This article examines a number of comparisons and contrasts in Mark 5:21–43, stories of two different kinds of healing that took place one morning when Jesus returned to Capernaum from the region of the Gerasenes (Mk 5:1, 21). The interlocking stories of the woman with the constant issue of haemorrhage and the restoration to life of the gravely ill and then dead daughter of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, invite literary and canonical examinations. The article also briefly discusses the significance of the unnamed groups of characters in the stories and compares the complementary versions of the stories amongst Matthew, Mark and Luke. The two miracles exhibit different aspects of Jesus’ amazing power and contribute to the ongoing portrayal of Jesus in Mark as the Son of God (Mk 1:1).

Introduction

This article continues my earlier work on Mark 5:21–43, a passage in which Jesus recognises that faith draws power from him when the woman in the crowd with the ongoing discharge of blood touches him. Shortly thereafter, he demonstrates his power over death and his ability to command life to return to a little girl (Branch 2013). Both healings are miracles.1 Both add to the documentation that Mark provides in his gospel’s opening statement that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1; Branch 2013:1). Miracles dominate the first half of Mark, and the Passion Story prevails in the second half of that gospel (Spivey, Smith & Black 2007:86). The restoration of life to Jairus’ daughter serves as a transition to the raising of Jesus from the dead.

This article employs literary and canonical methodologies. A literary approach involves looking at character, conflict, diction, point of view, setting and time and plot (see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008). This article primarily looks at elements of character in the interlocking stories. Mark 5:21–43 begins with the desperate request of Jairus, a synagogue ruler, to Jesus to come and lay hands on his daughter who is dying. Jesus agrees, but is interrupted on the way by a woman who touches him from behind and is healed. She likewise is desperate. This interruption – a story within a story – is called an intercalation.2

1. Other doublets are not examined in this article, but also provide interesting comparisons. Mack (1988:216) sees a structure of doublets in miracles in Mark. Consider these examples:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mark References</th>
<th>Matthew/Luke References</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>4:35–41</td>
<td>6:45–51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing the Gerasene demoniac</td>
<td>Healing the blind man at Bethsaida</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:1–20</td>
<td>8:22–26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing of Jairus’ daughter</td>
<td>Healing of the Syrophoenician’s daughter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:21–43</td>
<td>7:24–30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healing of the woman with haemorrhage</td>
<td>Healing of the deaf-mute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5:25–34</td>
<td>7:32–37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feeding of the 5000</td>
<td>Feeding of the 4000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6:34–44</td>
<td>8:1–10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In these interlocking stories, Jesus fulfils the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4: ‘He took our infirmities’ (see Spivey et al. 2007:55). The miracle stories in Mark focus on faith – whether it is the faith of one individual for herself or the faith of another individual for someone else (Powell 2009:89; see Mk 5:34; 10:52; 2:5; 7:29; 9:23). The object of faith in the New Testament is Jesus. Jairus’ action expresses faith that Jesus can heal his gravely ill daughter, and the action of the woman in the crowd expresses faith that, by merely touching a part of Jesus’ clothes, she can be healed. Her action draws healing from Jesus. Her healing differs on several levels from others in the biblical text, for example, Jesus did not initiate the encounter, Jesus and the woman did not face each other until after the healing and the healing occurred because it drew power from Jesus.3

In a canonical approach, a pericope is considered in its final (i.e. canonical) form. Furthermore, the community of faith to which a text is addressed, or under whose aegis it took shape, is recognised (cf. Hill & Walton 2000:579). Scholarship generally agrees that the Gospel of Mark was written to the churches in Rome and to a Gentile world (Barker 1995:1489).4 On two individual levels, the stories illustrate the results of faith directed toward Jesus.

Taking a literary approach, this article acknowledges literary elements like tone, tension, point of view and diction, but it concentrates on plot and character. For instance, the request of Jairus produces tension: Can Jesus heal his daughter, or will he be humiliated publicly? Similarly, the story’s tone toward the woman during the confession of her illness and her verification of her sudden healing is favourable because of her humility and truthfulness (Mk 5:33). However, since Mark provides many details about Jairus and the woman, and emphasises their suffering as he tells their stories, this article dwells on characterisation and plot. It looks at their stories and analyses how they add to the continuing character development of Mark’s portrayal of Jesus. Because the stories of Jairus and the woman with the haemorrhage interlock, the woman and Jairus5 invite a natural literary comparison and present intriguing research possibilities. Firstly, I shall consider some differences and then some similarities.6

### Similarities and differences between Jairus and the woman in the crowd

#### Differences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Jairus, a synagogue ruler</th>
<th>The woman in the crowd</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Holds a lofty position in society</td>
<td>Portrayed as an outsider</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is easily recognised and known</td>
<td>Probably mingling somewhat disguised; may wear layers of clothing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ritually clean</td>
<td>Ritually unclean, impure6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>As a prominent man he is undoubtedly sought after</td>
<td>As one ritually unclean, she is excluded from society7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Synagogue official</td>
<td>No official position in society</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Apparently healthy</td>
<td>Undoubtedly weakened by her chronic condition8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alive, energetic, mobile</td>
<td>Possibly dying because of her prolonged illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Named</td>
<td>Unnamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speaks</td>
<td>Her thoughts and words are recorded and summarised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Approaches Jesus face to face9</td>
<td>Approaches Jesus from behind10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urgently seeking healing for the illness, probably sudden, of his daughter</td>
<td>Urgently seeking healing for a prolonged illness in adulthood11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Loves his daughter11</td>
<td>No mention is made of loving relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A leader in Capernaum</td>
<td>A person without status</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeks healing for another</td>
<td>Seeks healing for herself and is the only woman in the New Testament to do so</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone with a large home</td>
<td>Perhaps homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone with a family</td>
<td>The text makes no mention of her family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Access to marital relations</td>
<td>Her condition prevents her from having marital relations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surrounded by family and servants</td>
<td>Apparently friendless and unmarried</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asks Jesus to lay hands on the girl</td>
<td>The woman touches Jesus’ clothes14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wealthy</td>
<td>Probably penniless15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employs messengers and mourners</td>
<td>Has no attendants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

7.Medically speaking, such a chronic condition as an ongoing menstrual flow suggests the woman was anaemic. Her condition requires constant work; she must frequently change her garments and wash them. For the symptoms of anaemia, see National Institutes of Health, (n.d.).

8.Powell (2005:67) correctly notes that the story leaves unaddressed the woman’s status as unclean according to the law and any implications it may have on Jesus. It also leaves unaddressed the implications of Jesus’ action of touching the dead girl. However, Jesus is never charged with uncleanness, probably primarily because there is no evidence of the conditions of the two when touched: a bloody discharge and death.

9.Diseases and chronic conditions, and the frequent failure of medical science and its practitioners are well-documented in the Bible and in literature of the Greco-Roman world (see Harper’s Bible Dictionary 1985:222). The Bible, as in the stories of the healing of the woman in the crowd and raising of Jairus’ daughter, and the outside accounts in the Greco-Roman world at times, share this pattern: a person has a hopeless condition or an incurable disease that cannot be helped by medical science; this person seeks a healer who accomplishes the healing in the name of a deity; acclamations of astonishment follow (see Achtemeier 1985:222).


11.Spivey et al. (2007:197–198) make these interesting observations: if the miracle of the woman’s healing happened without Jesus’ intent, there is a sense that it occurred to Jesus as well as to the woman, for indeed Jesus seems surprised and says that he felt power leave him.


13.Levine (1996:397) offers this observation, which could be found quite profound: the synagogue ruler has a daughter, and likewise, Jesus is a ruler’s son.

14.Employing a skilful play on words, Gaiser (2010:11) observes that healing comes from being in touch with Jesus.

15.The healing story of the woman in the crowd highlights someone ‘on the edge of society for whom normal medical practices are ineffective or too expensive’ (Gaiser 2010:10).
Although Jairus and the unnamed woman are adults, perhaps roughly the same age and residing in the same community, there is no indication that they knew each other. Instead there are clues that their differences – he a wealthy and influential ruler, and she an unclean and probably poor outcast – indicate that they moved in different social and economic circles. Their interlocking stories present no clue of any interlocking in their lives. Their point of meeting is their point of need: Jesus.

**Similarities**

Jairus and the woman share similarities. Their stories emphasise point of need: Jesus.16 Both Jairus and the woman in the crowd approach Jesus and kneel. These actions express homage and worship.18 Jesus bestows his compassion and power on both a rich man and a poor woman (Willson 2012). Both are members of Israel’s covenant community. Both interrupt Jesus. Both become part of the crowd accompanying Jesus to Jairus’ house.19 Both are desperate.20

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17. For a more thorough investigation of uncleanness and purity, see Branch 2013.

16. The compliment, ‘daughter’, an endearment, suggests that Jesus accepted her as she was, in spite of the way she received her healing (Powell 2005:74).

17. For a more thorough investigation of uncleanness and purity, see Branch 2013.

18. In that article, I mention the insight of Mathew (2000:104) who notes that, when Jesus touches the leper (Mt 5:40–45) and the leper becomes clean, Jesus’ presence spreads purity and Jesus ‘turns impurity into purity’. In addition, Garland (1996:55) sees the reason why Jesus does not become impure as ‘the divine dimension’. In Mark’s prologue, notably that Jesus speaks with authority, drives out evil spirits and evil spirits obey him (1:27).

19. Mark 1:40 recalls an earlier incident involving healing: a man with leprosy kneels before Jesus. Jesus accepts kneeling, an attitude of worship, without rebuke or reprimand. Perhaps Jairus knew of this.

20. For a more thorough investigation of uncleanness and purity, see Branch 2013.

21. Mark 1:40 recalls an earlier incident involving healing: a man with leprosy kneels before Jesus. Jesus accepts kneeling, an attitude of worship, without rebuke or reprimand. Perhaps Jairus knew of this.

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23. The Book of Ruth offers insights on the use of the endearment ‘daughter’ in Israel. In chapter 2, two people in separate instances honour Ruth, a Moabite, but convert to Israel’s faith on the same morning by calling her daughter. They are Naomi, Ruth’s mother-in-law, and Boaz, the owner of the field in which Ruth gleans (Rt 2:20). For Naomi, the term may well signify the transition to a family status equal to that of blood. For Boaz, the term carries with it his protection for he further instructs Ruth to glean only in his fields and amongst his servant girls. He commands his field hands not to touch her and to let her have water whenever she wishes (Rt 2:9–10). Boaz, by doing this publicly for all around to hear, puts his protection on Ruth. Jesus does the same with this powerful, tender word to the woman in the crowd (for further insights on this, please see Branch 2012). As mentioned there, the endearment is non-erotic, yet allows for an expressive tenderness (Cotter 2001:19). Jesus acknowledges the intimate, personal nature of the woman’s need and of the healing she received through her faith. The risen Jesus called his disciples ‘children’, which is another endearment (In 21:5).

choosing not to fear and to believe, and the woman obeys, because she departs in peace. Both direct their faith toward Jesus.25 Their hopeless situations lead each to turn to Jesus on the same morning. ‘Both eventually end up at the feet of Jesus (vv. 22, 23), where finally all are equal’, Gaiser (2010:10) writes.26

A comparison and contrast between the woman in the crowd and Jairus’ daughter

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Woman in the Crowd</th>
<th>Jairus’ Daughter</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unnamed</td>
<td>Unnamed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffered her infirmity for twelve years</td>
<td>Twelve years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A mature woman</td>
<td>A child on the cusp of womanhood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suffering from a chronic illness</td>
<td>Suffering from seemingly a sudden illness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Healed instantly</td>
<td>Raised instantly from the dead and healed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Her problem seems to be ongoing menstrual flow</td>
<td>Age 12 is the normal time for a girl to begin her monthly periods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sought healing for herself27</td>
<td>Her father sought her healing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consulted doctors</td>
<td>No mention of doctors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desperate for healing</td>
<td>Her father was desperate for her healing26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark summarises her direct speech</td>
<td>No direct speech</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inability to have sexual relations because of her condition</td>
<td>Purity stressed; she’s called a child and maiden (Mk 5:39–41, 41–42)28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No known family or attendants</td>
<td>Surrounded by parents who love her and servants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor; she has spent all her money</td>
<td>The daughter of affluent and influential parents</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Restored to the community</td>
<td>Restored to her family</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Called ‘daughter’ by Jesus</td>
<td>Described as the daughter of Jairus</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given a new family centred on Jesus30</td>
<td>Returned alive to her family30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Given new life</td>
<td>Given live again</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unclean because of chronic illness</td>
<td>Unclean because of death</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seemingly alone in the world</td>
<td>Seemingly the only child of Jairus and his wife</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25. Some commentators talk about a combination of superstition and faith, especially for the woman (see English 1992;114). I agree with Miller (2004:59) who finds claims of magic or belief in magic as unconvincing.

26. Beavis (2010:62) sees the raising of Jairus’ daughter as a ‘radical revision’ of the familiar story in Judges of Jephthah and his daughter and consistent with a similarity between Jonah 1:4–14 and Mark 5:35–41. I do not agree that Mark used the Jairus story to revise the Jephthah story, but do agree that the Mark story highlights Jesus’ power over death.

27. In an earlier article (Branch 2013) healing is discussed in more detail. The Talmud addresses the woman’s condition with 11 remedies. It must have been a common condition (Barclay 1956:128). Perhaps Mark makes fun of the doctors (see Barclay 1956:128). The Talmud prescribes tonics and astringents and even advocates carrying the ashes of an ostrich egg in a linen rag in the summer and in a cotton rag in the winter (Ogulives1975:154). Yet another cure was carrying a barley corn, which had been found in the dung of a she-ass.

28. Common diseases in ancient Palestine were malaria and typhoid, both characterised by a high fever (Packer & Tenney 1980:460). Perhaps Jairus’ daughter was afflicted in this way. Gaiser (2010:8) notes that Jairus uses a word for healing as being saved. This concept develops in Mark to include the kind of saving Jesus accomplishes on the cross.

29. I am indebted to Beavis (2010:57) for this keen insight.

30. Walters (2012:206) points out the interesting translation possibility of ‘Talitha, cumi’ [little girl, arise] (Mk 5:41). ‘The Aramaic is important, as there is a fine double meaning hidden away in it: The same word that denotes a young child – Talitha – also stands in the Targum for “lamb”. Jesus takes her hand and says, “Lamb, arise”’. Walters (2012:206) writes. John the Baptist describes Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn 1:29).

31. In Mark 3:31–34, Jesus re-defines his family as ‘whoever does God’s will is my brother and sister and mother’.

32. The story of the return to life of the daughter of Jairus shows God’s power to raise the dead (Spivey et al. 2007:198).

Although the woman with the haemorrhage and Jairus’ daughter do not interact formally in this story, readers are left to wonder if they do meet at a later stage. I think they probably do, for it would be natural for the family of Jairus and the woman to want to talk amongst themselves about their encounters with Jesus, especially after Jesus’ death. The Marcan account illustrates that Jesus handles their healings in an individual way. Encounters with Jesus – whether for healing or teaching and whether with the living or with the dead – are not stereotyped or based on a formula. The stories of the woman with the haemorrhage and the 12-year-old girl serve to verify Mark’s opening statement that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1) by showcasing aspects of Jesus’ power over a long-term illness and death. They highlight different aspects of his ability to heal and of his compassion. It would seem that human need triumphs over any assumed right of gender, rank or age.

A comparison of secondary characters: Jesus’ disciples, the messengers to Jairus, the professional mourners at Jairus’ house

The intercalation stories of Mark 5:21–43 also invite a comparison or contrast of their secondary characters: the disciples who accompany Jesus, the messengers from the house of Jairus and the mourners at Jairus’ house. The messengers and professional mourners are static characters in that they do not show change or growth (Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:14). Arguably, Peter, James and John, the three disciples Jesus took with him into the home of Jairus and into the bedroom of the dead girl, grew as characters for the text records that all in the room ‘were completely astonished’ with the girl’s resuscitation (Mk 5:42; see Lostracco & Wilkerson 2008:15).

However, the portrait in Mark is not altogether favourable toward the team of 12 disciples. For instance, they received private instruction from Jesus regarding his parables (Mk 4:34), but also panicked during a storm on the lake (vv. 35–41). Williamson (1983:102) writes that, in this unit of Mark, faith recognises Jesus as the Son of God (1:1), and the disciples lacked that kind of trust. He (Williamson 198:102) says that an appropriate paraphrase of Mark 4:40, after Jesus calmed the fierce storm, is this: ‘Why are you afraid? Do you not yet trust God, whose rule is present with me?’

No doubt, the disciples pondered these questions for they indeed serve as an appropriate segue to the amazing events...
of Mark 5: the healing of the demonic and the woman with the haemorrhage, and the resuscitation of Jairus' dead daughter. However, perhaps their level of reflection was too shallow for, at the end of chapter 5, they fail to affirm Mark's opening assertion that Jesus is the Son of God (1:1):

**Jesus' disciples (Mk 5:31)**
- Accompany Jesus
- Hear Jairus' plea
- Probably try to shield Jesus from the press of the crowd
- Express incredulity when Jesus stops and asks who touched Him
- Seem embarrassed at Jesus' seeming stupidity in asking who touched Him
- Seem to ridicule or rebuke Jesus for his question
- Point out how many people surround Him
- Seem not to understand Jesus' ability to feel power leave Him

**Messengers sent to Jairus (Mk 5:35)**
- Come to Jairus as Jesus, and the crowd walk toward Jairus’ home
- Abruptly announce the death of Jairus’ daughter
- Seem to express no compassion for the father
- Simply do a job curtly and without sensitivity
- Seem not to understand Jairus and his love for his daughter

**Professional mourners in Jairus' home (Mk 5:38–40)**
- Loudly do their job
- Know the girl is dead
- Ridicule Jesus
- Seem to have payment in mind
- Seem to have no prior knowledge of or permanent attachment to the girl

Secondary characters are often overlooked in biblical studies, because they are often unnamed, do not speak and are referred to in bulk as a large group. In short, they are hard to handle and a reader skips over them, heading instead to a named character who speaks. However, biblical narration abounds with anonymous characters. This pericope spends five verses on them, surely a significant contribution. As such, they deserve mention and analysis.

The unnamed disciples, members of the crowd and professional mourners give the interlocking stories validity by showing diverse people and the public ministry of Jesus. In addition, they serve as literary tools that help a story move quickly. The text identifies them in terms of function and place in society. Their anonymity binds them in a literary way to the two unnamed major characters in the pericope: the unnamed woman with the haemorrhage and the unnamed girl who is at the point of death. Arguably, the function or status of an unnamed character or characters gives a clue toward why a character or characters are in a story in the biblical text. The words and actions of unnamed characters sway events (Branch 2004:186). The unnamed woman with the haemorrhage serves as a foil for the unnamed, clueless disciples, because she grasps that Jesus can heal – and can even heal her. Perhaps Jairus’ daughter remains unnamed, because the story’s focus is this: Jesus’ words, touch and presence are more powerful than death.

### A textual analysis of the passage in the synoptics: Matthew, Mark, Luke

The stories of the healing of the woman with the ongoing discharge of blood and the resuscitation from the dead of Jairus’ daughter also occur in Matthew 9:18–26 and Luke 8:41–56. Mark’s account is both the longest (with 23 verses) and most detailed. Neither story appears in John.

A comparison or contrast of the Synoptic accounts proves helpful, because it lets a reader see the literary emphases in each gospel. The analysis below is based on a comparative viewing of the Synoptic texts:

- Matthew gives no location. Mark says Jesus and a crowd are beside the sea.
- Matthew says an unnamed ruler comes. Mark says one of the synagogue’s rulers comes and names him as Jairus.
- Matthew’s unnamed ruler kneels before Jesus and says, ‘My daughter has just died.’ In Mark, Jairus says, ‘My little daughter is at the point of death’ (italics added).
- Matthew’s ruler asks Jesus to ‘come and lay your hand on her, and she will live’. Mark’s Jairus specifies hands and adds, ‘so that she may be made well’. Both accounts stress the faith of the father who believes that the outcome of Jesus’ coming to his home will be that his daughter will live.

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43.See Branch (2004:186) for a lengthier discussion of unnamed characters that serve as foils.
40.Calvin (1981:409–410) asserts that any discrepancy in the three gospel accounts is absurd. Mark and Luke simply give more details. Calvin (1981:409–410) points out that Matthew, known for his brevity, withholds the ruler’s name and represents the father as saying, ‘My daughter is dead.’ Matthew summarises the ruler’s plight whilst Mark and Luke add more details to it. Calvin (1981:410) concludes that all three evangelists ‘relate the same event’.
41.John 11:1–44 contains the story of the resuscitation of Lazarus. In addition, Luke 7:11–16 contains the story of Jesus’ compassion on the widow of Nain. In this story, Jesus stops a funeral procession, commands the dead son of a widow to get up and restores the son, alive, to his mother.
42.For an excellent reference, see Aland 1985. This book presents parallel accounts, thereby eliminating the need to flip back and forth to various Bible passages. Aland provides textual notes and variants at the bottom of each page. For example, he (Aland 1985:x, 126) gives the reading of Mark 5:32 as follows: Jesus ‘looked around about and to see her that had done this thing’ (italics added). This was the reading of the Authorized Version (King James) in 1611, the English Revised Version of 1881 and the American Standard Version (Edition of the English Revised) of 1901. Kalin (1988:39) also appreciates Aland’s contributions. The translations using her show the text’s purposeful emphasis of Jesus’ ability to know that a woman in the crowd touched him.
39.See Branch (2004:186) for a lengthier discussion of unnamed characters that serve as foils.
42.1901. Kalin (1988:39) also appreciates Aland’s contributions. The translations using her show the text’s purposeful emphasis of Jesus’ ability to know that a woman in the crowd touched him.
43.Matthew’s account informs the reader or hearer that the young girl is already dead probably because Matthew’s audience proclaims ‘that in Jesus, God’s day of eschatological shalom is at hand’ (Kalin 1988:47).
• Matthew’s Jesus seems to follow behind the ruler. In Mark, the two men seem to fall in step side by side.
• Mark indicates others: ‘A great crowd followed him and thronged about him.’ Luke indicates that the crowd was waiting for Jesus.
• All three gospels record that Jairus approached Jesus publicly and fell at Jesus’ feet.
• With the textual marker, behold, Matthew singles out that something surprising is happening.44
• Matthew limits the woman’s suffering to suffering from the haemorrhage for 12 years. Mark designates it as coming from the hands of many physicians.
• Matthew and Luke add this important detail: the part of Jesus’ garment she touched.46 She touched its fringe.46
• Mark’s woman touches Jesus’ cloak and feels she is healed of her disease. Luke’s woman touches the fringe of his garment and immediately her flow of blood ceases.
• Matthew and Mark recount the woman’s thoughts: ‘If I only touch his garment, I shall be made well’ (Mt 9:21). Matthew adds that Jesus says, ‘Take heart,’ to the woman. Matthew eliminates Jesus’ other words, ‘Go in peace’ whilst Mark records them.
• Matthew records that the woman’s healing comes after Jesus’ words. In Mark and Luke, the woman is instantly healed after touching Jesus’ garment.
• Matthew eliminates four encounters: the conversations of Jesus with the crowd, his disciples and Peter about who touched him; Jesus’ face-to-face interaction with the healed woman; the abrupt announcement of Jairus’ servants that the daughter is dead; and Jesus’ immediate command to Jairus not to fear.
• Luke (8:54b–55a) records an additional assurance to Jairus about his dead daughter’s situation: she shall be well (Lk 8:50; italics added).
• Matthew details the commotion at Jairus’ house: flute players and a crowd made a tumult (Mt 9:23). Matthew also adds this command of Jesus, ‘Depart’ (Mt 9:24).
• Luke adds a significant insight about death. After Jesus took the child’s hand and said, ‘My child, get up!’ Her spirit returned (italics added). Matthew 9:25 summarises Jesus’ direct words to the child. After the crowd had been put outside, Jesus went inside, and took her hand, and the girl arose.
• The Jesus in Matthew is one of action and few words. Significantly in Matthew, the touch of Jesus is enough to raise the dead girl. The child is healed without words.

44This word, behold, common in the Hebrew text as hen or hinneh, is an interjection that demands attention. It means ‘Look!’ ‘See!’ ‘Take note!’ ‘Be aware that an important word or action follows’ (Harris, Archer & Waltke 1980:470–477).

45.A Jewish man’s outer garment evidently was a square or oblong affair measuring two to three meters (80 to 120 inches). This garment, in Hebrew a me’yil, was a coat, robe or mantle, and it was wrapped around the man as a protective covering. Clothing was a measure of wealth, and a large wardrobe indicated prominence. A poor man used the outer garment, made of coarse goat hair, as a bed covering and the woman in the crowd begin – indeed a better word – an interactive conversation with Jesus about healing. Each supplicant receives more from Jesus personally and more of Jesus’ power than anticipated. The outcomes are quite different from what each supplicant initially expected.48 The woman expected to touch Jesus’ garment, be healed and disappear back into the crowd, which was not to be (see Branch 2013).

46 The garment’s fringe indicates that Jesus complied with the dress code of an Israelite male. The fringe was to be on each corner of a garment (Nm 15:37–37), and a blue cord was to be attached to each fringe. The ornament was not to be showy, gaudy or ostentatious. Instead, it was to remind the wearer of the Lord’s command to be holy and to live a holy life (Freedman 2000:472).

47.Gaiser (2010:9) also sees this connection.

48.See Gaiser (2010:14) for additional insights.

In Luke, the story of the resuscitation of the son of the widow of Nain takes place before the stories of the dead girl and the sick woman (Lk 7:11–18; 8:40–56).

Conclusion
This article presents a close literary analysis of Mark 5:21–43 that concentrates largely on the character traits of two supplicants: Jairus and the woman with the ongoing flow of blood. The needs and actions of the characters entwine to form the pericope’s plot. It asserts that these characters’ two early morning encounters in Capernaum enlarge the portrait of Jesus that Mark has presented so far. In addition, this concluding section takes selected aspects of the character of Jairus and of the woman and analyses them.

Notice an interesting role reversal: Jairus kneels at the feet of Jesus, a new resident of Capernaum.47 Kneeling customarily indicates not only supplication, but also recognition of one of superior rank. Yet outwardly, this town ruler and wealthy man outranks this carpenter in terms of social status. Jairus openly begs and kneels in front of Jesus in a public place. Begging acknowledges another’s power and authority to do something as well as one’s own need. Perhaps Jairus had been one of those in Jesus’ home when the paralyzed had been lowered through the roof and healed and had left amazed and praising God (Mk 2:1–12).

Jesus receives without comment this unusual expression of homage, first from Jairus and quickly thereafter from the woman in the crowd. In short, Jesus acknowledges that kneeling represents worship; Jesus accepts their actions. It is his due. Both characters by their actions acknowledge Jesus’ power and seek Jesus’ power to meet their needs. Gaiser (2010) makes this observation:

Power kills; power makes alive – but it is the same power: the power of life and death, the power of God, now present in Christ. For the haemorrhaging woman, that power will at the same time heal her disease and nullify her uncleanness (Lev. 12:2, 5). (p. 12)

Jairus and the woman also share something: a desperate, immediate need. Because of their individual needs, Jairus and the woman in the crowd begin – indeed a better word probably is force – an interactive conversation with Jesus about healing. Each supplicant receives more from Jesus personally and more of Jesus’ power than anticipated. The outcomes are quite different from what each supplicant initially expected.48 The woman expected to touch Jesus’ garment, be healed and disappear back into the crowd, which was not to be (see Branch 2013).

Instead, the woman received public recognition and commendation for her faith, a new family whose focus is on Jesus, a loving endearment – daughter – from Jesus and the assurance that the malady will not return. Jairus, distraught
to the point of being frantic, seeks healing for his gravely ill daughter. In the short time he is away from home, his daughter dies. As is so typical of the miracles of Jesus and of God’s character throughout the biblical text, Jairus receives more than an answer to his initial desperate plea. Jairus, his wife and household receive back their beloved daughter from death to life. She is healed and ready to live again – and undoubtedly hungry! Jairus had believed only that Jesus could heal. The restoration of life to his daughter gives Jairus and his household this added insight: Jesus also has power over death.

Pelikan sheds light on Jesus’ authority and power. Calling Jesus the Cosmic Christ, Pelikan (1985:65) acknowledges that Jesus has priority over all created things. Jesus shows his lordship over death and incurable disease by touching the dead girl and commanding her to get up, and by receiving the touch of the woman in the crowd that drew healing from him. Jesus pulls rank on disease and death. By doing so, he establishes a principle around himself of having the ability to completely heal and to completely restore to life. In a canonical reading, perhaps Paul thought of the resuscitation of Jairus’ daughter when he penned these verses, acknowledging the kingship of Jesus throughout the cosmos: ‘He must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death’ (1 Cor 15:26–27).

Jesus’ actions toward the woman in the crowd and Jairus’ daughter conquer death and fight the fallenness of the world (see Pelikan 1985:67). The four gospels show that Jesus overcomes the fallenness of the world by becoming incarnate, suffering and dying on a cross, rising from the dead and thereby showing that he is ‘victorious over sin, death, and hell’ (Pelikan 1985:67). These two stories in Mark prefigure Jesus’ upcoming passion by pointing out fallenness in two areas: chronic ill health, leading to death, and death itself. The healing of the bleeding of the woman and the resuscitation from death of Jairus’ daughter speak of issues common to humanity and ‘effect even the Christ’ (Levine 1996:397): blood and death. Jesus will shed much blood and die as the story in Mark progresses.

Indeed, death connects the interlocking stories of Jairus and the woman. In a literary sense, the pericope indicates this significant conflict: both supplicants know they face the immediacy of death. Yet, their encounter with Jesus culminates in victory over death. The woman suffering the chronic illness, an illness that would probably have led to her death, is healed. Healing here represents the restoration of physical vitality (indeed, life!) and a life lived within a community. The resuscitation of Jairus’ daughter erodes any concept of the finality of death. Her resuscitation points to Jesus’ upcoming resurrection. Walters (2012) explains Jesus’ upcoming resurrection in the following way:

Resurrection continues creation and is faithful to creation. Death does not undo humanity, it leads us forward into a transformation of our created humanity, to which only it – death – can conduct us. (p. 209)

The two stories of Jairus’ daughter and the woman in the crowd show this: an encounter with Jesus changes a person – and tangentially changes many people. Let me explain.

The woman is healed, and thereby, her life is changed. The daughter of Jairus is restored to life. The wider significance of their public healing needs noting. The woman returns to society – restored as a fully-participating member. Additionally, in a kingly gesture, Jesus designates his authority over her by calling her ‘daughter’. In effect, he makes her his ward. The daughter of Jairus, who, at 12 years of age, is emerging into womanhood, receives her life restored to her so that she can grow up! What joy that must have been to her family! The girl can become a young woman. She can marry, have a family, take her place in society, be an ongoing joy to her parents and provide them with grandchildren! Jesus’ power spares Jairus and his wife a lifetime of grief.

These encounters with Jesus portray different kinds of faith. Faith in the New Testament is directed to Jesus. I shall briefly start with the mourners, messengers and disciples. The mourners have no faith in the aforementioned New-Testament sense. Informed that the girl is dead, they carry on loudly. Their income depends on death, and they do their job. Their scornful laughter verifies the girl’s death. The messengers, in their abruptness and insensitivity, report what they know: the girl is dead. Their report may indicate that the news came from the girl’s mother for it includes perhaps what was probably originally a tactful statement: ‘Why bother the teacher anymore?’ (Mk 5:35). Jesus’ discipless seem to be clueless to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God (Mk 1:1). Although they quite recently saw Jesus command the wind and waves to be calm and were eyewitnesses of earlier healings and miracles, they exhibit less faith than do Jairus and the woman in the crowd. These different character portrayals within the pericope on the aspect of faith illustrate different responses to Jesus.

Now let us look at the parents and the woman. In Mark, the distinction of a disciple, shown by the woman in the crowd and by Jairus, is a faith that believes in spite of unbelief (Spivey et al. 2007:85–86). Significantly, the disciples do not yet express this kind of faith. The response of the parents reflects a normal human reaction to what they had just seen: the power of Jesus over death. The response of the parents to seeing their dead daughter get up and walk around is astonishment, awe, amazement.51 Astonishment rather than

50. Regarding the raising of Jairus’ daughter, Calvin (1881-1416) links the power of Jesus’ voice, the touch of his hand and their result: the girl’s spirit returned. No doubt these happened simultaneously.

51. Other resuscitations are the widow of Nain’s son (Lk 7:11–17) and Lazarus (Jn 11:1-44).
disbelief is consistent with the response of others to other miracles stories and is certainly within the culture portrayed in New Testament times, writes Powell (2009:90).

Earlier in the story, Jairus obeys Jesus’ command not to fear. Jesus’ command reminds Jairus to remember his initial faith-filled request to Jesus to ‘Please come and put your hands on her so that she will be healed and live’ (Mk 5:23b). Jesus’ command, which Jairus obeys, calls on the distraught father to believe for healing past illness and past death. Jairus, to his credit, does this, and his action enlarges faith to include faith past death. Consequently, Jairus contributes significantly to the ongoing development of faith in Jesus given in the stories so far in Mark.

The woman with the haemorrhage likewise enlarges faith by taking the initiative. She draws healing from Jesus without a face-to-face encounter. In effect, she commands him for her action draws power from him, and he acknowledges her action as faith. I believe the woman in the crowd also exhibits faith as chutzpah. Young (1995:171, 178) defines chutzpah as ‘headstrong persistence, brazen impudence, unyielding tenacity, bold determination, or what in current English terms might be referred to as raw nerve’ and then links it to faith, as associated in Jesus’ parables.

I would add pushiness as an aspect of faith as chutzpah. This woman is determined to be healed! Desperate, she pushes through the crowd toward Jesus, disregarding that her touch makes others unclean (see Lv 15:25–30). She displays a determined, self-centred, pushy persistence that focuses on Jesus (see Branch 2013). Her faith draws power from Jesus; it activates Jesus’ power. Self-interest is not a bad thing, Jesus does not condemn it for her self-interest and need recognise that Jesus meets needs. Furthermore, her action recognises the egalitarian nature already expressed in Jesus’ ministry: Jesus earlier had healed a woman with a fever, a leper, a paralytic, a man with a shrivelled hand and a demoniac (Mk 1:29–31, 40–42; 2:1–12; 3:1–5; 5:1–20). Consequently, her story likewise significantly contributes to the ongoing revelation that Jesus is both the Son of God and the focus of faith (1:1; 2:5; 4:40; 5:34).

The restoration of life in its varied forms to the young girl and to the woman in the crowd show that Jesus has power that is greater than the power of death and the power of a chronic illness leading to death. Jesus publicly exhibits a God-given power. Jesus’ ability to heal in these ways and to restore life after a death ‘foreshadows the resurrection’ (Beavis 2010:62). Truly, Jesus is the Son of God in suffering and death as these interlocuting stories and the cameo appearances of these two desperate people in Capernaum show.

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52.Powell (2009:90) explains that ‘almost everyone believed that there were spiritual and magical powers that might enable people to do what they could not have done on their own’.


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