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Non-Jewish women as precursors of Universalism

Abstract:

Bei der Untersuchung der Darstellung von Frauen im Matthäusevangelium fand bisher wenig Beachtung, dass, wenn von Frauen die Rede ist, damit nicht eine homogene Gruppe bezeichnet wird. Zieht man einen Ansatz aus der Sozialpsychologie, nämlich die soziale Identitätstheorie heran, die ein Fragewerkzeug zur Verfügung stellt, um Gruppen zu analysieren, wird klar, dass die Frauen in mindestens zwei verschiedene Gruppen einzuteilen sind: Jüdinnen und Nicht-Jüdinnen. Der vorliegende Artikel bespricht, was diese Beobachtung zur Analyse der Darstellung von Frauen im Matthäusevangelium beiträgt, und untersucht, welche Unterschiede in der Darstellung dieser zwei Gruppen zu finden sind und welche Rolle die zwei Frauengruppen in den Narrationen spielen. Besonders sticht dabei hervor, dass Nicht-Jüdinnen im Text durchgehend als selbstbewusst und aktiv agierend dargestellt werden. Die Konstruktion einer *counter story*, die die Inklusion der Nicht-Jüdinnen erzählt, bedient sich dieser starken Frauen.

The depiction of women in the Gospel of Matthew has been discussed in detail in the past.¹ In my article „The women in the Gospel of Matthew – revisited“, I tried to show that there is a *counter story* in the Gospel of Matthew that undermines the *main story* which, in keeping with the times, was an androcentric one. It is told selectively and so interferes with the narration of the *main story*. This counter narrative describes women who behave differently from the usual gender norms of antiquity. They are depicted in it as active agents as well as disciples. The Passion narratives in particular show women as playing an especially active role, and thus turning the *counter story* for a brief moment into the *main story*. It becomes apparent, however, that, on the whole, the *counter story*, which characterizes women as disciples, cannot entirely overcome the *main story*, but fades out again towards the end.²

Most examinations of the depiction of women in the Gospel of Matthew have not paid

sufficient attention to the fact that there are different types of women in the text. Seen from the vantage point of social identity theories, derived from social psychology and providing a tool for analyzing groups, it becomes apparent that women in the Gospel of Matthew must be divided into at least two different groups: Jewish women and non-Jewish women.³ How does this observation contribute to the considerations concerning women's images in the Gospel of Matthew? With the help of social identity theory, I will embark on an examination of the differences in the depiction of these two groups, and of the roles these two groups of women play in the narratives. To this end, the first step must be a presentation and critical evaluation of the social identity theory; this will be followed by a separate examination of each of the two women's groups. Finally, conclusions will be drawn from the differences and the similarities in the depictions.

Social identity theory: Auxiliaries for behavior analysis of groups

Social identity theory was formulated in the 1970s by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner; it examines the effects of group affiliation on social behavior towards non-members of those groups.⁴ Especially Tajfel examined the construction and function of social stereotypes. He tested criteria which are useful in defining the probability of the emergence of a conflict between groups and its concomitant stereotyping. His main question dealt with the search for minimal group conditions that would lead to discrimination against other groups.⁵ He reached the conclusion that the mere existence of a comparable group of outsiders led to comparisons made by members of the groups. For the group members, the objective of the comparison was to reach a „positive-sense-of-belonging,“ which is why their actions towards non-members of their own group was influenced by their belonging and thus by their social identity.⁶ One individual, however, is always a member in several social groups, and not every affiliation has the same value at every given moment in time.⁷ For the emergence of group conflict, other variables are required; the existence of a group of strangers is not enough. One such variable is the degree to which individuals identify with a social group; another is whether the out-group and his or her own group are so similar that they compete with each other; or yet another is whether the other group is relevant to his or her own group so that a comparison will allow his or her own group to come out on top or not.⁸ It becomes apparent that the construction of social identity also contains the creation of difference. Consciousness of belonging is also based on the notion of the otherness of all things that do not belong to one's own group.⁹ In the situation of a social conflict, this aspect creates differences and increases the stereotyping of the members of the out-group. According to Tajfel, the function of stereotyping is the preservation of group

ideology and the creation of positively connoted differentiations between the groups.¹⁰ For the examination of Jewish and non-Jewish women in the Gospel of Matthew, the following questions can be borrowed from social identity theory: Which differences are marked in the depiction of Jews and non-Jews? How are these two groups delimited in their textual depiction? Are there explicit differences in the depiction of Jewish and non-Jewish women, or is there only a general comparison between Jews and non-Jews to be detected? Are stereotypes used in the text, which emphasize the non-belonging and thus exclusion of the out-group (non-Jewish women)?

These questions show that social identity theory can be usefully applied to detect delimitations and exclusions¹¹ between groups. But they also reveal a difficulty in applying social identity theory to our case: The focus on delimitations and exclusions can preclude the discovery of possible inclusions and/or exceptions that are to be found in the text side by side with the exclusions. This must be taken into account in the following reflections, because especially non-Jews in the Gospel of Matthew are not only excluded, but also integrated into the ranks of those who are part of Jesus' concerns. The focus of this article is not only on the differences between the two women's groups, but also on texts that reveal inclusion and on the roles women play in these inclusions.

The group of non-Jews in the Gospel of Matthew: Stereotypical delimitations – exemplary individuals

Before we examine the women's groups in more details, the more general question of how the Gospel of Matthew distinguishes between non-Jews and Jews who are believers in Christ¹² must be asked. Only in this way can women's roles in the depiction be elaborated upon.

In the Gospel of Matthew, non-Jews are constantly distinguished from the followers of Jesus, i.e. Jews who believe in Christ.¹³ Especially the Sermon on the Mount can be used in order to show the differences between these two groups. It is through comparing that value judgments are transported and stereotypes are constructed: non-Jews are depicted as humans who have a false understanding of status and power (Matthew 5,47, cf. 20,25-26); who are ignorant of how to pray (Matthew 6,7-8); who have a misconception of God and who are fixated on earthly goods (Matthew 6,32). Non-Jews are also used in the text as indicators of non-belonging (see esp. Matthew 18,17, cf. 7,6[?]; 10,5;). ἐθνικός in Matthew is the term for delimitation and exclusion of

everything that does not belong to Israel (Matthew 18,17). In other words, in the Gospel of Matthew a concept defining boundaries which keep out non-Jews still exists.¹⁴

Besides delimitations and exclusions of non-Jews, there are many texts in the Gospel in which this scheme is disrupted and inclusion, or the possibility for inclusions into the circle of disciples of Jesus, is thinkable. It is here that a *counter story* can be found, which interrupts the initially *dominant story* in which non-Jews are excluded from Jesus' ministry. Whereas those delimited and excluded in the text are always described as non-Jews or nations in general, the *counter story* depicts inclusions of exemplary individuals. This means that because only a generalized and stereotyped group is mentioned, women do not become particularly visible in the construction of differences. In the counter story, which contains the inclusion narratives, while delimitation and exclusion are made possible through stereotyping; inclusion is performed through the emphasis of the faith of individual non-Jewish men and women. In this way, stereotypes of delimitation can be disrupted. In the text of the Gospel of Matthew, there are also women who explicitly help to deconstruct stereotypical depictions of non-Jews. Women play a very significant role in this *counter-story*. More than once, they are the ones who set a counter-example to the exclusion of non-Jews.¹⁵ Examined in greater details, it is always the women who challenge men in a specific way and thus disrupt not only ethnic, but also gender stereotypes. The inclusion of non-Jews in the Gospel of Matthew is again introduced into the narration by way of a *counter story*. The role of non-Jewish women in this *counter story* compared to Jewish women in the text needs to be analyzed in greater detail.

The group of non-Jews is singularly stereotyped in the Gospel of Matthew. It is not only excluded from the group of Jewish believers in Christ, but is also employed explicitly as representing non-belonging. Those delimitations are transgressed in several places of the *story*, and the inclusion of non-Jews is depicted. In the construction of delimitation and exclusion, women are not visible; in the inclusion narratives, however, they play a crucial role.

First, the depiction of Jewish women in the Gospel of Matthew will be examined, in order to detect differences in the depictions of Jewish and non-Jewish women.

Jewish women as female disciples in the Gospel of Matthew

In the androcentric *main-story* of the Gospel of Matthew, women are generally

invisible,¹⁶ or they are the subject of decisions or the topic of discussions. In these depictions, women feature in traditional, stereotypical roles.¹⁷

As soon as women transgress those roles in the narrative, they are stylized as female disciples.¹⁸ The story of Peter's mother-in-law may serve as an example (Matthew 8,14-15). The healing of the mother-in-law is modeled after a vocation story, since the typical narrative strands of a healing story are transgressed. Especially in connection with διακονέω and ἀκολουθέω, allusions to stories of vocation are evoked. διακονέω is not distinct in its meaning here. It can invoke the picture of a women serving Jesus at the table, as it explicitly does in Mark 1,31. But, through the combination with ἀκολουθέω it includes the meaning of serving Jesus in a way disciples do. The imperfect tense gravitates into the direction of a continuous serving and not a one-time dinner service.¹⁹ In Matthew 12,46-50, women are explicitly included in Jesus' definition of discipleship. In the Gospel of Matthew, μαθητής must not be understood as exclusively male.²⁰

Moreover, the depiction of Jewish women in the Gospel of Matthew disrupts the readers' expectations, induced by the androcentric *main story*. Jewish women are mentioned in the genealogy from which women are normally excluded in patriarchal societies (see Matthew 1,18-25). In the text women are not excluded from meals, which is also unusual in ancient society (see Matthew 14,21/15,38). By their faith and their behavior, they serve as role models for the disciples (see Matthew 9,18-26; 26,6-13; 27,55-56; 28,1-10). In the Passion narrative, women take over the tasks of the absent disciples.²¹ They become visible as active agents in the moment in which the male protagonists have left the narrative stage. Nevertheless, Jewish women are never explicitly referred to as μαθηταί. As soon as the eleven disciples in Matthew 28,16 return, the women revert to their invisible state. The order issued by the resurrected Christ to his disciples in Matthew 28,18-20 is only meant for the males among them. The Jewish women lose their crucial role again with the appearance of the men. In terms of the categories of social identity theory, Jewish women form a group whose borders are only clearly drawn if men are absent. The group of women is not excluded from the circle of disciples either. But an inclusion only ever takes place implicitly.

Non-Jewish women – the women who challenge men

Non-Jewish women, too, are often included implicitly in the mention of the whole group of non-Jews. There are, however, important exceptions. In the genealogy, there is mention of Rahab and Ruth (1,5). Both are non-Jewish women who, by their behavior,

become significant for the people of Israel, and both are women who know how to get what they want. Rahab makes a pact with the two Israelite spies that she herself, and all her kin, will be spared during the conquest of Jericho (see Joshua 2,8-14). Ruth manages to become integrated into the people of Israel with the help of her mother-in-law, by more or less seducing Boaz. The connection between the mother-in-law and Ruth reveals a society of women able to stand its ground in a patriarchal society that does not have a place for childless widows.²² Both women, Rahab and Ruth, are protagonists in narratives of inclusion, in which non-Jewish women are not only accepted into the people of Israel, but become heroines and models for this people.

Even if the main explanation for the mention of women in the genealogy in Matthew is not the fact that two of those five women are non-Jews, thereby preparing the Great Commission for the intake of non-Jews into the community of Christ, these two women, are examples for an inclusion of non-Jewish women into the people of Israel. Two other women play an outstanding role in the inclusion narratives of the Gospel of Mathew: the Canaanite woman and Pilate's wife. Both are non-Jewish women, who nevertheless acknowledge Jesus' special role. Both disrupt the ancient gender stereotypes. Pilate's wife interrupts her husband sitting in judgment (see Matthew 27,19); the Canaanite woman engages in a protracted dispute with Jesus in order to get what she had gone out to receive (see Matthew 15,21-28). Whereas Pilate's wife is unsuccessful in her appeal, and thus turns her story into a short digressive moment in the Passion narrative, the Canaanite woman's action brings a decisive change in the overall story. The Canaanite woman's story is crucial in preparing the transience from the non-Jews' *counter story* to the *main story*, in which non-Jews are integrated. In it we are told of a change in Jesus' attitude, according to which the exclusion of non-Jews from his mission is at least partially nullified. The Canaanite woman's are instrumental in bringing about a change in the attitude towards non-Jews. Her story is thus transformed, within the world of the text, into the programmatic demand to make the change which is made Jesus Jewish community into a universal community of followers of Jesus.²³

The bleeding woman and the Canaanite woman

In comparing the story of the Canaanite woman (Matthew 15,21-28) and the story of the bleeding woman (Matthew 9,18-26), the difference in the depictions of Jewish women and non-Jewish women becomes especially clear. Space-theoretical consideration can be useful here, complementing the social identity theory. The depiction of belonging to groups always constructs a room in the sense of a „relational arrangement“.²⁴ Martina

Löw understands space as a „relational arrangement“ of social goods as well as of persons which are connected with other persons or groups by action (spacing).²⁵ This parallels the positioning of the self in relation to other persons²⁶ by a space-creating action, in which borderlines may be drawn, which mark those who do not have any place or position in this space.

In the Gospel of Matthew, both the Canaanite and the bleeding women appear as individuals and are unaccompanied by men. They are not defined through men, either, and both have a personal request which is fulfilled by Jesus. The bleeding woman is a woman from the people of Israel.²⁷ The scene is set in the street, on Jesus' route, from one house to the house of the Archon, whose daughter he is requested to heal. The healing of the bleeding woman takes place in a public space. It is all the more significant that the Gospel of Matthew changes the story of the bleeding woman, compared to the Gospels of Mark and Luke, in such a way that Jesus tends to the woman immediately in a positive manner. He knows at once who has touched him, and acknowledges the woman's faith.²⁸ There is no hint that the woman's action has transgressed any conventions. In public space, action and faith find Jesus' recognition. Through his deeds, Jesus creates a public space in which the healed woman is no longer excluded.

It is, moreover, significant, that the Gospel of Matthew sets the scene of this story in Jesus' own town (see Matthew 9,1 εἰς τὴν ἰδίαν πόλιν). The space in which the healing of the bleeding woman can take place is place in a special relationship to Jesus the Immanuel (Matthew 1,23). The bleeding woman belongs to the people to which Immanuel is sent in order to deliver it from its sins (Matthew 1,21). Precisely this woman, who belongs to the social space which is under Jesus' protection, is healed immediately.

The same cannot be seen at once with equal clarity in the Gospels of Luke and Mark. In these Gospels, there is no mention of the city which is the backdrop to the events. In Mark, it is the opposite shore (Mark 5,21), and in Luke, Jesus returns to the masses (Luke 8,40). The narrative of these two Gospels also takes place in a public space, in the street, on the way to the house of the leader of the synagogue. In both, Jesus' reaction to the woman's touch is a question, inquiring who touched him. In both texts, this question is used as a threat, for the woman becomes afraid (Mark 5,33; Luke 8,47). In both narratives, Jesus' actions are first meant to create a space from which the woman is to be excluded. In Mark as well as in Luke, Jesus' disciples point out his being surrounded

by a dense crowd of people so that it is impossible to find out who had actually touched him. The disciples construct a space into which the crowd belongs in its entirety; it is not divisible into individuals. Jesus, however, insists on a division so as to enable him to identify the person who touched him, and had induced power to emanate from him. In this way, the woman is singled out in the crowd, and since at that point it is not clear to the reader if Jesus will confront her about having the boldness to touch a foreign man, while she is still bleeding. Both narratives in Mark and Luke contain the potential of humiliating the woman in public and thus rejecting her the space inhabited by those who are under Jesus' protection.

In Luke, this moment is particularly emphasized because it states that the woman realized that she was not able to stay hidden, protected by the crowd. She reveals herself in both narratives and assumes an entirely different position than the crowd by her next action, which is to kneel down before Jesus. She creates the hierarchy of kneeling, while Jesus looks down on her from on high. A space is thus created, in which the woman is depicted as submissive and thereby weaker. Only through the acceptance of her action and the foregrounding of her faith does Jesus dissolve this spatial division.

All this shows clearly to what extent the Gospel of Matthew had changed the spatial structures in the narrative, for a space is created in his narrative which enables the woman's inclusion without a moment of potential humiliation.

Whereas in the story of the bleeding woman in Matthew, the healing takes place immediately and Jesus turns to her at once in a positive way, the Canaanite woman first has to enter a verbal exchange with Jesus. The setting of the geographical space in the beginning of the text, too, serves to emphasize the non-belonging of the Canaanite woman. By the word *Χανααία*, she is clearly marked as somebody not belonging to the people of Israel, since the Canaanites were, according to the tradition of the scriptures, part of the main enemies of this people. Another proof is the remark that she came from the area of Tyre and Sidon (*ἐξέρχουμαι*). It is unequivocally clear that she belongs to a space other than that of Jesus and his disciples. The narrative also contains the striking remark that Jesus retires to the area of Tyre and Sidon (Matthew 15,21). Spatial distance is established regarding the location where Jesus had just quarreled with the Pharisees and the scribes. The verbs *ἐξέρχουμαι* and *ἀναχωρέω* support the distancing, as does the naming of the foreign cities. The text itself is unclear as to whether Jesus had abandoned the Jewish territory. This imprecision of geographical space at the beginning of the narrative can be a hint for readers, foreshadowing a very unusual occurrence upcoming

in the story.

The narrative is unusual in several ways: For one, it is the first and only time where Jesus ignores a request. Silence is Jesus' initial reaction to the Canaanite woman's request to help her daughter. This silence reveals that the Canaanite woman does not belong to the social space of those who are under Jesus' protection. The exclusion of non-Jews from the space of Jesus' ministry is thus strongly emphasized.²⁹ The obstacle that the Canaanite woman has to overcome is thus particularly high.

The next action is that of Jesus' disciples, who now verbalize the woman's exclusion: they want Jesus to reject the woman (ἀπολύω). The verb shows the borderline of social space and emphasizes the fact that the woman does not have any access to the space of Jesus' protection.

Next, the woman has to overcome Jesus' refutation twice. Both of Jesus' answers aim at reinforcing the borderline between the people of Israel's space and the space of non-Jews.

Compared to the Markian Vorlage, the dialogue in the Gospel of Matthew is prolonged and dramatized (Mark 7,24-30).³⁰ In Mark, the setting is a different one. The meeting takes place in a house (Mark 7,24). The woman has access to that house; there is consequently no insinuation as to exclusion. Her request is initially met with Jesus' refusal, but his answer in Mark 7,27 leaves open the possibility that a subsequent concern for non-Jews may develop, for Jesus says: "Let the children be filled first" (πρῶτον). The adverb already hints at an afterwards, in which other options exist. The woman has to debate Jesus' standpoint only once, and her request is subsequently not only fulfilled, but the narrative, in the Gospel of Mark, dissolves the borderline of the space of Jesus' protection. In Mark, this story delineates the beginning of Jesus' ministry to the non-Jews.³¹

In Matthew, the non-Jewish woman has to come to terms with a frighteningly dismissive Jesus concerning her daughter's welfare.

Her debate with Jesus, and her retort to his dismissive words, undermines repeatedly her exclusion from the space of his protection, which Jesus emphasizes again and again. The Canaanite woman counters Jesus' first answer that he is only sent to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15,24, wherein the "only" receives special emphasis in the sentence

structure) by addressing Jesus as *Kyrios* (Matthew 15,25). This designation is otherwise used only by Jesus' disciples. The Canaanite woman thus interrupts the conventions of the different spaces, refusing to accept this division. She blurs the borderlines between the two spaces drawn by Jesus in his answer that it is not fair to take the bread from children and to throw it to dogs (Matthew 15,26). In confirming this assertion, while at the same time hinting at the breadcrumbs that will fall off the table anyway, she emphasizes the fact that these are not two separate spaces, but are connected to each other (Matthew 15,27). She acknowledges Jesus' mission to the people of Israel, but shows a possibility of inclusion of non-Jews in salvation.³² Her argumentation dissolves Jesus' division without questioning the division itself. She succeeds in making Jesus instigate a change. The smart retort of the Canaanite woman convinces Jesus to fulfill her request, too. Through his healing, the separation of the space of non-Jews and the space of Jews is made void, at least momentarily.

Even if the dissolution of exclusion is only partial at this stage in the Gospel of Matthew, the change in Jesus' behavior is an important narrative signal, which directly prepares for the Great Commission in Matthew 28,18-20. It is without doubt the Canaanite woman's main achievement that, in the world of the text, the *counter story* of the inclusion of non-Jews becomes the *main story* towards the end of the Gospel.

Jewish women and non-Jewish women

If we compare the depictions of Jewish women and non-Jewish women in the Gospel of Matthew, it becomes clear that Jewish women can be implicitly depicted as disciples of Jesus. That is not the case with non-Jewish women. They may display strong faith, and by the Matthean text editing, that faith is particularly emphasized.³³ Yet they are not disciples. This fact is in agreement with the depiction of the male protagonists.

Disciples are only Jewish men. Non-Jews, such as the three magi or the captain of Capernaum, are stylized as those who have grasped Jesus' power and message, but they are not disciples. Finally, Jewish women are models of discipleship, whereas non-Jewish women are models of faith in the salvation of the nations through Israel. Women are thus depicted according to the same model as men. This in itself is remarkable. Even more noticeable is that in the *counter story*, the inclusion of non-Jews, both men and women, is equally important. Only in a few narratives are non-Jewish individuals depicted: The three magi and Rahab and Ruth, the captain of Capernaum and the Canaanite woman, the Centurio under the cross and Pilate's wife can be paired in these narrative strands. This shows that the mention of non-Jewish women and men in the

counter story is balanced.

When depicting Jewish men and Jewish women, however, men take the foreground. Jewish women can be role models and disciples, too, but they do not take center stage as often as non-Jewish women.

Jewish women as well as non-Jewish women can be depicted in the text as agents, acting independently. The comparison between the bleeding woman and the Canaanite woman, however, hints at the more belligerent stance of the non-Jewish woman in the depiction, maybe because she has no choice. Her arguments have to be more compelling, because she has to fight for her right. Jewish women too transgress gender stereotypes, in that they take on men's tasks (e.g. during Jesus' Entombment). Non-Jewish women, however, are more consistently depicted as self-conscious, active agents. The *counter story*, which narrates the inclusion of the non-Jews among the followers of Jesus, features these strong women.

In terms of textual pragmatism, there remains the question of the meaning of the fact that the inclusion of non-Jews is instigated, if not exclusively, at least predominantly through the example of a strong woman. As far as the *counter story* is concerned, non-Jewish women are equivalent to non-Jewish men. Does this mean that inclusion can be told about especially well with the help of female role models?

The careful introduction of inclusion of non-Jews in the Gospel of Matthew hints at the historical circumstances at the time of composition of the Gospel, where it was not yet finally decided whether the community should accept non-Jews. The stereotyping of non-Jews may reflect the position of the opposition to inclusion,³⁴ whereas the inclusion narratives are supposed to convince that inclusion is the right way. If inclusion is related in an equal manner regarding men and women, female as well as male readers were invited to question their prejudices against non-Jews. For the first male readers, who opposed inclusion, the instances of exemplary non-Jewish women may have evoked a less-acute threat to their position.

Could it also be historically true that women in the community, as featured in the Gospel of Matthew, were particularly instrumental in the change in attitude towards non-Jews, and that their role in the enabling of inclusion is reflected in the narratives?

A last assumption is that it was easier for the author of the Gospel of Matthew to depict

non-Jewish women as active, independent and not adhering to gender stereotypes because they did not belong to the same group – they were not Jewish women (who believed in Christ). Maybe this was the reason why Matthew could give them this prominent role in his text. According to the social identity theory, it is significantly easier for members of a group to accept that members of another group do not adhere to the expected norms, than that members of the same group transgress them.³⁵ In the same manner, women of another group could not severely disrupt gender stereotypes in one's own group.

As far as first-time readers in the group of Jewish Christ-believers are concerned, the depiction of non-Jews who did not follow the ancient gender norms did not worry them much, because these non-Jews as outsiders did not belong to the same group. This might have been the way in which the questioning of gender norms alluded to in the text was silenced. The texts had their after-effects only regarding their message of inclusion of non-Jews, but not regarding their potential to alter women's position in the group.

For this reason it is all the more important for contemporary textual interpretations to perceive this potential found in the texts regarding the altered roles of women and to not allow its concealment by group processes, because, after all, in the narrative it is a woman who changes Jesus' attitude towards non-Jews.

Furthermore, from the point of view of social identity theory, an important observation is that the groups of Jewish and non-Jewish women in the text are never compared with each other directly, which is different from, for example, the group of Jesus' disciples, who compared both to non-Jews generally and to the Jewish authorities.

A comparison of the two groups of women in the narrative does not seem to have been of interest to the compiler of the Gospel. There may be two reasons for this. For one, they might not have been perceived as separate groups, because the author himself had an androcentric world-view and did not put women's concerns into focus. The second reason may be that both groups of women, as discussed above, had very different roles in the text. As far as social identity theory is concerned, they cannot be compared with each other, and consequently, the text does not feature any direct juxtaposition. That way, they also cannot be used against each other as, on the males' side, the disciples and the Jewish authorities.

All the same – after all

At least for first-time readers, the positive depiction of non-Jewish women in the text of the Gospel of Matthew might not have had the effect of forming a new gender identity. The fate of the women in the text hints at this, too, because in the end, the Jewish women as well as the non-Jewish women fare in it the same. Whereas Jewish women played the main role in the Passion narrative and in the story of the Resurrection, the reappearance of the remaining eleven disciples pushes them back into silence and invisibility. The same is true for the non-Jewish women: once the trailblazers for inclusion, they become invisible with the Great Commission (Matthew 28,18-20), through which the *counter story* of inclusion is integrated into the *main story*. As individuals, they have become unimportant.

The *counter story* of inclusion is integrated into the *main story* in such a way that it prevails in the end, whereas the *counter story* of the women dissolves within the androcentric *main story*.

¹ For a comprehensive account of the discussion so far, see Boeck, Nadja, Frauen im Matthäusevangelium – revisited, in: *lectio difficilior 2/2011*.

² For this paragraph, see Boeck, Frauen, p. 31.

³ The term Jewish woman/Jew or Jewish is difficult, because in the first century A.D., there was no clear delineation of this term. When I write Jewish woman I refer to women who belong to the people of Israel. For the discussion of social identity, there need to be differentiating terms such as Jewish woman/non-Jewish woman/Jewish woman believing in Christ, in order to distinguish between particular groups. In absence of a better terminology, I will stick to the use of Jewish woman/non-Jewish woman, while keeping in mind the problematic nature of the definition.

⁴ See Tajfel, Henri, Gruppenkonflikt und Vorurteil. Entstehung und Funktion sozialer Stereotypen, Bern 1982, p. 102; Haslam, S. Alexander, Psychology in Organizations. The Social Identity Approach, Los Angeles/London ²2004, p. 18.

⁵ See Thoits, Peggy A./Virshup, Lauren K., Me's and We's. Forms and Functions of

Social Identities. In: Ashmore, Richard A./Jushim, Lee (ed.), *Self and Identity. Fundamental Issues*, Rutgers Series of Self and Social Identity, New York, 1997, pp. 106-136, here p. 114.

⁶ See Haslam, *Organizations*, p. 20f.

⁷ See Tajfel, *Gruppenkonflikt*, p. 101.

⁸ See Haslam, *Organizations*, p. 21.

⁹ See Jokiranta, Jutta, *Social Identity Approach. Identity-Constructing Elements in the Psalms Peshet*. In: Martínez, Florentino García/Popović, Mladen (ed.), *Defining Identities. We, You, and the Others in the Dead Sea Scrolls*, Leiden/Boston 2008, pp. 85-109, here p. 92.

¹⁰ See Tajfel, *Gruppenkonflikt*, pp. 43.53-56.

¹¹ Delimitation is understood as the formulation of felt differences in attitudes and behavior, through which a distance between one's own group and another is construed. This process of delimitation can take place through comparisons as well as through distancing linguistic formulations. See Reinhold, Gerd (ed.), *Soziologielexikon*, München ⁴2000, p. 120; Fuchs-Heinritz, Werner, et al. (ed.), *Lexikon zur Soziologie*, Wiesbaden ⁵2011, p. 145. Exclusion, on the other hand, is taken to be the process of demarcation in opposition to undesired ways of behavior and to persons in a group, by which that person is excluded. It is one possible form of sanctioning for an infringement of the norm. It refers to the denial of participation and interaction within the group. As opposed to a sociological and systemic-theoretic understanding of exclusion, exclusion in this sense is limited to the group; it is not about social disadvantage or the withdrawal of ways of life (see Fuchs-Heinritz, *Lexikon zur Soziologie*, p. 190).

¹² I assume that, in the Gospel of Matthew, the group of the female followers of Jesus are understood to be Jewish women who believed in Christ, because a discernible internal-external designation over and against Israel did not yet exist, and because the author of the Gospel still sees himself as Jewish. See also Troi-Boeck, Nadja, *Konflikt und soziale Identität*, 2013, p. 325 (intended for publication), see also Saldarini, Anthony J., *Boundaries and Polemics in the Gospel of Matthew*, *Biblical Interpretation* 3 (1995), pp. 239-265, here pp. 241.244.

¹³ See Troi-Boeck, *Konflikt*, p. 295.

¹⁴ Whereas it does not yet exist vis-à-vis Israel, see Luz, Ulrich, *Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Matthäus 1-7) vol. 1*, Zürich/Düsseldorf/Neukirchen-Vluyn ⁵2002, p. 98.

¹⁵ Men too are significant in the inclusion narratives: the captain of Capernaum, the Centurio under the cross and the three magi. It is, however, still striking that women are equally important; all the inclusive narratives that mention non-Jewish women depict a type that does not answer to ancient gender stereotypes.

¹⁶ Saldarini talks about “absent”. See Saldarini, Anthony J., *Absent Women in Matthew’s Households*. In: Levine, Amy-Jill (ed.), *A Feminist Companion to Matthew*. Sheffield 2001, pp. 157-170, here p. 170.

¹⁷ See Boeck, *Frauen*, pp. 3-9.

¹⁸ See *ibid.*, pp. 12-15, 26-30.

¹⁹ See *ibid.*, p. 14.

²⁰ See Carter, Warren, *Matthew and the Margins. A Socio-Political and Religious Reading*, JSNT.SP 204, Sheffield 2000, p. 279.

²¹ See Boeck, *Frauen*, pp. 26-30.

²² See Fischer, Irmtraud, *Art. Rut/Rutbuch*, <http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/rut-rutbuch-3/ch/3f5dcda62d314f91bb3a2373ae06b836/#h0> (consulted last: 08.07.2013)

²³ See Troi-Boeck, *Konflikt*, p. 303.

²⁴ Löw, Martina, *Raumsoziologie*, Frankfurt 2001, p. 271, see also Geiger, Michaela, *Art. Raum* <http://www.bibelwissenschaft.de/wibilex/das-bibellexikon/lexikon/sachwort/anzeigen/details/raum-1/ch/1aaf2e758ccf27959ac0f85f764f1bb9/> (consulted last: 09.08.2013)

²⁵ See Löw, *Raumsoziologie*, p. 158.

²⁶ *ibid.*

²⁷ This corresponds with the marking of belonging and non-belonging in the text: only non-belonging has to be mentioned. Belonging is a precondition not discussed. See the three magi (2,1: from the Orient), the captain (8,10: with none in Israel). Non-belonging is marked every time by the use of name locations, see also the Canaanite woman.

²⁸ See Boeck, *Frauen*, pp. 20f.

²⁹ See Troi-Boeck, *Konflikt*, p. 302.

³⁰ See Davies, W.D./Allison, Dale C., *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the*

Gospel According To Saint Matthew Vol. II, Edinburgh 1991, p. 541.

³¹ See also Konradt, Matthias, *Israel, Kirche und die Völker im Matthäusevangelium*, WUNT 215, Tübingen 2007, p. 57.

³² See Troi-Boeck, *Konflikt*, p. 303; see Fiedler, *Das Matthäusevangelium*, Stuttgart 2006, pp. 228f. With her answer in verse 27, the Canaanite woman shows that she acknowledges Israel's privilege, and the strength of her faith consists of understanding that Jesus' care for Israel also means blessing for all other peoples – all of them have their share of bread, even if these are mere crumbs and they are not given to them explicitly. In doing so, she acknowledges the role of Israel in her own salvation. See also Senior, Donald, *Between two worlds. Gentiles and Jewish Christians in Matthew's Gospel*, CBQ 61 (1999), pp. 1-23, here pp. 12.20; Konradt, *Kirche*, p. 68.296.

³³ The short insertion of the story about Pilate's wife can only be found in the Gospel of Matthew.

³⁴ The introduction of Jesus being sent to non-Jewish women in a *counter story* leads to the suggestion that being sent to non-Jews was itself not yet undisputed within the Matthew community. See Konradt, *Kirche*, p. 389.

³⁵ For the "Black Sheep Effect" see among others: Marques, José M./Yzerbyt, Vincent Y./Leyens, Jaques-Philippe, *The 'Black Sheep Effect'. Extremity of judgments towards ingroup members as a function of group identification*. *European Journal of Social Psychology* 18 (1988), pp. 1-16, esp. pp. 4.12-14.

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