faith takes on added significance within the larger Markan context. Although the woman being Greek and Syrophoenician are influential within Mk 7:24-30 (also connecting her to the intratextual analogues involving Jezebel and the widow of Zarephath), these two descriptors have less relevance in resolving the character back into the Markan text; they serve to reinforce her ‘Gentile’ status within the larger narrative.

C. Conclusions about Her Influence and Function Within the Larger Markan Narrative

1. What Influence Does the Greek Syrophoenician Woman Have on Jesus and His Subsequent Actions?

Some specific things are revealed about Jesus as a result of his interaction with the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30. Jesus’ initial rejection of her is not due to a desire to maintain the clean/unclean distinctions of Jewish tradition; his initial rejection of her is more likely due to his assumptions about her religious affiliation, her involvement in regional oppression, and her social status; his rejection may also be fueled by the different role expectations men had of women in that era. The woman’s words and actions show Jesus (and the reader) that these assumptions about her are incorrect. The woman implies her religious affiliation when she acknowledges Yahweh’s will for Jewish priority; she then illustrates how His power extends to the Gentiles (making it permissible, therefore, for Jesus to serve her and her daughter) (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 109). She will not oppress the Jews but will accept whatever is available (believing it to be enough for healing). Concerning the woman’s status, Jesus concedes to raise her from the low status of a dog to the higher status of a member of
God’s household; those who Jesus assumes are unjustly ‘first’ shall be put ‘last’ and those who are truly ‘last’ shall be put ‘first’ in God’s kingdom. The Hebrew Biblical stories may remind Jesus (and the reader) that women can act courageously and wisely when inspired by Yahweh; it is therefore permissible for Jesus to accept the words of this wise woman. In Mk 7:24-30, the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman shows that ritual purity, racial and regional background, social status, and gender are all irrelevant if one accepts Yahweh as the divine power and Jesus as his official representative.

Jesus changes his mind about the Greek Syrophoenician woman due to her faith, her wit, and her act of boldly speaking out in response to Jesus’ metaphor. Jesus discerns from the woman’s response that she understands and believes what he communicates to her and, because of her intelligence, she is able to show another way to view the situation. Jesus is then willing to change his mind and his actions accordingly; later in the narrative, the reader sees Jesus feeding the four thousand in Gentile territory, not just with remnants, but with enough to satisfy their appetites and leave seven baskets full. The reader sees in Mk 7:24-30 that Jesus can learn from others, can be flexible, and can expand the scope of his ministry to include the Gentiles, even when it is counter-cultural to do so. It is clear from this scene that Jesus serves others when they recognize God’s authority, not when they pressure him; his first allegiance is to God (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 109). The woman honours Jesus’ allegiance to God, and shows, that although her actions are bold, he can serve her (and others like her).

3. What is Her Function and Meaning in the Narrative?

The essential function of the Greek Syrophoenician woman in Mk 7:24-30 is to provide Jesus with an alternative way of seeing the Gentiles, thereby becoming a transitional figure within the Markan theme of Gentile mission. She must transform his negative image of Gentiles as unworthy scavenger dogs into a positive image of them as inoffensive members of God’s...
household. She is successful in convincing Jesus of this alternative view of the Gentiles. Her function fulfilled, Jesus not only returns to activities among the Gentiles, but he expands these activities to include giving them bodily and spiritual sustenance so they will know how to be his followers.

The woman's meaning in the Markan gospel is to be a model of bold, active faith, to show how the 'lowest of the low' can speak out and be heard, on the condition that they hear, understand, and accept Jesus' message, and trust that they too can be inspired by God to speak the truth when occasion demands it. The Greek Syrophoenician woman's meaning within the narrative is related to the effect she has on the reader: her actions and words may cause the reader to re-evaluate his/her understanding of not only the woman but also his/her understanding of who is included in God's kingdom (perhaps requiring the reader to re-evaluate him/herself so that he/she is included as well).

II. Conclusions About Mk 7:24-30

After having analyzed the characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, I can apply these insights to my understanding of Mk 7:24-30.

It was clear from existing literature on this pericope that the healing is the context for the story, but it is the debate between Jesus and the woman that makes the scene significant. The contents of the first-person dialogue in this scene alerts the reader to the power struggle between these two characters and the significance of what the woman says.

There is no one explanation for Jesus' harsh response to the woman. I believe it could be influenced by three factors. First, Jesus' harsh response to this Gentile character may be influenced by the Gerasene neighbours asking Jesus to leave their region. Second, his response
to the woman could also be explained by the fact that several of her descriptors echo the
class of Jezebel, the dangerous Syrophoenician princess who wreaks havoc in 1 Kings.
Although other scholars have compared the story of the Greek Syrophoenician woman to that of
the widow of Zarephath, a comparison of Mk 7:24-30 to the story of Jezebel has not previously
been done. It is possible that the stories about the widow and Jezebel echo in the reader’s mind
when he/she is first introduced to the Greek Syrophoenician woman. The two intertextual
analogues therefore serve as midrashic explanations to Jesus’ unusual behaviour in Mk 7:24-30.
Third, and most importantly within a first-century socio-historical and literary context, when
Jesus and the woman meet each other in the narrative it becomes clear that their expectations of
each other differ. The literature surveyed on this passage does not always explicitly mention
these different expectations and assumes that the conflict between them arises out of the woman
being ‘Gentile.’ The basis for the conflict, however, has specific implications. Jesus, a Jewish
itinerant prophet from Galilee, expects this Greek Syrophoenician woman from Tyre to behave
in a certain way when he initially encounters her—as an upper-class idolatrous oppressor might
behave. There are issues here of economics, class, gender, and religious affiliation. The
boundary-crossing in both Jew-Gentile relations and in male-female relations combine in Mk
7:24-30: it is the different gender roles and expectations within each culture that are important in
this scene. What makes this scene remarkable is precisely that it is a Gentile woman who
influences a Jewish man to change his mind and act on her behalf. The role of the woman’s
gender has more influence in the story than most interpreters acknowledge.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, Jesus’ metaphor is vital in the story, as is the
woman’s transformation of it. The deciphering of the vocabulary within it, especially in
connection with the descriptors of the woman, helps the reader understand what the conflict
between these two characters is about.
It has yet to be explained definitively why the Markan Jesus uses ‘dogs’ in his metaphor, except to insult the woman (whom he believes to be a pagan). Downing (1992) offers one possible solution: Jesus believes the woman has the traits of a Cynic. I offer another possible solution: Jesus includes the term ‘dogs’ in the metaphor not because dogs are considered unclean, but because dogs are potentially harmful and are associated with idolatrous healing practices. Jesus refuses to exorcize the demon from the woman’s daughter because of her being an idolater, and he ridicules her religion with an implicit reference to the dogs used in pagan healing rites. The woman responds back to Jesus using the term ‘dogs’ in a ‘humility formula,’ indicating her willingness to accept Yahweh and His chosen people as superior and her and her daughter as inferior.

Understanding the term πρώτον (‘first’) in Mk 7:27 comes not only through the intertextual analogue about Elijah and the widow of Zarephath but through placing the term within the larger Markan context. The Greek Syrophoenician woman’s transformation of Jesus’ metaphor may influence Jesus’ subsequent use of the term ‘first’ in two of his teachings: whoever wants to be first in the kingdom must be last of all and servant to all, just like the παιδίων (the ‘little children’); and the good news must first be proclaimed to all nations (i.e., including the Gentiles) before the end of the age will come.

As the review of the literature on Mk 7:24-30 indicated, this passage addresses Jew-Gentile relations and includes this unusual woman’s actions and words. Although there is controversy about Gentile mission in the literature on Mk 7:24-30, it is clear that this pericope is pivotal within Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles. This is not because the Greek Syrophoenician woman initiates that mission (as some interpreters believe), but because she reconnects Jesus to activities among the Gentiles (after he was rejected by the Gerasene neighbourhood). In my exegesis of Mk 7:24-30, I demonstrate the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman reveals her transitional role in Jesus’ mission to the Gentiles. The Markan narrator
emphasizes the woman’s words, making them pivotal in Jesus’ changing perception of the Gentiles’ place within God’s household.

III. Areas for Future Research

My analysis of Mk 7:24-30 has indicated a number of areas that require further research. I also make some recommendations for future narrative critical analyses.

A. Future Research for Mk 7:24-30

Resolving the Greek Syrophoenician woman back into the Markan narrative has only just begun. Male-female and Jew-Gentile relations require further analyses from the perspective of the Markan story world and its first-century context. More research could still be done on the analogues to Mk 7:24-30 that involve women and Gentiles. The issue of gender in this pericope is a rich area for exploration, and my work has just pointed the way for future research. It would be useful to survey ANE literature to find other women who are intelligent and witty, who influence men to do good, and who cross cultural boundaries concerning norms of behaviour.

There is a definite development within Gentile mission in Mark, and Mk 7:24-30 is the transitional episode within that mission. Since the existing analyses of the Gentile mission within Mark include such a broad range of opinion, contextual controls are needed for this discussion; I have begun the discussion of the Markan Gentile mission from a narrative critical perspective, but further research is required to provide more details about the mission’s development. Gentile portrayal also requires a more detailed examination.

Resolving the character of the woman back into the text can also be done formally. The most useful form for this process is the type-scene. As mentioned, the healing type-scene has been applied with some success to Mk 7:24-30 (Rhoads 1994, 349-352). The healing type-scene
could also be examined according to subcategories (e.g., healing type-scenes for Gentile characters, for parents, and for distance healings--such as how distance healing is known in the woman's cultural environment and why this mode of healing is used). I have included some general remarks about Gentile healings in chapter 3 (n. 128). Once these subcategories are examined in detail, these analyses can be combined with the existing analyses on women involved in healing; this combination of findings may offer further insights into this distance healing involving a female Gentile mother. Research can also be done on the children in Mark: analyzing the terms used to describe them (e.g., ἕκνα, παιδίων, κοράσιων, θυγάτριων) to see how differences in their meanings affect the stories in which they appear; and analyzing them according to gender to reveal any differences in portrayals of male and female children. Further research is required to establish a strong connection between healings/exorcisms and dogs in the ANE (particularly in reference to Phoenicia). The literary and archaeological findings I have mentioned call attention to the need for that research.

The other Markan type-scene that could be developed is a controversy dialogue. This type-scene would help place the controversy in Mk 7:24-30 within the larger Markan context. Analysis of all the controversy dialogues within Mark is required to establish a controversy dialogue type-scene.¹ Dewey (1973) shows how the structure of a controversy dialogue can fit within a healings narrative (Mk 2:1-12; 3:1-6). It might also prove useful to consider how the social status of the characters involved alters the controversy dialogue form.²

The rabbinic references to ‘dogs’ also require further research as to their implications for Mk 7:24-30.³ Since these rabbinical comments may have come into existence anywhere between 250 B.C.E. and 1300 C.E., it is necessary to ascertain the extent of their possible connection to this story about Jesus as it is written in Mk 7:24-30 (c. 65-75 C.E.). It might also prove beneficial to evaluate the term ‘dog’ and the other key-words in Mk 7:24-30 within the literary context of the apocrypha, the pseudepigrapha, and the Dead Sea Scrolls.
The historicity of the story in Mk 7:24-30 is another area that has yet to be resolved. The story is congruent with the social and literary context of the larger Markan narrative, and narrative analysis shows that this story is also congruent with what is known of Jesus' teachings and life. It is quite possible this story is based on an event in Jesus' life, but I shall leave the research into the story's historicity for others to investigate.

B. Recommendations for Future Narrative Critical Analyses

My narrative critical method was informed by social, historical, and feminist discussions. It was particularly useful to be aware of both first-century prescriptive laws and descriptive socio-historical and literary evidence: prescriptive laws help the interpreter understand the cultural norms of behaviour that would have been expected in a first-century story world; descriptive evidence provides examples of how first-century people deviated from these norms. My analysis also profited from: reader-response discussions of the narrator-reader relationship; New Historicism's need for 'methodological self-consciousness' and opposition to for 'disembodied objectivity'; and linguistical and literary understandings of the role of speech representation within narratives. I believe the combination of this information strengthened my narrative critical analysis of the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman.

Work remains to be done on character theory in the following areas: a detailed process for analyzing characters and characterization; conventions relating to traits; categorization of characters; and speech representation. After surveying both biblical and non-biblical character theory, I have assembled a step-by-step process for analyzing Markan characters which addresses some of the deficits of existing narrative critical character theory. Applying this process to major and minor Markan characters will indicate if it is useful. For Markan speech representation, I have suggested forms, defined these forms, and assembled ideas about their functions within a narrative. These suggestions could be applied to speech representation within
other Markan stories to see if the suggestions are sound. In narrative criticism itself, it would be helpful to coordinate and define the terms associated with themes (e.g., plot, plot line, subject, theme, motif, and leitmotif).\(^5\)

Narrative criticism and its characterization theory shall both benefit from continual theoretical development. Hebrew Biblical characterization theory and analyses lend themselves quite well to Markan characterization and analyses (Sternberg 1985; Alter 1981). Research into non-biblical literary theory also provides resources for the various areas mentioned above that still require development within New Testament narrative criticism.

**IV. The Last Word?**

Mk 7:24-30 is a challenging pericope to understand. Approaching this text through an analysis of the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman offers glimpses into possible meanings about aspects of this story, particularly concerning Jesus' harshness to the woman. Although the Markan narrator gives the reader only a little information about the Greek Syrophoenician woman, much more can be discovered about her; this thesis is not the 'last word' about this remarkable and unique character within the Markan gospel. This narrative critical analysis of her characterization has shown that, as a female, her actions and words are counter-cultural. As a Gentile, she is a transitional figure within the Markan theme of Gentile mission. She is a woman who speaks out and is heard and understood by Jesus, and that makes all the difference not only in the lives of her and her daughter, but within the Gentile world in the Gospel of Mark.
NOTES

Chapter 4

1 A controversy dialogue type-scene within Mark can be created through using the following resources: Bultmann’s (1963) discussion of components and structure of a controversy dialogue (including his brief examination of the controversy dialogue in Mk 7:24-30) (39-42); Alter’s and Rhoads’ examples of other kinds of type-scenes (Alter 1981, 47-51; Rhoads 1994, 348-352); Malina and Rohrbaugh’s (1992) discussion about the game of challenge and riposte (188); Rhoads and Michie’s (1982) discussion of Markan questions and conflict patterns (49-54); Malina’s (1988) examination of conflict within Mk 7:1-23; and Rhoad’s (1994) exploration of conflict within Mk 7:24-30 (358-359).

2 For example, status is included in the ANE literary form of ‘a clever response by an inferior to a superior’ (Rhoads 1994, 358); it is also involved in an honour-shame society, particularly in the client-patron relationship within the patronage system (Malina and Rohrbaugh 1992, 213-214, 235-237).

3 The rabbinical references to ‘dogs’ are listed in chapter 1, n. 17.

4 The conventions relating to traits need to be discussed. In Mark, traits are rarely supplied directly by the narrator, and so must be arrived at by looking at indirect information supplied by the narrator; through inference and by placing this information within its socio-historical and literary context (while being aware of where this information appears along the text-continuum), the reader can infer what traits may be attributed to the character. As well, a useful way of categorizing characters is in order. I suggest a system based on shared character indicators and traits. The categorization of characters is done in order to find analogies with other characters so they may be associated with the appropriate themes and plot lines in the narrative.

It might also prove useful to develop a narrative critical method for analyzing the actions of a character: when the narrator uses passive versus active movement of the characters, what impact does it have on the story (e.g., the passive movements of Simon’s mother-in-law and Jairus’ daughter versus the active movements of the Greek Syrophoenician woman).

5 Baldick (1990) offers useful definitions for these terms; see chapter 2 n. 41.
WORKS CITED


APPENDIX A

MK 7:24-30: THE GREEK TEXT AND AN ENGLISH TRANSLATION

I. The Greek Text

24 Ἐκείθεν δὲ ἀναστὰς ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὰ ὄρια Τύρου. καὶ εἰσῆλθον εἰς οἰκίαν οὐδένα ἑθελεν γνώναι, καὶ οὐκ ἥδυνηθή λαθεῖν. 25 ἀλλ’ ἐκδύοσασα γυνὴ περὶ αὐτοῦ, ἥς εἶχεν τὸ θυγατρὶον αὐτῆς πνεῦμα ἀκάθαρτον, ἐλθοῦσα πρὸς τοὺς πόδας αὐτοῦ· 26 ἦ δὲ γυνὴ ἦν Ἐλληνής, Συροφοινίκισσα τῷ γενεῖ καὶ ἴδρωτα αὐτὸν ἵνα τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐκβάλῃ ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς αὐτῆς. 27 καὶ ἔλεγεν αὐτῇ, Ἀφες πρῶτον χορτασθῆναι τὰ τέκνα, οὐ γὰρ ἔστιν καλὸν λαβεῖν τὸν ἁρτὸν τῶν τέκνων καὶ τοῖς κυνάριοις βαλεῖν. 28 ἦ δὲ ἀπεκρίθη καὶ λέγει αὐτῷ, Κύριε· καὶ τὰ κυνάρια ὑποκάτω τῆς τραπέζης ἐσάθεσαν ἀπὸ τῶν ψιχῶν τῶν παιδίων. 29 καὶ ἔπειν αὐτῇ, Διὰ τούτου τὸν λόγον ὑπαγε, ἐξελλυθήνειν ἐκ τῆς θυγατρὸς σου τὸ δαιμόνιον. 30 καὶ ἀπελθοῦσα εἰς τὸν ὦκον αὐτῆς ἐφέν τὸ παιδίον βεβλημένον ἐπὶ τὴν κλίνην καὶ τὸ δαιμόνιον ἐξελλυθός (Aland et al. 1983, 150-151).

II. An English Translation

My English translation of the Greek maintains some of the Greek grammatical structure, while attempting to make the text understandable in English. The vocabulary that links this story to other analogues is translated in such a way so as to maintain those allusions (i.e., βαλεῖν ‘to throw’ 7:27, 30; τὸν ἁρτὸν ‘bread’ rather than ‘food’ 7:27). I include additional words in brackets to make the English more readable; these words are implied by the Greek without actually appearing in the Greek text. Where more than one word seems appropriate in the translation, I include both words and divide them with a slash mark.

24 From there, after having arisen, [Jesus] went away into the region of Tyre. Entering into a house, he did not want anyone to know [he was there], but he could not escape notice, 25 for immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit, after having heard about him, and having come, prostrated herself at his feet. 26 But the woman was Greek, Syrophoenician by race. She asked him whether he might cast the demon out of her daughter. 27 He said to her, “Permit the children to be satisfied first, for it is not fitting/good to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.” 28 But she answered, and she says to him, “Sir, even the dogs under the table eat from the children’s scraps.” 29 Then he said to her, “Because of this word/for saying that, go away [home]—the demon has left your daughter.” 30 So after having gone away to her house, she found the child having been thrown onto the bed, the demon having come out [of her].
APPENDIX B
INTRODUCTION TO NARRATIVE CRITICISM

Narrative criticism has been applied to New Testament studies most predominately over
the past twenty years (Moore 1989, 44). Narrative criticism did not originate within biblical
studies. New Testament narrative criticism has its roots in the Anglo-American literary studies
of the 1930s-50s, studies that came to be known as New Criticism (Moore 1989, 11). New
Critics believe that a narrative is able to stand on its own, and that it is taboo to speak about the
writer’s intention (12). This often led to New Critics assuming that there was one correct
interpretation of a text, rather than recognizing that a text can be interpreted in a variety of ways,
depending upon who is reading it (Bach 1993, 63). Narrative critics adopted the view from the
New Critics that the narrative is autonomous, having its own story world, and that it is possible
to develop an interpretation about the narrator’s discourse (without knowing anything about the
real author). Although New Criticism has not been in use in literary studies for over twenty
years, it influenced biblical narrative studies to shift from examining the author through the work
to examining the narrative in its own right (Moore 1989, 11).

Narrative criticism was also influenced by the structuralist movement within literary
studies. Chatman’s work Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film (1978)
has been very influential. Chatman’s work emerged from the structuralist study of narrative that
was active from the 1960s-70s (Moore 1989, 43). Chatman (1978) attempts to develop a theory
on narrative, studying “the necessary and the ancillary components and how they interrelate” in a
narrative, drawing from examples in both pre-modern and modern film and fiction (10). This is
not a theory for particular narratives, but is instead a structural narrative theory, focusing on the
conditions under which meaning is reached in all narratives (55). Chatman distinguishes
between the 'what' and the 'how' of narrative (19). The 'what' of a narrative is all the content with which the narrator has to work. The content is made up of the individual components including the characters, the setting, and the events that occur; these components are collectively referred to as the 'story.' The 'how' refers to the choices made by the narrator (such as his or her ordering of events), the employment of stylistic and rhetorical techniques, and the points of view expressed; the expression of these choices in a written text is referred to as the 'discourse.' The discourse is what is read in the text; the story is what exists as abstract concepts within the story world. It is necessary to identify 'story' and 'discourse' separately during narrative analysis. Given the same story components, each storyteller would describe the story components differently, perhaps placing them in a different order, thereby creating a unique discourse. The 'what' and the 'how' of the narrative are, however, integrally interrelated in their impact on the reader. In this work, Chatman explores this dichotomy and examines the various features within narratives, such as plot, character, setting, point of view, narrative voice, interior monologue, and stream of consciousness. Many New Testament narrative critics use Chatman's narratology as a foundation for their own methods.

Moore (1989) gives a helpful overview of the history of New Testament narrative criticism in his work *Literary Criticism and the Gospels: The Theoretical Challenge*. In the 1970s, narrative criticism began to develop within New Testament literary criticism, particularly through the creation of the Markan Seminar at the Society of Biblical Literature annual meeting of 1971 and by the beginning of the journal Semeia in 1974 (Moore 1989, 7; Rhoads 1982, 427). Among the works on narrative criticism that ensued, Petersen's *Literary Criticism for New Testament Critics* (1978) provides an early attempt to bridge the gap that then existed between historical and literary critics. Petersen offers a method of literary criticism (later thought of as narrative criticism) that he believes would be of benefit when used in conjunction with historical
criticism. Petersen applies this literary method to the Gospel of Mark and concludes that the
gospel is indeed a "bona fide narrative" (80). The writer extensively used independent traditions
(as source criticism insists), but then was involved with plotting them poetically in relation to
one another (54-55).

In 1980, at the conclusion of the decade-long Markan Seminar, Rhoads presented the
paper "Narrative Criticism and the Gospel of Mark" (1982). This is an excellent introduction to
narrative criticism and its application within Markan studies. Rhoads describes the basic areas of
narrative criticism as plot, conflict, character, setting, narrator, point of view, standards of
judgment, the implied author, the ideal reader, the style, and the rhetorical techniques used by the
author to influence the reader (412). Rhoads' article on Markan narrative criticism also provides
a brief survey of the literary work on Mark from the 1970s; Moore notes that in Rhoad's article
the method is programmatically labeled 'narrative criticism' for the first time (Moore 1989, 7).
The first work to provide a thorough descriptive of Markan poetics is Rhoads and Michie's Mark
as Story (1982). Their story-rhetoric model is implicitly suggestive of Chatman's earlier work
(1978) (Moore 1989, 43). The strength of Rhoads' and Michie's work, according to Moore
(1989), "lies in its excellent analyses of Markan plot and character," although they would have
benefited from prefacing their discussions on these areas with theoretical discussions (47).

In 1989, Moore commented that "New Testament scholars are not converting en masse to
narrative criticism, but significant numbers . . . give tentative credence to certain of narrative
criticism's holistic precepts and practices . . . while retaining their beliefs in historical method"
(177). In the 1990s, many more scholars have accepted the basic tenets of narrative criticism.
Now, narrative analyses are supported by the findings of social and historical criticisms in an
effort to understand the story world of Mark, which was created about and in the Mediterranean
region during the first century.
Narrative criticism, like any method, has underlying assumptions, and these assumptions provide the basis for both its weaknesses and its strengths. The basic assumptions underlying narrative criticism are the narrator's desire to influence the reader, the autonomy of the story world, the text as a sign, and the unity of the narrative text.

If a narrative is a series of events recounted by a narrator to a narratee (or reader), the communication between the narrator and the reader is basic to narrative (Banfield 1973, 1). Narrative critics assume that the narrator communicates through rhetorical devices (consciously or unconsciously) to have some influence on the reader. Although we are not able to be sure of the intentions of the narrator, we are able to examine the rhetorical devices we see within the text and attempt to understand their intended influence upon the reader.

As the narrator spins his tale, a story world is created in the imagination of the reader. That autonomous story world is created out of "the sum of propositions a narrative implies or expresses about its actors and their actions in time and space" (Petersen 1978, 40). The narrative text presents an imaginary world, not the real world, however many elements of it may have originated in real people's lives. Therefore, we need to look at the text as a sign that refers to objects we know from the real world. Those objects, however, are not in the text; instead, we have a textual word that signifies a concept, which we link to our understanding of the object that comes from our experience in the real world. By identifying the text as a sign, we may avoid the 'referential fallacy': "seeing the narrative world as direct representation of the real world, not recognizing the 'conceptual autonomy' of the narrative world" (40). This distinction is for historians to consider when doing textual analysis. Petersen explains: "it is fallacious historically because it assumes that the historians must demonstrate, namely, the evidential value of the narrative world for constructing the real world of events to which it refers" (40). Instead, historians must see the narrative as part of a message from the narrator to the reader. After
examining that message, historians are better able to determine how the narrative world relates to
the real world.

As mentioned in the chapter on method (chapter 2), the unity of the Markan text is seen
through the consistency of the narrator’s point of view and standards of judgment, the coherence
of the plot, the consistency of the characters, and the recurring stylistic patterns, rhetorical
devices, and themes that appear throughout the narrative (Rhoads 1994, 343). The unity of the
text is a hallmark of narrative criticism.

As with other methods, there are weaknesses and strengths within narrative criticism of
which one should be aware. I mention them not as an apology, but in an effort to compensate
for the weaknesses while recognizing the strengths of this method.

Moore (1989) provides a useful critique of New Testament narrative criticism. One of
his major points is that narrative critics use the theories from contemporary narratology without
proper attention to the assumptions on which these theories are based. Rhoads, Tannehill, and
others use narratology to produce sustained interpretations of entire narrative works, yet
narratology does not emphasize the unity of individual narrative works, but instead aims to
achieve the unity of narrative theory (Moore 1989, 52). Instead of drawing on one particular
work, these theorists use examples from various narrative texts in the process of creating their
theories. This should caution the critic in how he/she applies narratology; the unity within
narrative theory does not necessarily imply the unity of any particular narrative. Narrative
critics’ understanding of the significance of narrative unity within the gospels comes from their
debate with source and redaction critics. Source and redaction critics question the influence of
the author in his recording of the already pre-formed stories from oral history; if the author’s
influence in the ordering of these stories is minimal, it allows interpreters to divide the text
without regard to where the individual fragments appear in this written text. Narrative critics,
however, have shown that the role of the author/narrator is crucial and that the text must be examined as a whole to understand any one segment's significance. Narrative criticism overcompensates at times for the fragmentation of the text into the smaller units (the approach used by form and redaction critics) and gets into a "holistic passion" by emphasizing the unity of the text (Malbon 1992, 35). Certainly it is a great contribution of narrative criticism to show the consistencies that exist within the Markan gospel. One must remember, however, that inconsistencies may appear in the text. Moore's (1989) final warning is that New Testament critics must ground themselves in a knowledge of narrative theory: "if we are not to remain perpetual dilettantes in our literary criticisms of the Bible, we must be prepared to read long and hard in critical theory" (177-178).

Malbon (1992) reflects on some of the other extremities that are found within narrative criticism. She is hopeful that the influence of deconstruction criticism on New Testament studies will compensate for a tendency within narrative criticism to have a fixed meaning for a text (a lasting influence from New Criticism, no doubt). Deconstruction criticism encourages us to see that there is no fixed meaning to a text. It is also problematic that narrative critics see the text as an autonomous object; Malbon believes that reader-response criticism tries to compensate for that (35). Reader-response criticism is able to see that each reader has a role in the creation of personal meaning from the text. As I mentioned in my introduction, Veeser (1989) (a New Historicist) warns against a "disembodied objectivity"; an interpreter should identify who he/she is, so that the reader may more clearly see any unconscious biases in the interpreter's comments (v). It shall be through attention to narrative theory, and through the influences of deconstruction, reader-response, and New Historicism, that the extremities within narrative criticism can be balanced.
Despite these extremities, narrative criticism offers a valuable approach to textual analysis. For Rhoads (1982), there are two important shifts in using the method of narrative criticism. The first is the shift from the fragmentation of the text (inherent within so many of the other approaches) to focusing on the wholeness of the text (believing in the consistency of the narrator's point of view, techniques, characters, and plot concepts). The second shift is from approaching the text as a historical document to approaching it as a creative work of fiction, so that the narrative world of the story "has an autonomous integrity . . . quite apart from any semblances to the real world of Jesus' or Mark's times" (412-413). The autonomy of the fictitious Markan story world does not reject the use of historical and cultural knowledge to help reconstruct it, it simply does not attempt to discover historical events while doing so (413). Narrative criticism has made valuable contributions to New Testament studies, particularly within Markan studies. The Gospel of Mark is seen to be a basically consistent narrative, whose narrator is trying to communicate with the reader about the story of Jesus and the delivery of his message from God. Although the text does not hold a fixed meaning, various interpretations can show basic tendencies in the storytelling.

As mentioned in the review of the literature, approaches can complement each other. Narrative criticism benefits from the insights about a first-century story world that arise from historical, social, and feminist discussions; narrative criticism also benefits from the insights about the narrator-reader relationship from reader-response studies.

All narratives are created at a certain time in history and are set within a certain era. Historical critical studies help to identify the influences of these time periods on a narrative. Since the New Testament was written almost two thousand years ago, in another language (Koine Greek), in another part of the world (in countries around the Mediterranean), it is safe to say that a modern North American person reading it has "a cross-cultural experience" (Rhoads
Social critical studies address these differences and similarities between cultures, and their discussions provide the interpreter with information that may help him/her to avoid ethnocentrism in interpreting the New Testament texts. These studies, with their various approaches, assist the interpreter in understanding not only the time period in which the text was probably written, but also the social world that the narrator is creating and describing within the narrative. It is important to note that, although the text may indicate the norms within the culture, it may also call these norms into question (Tannehill 1977, 395). Narrative criticism is enriched by the insights provided by historical and social discussions. A useful approach for incorporating these insights begins with a close reading of the text (looking for compositional techniques that guide the reader’s interpretation). Next comes identification of rhetorical patterns and stylistic devices, while being aware of the socio-historical and literary context out of which the text arose; this context is a guide to understanding the narrator’s views (Donahue 1995, 6-7; Rhoads 1992, 140). This approach applies a literary method first, and then moves incessantly between literary and socio-historical insights about the story world (Stern 1989, 19; cf. Petersen 1978, 20, 79).

To be able to incorporate socio-historical insights about the story world, there must be recognition of the patriarchal bias upon which the Gospel of Mark is based. New Testament feminist studies inform the interpreter as to where this bias is found: patriarchal structures are inherent not only in first-century society but also within the New Testament texts. Feminist discussions demonstrate how the patriarchal views of the narrator and the society can become explicit rather than implicit. Feminist studies can inform an interpreter about the kinds of concerns, questions, and sensitivities that one can bring to a biblical text (Russell 1985, 15). Schüssler Fiorenza (1983, 1984) has developed a feminist method, applying four “hermeneutics” (interpretation
approaches) to the use of the Bible. The four hermeneutics are: suspicion, remembrance, proclamation, and actualization (1994, 148). The first approach is most useful to consider when incorporating socio-historical information about a first-century story world. The ‘feminist hermeneutic of suspicion’ recognizes the following:

1. Texts and historical sources must be read as androcentric texts, and not necessarily as representative of women’s historical reality and experience.
2. Patriarchy either glorifies or marginalizes women; this is a social construction of reality.
3. The codified law is also patriarchal, and it is more restrictive than the actual social reality.
4. Women’s actual social-religious status must be determined by their economic autonomy and social role, rather than by any ideological or prescriptive statements.

(Schüssler Fiorenza 1983, 108-109)

Since the actual social reality of male-female relations may well have been of a greater variety than what we suppose from reading a text, feminist discussions can assist both literary and socio-historical discussions from being blind to patriarchal bias within the text.

Since female characters are often "flattened or suppressed" in a male-driven plot (Bach 1993, 61), it is important for an interpreter to be aware of the role of the storyteller’s patriarchal bias in communicating information to the reader. Bach explains further:

The more blurred the portrait of the narrator, the easier it is for the reader to ‘forget’ the narrator’s alliances. Faithful readers share the narrator’s theological code, male readers forget the gender code, and those whose political stripe matches that of the narrator, the political code. Suspicions arise when the reader does not share the social, political, and gender codes of the narrator. The more codes one does not share with the narrator, the more incongruent the reading. (Bach 1993, 68)
An interpreter must, therefore, be very aware of the subtleties within the text, so as to be able to mine it for information about its female characters. Such subtleties can be detected by investigating the narrator-reader relationship.

Reader-response discussions are based on the assumption that a narrator writes a text in order to communicate with a reader; the narrator wishes to produce certain effects on the reader by way of certain strategies (Williams 1994, 67-68). Williams describes the main deficit in New Testament studies that reader-response studies address: “The Gospels have often been treated as a static set of theological themes or literary motifs. Evidence for a theme or motif is taken from throughout the Gospel with little concern for the place of this evidence in the development and movement of the plot,” neglecting the path the narrator has prepared to influence the reader (80). This sequential narrative flow is one of the main focuses of reader-response studies. The sequential flow of information and the process of characterization are two techniques that are identified as being influential on the reader.

Now that we have explored some of the basic tenets of narrative criticism, and how it can benefit from insights from historical, social, feminist, and reader-response studies, it seems feasible to build a narrative critical interpretation of Mk 7:24-30 that is informed by these other areas of biblical studies.
In non-biblical literary studies, narrative communication is often discussed in more detail, recognizing that the real author and the real reader are not accessible to our analysis just by studying the narrative text, but that we can discover within that text aspects of the implied author and the implied reader. In the process, it often becomes useful to discuss the narrator specifically, particularly when the narrator has marked differences from the implied author. For a more detailed discussion of narrative communication, see Chatman (1978, 151) and Moore (1989, 46-47). Markan narrative critics have not found it necessary or useful to distinguish between the implied author and the narrator, since there seems little difference between them (Rhoads 1982, 422; Williams 1994, 69-70). We do not know who the real author of Mark was, but we can tell certain things about that person’s beliefs from what is implied in the text (Rhoads 1982, 422). Rhoads thinks the Markan narrator is reliable (422); he is consistent in the points of view held within the Markan story world.

Just as narrative critics distinguish between the implied author and the real author, reader-response critics distinguish between implied reader and real reader. The implied reader is “one presupposed by the author when writing the text, who reads the narrative sequentially, responds appropriately to the rhetorical features, and accepts the values and the beliefs of the implied author” (Williams 1994, 71). Some critics refer to the ‘implied reader’ as the ‘ideal reader’ (Rhoads 1982, 422), or as the ‘potential reader’ (Rashkow 1993, 104). Again, I will be referring to the ‘implied reader’ simply as a the ‘reader,’ and will distinguish between the ‘implied reader’ and the ‘real reader’ only if there is a need to do so.

For a more detailed explanation of the narrative text as a sign and its connection to the referential fallacy, see Petersen (1978, 39-40).

Not all narratologists use various examples within their works. Moore (1989) notes one exception, namely, Gérard Genette’s Narrative Discourse, which is based solely on examples from Marcel Proust’s À la recherche du temps perdu (52). Even in that example, Moore points out Genette concludes that there is not necessarily a unity to the text, that would force the work’s coherence (53).

In Markan studies, different approaches from social criticism are already in use. Rhoads (1992) categorizes them into four approaches: social description, social history, sociology of knowledge, and the uses of models from the social sciences (in particular from cultural anthropology) (136). These four approaches all overlap and depend on each other. Social description names aspects of the material and social environment to get an idea of the daily cultures and customs; sources used are literature, art, coins, inscriptions, and other evidence found in archaeological excavations (136). Social history collects social description through time and then reconstructs the broad sweeping changes in periods in history (137). Sociology of knowledge seeks to establish the world-view of a society or a particular group, and to see how that world-view maintains the social order (139). Models from cultural anthropology show the dynamics of a culture, describing certain phenomena within it, such as kinship systems, power relations, rituals, purity and pollution rules, and economies; these models do not aid in researching history, but are useful in establishing a framework with which to avoid ethnocentrism (141). New Testament scholars whose work addresses social description include
Appendix B

Abraham Malherbe, John Stambaugh, David Balch, Eric Meyers, and James Strange (137). Those who work with social history include Gerd Theissen, Wayne Meeks, and Martin Hengel; those that have worked from the perspective of the oppressed include Elizabeth Schüssler Fiorenza and Ched Meyers (138). Concepts from sociology of knowledge are used by Beverly Gaventa, Richard Rohrbaugh, Wayne Meeks, and Howard Kee (139-141). Models from cultural anthropology are used by Robin Scroggs, J.G. Gage, Bruce Malina, Vernon Robbins, John Pilch, Herman Waetjen, and Jerome Neyrey (142-143).

There is within feminist studies, as within other fields, a broad spectrum of approaches. A number of feminist methods have been created so that these biblical texts can be analyzed and applied to feminists’ own faith exploration, thereby reclaiming the role of the women in biblical times so the modern reader can find inspiration in these texts. Sakenfeld’s “Feminist Uses of Biblical Material” (1985) distinguishes three trends in feminist text analysis and provides a helpful critique of these approaches (55-64). She groups feminist interpreters as follows: those seeking to counteract texts used “against” women by analyzing other texts about women; those analyzing the Bible for a theological perspective that critiques patriarchy; and those analyzing texts about women to see where there is an intersection between the history and stories of both ancient and modern women in patriarchal cultures (56). My interpretation is informed by feminist studies from all three trends, but mainly from those that fall in line with the third trend. My interpretation focuses on an ancient story about a woman living in a patriarchal culture, and I attempt to see how the patriarchal systems and views of that culture and author are manifest in the Markan story world and how these systems may influence the telling of that story.

For examples of feminist methods that are focus on reclaiming the biblical texts for inspirational purposes, see Schüssler Fiorenza (1983, 108-109; 1984, 14, 148); Russell (1985, 11); Ringe (1985); Tufariua (1990). For a critique of these types of approaches, see Kraemer (1992, 133).

Williams (1994) discusses Moore’s objection to analyzing the text based on the sequential flow of the narrative; Moore argues that, since much of the material was ‘traditional’ to a mainly Christian audience, the sequence would be irrelevant (in Williams 1994, 81). I agree with Williams that Moore fails to recognize the difference here between story and discourse, and that although the audience may have known the story of Jesus, they would not know the discourse of Mark, and would be affected by the techniques that the narrator uses within the sequential flow of the narrative.
To analyze the Markan characterization of the Greek Syrophoenician woman, it is useful to look at some theories about characterization and some observations about Markan minor characters. These observations create a context for the comments about this particular minor character. It is also helpful to understand the background of speech representation theory, since the woman’s speech is one of the main characterization devices used in Mk 7:24-30.

Character analysis is not without controversy. Both biblical and non-biblical literary analyses discuss to what extent character theory should make any connection between people in the ‘real world’ and characters in works of fiction. Rimmon-Kenan (1983) labels the two different arguments as the ‘realistic’ argument (based on mimetic theory) and the ‘purist’ argument (based on semiotic theory) (32). The ‘realistic’ approach understands characters as imitations of people. It abstracts them from the verbal texture of the work, attributes to them unconscious psychological motivations, and gives them a past and a future beyond what is specific in the text. The ‘purist’ approach understands characters only in their textual capacity. The characters are non-representational, so the focus in this approach is on the patterns of recurrence and the motifs they are linked with; the characters thereby lose their central status and definition. Rimmon-Kenan believes it is unnecessary to choose between the two approaches, since both can be reconciled through different aspects of narrative fiction: “[i]n the text characters are nodes in the verbal design; in the story they are--by definition--non (or pre-) verbal abstractions, constructs. Although these constructs are by no means human beings in the literal sense of the word, they are partly modeled on the reader’s conception of people and in this they are person-like” (33). Chatman (1978) points out that the ‘verisimilitude’ of characters (i.e., that they appear real or true) comes from the fact that the narrator’s spoken and unspoken
messages about the character are based on cultural codes with which the reader would have been
familiar (263). Chatman argues that the reader ascribes personality traits to the characters, just
as they do with the people they see around them in real life (132).

Another aspect of the controversy over character analysis is whether approaching the text
through the characters makes sense if the plot is the focus of the narrative. As was mentioned in
chapter 2, there has been support for character analysis in the gospels due to the role such
analysis played within a classical reader’s mind. From the first century B.C.E. to the second
century C.E., the Greek and Roman educational approach to classical texts did not involve
looking for historical accuracy, but instead examined the characters in a story to judge how best
to live a moral life (Weeden 1971, 14-18). If the reader and narrator of Mark had a Hellenistic
education, they would have approached the Markan narrative with a similar understanding. A
twentieth-century reader would do well to begin an examination of that gospel, therefore, by
reflecting upon the actions and words of the Markan characters (18).

The concerns about character analysis merit mention, but these concerns are resolvable.
Making connections between people in the real world and characters in fiction is valid to the
extent that there is a unity in the reader’s conception of how humans operate; the interpreter
looks for the same clues in both literature and life to construct the image of a person. As to the
second argument against character analysis, it has been shown that character and plot work
together to inform the reader; even ancients read narratives in terms of character, thereby
validating a modern approach to character analysis.

Character analyses have been done in the modern era on characters within the Gospel of
Mark. These analyses provide some useful insights into the characters within the Markan story
world, as well as how the Markan narrator approaches the characterizations of those personages.

The Markan narrator uses sophisticated literary techniques within his characterizations,
often using set patterns of providing information about characters. The repetition and variation
of these patterns assists the reader in evaluating that character. Rhoads and Michie (1982) discuss these various patterns and devices (102). Whether characters are reliable or unreliable is discovered through the narrator’s aside to the reader, his manner of introduction to them, and the inside views of the characters revealed through their thoughts and feelings. Another way to evaluate a character is to determine whether they live up to the standards of judgment in the story; that is, whether they are identified with “thinking the things of God” or “thinking the things of people” (Petersen in Malbon 1992, 30; Rhoads and Michie 1982, 44). In these and other ways, the narrator compares and contrasts each character with other characters in the story. The narrator also uses irony as the predominant means for revealing character in Mark’s story. Taking into account all the information the narrator provides, the reader reconstructs a character, such as Jesus, “determining his personal traits, his values and world view, his attitudes, struggles and motives, the dynamics of his relations with others, the integrity of his words and actions, his development as a character, and so on” (Rhoads and Michie 1982, 102). Malbon (1989) discusses how the “functional character groups in Mark are delineated on the basis of typical responses to Jesus, not on the basis of stereotypical characteristics associated with given status and roles. Thus Mark challenges both the absolutism of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ (no one is a perfect disciple) and the absolutism of types determined by status and rule (no one is ruled out as a disciple)” (280). One must therefore be cautious in classifying minor characters as ‘good’ or ‘bad,’ since they are often associated with functional character groups (such as ‘the followers of Jesus’) (277).

Although “[l]ittle scholarly work has been done on Mark’s portrayal of minor characters” (Williams 1994, 13), some general observations have been made about Mark’s minor characters. There are many minor characters within the Markan narrative, including those that are drawn to Jesus from out of the crowd. “Most are unnamed, defined by their illness (paralytic, demon possessed) or by their status (the rich young ruler, the Gentile woman); a very few are named”
(Dewey 1997, 54). Of the many minor characters that appear only once in the narrative, a large
group of them approach Jesus or are noticed by him. Rhoads and Michie (1982) refer to these
minor characters as ‘the little people’ (101) and Williams (1994) refers to them as ‘the minor
characters who come from the crowd’ (11). Rhoads and Michie (1982) give a broad overview
of ‘the little people’ (129-136), while Williams examines in detail each of the minor characters
from the crowd.

Rhoads and Michie (1982) determine that the minor characters share many traits,
although they cannot be dealt with as a single character since there are also differences among
them. The traits they do share include a childlike persistent faith, a disregard for power or status,
and a capacity for sacrificial service (129). These minor characters also exemplify the values of
the rule of God (the standard of judgment in the narrative), such as being least and being a
servant (Rhoads 1982, 419). Their behaviour serves as a foil to other characters in the narrative
(such as the actions of the disciples or authorities, who do not always exemplify these values)
(Rhoads and Michie 1982, 130). Rhoads and Michie’s overview on minor characters is helpful
in developing a general understanding of the qualities of the minor characters. Their overview
does not, however, go unchallenged.

Williams (1994) disagrees with Rhoads and Michie’s (1982) proposal that there is a
degree of continuity in the characterization of minor characters (with only different
characteristics being emphasized at different stages of the narrative), and that the reader
identifies with them as characters (Williams 1994, 31, 33). Williams provides a cogent
argument that the Markan narrative is more complicated than Rhoads and Michie admit. The
central section of the text shows more subtle nuances between the narrative analogues of stories
involving minor characters. Williams goes on to provide some fascinating insights into the
minor characters within Mark. In addition, he shows that there is a basic pattern in the
relationship between Jesus and the minor characters: the needy individual comes into contact
with Jesus (or another approaches Jesus on the individual’s behalf), Jesus has compassion on the individual, and, through Jesus’ authority, he heals the person (103). This pattern is established early in the narrative and, through repetition, creates an expectation of further instances of this pattern, with every episode showing some variations and additions. The reader is expected not only to look to the disciples for the proper response to Jesus, but to look to the minor characters who live up to Jesus’ demands and ideals: “Simply put, Mark’s narrative presents in addition to the disciples, other followers of Jesus” (205-206).

Building on Tannehill’s (1979) ideas on this area, Williams (1994) also analyzes the minor characters’ effect on the reader. Williams examines the narrative analogues that appear in the Markan scenes involving minor characters. Through the use of repetition and variation, the scenes emphasize matters that are important to a proper understanding of the story, most particularly observed through the characterization of these minor characters (52-53). There is a rhetorical function in the flow of the minor character pattern in Mark; the narrator encourages the reader to consider what are proper and improper responses to Jesus through observing Jesus’ reaction to the minor characters (81). The minor characters are important since they appear in crucial passages in Mark’s gospel.

Malbon (1994) also believes that the minor characters play an influential role in Mark:

One aspect of the major importance of minor characters is that they provide overall narrative punctuation—especially parentheses, exclamation points and colons—marking where the implied audience is to pause, reflect, and connect. . . . [S]tories centered on minor characters do occur at significant points in the narrative: setting off material as parentheses; bringing surprising closure to a series of narrative events as exclamation points; and, as colons, introducing discourses that develop the broader implications of the preceding stories. (81)

The influence of minor characters is a still a relatively unexplored area of New Testament narrative criticism, particularly when it comes to examining particular minor characters; this area warrants further development.
In character theory, various characterization devices have been investigated. Most of these have already been discussed in the chapter on method (chapter 2). The characterization device of speech representation has received little analysis to date within Markan narrative criticism. If modern readers are to benefit from analyzing Markan characters’ words, some background might be useful for understanding speech representation theory.

Both Genette (1980) and Rimmon-Kenan (1983) provide overviews of the history of speech representation theory (Genette 1980, 162-166; Rimmon-Kenan 1983, 106-108). In ancient Greece, both Plato and Aristotle distinguish between the narrator’s words, and the direct and indirect speech of the characters in the narrative. Plato, in Book III of The Republic, refers to there being two narrative modes: pure narrative (when the poet is speaking as himself) and mimesis (imitation, when the poet is speaking as if he were someone else). Aristotle, in Poetics, reduces the contrast of Plato’s pure narrative and mimesis by considering pure narrative and direct representation two varieties of mimesis. At the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century, the polarization between indirect and direct representation appears again in the novel theory of Henry James and his disciples in the “barely transposed terms of showing and telling” (Genette 1980, 163). Booth criticizes these neo-Aristotelians (of whom he was a part), indicating that the very idea of ‘showing’ is illusory (in Genette 1980, 163-164). Although dramatic presentation may be able to imitate, all that narrative can do is tell the story in a manner that more or less gives the illusion of mimesis; narration, oral or written, is in language, and “language signifies without imitating” (163-164). A distinction must be made between what the narrator says, and how he suggests that a character has spoken. Although many narrative critics use terms such as direct and indirect speech, it is important to be clear that all representations of speech in a narrative are constructed by the narrator. As mentioned in chapter 2, Tannen (1986) suggests that this speech representation be labeled as either ‘first-person dialogue’ or ‘third-person dialogue’ (311); I would add a third category: namely,
narratized dialogue’ (Genette 1980, 171). ‘First-person dialogue’ occurs when a character appears to be speaking for him/herself (using the first-person ‘I’). ‘Third-person dialogue’ occurs when the narrator describes what the character says (using the third-person ‘he/she/they’). ‘Narratized dialogue’ occurs when the narrator does not supply specific words for the character’s speech, but implies that he/she has spoken.

As well as describing specific forms of speech representation, literary critics discuss styles of speech representation. They compare classical Greek and biblical styles of speech representation. Auerbach (1957), in his examination of mimesis in western literature, compares the use of first-person dialogue by Homer with that of the Elohist (one of the Hebrew Scriptural writers) (8). He notes that the speech of biblical characters “does not serve, as does speech in Homer, to manifest, to externalize thoughts--on the contrary, it serves to indicate thoughts which remain unexpressed” (8). Auerbach sees a connection between Hebrew Scriptural and New Testament gospels’ use of first-person dialogue. Unlike the classical Greek use of first-person dialogue, he says,

[New Testament use of first-person dialogue is] too serious for comedy, too contemporary and everyday for tragedy, politically too insignificant for history. . . . Generally speaking, [first-person dialogue] is restricted in the antique historians to great continuous speeches delivered in the Senate or before a popular assembly or a gathering of soldiers. . . . But here in [the New Testament] the dramatic tension of the moment when the actors stand face to face has been given a salience and immediacy compared with which the dialogue . . . of antique tragedy appears highly stylized. . . . In the Gospels, however, one encounters numerous face-to-face dialogues. (40)

From this discussion, it is clear that there are various ways for the narrator to represent a character’s speaking, and that the narrator uses these ways to influence the reader, particularly in the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament.

The concerns expressed within the controversy over character analysis are resolvable. The character analyses that have already been done on the Gospel of Mark provide insights into the characters and the characterization devices within that text. The one particular New
Testament rhetorical device of speech representation seems more strongly affiliated with the Hebrew Bible than with classical Greek texts. The dramatic tension such speech evokes is useful in influencing the reader.
Hochman (1985) also discusses the controversy concerning character analysis (13-27): “The case against character has been made from a great many vantage points: textual, historical, literary-critical, ideological, metaphysical, and theoretical” (15). On the left, the case is against post-Renaissance individualism, and the ‘privileging’ of character as a bourgeois bias that stresses individuals and their choices versus the world they live in. On the right is the rigorous historicism that restricts the reading of texts in terms of discourse; the reading should be in accordance with what was appropriate to the times and genres that generated the text (15).

Malbon (1989) describes three categories of characters in Mark (277). The ‘foes’ are the Jewish religious establishment, the Roman political establishment, and the non-human foes (unclean spirits, demons, Satan). The ‘friends’ of Jesus also include non-human characters (God, the Holy Spirit) and human characters (suppliants). The ‘exemplars’ overlap the two previous categories, including many followers (such as the disciples, the crowd, and other minor characters).

Williams (1994) lists the Markan minor characters from the crowd: man with the unclean spirit (1:21-28), Simon’s mother-in-law (1:29-31), the leper (1:40-45), the paralytic (2:1-12), the man with the withered hand (3:1-6), the Gerasene demoniac (5:1-20), Jairus (5:21-24, 35-43), the hemorrhaging woman (5:25-34), the Greek Syrophoenician woman (7:24-30), the deaf man (7:31-37), the blind man of Bethsaida (8:22-26), the man with the possessed boy (9:14-29), the rich man (10:17-31), blind Bartimeaus (10:46-52), one of the scribes (12:28-34), the poor widow (12:41-44), the woman who anoints Jesus in Bethany (14:3-9), Simon of Cyrene (15:21), the centurion (15:39, 44-45), the woman followers (15:40-41, 47), Joseph of Arimathea (15:42-47) and the women at the tomb (16:1-8) (11 n.2). This is not an exhaustive list of the minor characters in Mark, but only addresses those who come from the crowd in the stories concerning Jesus.

Williams (1994) creates three categories for these minor characters: suppliants, exemplars of Jesus’ teaching, and those who are both suppliants and exemplars (11).

Williams (1994) refers to the work of both Tannehill, and Rhoads and Michie in his research: Tannehill’s “The Gospel of Mark as Narrative Christology” (1979) and Rhoads and Michie’s Mark as Story (1982).

Rhoads and Michie (1982) think the characteristics shown by the little people at the different stages are as follows: the first section focuses on the faith of the individual; the central section illustrates how one should lose one’s life, renounce oneself, and become the least; and the final section focuses on the sacrificial service of these characters (129-134).