COMING BACK TO LIFE

The Permeability of Past and Present, Mortality and Immortality, Death and Life in the Ancient Mediterranean

Edited by
Frederick S. Tappenden and Carly Daniel-Hughes

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EDITED BY

Frederick S. Tappenden

AND

Carly Daniel-Hughes

WITH THE ASSISTANCE OF

Bradley N. Rice

McGill University Library and Archives
Montreal, QC · 2017

In memory of

Ellen Bradshaw Aitken (1961–2014)

Scholar, Mentor, Friend

τοιγαροῦν καὶ ἡμεῖς τοσοῦτον ἔχοντες περικείμενον
ἡμῖν νέφος μαρτύρων . . .
Hebrews 12:1

Contents

Foreword

Rev. Dr. Ellen Bradshaw Aitken, Professor of Religious Studies (2004–2014) and Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies (2007–2014) at McGill University, was one of a kind. As her admiring friend and former teacher, I can bear witness to her stellar career in the academic world, and in fact I have already published such testimony through a pair of online posts at *Classical Inquiries* ([Nagy 2015a](), [2015b]()). In that testimony, I tried to personalize my admiration and fondness for Ellen, and I find that I said it best there. I repeat here the essentials.

The premature death of Ellen Bradshaw Aitken on June 14, 2014 deeply saddened me as her friend, colleague, and former teacher. The date for my putting together the *Classical Inquiries* pieces in May 2015 coincided with a special day set aside for celebrating Ellen's life and accomplishments. That day of celebration at McGill University gave me the happy opportunity to tell about Professor Aitken's research. In retelling my story there and now here, I will speak about her as Ellen, not as Professor Aitken, recalling those many happy times when I could talk to you directly, dearest Ellen.

Ellen's knowledge of the ancient world was stunningly vast, and she combined her expertise with an acute literary sensibility. There is no need for me to tell my McGill colleagues, since they already know, that Ellen was an inspiring and conscientious teacher, with a special knack for initiating young people into the world of research and teaching. She instilled in her students—and in her colleagues—a true sense of wonder about the power of empirical thinking. She was also a prodigiously gifted administrator, decisive and efficient while at the same time full of humanitas and compassion. In a word, Ellen Aitken was a born academic leader on all fronts.

I want to concentrate, however, on Ellen's discoveries concerning the topic of charioteering in Homeric poetry, which touches

tangentially on this volume's theme of the permeability of death and life. Ellen's research on this topic goes all the way back to 1982, when she was a senior at Harvard College, studying in the program of the Committee on Degrees in Folklore and Mythology. That year, she submitted an honors thesis entitled "ὀπάων and ὀπάζω: A Study in the Epic Treatment of Heroic Relationships." The thesis, combined with all her other stellar work as a young student at Harvard, earned her a baccalaureate degree *summa cum laude*. Then, more than thirty years later, Harvard's Center for Hellenic Studies initiated a plan to publish a second edition of this masterpiece in Homeric research. Ellen's untimely death did not thwart this plan, and an annotated version of her original work has now appeared ([Aitken 2015](#)). It is about a Homeric hero who had particularly interested Ellen: he is Mērionēs the Cretan, who fought in the Trojan War as an ὀπάων or "follower" of the hero Idomeneus, king of all the Cretans.

Ellen observed that the heroic pairing of Achilles and Patroklos is parallel to the heroic pairing of Idomeneus and Mērionēs. She noted in particular that, just as Patroklos is a θεράπων of Achilles, so too is Mērionēs a θεράπων of Idomeneus. Here, Ellen supports my argument that this word θεράπων, besides meaning "attendant" on the surface, carries the deeper meaning of "ritual substitute" under the surface.

In the case of Patroklos, what happens to this hero as a ritual substitute of Achilles is that he gets killed in the *Iliad*. Patroklos dies for Achilles. And here, as Ellen argues most effectively, is a big difference between Patroklos and Mērionēs. Though Mērionēs as a θεράπων of Idomeneus is a ritual substitute for that king of all the Cretans, this recessive member of the pair does not die for that dominant member. Mērionēs stays alive, destined to become a dominant hero in his own right. And a dress rehearsal, as it were, for this status of eventual dominance is the role of Mērionēs as a charioteer who competed in the chariot race organized by Achilles in *Iliad* 23.

It is Mērionēs who competes in that race, not Idomeneus. And there is a word applied to Mērionēs that distinguishes him as a ritual substitute who will not die for Idomeneus but will survive to become, in his own right, a virtual Idomeneus. That word is ὀπάων, the etymological meaning of which, as Ellen explains, is "follower." Mērionēs is the would-be "successor" of Idomeneus. Mērionēs stays alive, destined to become a dominant hero in his own right. And the key to his success, as Ellen shows, is that he is not only the θεράπων of Idomeneus, but also the ὀπάων of that hero.

I used to joke with Ellen by predicting that, as soon as the second edition of her 1982 thesis is published online, Mērionēs the charioteer will ride again. Now that we her many fellow researchers can no longer work with Ellen directly, it is all the more important, vitally important, for us to make sure that this magnificent chariot ride gets underway. So, let the wheels of the chariot start rolling again.

November 2016   Gregory Nagy
Washington, DC   Center for Hellenic Studies
                                                              Harvard University

EMBEDDED ONLINE WORKS

Aitken, Ellen Bradshaw. 2015. Ὀπάων *and* ὀπάζω: *A Study in the Epic Treatment of Heroic Relationships*. Second, online edition, published posthumously with annotations. Washington, DC: Center for Hellenic Studies, Harvard University. First edition: A.B. Honors thesis, Harvard University, Cambridge, MA, 1982. chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/5984.

Nagy, Gregory. 2015a. "Mērionēs Rides Again: An Alternative Model for a Heroic Charioteer." *Classical Inquiries*. Published May 1, 2015. classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/meriones-rides-again-an-alternative-model-for-a-heroic-charioteer.

———. 2015b. "The Upgrading of Mērionēs from Chariot Driver to Chariot Fighter." *Classical Inquiries*. Published May 8, 2015. classical-inquiries.chs.harvard.edu/the-upgrading-of-meriones-from-chariot-driver-to-chariot-fighter.

Preface

The papers collected in this volume have their roots in the "[Coming Back to Life: Performance, Memory, and Cognition in the Ancient Mediterranean](#)" colloquium held at McGill University and Concordia University in May 2014. All but two of the papers were presented at that meeting; the contributions of Daphna Arbel and Troels Engberg-Pedersen were initially conceived for that colloquium, though neither author was able to attend. In their present form, all papers have been thoroughly refereed for publication, being subjected to both the editors' critique as well as two independent and blind peer reviews. As the editors of this volume, we are delighted to present these papers in a digital format that is openly accessible around the globe.

The idea to publish the colloquium proceedings as an open-access eBook dates back to one of the early planning meetings between Fred Tappenden, Carly Daniel-Hughes, and the late Ellen Aitken. From the outset, we saw this publication as an opportunity to reimagine what conference proceedings might look like in the digital age. Two broad trends in the academy further fueled this vision. At a local level, the McGill University Library was looking to expand its [scholarly publishing](#) beyond journals to include also scholarly books and monographs. Supporting the collection, editing, peer review, and dissemination of papers associated with the "Coming Back to Life" colloquium presented an excellent opportunity to establish proof-of-concept for that initiative. At the international level, however, for some time now there have been strong currents in the broader academy moving toward publishing models premised on open accessibility. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), for instance, has recently mandated that as of May 1, 2015, all publications resulting from SSHRC funding must be openly accessible to the public at least

twelve months after publication (see the [Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications](#)). Where public money is employed, public access ought to follow. While SSHRC's funding for the "Coming Back to Life" colloquium predated this policy shift, we are thrilled that the resultant *Coming Back to Life* volume is aligned with current Tri-Agency mandates.

Seeking to reimagine what conference proceedings might look like in the digital age meant thinking broadly and creatively about the potential afforded by a digital publication. One model to which we looked was the [Center for Hellenic Studies](#) (CHS) at Harvard University, which has a long history of supporting digital scholarship and open-access publishing. Ellen Aitken had been tangentially involved with the CHS throughout her career ([Aitken 2006](#), [2012](#); [Maclean and Aitken 2001](#); see also [Aitken 2015](#) and the foreword to this volume), and she naturally brought insights from the CHS into our planning meetings. At the same time, we wanted to explore the range of materials we might include in a volume of this kind. For example, might we include PDF files of student posters from the conference, video files of the meeting itself, the embedding of high-quality colour images and figures, links to online texts, museum exhibits, and the like? Moreover, in what formats might we present the material: as an HTML website, a PDF for download, or even an EPUB format for e-readers? Though we knew that not every idea would come to fruition in the final volume, from the outset we wanted to produce a volume that harnessed the power of digital technologies in ways that were impossible for a traditional print volume.

One of the chief ways we capitalise on the digital medium is by embedding hyperlinks into each paper, which direct readers to online resources directly relevant to the topic under discussion. Though the exact figure has not been calculated, we estimate that some 85% of primary source references in this volume include a hyperlink to an online scholarly edition and/or translation. In other instances, links connect to online museum exhibits, images of artifacts and archaeological remains, scholarly e-publications, and

where relevant the occasional element of popular culture (e.g., books and/or movies). In researching and embedding these links, our primary guide has been the conviction that all linked data must be open access. For example, in places where a contributor cites Ignatius's *Letter to the Ephesians* 7.2, our copyeditors have embedded a hyperlink to the older Loeb edition (Lake 1912–1913) rather than its newer counterpart (Ehrman 2003); the latter is also available online at the Digital Loeb Classical Library, though its accessibility is restricted by the publisher's paywall.

The reader should take note that, because many of the linked texts are in the public domain, in many cases they therefore reflect older critical editions that must always be checked against the most up-to-date editions. For example, at several points Roger Beck cites the Seminar Classics 609 (1969) critical edition of Porphyry's *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey*. Because that edition is not available online, we have embedded hyperlinks to Thomas Taylor's much older edition from 1823. In an effort to avoid confusion, many contributors have distinguished between the current critical editions they worked with when conducting their analysis (on the one hand), and the embedded digital versions that permit the reader quick reference (on the other). Where numbering systems differ between old and new editions, we have identified this parenthetically: for example, *De antr. nymph.* 6 (≈ §2 in Taylor 1823). We have also provided for each paper an independent bibliography of "Embedded Online Works." Taken together, these features should help the reader to distinguish newer critical editions from older, openly accessible ones.

In many instances, however, the embedded hyperlinks connect to texts that are in fact the most up-to-date scholarly editions, and thus these links put the best scholarly materials right at the reader's fingertips (literally so, when the volume is read on an e-reader!). This is the case with all New Testament and Hebrew Bible references, which are linked to the NA[28] or the BHS (respectively), both of which are available from the Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft. Similarly, Troels Engberg-Pedersen makes several references to

volumes 2 and 3 of Hans von Arnim's *Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta* (1903–1924), which still stands as a standard sourcebook despite its lapse into the public domain. One of the great benefits of the *Coming Back to Life* volume, then, is increased accessibility to quality scholarly resources on the internet.

With every paper, we have judiciously selected the linked online content, giving overwhelming preference to reputable editions. As much as possible, we have sought to draw upon the digitisation efforts of academic institutions. This is seen most notably in our use of existing databases such as the HathiTrust Digital Library, various university library collections in the Internet Archive, and of course the Perseus Digital Library. There are several noted benefits to drawing upon these databases. First, all three databases contain sources that have been digitised by academic libraries (e.g., University of Toronto, Harvard University, University of Michigan). Second, these databases provide stable links/identifiers so as to protect (as much as possible) against link rot. Finally, the design of these databases is oriented toward online reading and the engagement of printed texts in digital environments (see, for example, the HathiTrust user interface for Ignatius, *Eph.* 7.2, where the Loeb layout of facing Greek-English pages is preserved). Though issues relating to public domain and online accessibility vary from country to country, the majority of materials (if not all) should be accessible to the majority of readers (if not all).[1]

Where possible, preference has been given to displaying a linked text in its original language (either Greek, Hebrew, Latin, or

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[1] Because public domain laws vary from country to country, it is possible some links that work in Canada will not work elsewhere in the world. All linked content has been tested in Canada over a period of eighteen months (early summer 2015 to early winter 2016); we have also tested some links with positive results in both the United Kingdom and the United States. Generally speaking, in Canada a written work enters the public domain fifty years after the author's death; in the United Kingdom, the European Union, and the United states, a written work enters the public domain seventy years after the author's death.

Coptic). In many instances, the linked text has both the ancient language and modern translation set side by side (as in public domain editions of the Loeb Classical Library). In other instances, we link only the original language (notably, biblical citations link to the NA^{28}, BHS, or LXX-Rahlfs, all available from the [Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft](#)), and in a few instances only modern translations are available (notably, in the use of [*ANF*](#), [*NPNF¹*](#), and [*NPNF²*](#)). We also link to a handful of online scholarly databases such as the Packard Humanities Institute's [*Searchable Greek Inscriptions*](#), the online catalogue of the [*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*](#) (Berlin-Brandenburg Academy of Sciences), image publications of the Hellenic Ministry of Culture and Sport, and even private websites such as Roger Pearse's "[The Roman Cult of Mithras](#)." Many of the decisions to incorporate these online resources—especially the few non-academic resources—have been made in consultation with individual contributors, thus ensuring the quality of linked materials.

In determining the format of this volume, we decided to make the entire collection available in three manifestations: (1) as an HTML website, (2) as a PDF file, and (3) as an EPUB file ready for download to e-reader devices. Additionally, and in keeping with our vision of reimagining conference proceedings in the digital age, we are also publishing the video file of Sarah Iles Johnston's keynote address at the "Coming Back to Life" colloquium (delivered May 9, 2014).

By drawing together this vast array of online resources, the *Coming Back to Life* volume utilises not only text but also image and audio/video content that is not easy—and sometimes impossible—to capture in print contexts. By extension, the volume also serves as a hub of connected information that contributes to a larger network of linked data across the World Wide Web. To these ends, and consonant with our theme of inquiry, we are hopeful that the present volume brings the literature, thought world, practices, and material cultures of the ancient Mediterranean *back to life* in ways that a traditional print volume simply cannot.

Acknowledgments and Dedication:

There are many people who have had a share in this project, both from its conception through to its conclusion. It is a joy to extend our thanks to these individuals for their contributions, encouragements, critical engagements, and insights.

As noted above, the papers in this volume stem from a scholarly colloquium held in Montreal in May 2014. In addition to this volume's contributors, that meeting included Laura Nasrallah, Judith Newman, Michael Peppard, Kelly Olson, Lynn Kozak, Ian Henderson, André Gagné, Lorenzo DiTommaso, Gerbern Oegema, Shayna Sheinfeld, Melanie Racette-Campbell, Meaghan Matheson, and Marla MacDonald. The scholarly exchanges at this meeting were deep and rich, and the papers in this volume benefitted greatly from both informal colloquium discussion and formal responses. Beyond the May 2014 meeting, many thanks are due to the anonymous peer reviewers who incisively and critically evaluated the papers.

The McGill University Library has been exceptional to work with throughout this process. We thank especially Jennifer Innes and Sarah Severson, as well as Amy Buckland (now at the University of Guelph) and Jessica Lange for their help in conceptualising and implementing this volume. Jennifer Innes should be singled out specifically; she both coordinated the peer review process and spearheaded the design and layout of this eBook's various manifestations. In addition to the McGill Library, the bulk of copyediting and hyperlink checking fell to Brad Rice; this volume would not have been possible were it not for his meticulous eye and attention to detail. Thanks are due also to Jeff Keiser for offering his expertise in design for the eBook's online graphic.

Funding for this publishing project was provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the McGill University Library Scholarly Communications, and the McGill University School of Religious Studies.

Finally, it is our great pleasure to dedicate this volume to the late Ellen Aitken, former Dean of the Faculty of Religious Studies and Professor of Early Christian History and Literature at McGill

University. Ellen's sudden diagnosis of cancer came on the eve of the "Coming Back to Life" colloquium, and it was only six short weeks until her untimely death in June 2014. While the colloquium itself drew together the contributors to this volume, many were Ellen's colleagues, students, and/or friends. It is fitting for those of us who knew Ellen to honour her here, in this context, with contributions occasioned by one of her final scholarly projects (namely, the "Coming Back to Life" colloquium). Ellen was also a strong proponent of the digital humanities and the potential of e-publishing, and so this volume is all the more apropos. She has joined, along with countless other heroes of faith, what Hebrews calls the "great cloud of witnesses" that surrounds the living. As we reflect on and dedicate this volume to Ellen, her presence comes alive again in our memories and our company, and so the lines between death and life seem just a little more porous, even if for only a short moment.

January 2017   Frederick S. Tappenden
Montreal, QC   Carly Daniel-Hughes

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Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABD	*Anchor Bible Dictionary*. Edited by David Noel Freedman. 6 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1992
ABRL	Anchor Bible Reference Library
ABSA	*Annual of the British School at Athens*
ACSt	American Classical Studies
ACTR	Ashgate Contemporary Thinkers on Religion
ACW	Ancient Christian Writers
AEOC	American Excavations in Old Corinth
AGJU	Arbeiten zur Geschichte des antiken Judentums und des Urchristentums
AHR	*American Historical review*
AJA	*American Journal of Archaeology*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
AJSL	*American Journal of Semitic Languages and Literatures*
ALUB	Annales littéraires de l'Université de Besançon
ALW	*Archiv für Liturgiewissenschaft*
AM	Arethusa Monographs
AmEthnologist	*American Ethnologist*
AmJT	*American Journal of Theology*
ANF	*The Ante-Nicene Fathers*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. New York: Scribner's Sons, 1885–1887 catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/010248796
ANL	Annua nuntia Lovaniensia
AnOr	Analecta Orientalia
ANRW	*Aufstieg und Niedergang der römischen Welt: Geschichte und Kultur Roms im Spiegel der neueren Forschung.* Edited by H. Temporini and W. Haase. Berlin, 1972–
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
AnthLat	Anthologia Latina
AnthroMed	*Anthropology and Medicine*
AP	Ancient Philosophies
APB	*Acta patristica et byzantina*

AR	*Archiv für Religionswissenschaft*
ASLL	Anglo-Saxon Language and Literature
ASR	*American Sociological Review*
AYB	Anchor Yale Bible
BAR.I	British Archaeological Reports: International Series
BASP	*Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists*
BCAW	Blackwell Companions to the Ancient World
BCHSup	Bulletin de correspondance hellénique: Supplément
BETL	Bibliotheca Ephemeridum Theologicarum Lovaniensium
BFPUL	Bibliothèque de la Faculté de Philosophie et Lettres de l'Université de Liège
BHT	Beiträge zur historischen Theologie
Bib	*Biblica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
BibOr	Biblica et Orientalia
BICSSup	Supplement to the Bulletin of the Institute of Classical Studies
BNP	*Brill's New Pauly*: *Encyclopaedia of the Ancient World*. Edited by Hubert Cancik. 22 vols. Leiden: Brill, 2002–2011
BNTC	Black's New Testament Commentaries
BollS	Bollingen Series
BSGRT	Bibliotheca Scriptorum Graecorum et Romanorum Teubneriana
BTB	*Biblical Theology Bulletin*
BTS	Biblical Tools and Studies
BZAW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft
BZNW	Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft
CBET	Contributions to Biblical Exegesis and Theology
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CCS	Cambridge Classical Studies
CCSL	Corpus Christianorum: Series Latina
CEG	*Carmina epigraphica Graeca*. Edited by P. A. Hansen. Berlin, 1983–1989
CGAE	Catalogue général des antiquités égyptiennes du Musée du Caire
ClAnt	*Classical Antiquity*
CH	*Church History*

CIJ	*Corpus Inscriptionum Judaicarum*. Edited by Jean-Baptiste Frey. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936–1952. Inscriptions for volume 2 online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University epigraphy.packhum.org
CIL	*Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum*. Deutsche Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin. 17 vols. Berlin: Reimer; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1862– cil.bbaw.de/cil_en/dateien/cil_baende.html
CIMRM	Vermaseren, M. J. 1956–1960. *Corpus Inscriptionum et Monumentorum Religionis Mithriacae*. 2 vols. The Hague: Nijhoff. Many *CIMRM* entries have corresponding online content at Roger Pearse, ed. "Catalogue of Monuments and Images of Mithras." *The Roman Cult of Mithras* www.roger-pearse.com/mithras
Classics@	*Classics@: Online Journal of the Center for Hellenic Studies* chs.harvard.edu/CHS/article/display/1167
CLE	*Carmina Latina Epigraphica*. Edited by A. Riese, F. Bücheler, and E. Lommatzsch. 3 vols. AnthLat 2.1–3. BSGRT. Leipzig: Teubner, 1895–1926
ConBNT	Coniectanea Neotestamentica
CritQ	*Critical Quarterly*
CSCO	Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum Orientalium
CW	*Classical World*
DeathStud	*Death Studies*
DNP	*Der neue Pauly: Enzyklopädie der Antike*. Edited by Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider. Stuttgart: Metzler, 1996–
ECF	Early Church Fathers
ECL	Early Christianity and its Literature
EG	*Epigrammata Graeca*. Edited by G. Kaibel. Berlin: Reimer, 1878. Some inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University epigraphy.packhum.org
EgT	*Eglise et théologie*
EKKNT	Evangelisch-katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament
Ekstasis	Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages

EJL	Early Judaism and Its Literature
EMC	*Echos du monde classique/Classical Views*
EnAC	*Entretiens sur l'antiquité classique*
EPRO	Etudes préliminaires aux religions orientales dans l'Empire romain
ESEC	Emory Studies in Early Christianity
EvT	*Evangelische Theologie*
FAT	Forschungen zum Alten Testament
FC	Fathers of the Church
FCNTECW	Feminist Companion to the New Testament and Early Christian Writings
FFF	Foundations and Facets Forum
FGH	*Die Fragmente der griechischen Historiker*. Edited by Felix Jacoby. Leiden: Brill, 1954–1964
FOTL	Forms of the Old Testament Literature
FRLANT	Forschungen zur Religion und Literatur des Alten und Neuen Testaments
GCS	Die griechischen christlichen Schriftsteller der ersten [drei] Jahrhunderte
GR	*Greece and Rome*
HBM	Hebrew Bible Monographs
HDR	Harvard Dissertations in Religion
Hen	*Henoch*
HermC	Hermeneutic Commentaries
Hesperia	*Hesperia: Journal of the American School of Classical Studies at Athens*
HespS	Hesperia Supplements
Historia	*Historia: Zeitschrift für alte Geschichte*
HistPsychiatry	*History of Psychiatry*
HR	*History of Religions*
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary
IBM	*The Collection of Ancient Greek Inscriptions in the British Museum*. Edited by C. T. Newton, E. L. Hicks, and G. Hirschfeld. 5 vols. Oxford: Clarendon, 1874–1916. Some inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University epigraphy.packhum.org

Abbreviations

ICC	International Critical Commentary
IF	Istanbuler Forschungen
IG	*Inscriptiones Graecae*. Edited by Berlin-Brandenburgische Akademie der Wissenschaften. Berlin, 1877–. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
IK	*Inschriften griechischer Städte aus Kleinasien*
ILCV	*Inscriptiones Latinae Christianae Veteres*. Edited by Ernst Diehl. 2nd ed. Berlin: Druckerei Hildebrand, 1961
IMetropolis	*Metropolis Inscriptions: Texts and List*. Edited by Donald F. McCabe. The Princeton Project on the Inscriptions of Anatolia. Princeton: Institute for Advanced Study, 1989. Packard Humanities Institute CD #6, 1991. Includes: R. Meriç, R. Merkelbach, J. Nollé, and S. Şahin, eds. *Die Inschriften von Ephesos, VII,1, nos. 3401–3493. IK* 17.1. Bonn, 1981. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
ImpEmp	Impact of Empire
IMT LAp./Mil.	*Inschriften Mysia und Troas*. Edited by M. Barth and J. Stauber. Munich: Leopold Wenger Institut, Universität München, 1989. Packard Humanities Institute CD #7 (Mysia, "Lacus Apolloniatis & Miletupolis," nos. 2150–2417), 1996. Includes: *Miletupolis: Inschriften und Denkmäler*. Edited by E. Schwertheim. *IK* 26. Bonn, 1983. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
Inscr.Métr.	*Inscriptions métriques de l'Égypte gréco-romaine: Recherches sur la poésie épigrammatique des Grecs en Égypte*. Edited by Étienne Bernand. ALUB 98. Paris 1969. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org

IPrusaOlymp	*Die Inschriften von Prusa ad Olympum*. Edited by Thomas Corsten. 2 vols. *IK* 39–40. Bonn 1991–1993. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
ISinope	*The Inscriptions of Sinope*. Edited by D. H. French. *IK* 64. Bonn: Habelt, 2004. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
ISLL	Illinois Studies in Language and Literature
ISmyrna	*Smyrna Inscriptions: Texts and List*. Edited by Donald F. McCabe. The Princeton Project on the Inscriptions of Anatolia. Princeton: Institute for Advanced Study, 1988. Packard Humanities Institute CD #6, 1991. Includes: G. Petzl, ed. *Die Inschriften von Smyrna*. 2 vols. *IK* 23 and 24.1–2. Bonn, 1982–1990. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
JAAR	*Journal of the American Academy of Religion*
JAF	*Journal of American Folklore*
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JBTh	*Jahrbuch für biblische Theologie*
JECH	*Journal of Early Christian History*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JHistSoc	*The Journal of the Historical Society*
JHS	*Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JIWE	*Jewish Inscriptions of Western Europe*. Edited by David Noy. 2 vols. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993–1995. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
JLossTrauma	*Journal of Loss and Trauma*
JMS	*Journal of Mithraic Studies*
JPSTC	JPS Torah Commentary
JSJ	Journal for the Study of Judaism in the Persian, Hellenistic, and Roman Periods

JSJSup	Journal for the Study of Judaism Supplement Series
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSNTSup	Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series
JSOT	*Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*
JSOTSup	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series
JSPSup	Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha Supplement Series
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
KAV	Kommentar zu den Apostolischen Vätern
KD	*Kerygma und Dogma*
KTU	*Die keilalphabetischen Texte aus Ugarit.* Edited by Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Jaoquin Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 2013. 3rd enl. ed. of *KTU: The Cuneiform Alphabetic Texts from Ugarit, Ras Ibn Hani, and Other Places.* Edited by Manfried Dietrich, Oswald Loretz, and Jaoquin Sanmartín. Münster: Ugarit-Verlag, 1995 (= *CTU*)
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LICS	*Leeds International Classical Studies*
LNTS	The Library of New Testament Studies
LSJ	Liddell, Henry George, Robert Scott, and Henry Stuart Jones. *A Greek-English Lexicon.* 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford: Clarendon, 1996
Marek, Kat.Am.	*Stadt, Ära und Territorium in Pontus-Bithynia und Nord-Galatia.* Edited by Christian Marek. IF 39. Tübingen: Wasmuth, 1993, 157–87 and Anhang 5, "Katalog der Inschriften von Amastris." Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions.* The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University epigraphy.packhum.org
MDAI	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts*
MDAI(A)	*Mitteilungen des Deutschen archäologischen Instituts, Athenische Abteilung*
MFC	Message of the Fathers of the Church
MH	*Museum Helveticum*
MMed	Medieval Mediterranean
MnS	Mnemosyne Supplements
MVAW	Münchener Vorlesungen zu Antiken Welten

NAPSPMS	North American Patristic Society Patristic Monograph Series
NHMS	Nag Hammadi and Manichaean Studies
NHS	Nag Hammadi Studies
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovTSup	Supplements to Novum Testamentum
NPNF¹	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 1. Edited by Philip Schaff. 14 vols. New York: Scribner's Sons. 1898–1909 catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/011984014
NPNF²	*Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers*, Series 2. Edited by Philip Schaff and Henry Wace. 14 vols. New York: The Christian Literature Company. 1890–1900 catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/001399409
NTAbh	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen
NTL	New Testament Library
NTOA	Novum Testamentum et Orbis Antiquus
NTS	*New Testament Studies*
OCP	*Orientalia Christiana Periodica*
OCT	Oxford Classical Texts/Scriptorum classicorum bibliotheca oxoniensis
OECS	Oxford Early Christian Studies
OLA	Orientalia Lovaniensia Analecta
Omega	*Omega: Journal of Death and Dying*
OralTrad	*Oral Tradition*
OrChrAn	Orientalia Christiana Analecta
OSCC	Oklahoma Series in Classical Culture
OTP	*Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*. Edited by James H. Charlesworth. 2 vols. New York: Doubleday, 1983–1985
PAAJR	*Proceedings of the American Academy of Jewish Research*
PaP	*Past and Present: A Journal of Scientific History*
PCG	*Poetae Comici Graeci*. Edited by R. Kassel and C. Austin. 8 vols. Berlin: de Gruyter, 1983–2001
PEG	*Poetae Epici Graeci: Testimonia et Fragmenta*. Edited by A. Bernabé. BSGRT. Leipzig: Teubner, 1996–2007
PF	Papyrologica Florentina
PG	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Graeca*. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 162 vols. Paris, 1857–1886 catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/100604285
Phoenix	*Phoenix: Journal of the Classical Association of Canada*

PhoenixSup	Phoenix Supplements
PL	*Patrologiae Cursus Completus: Series Latina*. Edited by Jacques-Paul Migne. 217 vols. Paris, 1844–1864 catalog.hathitrust.org/Record/007035196
PMG	*Poetae Melici Graeci*. Edited by D. L. Page. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962
PRSt	*Perspectives in Religious Studies*
PTS	Patristische Texte und Studien
PVTG	Pseudepigrapha Veteris Testamenti Graece
QUCC	*Quaderni urbinati di cultura classica*
R&T	*Religion and Theology*
RAC	*Reallexikon für Antike und Christentum*
RB	*Revue biblique*
RevAnt	Revealing Antiquity
RevExp	*Review and Expositor*
RGRW	Religions in the Graeco-Roman World
RKST	Regensburger Klassikstudien
RL	*Religion and Literature*
RNT	Regensburger Neues Testament
RSECW	Routledge Studies in the Early Christian World
RSR	Routledge Studies in Religion
SAAA	Studies on the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles
SAQ	Sammlung ausgewählter kirchen- und dogmengeschichtlicher Quellenschriften
SBJT	*Southern Baptist Journal of Theology*
SBLMS	Society of Biblical Literature Monograph Series
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SBLSymS	Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series
SBLTT	Society of Biblical Literature Texts and Translations
SBS	Stuttgarter Bibelstudien
SC	Sources chrétiennes
ScEs	*Science et esprit*
SD	Studies and Documents
SEG	*Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum*. Edited by Jacob E. Hondius et al. 61+ vols. Leiden: Brill, 1923–
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SFA	Studies in Funerary Archaeology
SGFWLUM	Schriften der Gesellschaft zur Förderung der Westfälischen Landes-Universität zu Münster

SGRR	Studies in Greek and Roman Religion
SIG	*Sylloge Inscriptionum Graecarum*. Edited by Wilhelm Dittenberger. 4 vols. 3rd ed. Leipzig: Hirzel, 1915–1924. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
SJ	Studia Judaica
SMAL	Studies in Mediterranean Archaeology and Literature
SNTSMS	Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series
SQAW	Schriften und Quellen der alten Welt
SR	*Studies in Religion*
STAC	Studien und Texte zu Antike und Christentum
STAR	Studies in Theology and Religion
StBibLit	Studies in Biblical Literature
StPP	Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde
SVF	*Stoicorum Veterum Fragmenta*. Hans Friedrich August von Arnim. 4 vols. Leipzig: Teubner, 1903–1924
	Vol. 1: archive.org/stream/stoicorumveterum01arniuoft
	Vol. 2: archive.org/stream/stoicorumveterum02arniuoft
	Vol. 3: archive.org/stream/stoicorumveterum03arniuoft
	Vol. 4: archive.org/stream/stoicorumveterum04arniuoft
SVigChr	Supplements to Vigiliae Christianae
SVTP	Studia in Veteris Testamenti Pseudepigrapha
TAM	*Tituli Asiae Minoris.* 5 vols. Edited by Ernst Kalinka, Rudolf Heberdey, Friedrich Karl Dörner, and Peter Herrmann. Vienna, 1901–1989. Inscriptions online at *Searchable Greek Inscriptions*. The Packard Humanities Institute. Cornell University and Ohio State University
	epigraphy.packhum.org
TANZ	Texte und Arbeiten zum neutestamentlichen Zeitalter
TAPA	*Transactions of the American Philological Association*
TBNGP	Texte und Forschungen zur byzantinisch-neugriechischen Philologie
TC	*Trends in Classics*
TDNT	*Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*. Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich. Translated by Geoffrey W. Bromiley. 10 vols. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964–1976

TGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Edited by August Nauck. Leipzig: Teubner, 1889 archive.org/stream/tragicorumgraeco00naucuoft
TJT	*Toronto Journal of Theology*
TrGF	*Tragicorum Graecorum Fragmenta*. Edited by A. Nauck; supplements by B. Snell, R. Kannicht, and S. Radit. Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1971–2004 (1889)
TS	*Theological Studies*
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
UALG	Untersuchungen zur antiken Literatur und Geschichte
UKPHS	University of Kansas Publications in Humanistic Studies
UT	*Ugaritic Textbook*. Cyrus H. Gordon. AnOr 38. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1965
VC	*Vigiliae Christianae*
VL	*Vita Latina*
VT	*Vetus Testamentum*
VTSup	Supplements to Vetus Testamentum
WGRW	Writings from the Greco-Roman World
WUNT	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament
ZAC	*Zeitschrift für antikes Christentum/Journal of Ancient Christianity*
ZBK	Zürcher Bibelkommentare
ZNW	*Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche*
ZPE	*Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik*

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Meredith Warren is lecturer in biblical and religious studies at the University of Sheffield, where she leads the Embodied Religion research theme. She primarily researches the symbolic role of food, eating, and the sense of taste in the religions of antiquity. Her first book, *My Flesh is Meat Indeed: A Nonsacramental Reading of John 6:51–58* (Fortress, 2015), examined the interplay of eating and divinification in the Gospel of John and ancient Greek novels. Her forthcoming monograph, *Hierophagy: Transformational Eating in Ancient Literature*, explores how taste and eating allow access to other worlds.

Coming Back to Life in the Ancient Mediterranean:
An Introduction

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The permanence and profundity of death touches human beings across cultures and times. To the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean, the lines between death and life were neither fixed nor finite. For many, death was a passageway into a new and uncertain existence. The dead were not so much extinguished as understood to be elsewhere, and some even held that the deceased continued to exercise agency among the living. Others were more sceptical, insisting that beliefs in ghosts and afterlives are nothing more than popular superstitions. Yet even here, notions of *coming back to life* provided a framework in which to conceptualise the ongoing social, political, and cultural influence of the past. To varying degrees, notions of *coming back to life* function less as theological convictions and more as discursive tropes that allow the living to grapple with that which is lost. Whether through mnemonic commemoration, performative incantation, or conceptual recognition, that which was past could *come back to life* in a variety of ways in the ancient Mediterranean.

The collected essays in this volume, which have their genesis in a 2014 colloquium held in Montreal, Quebec,[1] examine the *coming*

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[1] "Coming Back to Life: Performance, Memory, and Cognition in the Ancient Mediterranean." An international scholarly colloquium held at McGill University and Concordia University, 8–11 May 2014.

back to life thematic within a variety of ancient Mediterranean contexts. Our interests lie in the exploration of how antique communities configured, tested, and actualised the boundaries between *past and present*, *mortality and immortality*, *death and life*. Certainly ancient Jewish and Christian notions of the resurrection of the dead—and particularly, Christian beliefs in the resurrection of Jesus—stand as prime examples of the *coming back to life* thematic. But even here, where the return to life reverses death through the reviving and often transforming of the deceased, there exists a much larger set of assumptions regarding the ontology of *past and present*, *mortality and immortality*, *death and life*: namely, convictions of the potential porosity between distinct modes of existence. On this point, we find that ancient Judeans and Christ-devotees were not alone in negotiating the boundaries between the living and the dead. As the essays in this volume explore, the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean experimented widely with various understandings of death's *permeability*.

For many, the passage from life to death required a process of ritual transference, and failure to do so could result in the restlessness of the dead. The Roman magistrate Pliny the Younger (*Ep. 7.27*), for example, recounts the story of an Athenian house in which the remains of a certain man had been carelessly buried. From time to time, the man's ghost would perpetually haunt subsequent residents of the house until his body had been exhumed and properly laid to rest (Hope 2000). In this instance, the perception of permeability extends across several modes of existence: the decaying bones, the disembodied restless spirit, and even the petrified, insomnia-ridden residents. Indeed, Pliny goes on to note that, even during the daylight hours, when the phantom was at bay, "the remembrance of it made such a strong impression upon their imaginations that it still seemed before their eyes, and their terror remained" (trans. Melmoth and Hutchinson 1915). In this account, for these Athenians, the lines between life and death are, in various ways, quite porous.

Others negotiated this permeability by engaging in popular practices such as the offering of meals at tombs as a way of sustaining the deceased in the afterlife. Such practices are described in the writings of the second-century satirist Lucian of Samosata, who mocks the activities of his contemporaries; thus Charon asks:

> Why is it, then, that those people [= the living] are putting garlands on the stones and anointing them with perfumes? There are others also who have built pyres in front of the mounds and have dug trenches, and now they are burning up those fine dinners and pouring wine and mead, as far as one may judge, into the ditches.

To which Hermes replies:

> I don't know what good these things are to men in Hades, ferryman; they are convinced, however, that the souls, allowed to come up from below, get their dinner as best they may by flitting about the smoke and steam and drink the mead out of the trench. (Lucian, *Char. 22*; trans. Harmon, Kilburn, and MacLeod, 1913–1967)

While Lucian is sceptical of such efforts (Davies 1999, 131–35),[2] for those who mourn, though the dead are gone, practices like these function as mechanisms by which the deceased are able to *come back to life* within the perceptions of the living.

The satirical flavour of Lucian's account highlights that not all held beliefs in an afterlife. Nonetheless, notions of *coming back to life* provided a framework within which many conceptualised phenomena such as social structures, cultural institutions, ritual behaviours, and even political ideologies. The burial practices of the

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[2] Indeed, Charon's reply to Hermes is telling: "What, *they* eat and drink, when their skulls are dry as tinder? . . . I should be in a fine predicament, Hermes, and should have no end of trouble if I were obliged not only to bring them down but to bring them up to drink! What folly, the idiots! They do not know what an impassible frontier divides the world of the dead from the world of the living" (emphasis original).

Roman aristocracy are particularly noteworthy, even if they represent an ideal of the elite. Here, funeral processions functioned as pageants of Roman memory; wearing ancestor masks that had been fashioned and collected through a given family's history, actors played the role of the deceased and thus brought the familial and political pasts *back to life* in a single performance (Flower 1996).

The examples just cited, which focus more on boundary negotiation between the living and the dead than on the assertion of the deceased's return, naturally raise the question, how strictly should one consider the theme of *coming back to life*? Are we to limit our analyses to instances of revivification, or might we also include accounts of apotheosis, immortalisation, heavenly transposition, mnemonic commemoration, and even cultural resurgence? In the stories of the ancient Mediterranean, figures such as Memnon, Heracles, Enoch, and at times even Moses and Jesus are variously thought to experience elevation to new forms of (divinised) life, either after having first experienced death or perhaps skipping death altogether. Some might suggest these accounts do not represent *coming back to life* (strictly speaking), for the figures in question do not return to the terrestrial, embodied land of the living but instead are transformed into various expressions of divinity. Yet, as Katharina Waldner (this volume) rightly notes, such accounts immediately cast doubt on the very categories that we moderns take as fixed and impermeable, categories such as *human* and *god*, *heaven* and *earth*, *life* and *death*, and *past*, *present*, and *future*. What we find spread across the cultures of the ancient Mediterranean are not neat partitions or strict categorical binaries, but rather imaginative constructions that explore and test the boundaries of *past and present*, *mortality and immortality*, *death and life*. Indeed, when looking for touch points between ancient Mediterranean cultures, permeability and the potential of transformation between cosmological, anthropological, and theological categories finds widespread resonance (Tappenden 2015). When configured more broadly, notions of *coming back to life* relate not only to the revivification of human subjects but also—and more pervasively—to

ideals of heavenly and somatic transformation, and further to patterns of re-emergence within the social, cultural, and/or political spheres.

The focus of this volume, then, is upon the various ways that *past and present, mortality and immortality, life and death* interlace each other in the ancient Mediterranean. We are interested in how antique peoples negotiate and explore the *porosity* or *permeability* that might exist between that which is gone and that which remains. At the opening of her excellent study, *Restless Dead: Encounters Between the Living and the Dead in Ancient Greece* (1999), Sarah Iles Johnston configures this permeability as a "paradox":

> [The] person who once ate and drank and laughed with the rest of us is gone, [and yet] she continues to inhabit the world of those who knew her. Because the dead remain part of our mental and emotional lives long after they cease to dwell beside us physically, it is easy to assume that they are simply carrying on their existence elsewhere and might occasionally come back to visit us. From this assumption arise a variety of hopes and fears. (Johnston 1999, viii)

In varying ways, the papers in this volume explore the hopes and fears of ancient Mediterranean peoples and communities. In doing so, notions of *coming back to life* are seen to touch on a wide array of topics and human experiences.

A launching point for our collective efforts in this volume is the conviction that the cultural ecosystem of the ancient Mediterranean is one of much exchange and interpenetration. In large part, this ecosystem is facilitated by the geography itself; as Angelos Chaniotis (2005, 148) notes: "the Mediterranean Sea has more often been a facilitator of communication than a barrier, and communication contributes to the wide diffusion not only of flora, fauna, and artifacts, but also of culture." Though much of the first three centuries CE are usually regarded as a time of relative stability (for example, the *Pax Romana* of the first and second centuries), a pervasive undercurrent of cultural flux permeates the social fabric of

the Mediterranean. The process of Romanisation from the first century BCE onward—what Craige Champion (2004, 214–77) describes as a procedure of cultural assimilation, hybridisation, and resistance—created an environment of cultural intermixing and cross-pollination that touched all areas of social life and fostered rich interchanges of ideas. It is within such a context that notions of *coming back to life* are adapted, invented, and experimented with by antique peoples. While many of the contributions in this volume focus on the literature of early Christ-devotees, the scope of the volume is sufficiently broad to place early Christian resurrection ideals within a larger, trans-Mediterranean framework of *coming back to life* discourses, beliefs, and practices. Given the scope and diversity of the ancient evidence, the contributors explore a wide breadth of antique writings and materials, centring largely on the first through third centuries CE, but touching also on classical Greek mythology, the waning years of republican Rome, and even fourth/fifth century monasticism in Egypt.

Our aim is to treat ancient Mediterranean religions—including expressions of early Christ worship—as a whole, thus highlighting the mutuality and exchanges that happen between distinct cultural expressions. As a field of academic inquiry, the study of comparative antique religions is still in its infancy (Spaeth 2013b). To date, much work has been done on the localized and cultural nature of ancient religions (Johnston 2004a, x), yet the more difficult task of exploring cultural intermixing and sharing is still relatively young. Standard reference works such as those by Barbette Spaeth (2013a) and Sarah Iles Johnston (2004b, 2007) begin with chapters that take a more localised approach (e.g., religion in Rome, religion in Greece, early Christianity, ancient Judaism, and the like), and then transition into topical surveys that explore religious intersections.[3] No clear

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[3] So Spaeth (2013a) and Johnston (2004b, 2007); notably, and more recently, Orlin (2016) is organised more topically than geographically, and contributors were instructed "to explore—where possible—both commonalities among the different religious traditions and the difference between them" (xviii).

definition has yet been put forward regarding what constitutes "ancient Mediterranean religion," though Fritz Graf (2004, 14) concludes his essay, "What is Ancient Mediterranean Religion?", by insisting:

> I have regarded the religions of the ancient Mediterranean world as being in constant contact with each other—a contact that, similar to that of languages in contact, resulted both in assimilation and in dissimilation. I have not looked for specific characteristics of "the" religions of the ancient Mediterranean world, beyond their being in almost constant contact; in fact, this, to me, seems their main characteristic.

For Graf, this phenomenon of constant sharing, interpenetration, and definition vis-à-vis the other provides the sinew of study when considering ancient Mediterranean religion as a whole. Accordingly, the move toward examining what Chaniotis (2005, 143) calls "continuities, survivals, and similarities" between various religious groups necessitates a focus upon specific touchstones that find resonance within various religious expressions. By orienting our efforts around notions of *coming back to life*, this volume builds upon and contributes to the bourgeoning field of comparative ancient religions by adding thematic focus that draws on the interdisciplinary depth and breadth of the volume's contributors.

As noted above, the roots of this volume are in a 2014 colloquium held in Montreal. In preparation for that meeting, participants were invited to consider the theme of *coming back to life* in light of three analytical categories: performance, memory, and cognition. What we recognized then, and still see now, is that the complexity of the phenomenon of death's *permeability* points to a matrix in which both the living and the dead have certain performative, mnemonic, and/or cognitive abilities that, in various ways, enable revivification. For example, the conviction that the dead sustain consciousness presumes the interlacing of cognition and memory such that the living are perpetually reminded of the restless dead's ongoing capacity for communication and awareness.

Similarly, the performative and mnemonic dimensions of death rites enable the deceased's tangible presence among the living through ritualized activities.

After the 2014 meeting, however, it became apparent (as is often the case) that more is at work in antique notions of *coming back to life* than we expected. In addition to the categories of performance, memory, and cognition, several contributors found issues of grief and mourning, genre and narrative structures, gender norms and ideals, and social structures and rituals to be just as germane. The thematic of *coming back to life* proved as pervasive as we suspected, finding expression not only in theological convictions but also in societal values, cultural frames, and structures of power and social expectation. Ultimately, this indicates that ancient ideas of *coming back to life* were not geographically, ethnically, or traditionally localised; instead, the peoples of the ancient Mediterranean experimented variously with notions of revivification and re-emergence. The diversity of the ancient evidence necessitates scholarly collaboration, and the breadth of contributors to this volume reflects the interdisciplinarity required to navigate the sea of cultural assimilation, hybridisation, and resistance noted above. Among this volume's contributors are scholars working in fields such as classics, ancient Judaism, early Christianity, and ancient Mediterranean religions, all of which employ an array of textual analyses and theoretical sophistication.

Our exploration of this thematic opens with Sarah Iles Johnston's paper, "Many (Un)Happy Returns: Ancient Greek Concepts of a Return from Death and their Later Counterparts." This contribution originally served as the keynote address from the 2014 colloquium, the video from which is also included in the HTML edition of this volume.[4] Johnston's paper begins by cataloguing the revenants of classical Greek mythology, after which she examines some contemporary Western notions of *coming back to life* and finally links the two poles together with a discussion of the impacts of

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[4] The video can be accessed at http://comingbacktolife.mcgill.ca.

Christian theology upon the Western imagination. Given the breadth and scope of her analysis, Johnston sets our thematic within a broader cultural context that spans two millennia.

The volume is structured into four sections, each of which includes clusters of papers that share similar thematic engagement with the *coming back to life* trope. In section one, Valerie Hope, Angela Standhartinger, and Daphna Arbel each address issues of memory and mourning in relation to the revivification of the dead. Hope examines Cicero's loss of his daughter, Tullia, in February 45 BCE; exploring the cultural expectations and dynamics that surround the expression of grief in late republican Rome, she concludes (p. 60):

> Neither the dead nor the bereaved were simply forgotten or ignored, but reintegrated into new social roles. The dead could not come back to life (in a literal sense), but were given new spaces (in memory structures, conversation, epitaphs, images etc.) in the continuing lives of those that survived them.

In their own ways, both Standhartinger and Arbel explore these "new social roles" in relation to women's laments. Standhartinger focuses specifically on the context of funerary banquets, further pushing the thesis that the voice and actions of Jesus were dramatised in the meal context. As Standhartinger demonstrates, this was likely performed by women who actualised the divine drama, thus enabling the speaker Jesus to *come back to life*. Arbel moves in a different direction, focusing instead on the presentation of Eve at Adam's death in the [Greek Life of Adam and Eve (GLAE) 31–42](). In this curious section, the GLAE avoids traditions of Eve's liability in Adam's death. Instead, together with the angels, Eve is deemed worthy and able to solicit God's mercy and to influence divine judgment, thus enacting Adam's safe transition to the afterlife and his preparation for (future) resurrection.

Section two considers the interrelated themes of how antique peoples conceptualise the return to life, and further how those concepts are substantiated within communal practices. Roger Beck

considers the archaeological remains of the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres at Ostia. He argues that the very design of the mithraeum—which is a microcosm of the universe—functions as an instrument for getting initiates down from heaven and back out again. Accordingly, Beck's analysis contributes to the longstanding body of scholarship that links death and *coming back to life* to cosmological descent and ascent (Bousset 1901; Segal 1980). Troels Engberg-Pedersen compares Jesus's raising of Lazarus in John 11–12 with certain aspects of Stoic philosophy, focusing specifically on notions of the cognitive λόγος and the physical πνεῦμα. He concludes that, if we can in fact understand the Johannine notion of radical transformation from death to life within a unified cosmological framework along Stoic lines, then there is in fact a kind of porosity between death and life; it is a porosity that is generated by a power that is physical and directly active in the world, though perhaps more as part of the world in Stoicism than in John. Flowing from both Beck and Engberg-Pedersen, Frederick Tappenden draws on the themes of heavenly ascent and material cosmology to examine the dynamic interplay of *life in/through death* in the writings of Paul and some of his early interpreters. He demonstrates that Paul upholds an intricate balance between spatial concepts, correlating UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT in such a way as to envision death and life as mutually affecting one another in the material coordinates of the human body. What Paul holds in conceptual tension, however, his later interpreters tend to parse out and prioritise, thus resulting in a diversity of Pauline resurrection ideals. Hugo Lundhaug also explores variety in early Christian resurrection beliefs as articulated in the Origenist controversy of the late-fourth/early-fifth centuries. Analysing a selection of Egyptian monastic writings, he explores how these texts employ similar—even the same—terms and categories, though ultimately they reflect different—at times clashing—cognitive models. While words and phrases were being redefined, what mattered to the contestants was not just the phrases used, but also the concepts through which they were understood. In the end, Lundhaug demonstrates how notions

of resurrection conformed to one's preferred cognitive model, thus producing very different interpretations of the same basic set of terms and metaphors.

The papers in section three explore the ways in which notions of *coming back to life* shape the identities of early Christ-devotee communities. Carly Daniel-Hughes's paper trades on similar topics to those of Engberg-Pedersen, Tappenden, and Lundhaug, though her focus is upon Tertullian's four treatises on marriage. She demonstrates that Tertullian's writings illuminate how speculation about the resurrected body could be implicated in early Christian views of social and communal life, both with a vision toward communal boundary definition and attempts at self-legitimation, and also with implications for intra-communal Christian debates about social and sexual practices, gender roles, and marital and familial arrangements. Working in a different sector of early Christian writings, David Eastman examines how the rhetoric of resurrection served to establish apostolic legitimacy. What separated Jesus from other teachers and would-be messiahs and affirmed his identity as unique was his resurrection, for this was the ultimate stamp of divine approval. Examining some of the apocryphal Acts, Eastman demonstrates this same status being applied to the apostles Paul and Peter, while their rival Simon Magus fails to prove himself through the same means. In the end, the final evidence of divinely-sanctioned legitimacy was not simply living well or dying well, but also *coming back to life*. The theme of following Jesus to one's death also permeates the papers of both Stéphanie Machabée and Eliza Rosenberg. Machabée notes that while many martyrologies portray women as rejecting biological motherhood in order to achieve salvation, a text such as the *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons* deemed the language of birthing and motherhood to be useful in framing the experiences of persecuted Christians. For Machabée, though the rhetoric of birth, abortion, and rebirth creates a stark contrast between the experiences of Christian confessors and deniers, she goes on to demonstrate also that such language creates rhetorical space by which denying or lapsed Christians can *come*

back to life upon a proper act of confession. Finally, working with the Apocalypse of John, Rosenberg charts the thematic correlations between ancient funerals and weddings—the trope of the so-called *blood wedding*. Interestingly, however, the martyr figures who receive resurrection at Revelation's climax are restored not to the status of honourable masculinity, but rather to the status of the subordinate bride of the lamb. Accordingly, Rosenberg's exploration of nuptial and funerary imagery contributes to scholarly discussions of gender transformations within the apocalypse more broadly (cf. Moore 1995; Frilingos 2003).

The volume concludes in section four with an exploration of the *coming back to life* thematic within the context of narrative and mythological representations. In many ways, the papers in this section tie in closely with Johnston's contribution earlier in the volume. Katharina Waldner examines the figure of Hippolytus. She traces, from archaic Greece through imperial Rome, both the expressions of his hero cult and the various stories told about his gruesome death and *coming back to life*. Waldner demonstrates the various ways that such retellings facilitated the negotiation of boundaries between life and death, mortality and immortality, and hero, human being, and god, particularly with respect to political, cultural, aesthetic, and existential arenas. Jeffrey Keiser continues on the theme of Greek hero cult, specifically the mythological *topos* of theomachy (or "god fighting"). His point of departure is Paul's use of the term κέντρον; through a close comparison with other examples of theomachy in Greek, Roman, and Jewish writings, Keiser shows that Paul taunts the personified figure of Death for failing to defeat Christ, the god-fighter ([1 Cor 15:54–57](#)). Far from providing a mere rhetorical flourish for 1 Cor 15, Paul's taunt illustrates the mythological significance of Christ's *coming back to life*. Frances Flannery examines the portrayal of Jesus as Healer-Physician-Saviour in the Synoptic Gospels, specifically with respect to the keying of Jesus's image into longstanding mnemonic and cultural images of Asclepius. In doing so, she argues that the Gospels present Jesus as a healing deity who is superior to Asclepius; that, unlike Asclepius,

only Jesus can routinely heal the sick and raise even the dead as if they were sleeping, without attachment to a physical place, without fees, and regardless of purity boundaries. Finally, Meredith Warren examines the crucifixion of Jesus in John's Gospel in light of the literary trope of *Scheintod* ("apparent death") in the Greek romance novels. In the novels, *Scheintod* points to the divinity of the heroines, for ordinary people are incapable of returning from the dead. Likewise, the moment of Jesus's death in John creates a similar instance of unreality in the narrative in which Jesus's death both occurs and is survived, signifying his divinity. By comparing Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross to the sacrificial *Scheintoten* of the Greek romances, Warren argues that Jesus's survival of death in John is readable as an event that concretises his association with his patron deity.

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Many (Un)Happy Returns:
Ancient Greek Concepts of a Return from
Death and their Later Counterparts[1]

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We hear a great deal, both from ancient sources and from
contemporary scholars, about the journey *into* death as the ancient
Greeks imagined it. The newly disembodied soul was expected to
meet Charon, the ferryman who would carry it across the river that
separated the land of the living from the land of the dead. It would
see Cerberus, a three-headed (or according to other reports, a 100-
headed) dog that guarded the entrance to the palace of Hades and
Persephone, the gods who ruled over the dead. Confusing roads that
might lure the unwary soul into dangerous parts of the underworld
wove through a landscape dotted with cypress trees, asphodel, and
springs of water that could wipe clean all memories of life within the
thirsty souls who drank from them. For the well-prepared or the
lucky, there was a place of continuous sunlight where they might
spend eternity eating, drinking, and engaging in pleasant pursuits.
For those not so well prepared or lucky, they were dank, muddy
places of punishment or, at best, boredom (Johnston 1999, 14–16;
Sourvinou-Inwood 1995, 103–07).

We hear much less about how the Greeks imagined one coming
back from death. I do not mean coming back as a ghost—a
disembodied soul that had somehow escaped from Hades's realm,
about which the Greeks had plenty to say (see Johnston 1999)—but

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[1] I am grateful to audiences at McGill University, Bryn Mawr College, and
Uppsala Universitet for their helpful comments following oral versions of this
paper.

rather back in the absolute sense, as a fully reincorporated person. What we do hear about this possibility comes from myths, the narrative form that is often used, in so many cultures, to explore the ramifications of what seem to be desirable, yet impossible, goals. In this essay, I will look closely at those myths, asking what they can tell us about Greek ideas of life and death, and why the Greeks liked to entertain certain variations of a possible return from death, but not others.

I will proceed as follows. First, I will survey the Greek stories we have about a bodily return to life after death and make some observations about them. Second, I will look at stories about revenants from another culture—namely, our own Western culture—and draw some conclusions about them. As we will see, there is quite a contrast between the two sets of stories. Third, I will suggest two reasons for this contrast—two factors that may have predisposed modern Western peoples to think differently about the possible return of the dead from the way that the ancient Greeks did. My suggestions are hypothetical, and like all hypotheses, they are provisional, intended more to provoke thought than to provide absolute answers.

I. GREEK STORIES ABOUT THE BODILY
RETURN OF THE DEAD

My dossier for this topic includes thirteen stories. Let us start with the one for which we have the oldest evidence: the tale of Sisyphus. Sisyphus first evaded Death by managing to chain him up and then, after Death had been released and duly came to claim him, Sisyphus found a clever way to exploit an existential loophole and return again to the upper world: namely, before he died, he instructed his wife not to give him burial rites, which stranded him between the upper and lower worlds—a pitiable state. He then prevailed upon Persephone to allow him to return home to ask his wife to perform them. Of course, once there, he refused to return to the underworld and lived on for quite a while longer (Alcaeus, frag. 38 [Lobel and

Page 1955]; Theognis 702–712; Pherecydes, *FGH* 3F119; see Fowler 2013, 52; Gantz 1993, 173–76).[2]

An even more famous Greek myth about an attempted return to life involves the singer Orpheus, who traveled to the underworld to recover his wife. Orpheus used his talents as a musician to persuade Persephone to allow him to lead his wife back to the upper world. Although there may have been an early version of the story in which he succeeded in this task, in all extant versions, Orpheus failed. His wife slipped away from him at the last moment because Orpheus violated Persephone's stipulation that he not look back at her until they reached the upper world. Plunged into an even deeper grief than before, Orpheus refused to remarry and was eventually murdered by a group of women whose attentions he spurned (Pseudo-Eratosthenes, *Cat.* 24; Euripides, *Alc.* 357–362; Plato, *Symp.* 179b–179d; Moschus, *Ep. Bion.* 3.123–124; Conon, *FGH* 26F1.45; see Gantz 1993, 721–25; Graf 1987).

The general pattern behind Orpheus's story is also found in that of Protesilaus and his wife, who is sometimes referred to as Laodamia. After only one day of marriage, Protesilaus joined the Greek expedition to Troy and was killed as soon as he leapt off the ship. The gods took pity on the despairing Laodamia and allowed Protesilaus to return to the upper world for a single day, in order to bid her farewell. Upon her husband's second death, however, Laodamia plunged into even greater despair, which drove her to commission a statue of her husband that she could take to bed with her. Upon discovering what she was doing, Laodamia's father had the image destroyed, and Laodamia killed herself (Homer, *Il.* 2.698–

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[2] For all of the myths I discuss, I offer a few of the earliest sources and references to either or both of two good scholarly works on early Greek mythography (namely, Fowler 2013 and Gantz 1993) where more early sources can be found. The embedded hyperlinks offer the reader easy reference to open-access (though often older) scholarly editions. I do not usually cite later primary sources; references to them can be found often in Gantz's treatments of the myths, and also in any number of scholarly works such as *The New Pauly Encyclopedia of the Ancient World.*

702; Proclus, *Cypr.* arg. 10 [West 2003]; *Cypr.* frag. 22 [West 2003 = *Cypr.* 17 in Evelyn-White 1914]; Ovid, *Her.* 13; Apollodorus, *Epit.* 3.29–30; Hyginus, *Fab.* 104; see Gantz 1993, 592–94).

Similar in some ways to the story of Protesilaus is that of Iolaus, the nephew of Heracles, who was brought back to life by the gods in order that he might help Heracles's children win their battle against Eurystheus, and then, the battle having been won, died again (Scholia Pindar, *Pyth.* 9.137).[3]

In all four of the stories that we have looked at so far, the return to life is represented as a favor that the gods can freely bestow upon mortals, when they choose to. The next case takes us in a different direction. Asclepius eventually honed his medical skills to the point that he could raise the dead, and did so on several occasions. Zeus put a stop to this by striking Asclepius with a lightning bolt. In most versions of the story, no reason is given for Zeus's action, but according to Diodorus of Sicily, Hades asked Zeus to do it because the lower world was losing citizens (Hesiod, frag. 51 [Merkelbach and West 1967]; Stesichorus, *PMG* 194; Acusilaus, *FGH* 2F18; Pherecydes, *FGH* 3F35; Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.55–58; see Fowler 2013, 74; Gantz 1993, 91–92).

Here, for the first time in our dossier, we have a mortal succeeding at what otherwise only gods could do: raising the dead. That Asclepius was a *physician* makes a certain sense in that regard—I will return to that point. But let us note, for now, that it is the gods who put Death back into business for reasons of their own. The same idea plays out in the earlier part of Sisyphus's story: Sisyphus initially thwarts Death by chaining him up, and Death must be released from his bonds by Ares. We should also note that, as in the cases of Orpheus and Laodamia, the mortal who sought to reverse death (Asclepius) ends up the worse off for it himself.

My sixth case is Alcestis. When it was time for her husband, Admetus, to die, Admetus's friend Apollo intervened and got the

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[3] Euripides, *Heracl.* 799–866 has him rejuvenated by the Dioscuri rather than resurrected, perhaps, conjectures Gantz (1993, 464–66), because the original story was too incredible.

Fates to agree that, if someone else volunteered to die in his place, Admetus would be spared. (Here again, we see the intervention of a god in matters of life and death, and again for purely personal reasons.) The only person who volunteered to die for Admetus, however, was Alcestis, and die she did. On the day of her funeral, Heracles dropped by for a visit, and when he heard what had happened, set out for the cemetery, confronted Death as he came to claim Alcestis, and beat Death in a wrestling match. Heracles then led Alcestis back to her husband (Phrynichus, *TrGF* 3F3 [≈ [Phrynichus, frag. 3](#) *TGF*]; [Euripides, *Alcestis*](#); see Fowler 2013, 75; Gantz 1993, 195–97). As in the second part of Sisyphus's story, victory was complete; both Alcestis and Admetus lived on to ripe old ages. As in the first part of Sisyphus's story, Death was conquered by a mortal, using physical means—although there is also a version of the story, passed down by Plato, in which either Persephone or all the gods, admiring Alcestis's courage, freely decided to send her back to the world of the living ([Plato, *Symp.* 179b](#); cf. [Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 1.9.15](#)). That version aligns with the other cases we have looked at, in which the gods decide which mortals merit a return to life.

As a final case in this section of my dossier I offer Pelops, who was chopped up into a stew by his father, Tantalus. The goddess Rhea (or in another version of the story, Clotho, one of the Fates) reassembled Pelops's dismembered pieces and then brought him back to life ([Pindar, *Ol.* 1.25–27](#); [Bacchylides, frag. 42](#) [Snell and Maehler 1970]; see Gantz 1993, 531–34; cf. Graf and Johnston 2013, 75–76). As in the other cases we have looked at so far, it is a god, or gods, who bring about the resurrection, and as in the case of Alcestis, the story seems to have had a happy ending, at least in the short term—the renewed Pelops married, won a kingdom, and sired children.

Let us move on now to three more cases that share a different twist: namely that the revivified individual not only returns to life, but also enters into a new, divine state. Semele perished in flames when Zeus revealed himself to her in all of his divine glory. But after her son Dionysus grew up, he journeyed to the underworld and

convinced Hades and Persephone to release Semele's soul. Dionysus thereupon led his mother up not only to the world of the living, but to the very heavens, where she joined the company of the gods (Iophon, *TrGF* 22F3 [= Iophon, frag. 3 *TGF*]; see Gantz 1993, 472–79; cf. Graf and Johnston 2013, 73–74). Sometimes it was said that she took on a new name at that time, Thyone (Diodorus of Sicily 4.25.4). Similarly, Artemis revived, or asked Asclepius to revive, her dead devotee Hippolytus, after which she named him Virbius and established him as a divine figure (Gantz 1993, 285–88; *Naupactia*, frag. 10 *PEG*; Ovid, *Metam.* 15.497–546). And finally, Eos convinced Zeus to bestow immortality upon her dead son, Memnon (Proclus, *Aeth.* arg. 2 [West 2003 ≈ *Aeth.* 1 in Evelyn-White 1914]; see Gantz 1993, 37).

All three of these stories represent an escape from death, won by the favor of a god—but they also include a simultaneous promotion to divinity or semi-divinity for the formerly deceased, and sometimes include what amounts to a change of identity as well. They differ, then, from our seven other stories, in which the deceased individuals resumed existence in exactly the existential form that they had previously enjoyed.

Our final two cases are only partial returns to life. First there is Castor, the mortal twin of an immortal brother, Polydeuces. When Castor died, Polydeuces asked Zeus to restore him to life and Zeus made them a deal: each of the brothers would be dead half of the time and alive half of the time (Homer, *Od.* 11.298–304; Proclus, *Cypr.* frag. 9 [West 2003]; Pindar, *Nem.* 10.55–59; see Fowler 2013, 423–34; Gantz 1993, 318–28). In other words, the story of Castor and Polydeuces again presents a situation in which a member of the dead returns to life at the request of a loved one, through the intervention of a god. And then, finally, there is the Argonaut Aithalides, who was granted by his father Hermes the boon of spending half his time after death above on earth, and half below—much like Castor (Pherecydes, *FGH* 3F109; cf. Apollonius Rhodius, *Argon.* 1.640–648; see Gantz 1993, 343).

There is one more case—although I have kept it separate from our main corpus because our sources for it are later than those for the other stories we have looked at, though the story itself was said to be set during the reign of Philip of Macedon. The second-century CE author Phlegon of Tralles, and more briefly the fifth-century Neoplatonist Proclus,[4] both tell of how a young man, Machates, a guest in a wealthy house, was visited two nights in a row by a young girl who called herself Philinnion. After making love to him, Philinnion left behind jewelry and pieces of clothing as tokens of her affection. Upon seeing the tokens, the young man's hosts realize that this visitor is none other than their dead daughter, who had died a newlywed bride. They confront her on her third visit, and she cries that they have ruined everything—if her visits had continued undisturbed for three nights, then by the will of the chthonian gods she would have returned permanently to life, but now, instead, she will return whence she has come. So far, this sounds like a variation of the Orpheus story, but the final part takes us in a new direction: the local seer commands the parents to disinter their daughter's body, burn it outside the city, make offerings to Hermes Chthonios, the Erinyes, and Ares, and then purify themselves and the local temples. Here, perhaps for the first time, we seem to see some fear of the returning dead—or at least a strong desire to ensure that she stays where she belongs, once she has again retreated to the underworld. Machates, by the way, kills himself in despair—again, a variation of the Orpheus story.

We can divide the stories we have looked at into three types: those in which the return of the dead is wholly successful (Alcestis, Pelops, Iolaus); those in which the return of the dead is successful but those who initiate it are punished by the gods (Sisyphus and Asclepius); and those in which the dead fail to fully return and it is

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[4] Phlegon, *Mir.* 2.1 (and see commentary in Hansen 1996); Proclus, *In R.* 2.115–116 (most easily available in English as Appendix 1 of Hansen 1996). Proclus mentions three other cases of the dead returning to life from approximately his own period (the fifth century CE). None of these three people threaten the living; indeed, they offer help of various kinds.

the failure itself that has dire consequences for those who initiate it (Orpheus and Laodamia). Of our remaining cases, Semele, Hippolytus, and Memnon belong in their own category, since they all become divine. As for Castor, although *we* might argue that the return of Castor had dire consequences for Polydeuces, insofar as he loses half his immortality, the myth does not present the situation that way; Castor's story probably belongs, therefore, in the same category as those of Alcestis, Pelops, and Ioalus, as does that of Aithalides. The story of Philinnion probably belongs, as I noted, in the same category as the stories of Orpheus and Laodamia.

Notably, none of these stories implies that returning from the dead is in and of itself a problem—it is a special dispensation that a god might bestow, or that a particularly clever mortal might devise. Nor are the returning dead *themselves* presented as problems in these stories, with the possible exception of Philinnion. The problems, when there are problems, arise either from angering a god, as in the cases of Asclepius and Sisyphus, or from having failed to accept limitations set by the gods, as in the cases of Orpheus, Laodamia, and Philinnion. If the Greeks feared the return of the dead in and of itself, it was the return of the dead in the form of the restless, disembodied souls that I mentioned earlier, or in other words, ghosts—not the possibility that the dead might return in embodied form.

II. MODERN STORIES OF THE RETURNING DEAD

The stories told about the return of the dead in the modern West (of which I will focus in the short space of this essay only on anglophone examples) are quite different. In 1902, W. W. Jacobs published a short story called "The Monkey's Paw."[5] The title refers to a mummified monkey's paw that a soldier has brought home from India, a talisman that can grant its owner three wishes. Having experienced its dangerous powers himself, and wishing to destroy it, the soldier, nonetheless, reluctantly gives it to his friends. Their

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[5] The story appeared in Jacobs's (1902) anthology *The Lady of the Barge*.

initial wish is for 200 pounds to pay off their mortgage. The next day, their son is killed in a horrible accident; the compensation for his death is exactly 200 pounds. Ten more days go by and the mother, overwhelmed by grief, snatches up the paw and makes a second wish—that her son come home. Immediately, there comes a knocking at the door. As the mother joyously fumbles to open it, the father—who had been the one to identify his son's badly mutilated body at the morgue—quickly picks up the claw and makes a wish of his own. When the door swings open, nothing is there but the wind, whistling through the empty street.

"The Monkey's Paw" was an enormous success. A year after its publication, it was adapted for the London stage,[6] and there have been many radio, film, and TV versions as well. Stephen King used the idea that underlies it in several of his novels, most prominently *Pet Sematary* (1983), in which a young doctor uses the power of an ancient Native America burial ground to resurrect, first, his daughter's cat, and then his two-year-old son. As in all tales of "The Monkey's Paw" type, the doctor learns, to his regret, that—as another character had warned him—"sometimes dead is better." In *Pet Sematary*, those who return carry a lingering stench of the grave and also, far more alarmingly, a vicious spirit called the wendigo. Indeed, although the *body* that returns may be that of a cat or a child, the soul and intelligence that animate it are purely evil.

Similarly, in C. S. Lewis's 1945 novel *That Hideous Strength*, a team of scientists who are bent on taking over the world think they have reanimated the head of a recently executed convict, a brilliant but criminally insane man who will lead them in their endeavors. Bad as that sounds, it gets worse. As it turns out, the head is no longer inhabited by the soul and mind of the convict. It has been possessed by an evil force that has its own colonizing plans, which extend to the whole universe. In *Solaris*, a 1961 novel by Stanislaw Lem, which has been made into a movie three times (1968, 1972,

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[6] "The Monkey's Paw: A Story in Three Scenes," co-written by W. W. Jacobs and Louis N. Parker.

and [2002](#)), a team of scientists sent to investigate a distant planet are apparently visited by loved ones they left behind on earth—including, for the main character Kris, his dead wife Rheya, who committed suicide after Kris told her he was leaving. Rheya is willing to let bygones be bygones and resume their marriage. Although drawn to her by a combination of guilt and desire, Kris is more alert to danger than are the protagonists in other "Monkey's Paw" type stories and initially resists temptation.

The original novel and two of the film versions end with Rheya helping the scientists find a way to end her new existence, which has become as unhappy for her as her first life was. The end of the third, most recent film is ambiguous; we could understand Kris as choosing to stay with the new Rheya, although in an altered bodily state himself. In any case, all versions of Lem's story bring us up against the central issue of "The Monkey's Paw" and ask us to consider, once again, whether staying dead might be better—better for those who have died and also for those who are left behind.

We could go on at great length with this catalog of twentieth-century stories that center on the bodily return of the dead, and the disasters that follow—a whole lecture could be devoted to H. P. Lovecraft's treatments of the idea, and particularly his stories of "[Herbert West: Reanimator](#)" (1922), in which a young medical student's attempts to reanimate the dead prompt decaying corpses—or parts of corpses—to violently attack the living. But let us pause, instead, and consider what we can take away from *these* stories and many others like them, as we did for the ancient myths.

First, modern stories are never of the Alcestis type—that is, the return of the dead does *not* end happily. At the very least, as in some versions of *Solaris*, resurrected individuals long to die once more, and sometimes they take loved ones along with them. They follow the Orpheus paradigm, in other words. Overall, moreover, far from implying that the return of the dead might be a special dispensation granted now and then to favorite mortals, modern tales almost always make it clear that such a thing is against the laws of God, fate, nature or all three. Life may be better than death, but in these

stories, death is always better than anything that lies between the two.

Second, many of these stories offer lavish descriptions of the reanimated body's decaying state: in King's *Pet Sematary*, as I noted, those who return from the dead carry a whiff of the grave and the marks of their wounds. The reanimated head in Lewis's novel must be artificially supplied with saliva before it can talk, and then it drools disgustingly into its own beard. The father makes his last wish on the monkey's paw because he realizes how gruesome a sight his son's reanimated corpse will present when his wife opens the door. "Herbert West: Reanimator" is filled with adjectives such as "ghastly," or "hideous." In the modern West, the returning dead are expected to be vile.

Third, in many modern stories, the corpse is reanimated not by its own soul, but by a force of evil—a wendigo, a colonizing space alien, or some more vaguely identified but still horrible force. Sometimes it *is* the original soul who repopulates the corpse, but with a temperament that has changed for the worse and a hunger for living flesh. What remains of one of Herbert West's experiments, who in life was the beloved dean of the medical school, is described as "strewing red death in its wake."

III. CHRISTIANITY'S CONTRIBUTIONS

So, why are the two groups of stories so different? Why did ancient Greeks express anxiety about the return of the *soul*—that is, the ghost—but not about the *bodily* return of the dead, whereas modern Western culture, although certainly not immune from fear of ghosts, seems obsessed with the horror and danger of the reanimated corpse? We might guess that it has something to do with the advancement of technology; we might conjecture that the potential to restore bodily life seems closer to realization now than it ever did before, and that stories like those I sketched above are a medium through which we can think about the ramifications of that possibility. The fact that doctors and scientists are very often the reanimators in modern stories—in *Pet Sematary*, in *That Hideous*

Strength, in *Solaris*, and in 'Herbert West,' for example—would seem to support this. But there is a flaw in this analysis: Asclepius, after all, was a doctor. The Greeks were also capable of using stories about the return of the dead to think about the ramifications of advancing technology, and yet they never presented the reanimated corpse *itself* as being any problem.

I suggest that there is another, and much older, reason that contemporary Western culture fears the bodily return of the dead, namely, Christianity and its enduring effect upon even secular representations of death in the West. Christianity is a religion anchored in the promise that a human once rose from the dead and that those who believe in him will rise from the dead as well. One of the passages most central to those claims is 1 Cor 15:21–54 in which Paul, discussing the resurrection of the dead, promises that when "the [last] trumpet sounds . . . the dead shall rise again incorruptible . . . . For this corruptible body must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality" (1 Cor 15:52–53). In short, Paul promises that like Christ, we will trade the bodies in which we die for some better version of those bodies.

Central to this passage, and to the ardent debates that went on over it for more than thirteeen centuries amongst clerics and scholars, is the question of *how* the dead rise. As Caroline Walker Bynum (1994) showed at length, there was a deep, abiding desire that one's personal, individual body be restored when the last trumpet sounded, even down to its moles and warts. This meant that the particles of each body had to reassemble themselves *exactly* into that same body upon resurrection. That is, *Peter's* body could not be allowed to include disintegrated particles of *Paul's* body (as the medieval debaters put it; cf. Bynum 1994, 134–35). How did God *deal* with all of this? What about people who had been eaten by cannibals? How did God straighten out *those* two bodies at resurrection? (cf. Bynum 1994, 33).

The history of these debates is fascinating—nor did they stop with the end point of Bynum's book, the year 1336, which simply represents the moment when Pope Benedict the Twelfth formally

declared that souls will experience beatific vision at resurrection—that is, that souls will indeed have eyes. Martin Luther certainly had something to say on the topic—that is, he supported the ideas of a unified self and bodily resurrection—and as far as I can tell, bodily resurrection is still doctrine not only in the contemporary Catholic Church, but also in most forms of Protestantism. But for our purposes, two overall points that emerge from Bynum's book are important. First, that early on, Christians developed a *unified* concept of the self, which valued both body and soul—indeed, they assumed that neither part of this self could be resurrected without the other and therefore that without the resurrection of the body, the self could not be resurrected at all.[7] I doubt that a truly dualist concept of the self is found anywhere outside of certain philosophical systems such as Platonism, but some peoples, including the ancient Greeks, have a modified form of it, according to which it is the soul that survives death and goes on to some sort of existence afterwards, even as the body rots, but it is a soul that has *somatomorphic* qualities.[8] That is, the soul carries along with it into the afterlife certain characteristics of embodiment, such as potential sensation and individualized appearance. This is why Odysseus is able to recognize his dead friends and relatives in the *nekuia* of Book 11 of the *Odyssey*, and why souls are able to suffer pain and enjoy pleasures in the Greek afterlife.

The second overall point is that, although Christianity insisted on the eventual bodily resurrection of every person, it acknowledged the initial corruption and decay of the body. Indeed, Christianity both reviled and reveled in that decay: the rot and disarticulation of the body that followed death were understood as necessary steps on the way to eventual resurrection, but as *only* steps, and therefore as signs that the process was underway but not yet complete. This sentiment that decay is an undesirable and yet crucial stage in the

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[7] This conviction likely has antecedents in certain streams of ancient Jewish thought and literature, which similarly presume notions of body-soul unity. See, for example, Cavallin 1974 and Segal 2004.

[8] I borrow the term "somatomorphic" from Bynum 1994, ch. 7.

perfecting of the self underlies two fearsome creatures who appear in the course of the Middle Ages: one is the revenant whose body has begun the process of decay but has not yet *finished* it, who reappears amongst the living in a ghastly physical form. In other words, the reanimated corpse. Nancy Caciola's (1996; see also Caciola 2014) study of such medieval revenants shows that they were traced to one of two causes: theologians and scholars argued that it was demons who animated the rotting corpses, while the common people tended to believe it was the souls themselves, bent on returning to their former homes. Either way, such a creature was big trouble, doing such things as raping virgins and murdering people. In other words, the medieval reanimated corpse is an ancestor of the modern Western phenomena I talked about earlier.

The other fearsome creature is the revenant whose body does *not* decay at all, and who does not, therefore, even enter into the process that eventually leads to resurrection. Here, too, either the lingering soul or a demonic force is understood to animate the corpse—leading eventually to belief in what becomes known as, among other terms, the "vampire." Notably, nothing like the vampire—that is, a dead person who returns to attack the living—appears in Greek sources until well after Christianization. Our first discussion of such a creature is found in Leo Allatius's 1645 treatise on what were then contemporary Greek beliefs (*[De Graecorum hodie quorundam opinationibus](...)*).[9] Allatius, a Greek from Chios who was trained in classical literature, theology, and medicine, calls them *vrykolakes*—a Slavic term that means "werewolves," although "werewolf" for the Slavs meant not the creatures that we think of, who transform from humans into wolves and back again, but rather nasty revenants, who returned from the grave to wreak havoc.

In other words, when threatening revenants finally enter our record of Greek beliefs, they do so under a borrowed name, perhaps implying that the belief was borrowed as well—although how much earlier than Leo Allatius's account that borrowing occurred is

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[9] On Allatius's treatise, see now Hartnup 2004, esp. chs. 7 and 8.

impossible to say. What might have laid the groundwork for such borrowing? One possible answer is the Greek Orthodox practice of exhuming the deceased after three years and giving him or her secondary burial, a practice mentioned by Allatius that is still alive in many parts of Greece today (Danforth 1982). Although normally only bones would be left when a grave was reopened, occasionally (for what are now well-understood biological reasons having to do with the acidity of the soil and similar variables) a body will be mummified or saponified—that is, turned into a soap-like substance that preserves the features remarkably well—or tympanated—that is, inflated by interior gases into a drum-like state—all of which understandably lead to the belief that the dead are not dead at all (Barber 1988, 102–32).

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Let us bring together the ideas suggested in this essay. First: Western culture, under the enduring influence of Christianity and its promise of eventual bodily resurrection, developed a stronger aversion to the corpse than had many pre-Christian Mediterranean cultures, because the corpse—which by definition is a dead body in some state of decay, greater or lesser—signified that the process of decomposition that preceded creation of the second, more spiritual resurrection body was not yet complete. A rotting corpse that was *reanimated* signified that either the original soul or a demon had improperly taken possession of it—thus interrupting the process of dissolution, reconstruction and resurrection, either temporarily or permanently. Given that such a thing was against God's plan for the resurrection of all individuals, the reanimated corpse could only be understood as evil.[10]

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[10] Caciola (2014) collects some fascinating exceptions to this, in which the returning dead seem, at least at first glance, to be innocent and even pious in their behavior. However, as Caciola shows, these stories have been appropriated, altered and repurposed by Christian narrators intent on turning traditional tales of frightening revenants into proofs of the resurrection promised by Christianity.

The pre-Christian Greeks, by contrast, located the enduring self in the soul; it was in the soul that the self would experience any postmortem existence, good or bad. The corpse, although avoided by the living as a source of contact pollution, was not understood to have a continuing relationship with or affect upon the soul, once the corpse had been properly disposed of—either tucked beneath the ground or incinerated on a pyre, and in either case accompanied by proper funerary goods. The soul endured, experienced whatever rewards or punishments the self had earned while alive.

Interestingly, this idea that the body and the soul were severed from one another after death left open the possibility of imagining the rare bodily return to life in almost any way, including a positive one; as being a boon from the gods, for example. No stigma seems to have been attached to such a possibility precisely because no postmortem relationship between the body and the soul had ever been conceptualized, much less regularized, as it was in early Christianity. Certainly, everyday expectations were confounded when, in myths, the dead rejoined the living, but no horror was attached to the idea in those myths. We should note, in this respect, one more thing about the myths that we examined: they are so little concerned with the issue of the corpse that they fail to say anything about the body in which the returning dead makes its appearance. Apparently, it looks just like the body did before the person had died—Admetus can recognize Alcestis, for instance. This contrasts strongly with later tales of revenants, where the body is vile in appearance, smell, or both, and does not always function correctly.

Of course, were this essay a longer one, in which we could take a more expansive look at both ancient and modern Western cultures, we would surely discover that some ancient cultures proposed a stronger, more enduring link between the soul and the body than the Greeks did—the Egyptians would seem to be an obvious example, given the care they took to preserve the bodies of their deceased. We might also discover that some modern Western cultures are relatively disinterested in horrifying tales of the returning corpse—although my own initial survey of French,

German, and Scandinavian cultures suggests that they are just as fascinated with the idea as anglophone cultures have been. And, of course, there are cultures that have developed strong beliefs in the threatening return of the corpse under little or no influence from Christianity. The African religious tradition that originally produced the concept of what we now call a "zombie" is an example. The medieval Christian idea of the reanimated corpse was particularly apropos for *this* essay because of its historical situation—it lies between the ancient Greek model of death, with which we know it perforce interacted, and the modern Western models that I used as contrast for the Greek model, reacting against the one and influencing the other—but it is not the only one.

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SECTION I

Memory, Mourning, and Returning to Life

Living without the Dead:
Finding Solace in Ancient Rome

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I. INTRODUCTION

In February 45 BCE Cicero's daughter, Tullia, died. Cicero took the loss very hard and in the weeks that followed chronicled his suffering in letters, chiefly written to his friend Atticus.[1] This correspondence provides a unique insight into grief in the Roman world, specifically that of an educated, elite, literary and (formerly) politically important man in the final years of Republican Rome. Grief is a topic rarely otherwise addressed in such a personal and detailed fashion within the surviving literary sources. When ancient authors wrote about grief, it was generally not their own grief, but that of others that they described and sometimes judged. Grief was a problematic issue; on the one hand to grieve was natural and expected (e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 99.16; *Marc.* 7.1), on the other hand the expression of such an emotion was incompatible with public life and male virtue, and often classed as womanly weakness (Cicero, *Fam.* 9.20.3; Seneca, *Ep.* 63.13; Plutarch, *Cons. ux* 4). For a man such as Cicero, grief was not a private matter, but bound up with his public life and duty. To this end seeking consolation, finding ways of living without the dead and living with grief, was essential.

Cicero's reaction to Tullia's death has been well investigated (Treggiari 1998; Wilcox 2005a; Evans 2007; Baltussen 2009, 2013b).

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[1] The relevant letters are mainly in Book 12 of Cicero's *Letters to Atticus*. Translations used in the paper are taken from the Loeb Classical Library. For all ancient sources, the embedded hyperlinks offer the reader easy reference to open-access (though often older) scholarly editions.

Here, rather than creating a narrative of Cicero's grief, I will explore how the bereaved of ancient Rome sought to accommodate their losses. Using Cicero as a starting point, I will investigate some of the methods for alleviating grief, which were available and employed, during the late Republic and early Imperial period, and the efficacy of these. Latin literary consolation has recently gained new attention (Alonso del Real 2001; Baltussen 2013a), but to date has not been integrated with the other methods by which people sought to accept death and bereavement. There is a need for a greater understanding of what the bereaved did and were expected to do, and that in ancient Rome seeking solace could be an active and social process.

II. DEFINING GRIEF AND COPING

In modern Western society grief may be characterized as a psychological condition or a natural response; it can be understood as something private and internal or something inherently social and communal; and individual responses can be interpreted as normal or abnormal (see, e.g., Archer 1999; Klass 1999; Walter 1999; Jakoby 2012). There is little consensus between disciplines, especially those of psychology, psychiatry, sociology and anthropology, as to whether grief is an illness, a universal emotion, a cultural construct or indeed whether it is a single or separate emotion at all (Jakoby 2012). Such debates highlight the complex relationship between grief and mourning. Grief can be understood as an emotional, uncontrolled and primarily private reaction to loss, while mourning is the public expression, or processes and actions that accommodate the loss (see, e.g., Stroebe et al. 2001, 6). However, such distinctions are challenging to maintain. It has been observed that, "it is really difficult to provide specific examples of grief, since the moment it is expressed it becomes mourning" (Fontana and Keene 2009, 162). It may be more appropriate not to view grief and mourning as two different things, but two different interpretations of a single practice (O'Rourke 2007, 397).

Where there is more consensus is that cultural contexts create varying strategies, which may include formal mourning rituals,

which allow both for the expression and alleviation of grief. Even if grief is a universal, and natural, emotional response, people are policed and schooled in grief and mourning across their life course, they may observe and absorb what to expect and how to behave long before they suffer bereavement (Walter 2001, 101; Rosenblatt 2001, 293). Culture determines how grief is thought of, represented, experienced and alleviated.

A major part of the experience of grief is coping, that is, using strategies to manage (and often lessen) grief. Definitions of grief as a psychological disorder or illness may be questioned (e.g., Walter 2001; Granek 2013), but the alleviation of grief, or the desire to restore emotional equilibrium, both by the bereaved and those coming into contact with them, is a recurring theme. The contemporary good mourner is, generally, someone who keeps functioning and working, masks any emotional pain, and thus appears to be coping (Harris 2009). Bereavement counsellors and self-help manuals often characterize grief as a process, with the bereaved needing to undertake "grief work" or tasks. Those who fail to "recover" rapidly may be labelled as abnormal, excessive or pathological in their grief. However, the appropriateness of trying to "cure" grief has been challenged; for some, grief is not a linear process since the bereaved may oscillate between grief and restoring normal life, while others seek to retain continuing bonds with the dead (see, e.g., Archer 1999, 26; Stroebe and Schut 1999; Klass and Walter 2001; Valentine 2008; Stroebe and Schut 2010; Klass 2013).

Indeed, the extent to which bereaved individuals are conscious of grief processes is debatable, and many think in more general terms of emotional, spiritual and practical forms of help and alleviation. Solace can be found through the words and company of other people (including family, friends, medical practitioners and social media), rituals, religion, remembering, and the distractions of routine work, but also through inner resources such as personal faith, comfort objects, familiar places, reading or music (Klass 2013). The exact nature of solace may vary for each individual (and loss), while being culturally defined. Writing of the Victorians, for example, Jalland

(1996, 12) noted, "the four primary forms of consolation were religious belief, time, private and social memory, and the sympathy of friends and relatives; but most Victorian Protestants relied above all on their expectation of happy family reunions in heaven." Methods for the alleviation of grief may change, but across most cultures and historical periods grief is countered by ideas of comfort, soothing and the easing of pain; thus Klass (2013, 598): "sorrow is the defining characteristic of grief and consolation historically has been its amelioration." The intention of solace is to alleviate, not to remove or "cure" sorrow.

For the ancient world, understanding grief, its definition, expression and alleviation, is complex. We cannot assume that the Roman emotional landscape mirrored our own (cf. Cairns 2008), that the experience of grief was the same, especially in a high-mortality environment; and our understanding is further distorted by the biases of the sources, which predominantly present the perspective of wealthy, elite, educated men. As in the modern context there were certain intellectual attempts to define grief and explorations of grief as an emotion (or passion). Different philosophical schools promoted different perspectives on the emotions, although living in a state where the emotions could be moderated was idealized. Most significant in Rome was the Stoic and Epicurean perspective that the passions could overwhelm and disrupt human nature and rationality, and that philosophical discourse could act as a therapeutic counterweight (Gill 1997). Grief was not always identified as a separate passion, and could be seen as a subcategory of pain (Erskine 1997, 41). Cicero, following Stoic arguments, classed grief under the passion of *aegritudo* (distress), which he described as the most challenging: "but *aegritudo* involves worse things—decay, torture, torment, repulsiveness. It tears and devours the soul and completely destroys it" (*Tusc.* 3.27).

The pain of grief, and how to resolve it, was commonly discussed, again predominantly in philosophically driven literature. Grief could be characterized as an illness. Cicero in his letters following Tullia's death spoke of his wound (*Att.* 12.18.1), of taking

his medicine (*Att.* 12.21.5) and searching for remedies (*Att.* 12.21.5). Servius Sulpicius Rufus feared that in his grief Cicero was like a bad doctor (*Fam.* 4.5.5). Seneca the Younger often couched himself as similar to a doctor in having to administer the equivalent of cures to the bereaved (e.g., *Helv.* 2.2). Military metaphors could also be employed, terming grief as a battle from which the bereaved needed to emerge victorious (e.g., Cicero, *Att.* 12.15; Seneca, *Marc.* 1.5). On the one hand, such comparisons suggest that grief was considered a bad thing, a disease or an enemy that must be cured or defeated, and thus if these attempts failed, if grief continued, it represented a weakness in character. On the other hand, these analogies with medicine and combat suggest an acute awareness of the intensity of grief and its potentially debilitating nature; that moderating the emotion of grief was not straightforward, people needed help.

The majority of those living in the Roman era may not, however, have analysed or thought of their grief from a philosophical perspective. Beyond the elite authorial voices were women, children, slaves and the poor, who may have explained and experienced their grief very differently.[2] The intellectual elite were often condemning of the mourning behaviour of others, the exaggerated gestures, noisy laments and false tears that turned grief into a public performance. As Seneca suggested, real men needed to be in control of their emotions, and not mourn at all (Seneca, *Ep.* 63.13). Yet to show no or insufficient emotion in public, especially at the funeral, might suggest a lack of humanity or an absence of genuine grief (e.g., Petronius, *Sat.* 42; Suetonius, *Tib.* 52; Tacitus, *Ann.* 3.2–3). To shed tears at a funeral, and in the privacy of one's home, was acceptable, but not in other contexts. In contrast to this idealised control, grief was a major form of artistic inspiration, for example in poetry and drama, which could lay bare people's suffering, and evoke the audience to empathize, as others displayed, even exalted in, grief.

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[2] Gender distinctions in Roman mourning practices have hitherto driven much research (e.g., Richlin 2001; Corbeill 2004). I'm not intending to underplay the role of gender here, but to focus more broadly on aspects of solace, which in spirit (if not in detail) were less gender specific.

Such works were also created by men, but they could challenge and invert the philosophical perspective that grief must be controlled. To put it simply, grief was often presented either as a problem best solved by concealment, or as an emotion to be expressed in full. For many, neither of these extremes may have been appropriate, and their grieving, before and after the funeral, may have oscillated between a need for practical solutions and loss-orientated emotional reactions (cf. Stroebe and Schut 1999). Ultimately we have to wonder whether the surviving evidence presents us only with mourning (that is, public display and performance) and not grief.[3] At best the available evidence is representations (if not distortions) of the emotions, not the emotions themselves (Baltussen 2009, 357), since what survives was intended (to some degree) for public display and consumption. Yet much of this evidence is so emotionally charged (or denying) that to argue that what survives reflects only mourning Romans and not grieving Romans, is perhaps unsustainable. Besides alleviating sorrow, helping the bereaved, and offering consolation could be a social responsibility (see below). What survives may be stylised representations of grief, but the pain grief brought was readily acknowledged and shared.

III. Cicero and Seeking Solace

Cicero was an elite, intellectual and philosophically influenced man, yet in his letters following the death of Tullia we have a Cicero who presents us with (or very close to) the genuine grief of a Roman.[4]

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[3] Latin vocabulary can distinguish between grief and mourning. Mourning is usually *luctus* (suggesting wailing), with other words reflecting the physical manifestations of mourning: lament (*lamentatio*), groaning (*gemitus*), striking the body (*planctus*), and a dishevelled appearance (*squalor*). The term employed for grief is most often *maeror*, with the words *dolor* (sorrow) and *tristia* (sadness) also used. However, the fact that *luctus* and *maeror* are frequently linked together (e.g., Cicero, *Phil.* 14.11.13; *Mil.* 5.13; Lucius Apuleius, *Met.* 1.6) suggests that, as in English, there was no hard and fast dividing line between what was grief and what was mourning.

[4] This is not to say that we can take all Cicero's emotional outpourings at face value, even in the context of semi-private letters to his best friend, but to

Baltussen (2009; 2013b, 78) has suggested that Cicero was suffering from acute or pathological grief in the eight to ten weeks that followed Tullia's death, and Evans (2007) has characterized this period as a major depressive episode. We need perhaps to be wary of such diagnoses, since they imply that Cicero was somehow abnormal, that his grief was more extreme than that experienced by his contemporaries who faced similar bereavements. This may have been the case, but we lack other suitable comparators; no other Roman charts their grief in such a fashion, leaving us unable to judge what may have been extreme, less extreme, normal or abnormal.[5] Such diagnoses also risk overlooking the political backdrop. Before his daughter's death, Cicero was already a troubled man whose career was in crisis, and his grief for Tullia became emblematic of, and blended with, his grief for the failing Republic.

Rather than diagnose Cicero, or analyse the chronology of his grief, we can consider what Cicero was doing and what he was expected to do. I am not suggesting that Cicero was consciously undertaking "grief work," but we can identify what was advocated in the Roman world to assist the bereaved. Cicero's experience, given his standing and intellectual pursuits, may have been far from the

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accept the other extreme, and to view his grief purely as literary posturing, may also be misleading (see Baltussen 2009, 359). How Cicero presents his grief is bound by literary, cultural and elite conventions, but also his personal interactions with these. There is a need, however, to distinguish the letters to Atticus from those written to and received from Servius Sulpicius Rufus (*Fam. 4.5*; *4.6*) and Lucceius (*Fam. 5.14*; *5.15*), where Cicero more carefully constructs his grief for Tullia in parallel with his grief for the decline of the Republic. For competitive rivalry in the elite rhetoric of correspondence and letters as gift exchange between friends, see Wilcox 2005b; 2012, 10–12.

[5] Plutarch, in his biography, characterizes Cicero's grief for Tullia as excessive (*Cic. 41.5*). Plutarch presumably bases this assertion primarily on his reading of Cicero's surviving writings. Plutarch often took a hard stance on demonstrative and indulgent mourning (e.g., *Cons. ux. 3–4*), so he is not an unbiased commentator. Nevertheless, the impact of Cicero's unusual charting of his grief upon his posthumous reputation was probably a real (and not a positive) one.

norm, but equally the charting of his grieving is unusual, not just for its detail, but also because he ignored the general view (and his own previous advice) that elite men needed to win the battle with their emotions: that is to say, in these letters Cicero does not provide us with the idealized experiences of a philosophically educated man. I would argue that whether Cicero's grief was unusually extreme or not, the essence of the things that Cicero did to assuage that grief was normal, if not always effective.

Using Cicero's letters and complementing evidence, mainly dating from the early imperial period, we can identify the following which were used by, and which offered comfort to, the bereaved: ritual; religious and philosophical beliefs; public duty; support networks; literature; and memory. This list is not exhaustive and it remains biased towards the elite Roman male, but it provides some insights into how grief was managed. I want to look briefly at each in turn. As features of Roman life and death there is much here that is well researched, and this is not the place to explore everything in detail. The intention is to focus upon the bereaved, and how these aspects did, or were believed to, alleviate grief.

Rituals

Cicero revealed nothing about the funeral rituals that surrounded Tullia's death, since the detailed correspondence with Atticus began some weeks later.[6] We may assume that the usual rites were followed; Tullia's body may have been displayed for a few days (see, for example, the Haterii relief as either an image or line drawing), then carried out in a funeral procession, with the bier being accompanied by family, friends, musicians and hired mourners (see, for example, the Amiternum relief as either an image or line drawing); at the cemetery a eulogy may have been delivered

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[6] The exact chronology of events, including the date of Tullia's death, is unclear. The almost daily correspondence with Atticus began in early March 45 BCE when Cicero went to his villa in Asturia, probably a few weeks after Tullia's death, and continues into early July, by which time Cicero was at his property in Tusculum.

(possibly by Cicero) before the pyre was lit. Rites of purification would have followed the funeral, and again nine days after the death (for Roman funerary ritual, see Toynbee 1971, 43–64; Bodel 1999; Hope 2009, 65–96). During this period Cicero would have been expected to abstain from public business, don dark clothing and remain at home. Cicero was not a supporter of extravagant and dramatic rites (*Leg.* 2.59; *Tusc.* 3.62), so Tullia's funeral may have lacked aspects such as noisy laments and mourners who injured themselves by breast-beating, hair tearing and check scratching.[7] What is apparent is that the end of the formal mourning rituals did not mark the end of Cicero's grief. Nine days after Tullia's death Cicero did not resume his public activities (see below). Whatever the details of Tullia's funeral, the rituals alone did not resolve Cicero's grief.

Funerary rituals structure both the disposal of the corpse and the behaviour, and transitional status, of the bereaved; rituals allow people to say farewell to the dead and to renegotiate their place in society. Both the corpse and bereaved may be regarded as polluted and dangerous, and the rituals aim both to neutralize and control those dangers. Mourners need to be cleansed of their grief, since their emotional state is potentially dangerous and disruptive (O'Rourke 2007, 397). Rituals then benefit not just the bereaved, but the wider society and community. In the Roman world there were stipulations concerning how long mourning should last and aiming to control some emotional displays (Cicero, *Leg.* 2.59; Plutarch, *Num.* 12; Paulus, *Sent.* 1.21.2–5). Men in particular needed to resume work and public duties rapidly for the efficient running of the state. Mourning (dramatic gestures and retaining mourning dress) was often characterized as women's work.

Roman funerary rituals were both practical and symbolic, but also allowed for the acknowledgement and display of grief in a controlled and time-limited fashion. Whether the rituals were

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[7] Tullia died at Tusculum. Shortly after the death Cicero was in Rome, staying at Atticus's house, before going to Asturia, but whether Tullia's funeral was held in Rome or Tusculum is unclear.

emotionally satisfying for all is more difficult to judge. The mourner's relationship to the deceased, and their age, gender and status, would have dictated the details of their mourning role. In addition, slaves, hired undertakers and hired mourners could be employed. The use of such death specialists may have increased during the late Republic and early Imperial period (Bodel 2004), creating distance between the bereaved and the corpse; tending the dead, and acts of public mourning, were often perceived as the preserve of low-status women (Richlin 2001). Prescribed ritual roles may have helped the bereaved; knowing what to do and how to act, that one was fulfilling societal and personal expectations for behaviour, may have been a comfort. However, for some, admittedly often intending to critique those of a different class, gender and intellect, there was awareness of a mismatch between the rituals, especially the performance of mourning, and emotional reality. For example, Cicero noted that children who displayed cheerfulness in the midst of family grieving were hit to make them cry the expected tears (*Tusc.* 3.64); Lucian characterized mourning as showy, dramatic and of little real benefit (*Luct.*); Martial observed that he who grieves properly grieves alone (1.33). There was scepticism about the performative elements of mourning; emotional displays were inherently false, and thus not suited or helpful to those who were genuinely grieving.

In sharp contrast is evidence that denies any mismatch, and suggests that the rituals provided a useful focus for the expression of grief. Statius, for example, described extreme mourning behaviour, and did not see this as false, but a genuine (as well as expected) response. In describing the rites for Priscilla, the heaps of incense, the expensively draped bier, the elaborate burial and the tears of her husband were, to Statius, appropriate (poetic at least) expressions of love and loss (*Silv.* 5.1.208–230). It is poetry as well that often hints at the importance of completing the rituals, ironically most often in cases where rituals were incomplete or it was feared that they would be (e.g., Ovid, *Tr.* 3.3.37–46). Lucan, for example, listed the rites denied to the dead Pompey, but thereby to his surviving wife, when

he was assassinated and his body abandoned on a foreign shore (*Phars.* 8.739–742). Such accounts explored the implications of corpse neglect, but also highlighted the significance of ritual disposal; not having a body to mourn over was a cause of additional suffering; saying goodbye was important.

Annual festivals such as the *Parentalia* and the *Rosalia* provided ongoing rituals, with graves visited, tended and the dead remembered and nourished. There was also scope for more individualized, ritualized approaches. Cicero planned to build a shrine to Tullia (see below); he was not clear on what function this was to perform in his future life, but it is likely that Cicero envisaged regular visits. Post funeral, daily routines might also be adapted, certain spaces and actions becoming marked by the absence of the dead, or objects and images could take on new meanings as a focus for ritual. Emperor Augustus was said regularly to kiss a statue of his dead grandson (Suetonius, *Cal.* 7); others talked to or adorned portraits, and treasured jewellery and keepsakes (Hope 2011a). After Tullia's death Cicero initially shunned his usual habits, avoiding Rome and the villa where Tullia had died, although he eventually accepted his return there (*Att.* 12.45; 12.46).

Funeral rituals separated the living and the dead and were thus a way for the living to acknowledge and negotiate a new relationship with those they had lost. The public performance of grief, which these rituals could entail, was not demanded of all, and to some seemed irrelevant and unsatisfactory; but for others it was important and genuine. The rituals allowed the bereaved to express grief in an accepted and structured fashion, though the details and efficacy of this differed for men and women, rich and poor. Post funeral, the dead (and their graves) were not forgotten; bonds with the dead could be actively maintained through public, and more personal, rituals.

Belief: Philosophy and Religion

Religious and philosophical beliefs in ancient Rome could be varied and highly personal. In terms of what happened to the dead a range

of options was subscribed to, everything from death being annihilation to continuing existence of the dead in an underworld. What most people believed is hard to judge. Different views were expressed in epitaphs; some found comfort in ideas of continuity, life after death and the hope of reunion (e.g., *CIL* 11.6435), while others viewed death as the end: "I was not, I was, I am not, I don't care" (*CIL* 13.530). Most epitaphs, beyond the generic opening formula *Dis Manibus* ("to the spirits of the departed"), made no clear statement about whether the dead person, or their survivors, subscribed to notions of the afterlife or the immortality of the soul.

In his letters following Tullia's death, Cicero made little reference to religion. Elsewhere Cicero's writings presented divergent perspectives; promoting a celestial realm for the great and good (*Rep.* 6.13), picturing Rome's enemies in hell (*Phil.* 14.32) or dismissing Hades all together (*Tusc.* 1.10). Each of these options served a purpose in a specific literary context and thus none necessarily represented Cicero's views. At Tullia's death, Cicero struggled with the mortality of his child and the finality of death, as evidenced by his determination to build a shrine (see below; and Lactantius, *Inst.* 1.15.19–20). It was as if Cicero wished to give his daughter divine status, and such deification of a mortal was unusual and innovative. Shortly after Cicero wrote his letters on this subject, however, the assassinated Julius Caesar was declared a god, and in the following century there was an increasing trend towards merging the human and the divine in funerary commemoration (Wrede 1981; Cole 2014).

Instead or alongside of religion were philosophical principles. Here, as with religion, there could be strict adherence to certain schools of thought (e.g., Stoics, Sceptics, Epicureans), or a more eclectic philosophical approach, often witnessed in Cicero's own writings. The philosophical stance was generally one of moderation in the expression of grief, while offering advice to rationalize and thus control it. Cicero in writing to Titius after the death of his sons (and a few months before the death of Tullia) utilized some of the main arguments such as death befalls all men, death is not an evil

and time heals (*Fam.* 5.16; cf. *Tusc.* 3.77). In his own bereavement Cicero did struggle with some of the philosophical teachings on grief, claiming that nothing could console him (see below), but it is also clear that he read and studied widely. Cicero also emphasized that in his grief he went no further than the best teachers advised, and that he was trying the expected remedies (*Att.* 12.21.5). The specifics of philosophy may not have offered the immediate therapy that Cicero expected, but the pursuit did supply occupation. More than a year after Tullia's death Cicero noted his gratitude to philosophy for providing him with distraction from anxiety and armour against misfortune (*Fam.* 12.23.4).

Others too found the philosophical response to death difficult to stomach in its full intensity. In the first century CE, Statius railed against those who tried to set limits to grief, "who [dare] to pronounce a law for weeping or to set the boundaries of grieving" (*Silv.* 5.5.60–61; see Markus 2004). Tacitus viewed forced male self-control as bravado; it could be just as demonstrative as female tears and laments (*Agr.* 29.1). Nevertheless, as distilled common sense maxims, advice such as *the dead do not suffer* and *time heals* were commonly quoted.

In bereavement many people did take comfort from their "beliefs," whether philosophical or religious, since these provided explanations for the fate of the dead and also practical and spiritual guidance on living with grief. Religion could also promote continuing bonds with the dead, if not through the hope of reunion, through regular rituals (see above), which provided a place for the dead in the lives of the living.

Public Duty

Cicero highlighted, by its absence for him, that keeping busy, especially in terms of public service, was a tried and tested method for the alleviation of grief. Service to the state should come first and could demand the suppression of emotion. In terms of busyness Cicero did nothing, or at least that was what his friends accused him of, withdrawing from Rome and absenting himself from political life

(e.g., *Fam.* 5.14.1–2). That Cicero's absence was problematic is suggested by the fact that he was claiming ill-health, and was prepared to swear an oath to that effect (*Att.* 12.13.2); grief alone was not sufficient excuse for missing certain duties. Getting on with things and being seen to do so was idealized male grief behaviour. It was not that grief was not present, but that it should be controlled or disguised, as was suggested to Cicero and by him (*Fam.* 5.16.5; *Att.* 12.20.1; 12.23.1). There were many famed examples of good solid Republican men who, at least in public, shed not a tear. Julius Caesar, after the death of his daughter, for example, was back commanding his troops within a few days (Seneca, *Marc.* 14.3). Cicero was aware of the power of such paradigms and in his letters to Atticus requested details of other people's bereavements, intending to use them in his own consolation (*Att.* 12.20.2; 12.22.2; 12.24.2). Writing to Brutus following the death of his wife, Cicero noted, "moderation in grief, which is expedient for other men, is for you a necessity" (*Ad Brut.* 18(I.9).2 [= 19(I.9).2 in Williams and Cary 1927–1929]).

Keeping busy, and performing public duties, was also characterized as a useful distraction, something that assisted with the healing process. Tacitus described war against the Britons as the remedy employed by his father-in-law Agricola, following the death of a young son (*Agr.* 29.1). Agricola carried on, even if healing his grief by potentially inflicting it on others. Doing the familiar could soothe the bereaved when the stability of human relationships and their own existence had been undermined by death. Most people were not generals or holders of public office, but the sense that routine and usual roles could both distract from the pain of and ease grief was promoted. Seneca suggested that it was when the bereaved were at home (*domum*) and alone, rather than busy at work, that sorrow could creep in (*Polyb.* 8.1).

For Cicero, the compromising of his public position made both a public and active response initially difficult. Cicero could not become a paradigm of grief moderation and take comfort in admiration for this public performance (Wilcox 2005a), although

ultimately his writing would, in part, fulfil this role (see below). In a reply to a letter from Servius Sulpicius Rufus, Cicero himself noted the importance of public duty, but also the parallels between his public and private ills and the mutual dependency of home and forum: "hence I avoid both home and Forum, because home can no longer comfort the sorrow which public affairs cause me, nor public affairs comfort the sorrow which I suffer at home" (*Fam.* 4.6.2). If Cicero was being unmanly in his grief it was because he was deprived of the usual aristocratic pursuits that prevented both his public display of expected self-control, and distraction from the blow (see also *Att.* 12.21.5; 12.23.1). In his withdrawal Cicero perhaps foresaw a challenge to the idealization of public duty. Under the rule of the emperors, male role models came from the imperial family, and the real value of other men's public service could be questioned. Finding both consolation and distraction in serving Rome may have become more difficult. This is not to say that all elite men would come to grieve as Cicero had; the Republican examples of self-control were still lauded, but there may have been a softening of the male ideal and a more sentimental view of the value of family (Dixon 1991; Bodel 1999; Hope 2011b, 111–15). The idea of keeping busy, whether you were male, female, rich or poor, was still promoted, but getting on with life could involve focusing on your family as much as a public career.

People were admired for being selfless and putting the needs of the state and others above their grief. This emphasized that grief should be time-limited, that in a society of high mortality it was important to look to the living, not to the dead. For those with public roles this was essential. The distraction offered by duty and work benefitted the bereaved, and also Roman society more generally.

Support Networks

We know what Cicero was doing because he wrote to his friends; they tried to help him, sending him letters of consolation, including suitable advice, even if there was some competitive rivalry in the elite

rhetoric of correspondence (Wilcox 2005b; Wilcox 2012). Cicero's friends could be impatient with him (e.g., *Att.* 12.41.3), but the inherent empathy and sense of duty to one's peers remains clear. Cicero claimed that he wanted to avoid company (*Att.* 12.13.2) and that solitude was helping him (*Att.* 12.14.3; 12.16; 12.18.1; 12.23.1; 12.26.2): "I talk to no one" and "solitude is my best friend" (*Att.* 12.15). Yet he did crave the company of Atticus and Brutus (*Att.* 12.14; 12.16), and acknowledged the comfort and alleviation (*adlevor*) he received from Atticus's letters (*Att.* 12.39.2) and his presence (*Att.* 12.50; 12.49). Cicero was not shunning his closest friends, but spending more time with them entailed returning to the wider social and political realm of Rome, something that he was not prepared to do until some months after Tullia's death.

Family and friends provided support, comfort and distraction, and also practical assistance.[8] Consolation letters preserved on papyrus from Egypt, for example, indicate that food and supplies could be sent to the bereaved (see Chapa 1998). Cicero looked to Atticus for help to protect his reputation, with financial and legal matters, and issues such as purchasing land for Tullia's shrine (see, e.g., *Att.* 12.14; 12.18.3; 12.17). Friends and family were supposed to understand the predicament of the bereaved, but also to share it. Consolation letters often began with the homily that the friend writing experienced the grief almost as much as the person they were addressing (e.g., *Fam.* 5.16.1). Friendship provided a locus not just for support, but also empathy. Shared knowledge and memories of the dead person facilitated the articulation of the loss and building of bonds between the living. In several of his carefully edited letters, Pliny the Younger observed the grief of his friends, empathizing with them (e.g., *Ep.* 4.21; 5.5; 5.16; 8.5). In talking of his own sorrows at the loss of his slaves, Pliny noted that "even grief has its pleasure, especially if you can weep in the arms of a friend who is ready with approval or sympathy for your tears" (*Ep.* 8.16.5). At the death of

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[8] The significance of reciprocal attachments to family and friends and how these provide security and assuage distress have been analyzed in studies of bereavement (e.g., Parkes 2006, 36).

her son Drusus, the empress Livia also actively sought consolation by speaking of him with friends (Seneca, *Marc.* 3.3). Remembering the dead via conversation was an active form of consolation.

Friendship networks can appear more important than family. In his letters to Atticus, Cicero barely mentioned the grandchild that Tullia bore him, that survived its mother by only a few weeks (*Att.* 12.18a.2; 12.28.3). Nor did he speak of his own surviving son as a source of comfort, and he positively avoided his young wife, who did not seem to share his grief (*Att.* 12.32; Plutarch, *Cic.* 41.5). In the consolation letters he sent to Brutus and Titius, Cicero did not suggest family members as a potential form of solace. These omissions may well reflect the limits of genre, and the expected nature of male correspondence (Wilcox 2005b, 241; 2012, 42). Yet sources of a later date appear to place more emphasis on the comfort found in family, and in particular looking to surviving children and grandchildren. For example, Tacitus noted that Agricola found consolation in a newborn daughter when a young son died (*Agr.* 6); Octavia, the sister of the emperor Augustus, was criticised for neglecting her living children and grandchildren by grieving too long for her dead son (Seneca, *Marc.* 2.4). Being a parent, spouse or child provided company, but also distraction and occupation by fulfilling family duties.

Support networks enabled the bereaved to speak about and remember the dead and thus articulate their grief. This allowed the bereaved to shift their primary focus away from the dead, back to the living, emphasising the permanency of the separation, and renegotiating (with the help of others) a new and different relationship with the deceased. Grieving could be social; the bereaved were not excluded or isolated for a long period, but expected to continue in their social as well as public roles. For office-holding men, maintaining friendships was part of their public interface, and thus in surviving sources these friendships, with idealized codes of behaviour, sometimes took priority over familial comfort. Cicero may not have acknowledged the role of his family during his grief, but in many respects it was inherent in how he

grieved. Tullia had been his comfort and distraction, and in his comments that make her a complement to his public role, he was not afraid to acknowledge this.

Literature

In the months following Tullia's death, Cicero read and wrote from a philosophical perspective, activities that were always central to his career, but what differed is that he was reading, researching and writing primarily (although not exclusively) on grief and consolation (*Att.* 12.14.3; 12.21.5). Cicero viewed his literary pursuits as a comfort and a distraction (*Att.* 12.14.3; 12.16), "all my conversation is with books" (*Att.* 12.15). He also used literature as a defence against his critics; he was suffering, maybe not socializing or in public view, but he was fully occupied (*Att.* 12.20.1; 12.38a.1; 12.40.2). Literary pursuits were an acceptable use of his time: "I have chosen the most elevated means of distraction from my sorrow and the most fitting for a man of culture" (*Att.* 12.38a.2). Reading and writing provided an acceptable facade for Cicero to hide behind, as well as useful occupation, although at times he questioned the full benefit of literature, characterizing his grief as beyond or defeating consolation (*Att.* 12.14.3; 12.38.1; 12.46). Ultimately in his own self-consolation and other works, which he produced in prolific numbers in his final years, Cicero probably brought literary solace to fruition, but it took time that he was initially impatient of (Baltussen 2011).

Cicero read and wrote a lot, and was at one extreme of the literary spectrum, especially in penning his own consolation (*Att.* 12.14.3; Baltussen 2013b). For Cicero researching, reading and writing was a natural response, but for others the written word may also have provided comfort. Seneca recommended that Polybius, after the loss of his brother, read Homer and Virgil (*Polyb.* 8.2). Literature allowed for the expression of grief as a shared human condition, and offered support and guidance. Works were also available (letters, treatises and poems) that had explicit consolatory elements, and these could be termed *consolationes*; although defining such works as a coherent genre is fraught with difficulty

(Scourfield 2013). In such works philosophical arguments could be distilled into commonplace maxims, such as the dead are better off, grief is pointless and time heals, which could be tailored to the needs of the recipient. Consolation was not just about exhorting the bereaved to be strong, but also about providing empathy and positive memories of the dead, and even memorializing the grief itself. Similarly, the written word could bring personal comfort to the bereaved through epitaphs, records of funeral speeches and posthumous eulogies, which combined (in varying degrees) remembering the dead person, remembering the pain of loss and offering consolation. There was tacit acknowledgement that grief would pass, or lessen with time, but the reality of the suffering should not be easily forgotten.

Cicero's literary pursuits were, in his early grief, private and isolating. He hid in his reading and writing. Others may have done the same, finding personal solace in varied forms of literature that expressed loss, offered advice, or supported certain beliefs (see above). Reading (and for some writing) may have been a private or semi-private pursuit, but the surviving literary testaments to grief (including Cicero's own consolation) would ultimately become public, social and commemorative.

Memory

Cicero also considered Tullia's memory. He was planning some sort of memorial shrine which he couched in semi-religious terms, speaking of a type of apotheosis for Tullia (*Att.* 12.12.1; 12.36; 12.37a), and saying that the ground needed to be viewed as somehow consecrated (*Att.* 12.19.1). He was obsessive over the shrine, and attempted to find a suitable location (e.g., *Att.* 12.20.2; 12.22.3; 12.23.3; 12.27.1; 12.35; 12.40.4; 12.44; 13.1.2). Cicero saw it as a vow, a promise that he was driven to fulfil (*Att.* 12.18.1), something he would feel guilty about if it was incomplete (*Att.* 12.41.4); he characterized it as the only possible consolation (*Att.* 12.41.3), but also a foolishness or folly (*Att.*12.36; 13.29). Cicero wanted the shrine to be visible, and although he revealed little about

the intended design, it would presumably have involved statuary and inscriptions that honoured Tullia. In the end, the shrine seems not to have been built, and for Cicero his written works, which were shaped by the experience of his grief, probably seemed a more fitting memorial (Baltussen 2013b, 365).[9]

For the bereaved an essential part of their role in finding a place for the dead was memory promotion. This often entailed the implicit acknowledgement that their memories of the bereaved were personal and thus temporary. A range of options was available to keep the names of the dead alive, for example, epitaphs, tombs, statues, buildings and charitable foundations, as well as more personal linking objects such as portraits and jewellery (Hope 2011a; cf. Gibson 2004). These could serve to commemorate both the dead person and the grief, as well as provide a locus for consolation. As one boy's parents said of the statue at his tomb, "when we gaze upon your features, you will give solace" (*CIL* 8.19606). Positive memories were an antidote to grief (see, e.g., Seneca, *Ep.* 99.23). But all these memory options were transient, and often deemed inadequate. There was a common thread that literary monuments were the best and most enduring legacy; that to be an author, or the subject of an author's words, would bring fame everlasting (e.g., Horace, *Carm.* 3.30.1–9; Ovid, *Metam.* 15.871–879; Seneca, *Polyb.* 18.2). For some among the elite, this entailed the rejection of physical monuments. Frontinus (consul in 72/73 CE) saw memorials as superfluous, "my memory will endure if my life has deserved it" (Pliny, *Ep.* 9.19.6), but fame everlasting through great deeds was not available to the majority, nor did it necessarily address the needs of the bereaved.

Memory promotion was a duty, in some cases a distraction, but was it a comfort? At times for Cicero, it seemed like a burden,

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[9] In the Roman world memory was linked to preserving the name of the dead person. Thus it is striking that after her death, Cicero never mentioned Tullia by name again in his letters or other writings (Erskine 1997, 36). This may have been because he was focused more on his own suffering (and commemorating that suffering) than Tullia's memory, or because the cause of his suffering was so apparent that it need not be named.

something motivated by the guilt of survival, and the knowledge that memory work, at least for the individual, was doomed to failure. From a philosophical perspective, remembering the dead, their positive qualities and achievements, was an important aspect of rationalizing death and bereavement. For the bereaved, remembering the dead was often inseparable from remembering their own sense of loss.

IV. A SYSTEM FOR COPING?

The six areas identified helped the bereaved in different ways, such as offering methods to rationalize death and loss (religion and philosophy), or providing events and timetables (rituals and memory), or giving accepted places and avenues for the expression of grief (support networks, literature, rituals and memory), or the negotiation of a new relationship with the dead (ritual, religion and memory). Looking at these aspects separately underplays how they frequently overlapped. For example, philosophy informed literary consolation; literary consolation was a form of memory promotion; memory promotion was an expected duty, and so forth. These interconnected coping strategies served to address spiritual, intellectual, practical and emotional needs, as well as the public interface of these. This public interface is key, since, although inner resources such as personal faith, individualized rituals, small mementos and reading in private, can be identified, the bulk of our evidence has a public side, and often overtly so. What these forms of coping primarily allowed was ways for the bereaved to conceal or reveal their grief in a suitable fashion in public contexts. In this respect, grieving and public mourning often became inseparable.

In identifying these aspects, I am not suggesting that there was a set path for the bereaved, a standard formula that was thought to guarantee recovery. What becomes clear is that there were accepted and expected ways to alleviate grief, not necessarily to cure it. Despite the use of military and medical metaphors, grief was expected, and what the bereaved needed was solace. If this solace was effective, it allowed the bereaved to live with their grief, and be

able to control it in public contexts. The suitability, details of, use and access to the available forms of solace varied. Who had died (for example, a spouse, child, parent), and the age, status and gender of both the deceased and the bereaved person would have potentially affected how grief was both experienced and alleviated.[10] Thus not all of these aspects would have been appropriate for all. The ideal of public duty as a distraction, for example, was not relevant to many, although this could equate to a general maxim of getting back to work.

For those who were afflicted there was a clear emphasis on being active rather than passive in grief; seeking out consolation through a range of activities—rituals, commemoration, reading, talking with friends and generally keeping busy. Inactivity was not perceived to be good for the bereaved. It is also clear that consolation was not only an active process but also a social one. People were expected to offer consolation as well as receive it; to console and be consoled. The public side of seeking and giving solace ensured that the bereaved were not isolated. In particular, talking about the dead, and actively memorializing them, regardless of whether the bereaved believed in an afterlife or not, was an important aspect which promoted continuing bonds with the dead. Neither the dead nor the bereaved were simply forgotten or ignored, but reintegrated into new social roles. The dead could not come back to life (in a literal sense), but were given new spaces (in memory structures, conversation, epitaphs, images etc.) in the continuing lives of those that survived them.

The reintegration of the bereaved, addressing loss but also restoration, was important not just for the individual, but for the wider community that needed functioning and active citizens. People were schooled and policed into certain mourning roles, and into adopting certain methods for alleviating grief. There were ever-present public ideals, and stereotypes, for how men, women, rich

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[10] Studies highlight that the nature of the grief reaction is affected by factors such as the quality of the relationship with the deceased, the cause of the death and economic circumstances (e.g., Parkes 2006, 29–30).

and poor should cope with loss, but these could be challenged. The expected ways of expressing and alleviating grief were not always adequate or suited to all, and there could be a mismatch between public behaviour and more private (or internalized) suffering. For an elite man, for example, the ideal was to mourn publicly in a controlled fashion up to and including the funeral; after this, grief was not to interfere with public duties; and solace, if required, was to be found through friends, family, philosophical literature and memorializing the dead. For many this may have been effective; we have little way of knowing since in general we only hear of grieving men when they were exceptionally good at being consoled or exceptionally bad at it. We can note, for example, Seneca's damning summary of how the emperor Caligula mourned for his sister. Caligula did not attend his sister's funeral, failed in his public duties, was unclear in his memory strategy and instead of finding solace in philosophical literature or the conversation of friends, turned to gambling (Seneca, *Polyb*. 17.3–6). The message here is that Caligula did not know how to grieve, and seek alleviation of that grief, because he was a flawed character, or at least it fits Seneca's literary purposes to describe him so. But Caligula may not have been alone in finding public expectations for grief, and its alleviation, challenging or inadequate.

If we return to Cicero, we can see him struggling with some of the expected forms of solace and his customizing of these. In many respects Cicero did what was expected of an elite and educated man in the weeks following Tullia's funeral: he grieved deeply, but not in public, and was consoled by reading, writing, philosophizing and memorializing, all under the watchful gaze of his friends. On the other hand, we can note that as Cicero grieved for Tullia, rituals were little mentioned, public duty was problematized, he went down his own philosophical and literary avenues, and ultimately his public memory strategy (coupled with an unheard of deification) was not built. Cicero's grief was an individual and complex journey that drew upon, but also adapted and deviated from, the expected consolations. In this Cicero may not have been that unusual; finding

solace was flexible not proscriptive. What made Cicero unusual was that he chronicled his lows, the real difficulties that he faced, and sometimes the inadequacies of the available mechanisms and the mismatch between the public ideals and the private realities. Others passed judgment on Caligula, whereas it is through Cicero himself that we know of his grief and also that eventually he learned to conceal his pain and play a public role once more. In some respects, Cicero, as an elite man, was temporarily bad at finding consolation, but at no point did he make a public show of himself.

Cicero was criticized, not because of his genuine grief for his daughter, but because for a short while he neglected his public persona; arguably everything else he did was within acceptable boundaries. Indeed, because of his compromised political position it was almost impossible for Cicero to display the expected mastery of his grief in public anyway (Wilcox 2005a, 276). In some respects, Cicero may have been ahead of his time, highlighting how the expected forms of solace would gently shift with cultural, social and political changes. How Cicero experienced his grief may have been less unusual among subsequent generations of the male elite, those living under the emperors. In imperial Rome, the real importance and distraction of public duty could be questioned, details of funeral ritual (e.g., content of eulogies, the presence of ancestor masks) outside the imperial family shifted, deification (and divine attributes for the dead) was normalized, family bonds were more openly cherished, and the boundaries between public and private challenged (see, e.g., Wrede 1981; Dixon 1991; Bodel 1999; Markus 2004; Hope 2011b, 111–15; McIntyre 2013). Cicero's journey through his grief may then have been less pathological and more the result of the impact of changing political times on the elite, which would require some subtle shifts in how the bereaved educated elite man would seek consolation in future.

v. Conclusion

Cicero believed that the death of his daughter had changed him. To Atticus he wrote, "the things you liked in me are gone for good" (*Att.* 12.14.3). The loss of Tullia also forced Cicero to acknowledge his

wider problems: "everything is over with me, everything, and has been for long enough, but now I admit it, having lost the one link that held me" (*Att.* 12.23). For many weeks Cicero struggled with his inner and outer composure, a problematic state for such a well-known public figure. He experienced guilt as he oscillated between the emotion of loss and the expected demands of being Cicero: "I try all I know to bring my face if not my heart back to composure, if I can. While I do this I sometimes feel I am committing a sin, at others that I should be sinning if I failed to do it" (*Att.* 12.14.3). Cicero did not live up to his own exhortations to others: "there are many ways of consolation, but the most direct is this: allow to reason what you will in any case allow to time" (*Att.* 12.10). In the end, "time" for Cicero did win out and he was able to show "resolution and fortitude in mind and word" (*Att.* 12.40.3). Cicero did not claim that his grief was cured, resolved or over, nor did he wish it to be, but he learned to suppress it and to function again: "I reduced the outward show of grief; grief itself I could not reduce, and would not if I could" (*Att.* 12.28.2).

Cicero eventually found a place for both Tullia and his grief in his ongoing life. To achieve this Cicero sought and accepted solace. How he found solace, and reacted to it, was not perhaps as he might have expected or had previously recommended to others, but beyond some philosophical ideals, the ways to cope with bereavement, to console and be consoled, were flexible. There was no simple strategy, system or process, but multiple aspects, embedded in Roman life and culture, that could help. The combination and efficacy of these was not the same for all, and also could be readily customized. There is much that would seem familiar to a modern observer, such as the importance of family and friends, personal belief, the distractions of work and elements of self-help, but also what now may seem alien, such as the readiness to talk about the dead, the plethora of memory strategies and the socialising and non-isolation of the bereaved. Despite philosophical rhetoric, grief was not simply to be cured or conquered, or to be primarily a private and isolating ordeal, but something that was publically acknowledged,

accepted and to some extent accommodated. For their part, however, the bereaved needed to fulfil certain expectations, and be prepared to accept, and even actively seek out, the solace which would bring them composure, in public at least.

The details of this solace were not, however, static and unchanging. Roman consolation may have altered with cultural and ideological shifts. Cicero, on the cusp of a new political era, was looking backwards and forwards in how he found solace, and presented the public face of his grief. Indeed, it could be argued that a case such as Cicero's highlights that the available forms of solace were largely a sham, only related to public image and creating a socially acceptable presentation of grief, rather than alleviating its real pain. In the end we should note that, even though idealized and grounded in public expectations, consolations, tied to personal beliefs, philosophy, ritual, family, duty and memory, could bring succour to the bereaved. In public the true depth of grief could be concealed rather than revealed, but performing public mourning, and seeking solace, was not always an act, but for many a source of genuine comfort.

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Bringing Back to Life:
Laments and the Origin of the So-Called
Words of Institution

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I. INTRODUCTION

Meals create communities. From their earliest days, communities of those who believed in Christ were no exception to this rule. Recent research into the origins of the Eucharist has focused on the analogous customs of Greco-Roman banquets, and not on the so-called "words of institution," namely: "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me."[1] In the words of Dennis Smith (2003, 279):

> Early Christians met at a meal because that is what groups in the ancient world did. Christians were simply following a pattern found throughout their world . . . . They celebrated a meal based on the banquet model found commonly in their world. . . . Banquet ideology provided a model for creating community, defining behaviour within the community, sharing values, and connecting with the divine. It was also embedded in a social practice and so provided a means for the ideology to be confirmed through a shared experience.

We might of course ask whether banquets and symposia in the Greek and Roman world did in fact follow a uniform social pattern.[2]

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[1] See, for example, Smith 2003; Klinghardt 1996; Taussig 2009; Smith and Taussig 2012. For research on the history of liturgy, see Messner 2009, 214–16; Bradshaw 2004; Leonhard and Eckhard 2010, 1067–76.

[2] On the differences between the Greek and Roman ideals concerning

But scholars are nonetheless correct in identifying overtly religious components, such as prayers and libations, at many of these shared meals. Thus spirituality at meals can no longer be considered a uniquely Jewish and Christian phenomenon. New insights into form, participants, etiquette and the liturgy of early Christian meals reveal above all the pluralistic and multiform practice of the celebration of banquets in various Jewish and Christian groups. What remains to be seen, however, is how the famous "words of institution," found four times in the Gospels and in Paul, were used at such meals. Smith (2003, 189) argues that the words of institution "cannot be read as a script for liturgical action, unless one can imagine someone in the community acting out the part of Jesus in some kind of divine drama, which seems unlikely."

But is it quite impossible that someone could have acted out the part of Jesus in speaking these words in his name? That I am now asking this question should indicate to you that I think it very possible indeed. In what follows I want to examine the socio-historical contexts in which the words of institution originated and were performed at community meals. I will argue that those words indeed are part of a performance that actualizes a *divine drama* in which the speaker Jesus *comes back to life*. To make my case, I will refer to mortuary practices which, as I will argue, contain forms of speech and ritualized eating that can mediate between the realms of the dead and the living. But first I have to explain why I place the words of institution into a funerary context at all. So my first question is: What can we know about the origin and *Sitz im Leben* of those words Paul passed on to the Corinthians in 1 Cor 11:23–25?

II. ORIGIN AND *SITZ IM LEBEN* OF THE SO-CALLED "WORDS OF INSTITUTION"

The simplest answer to the question of the origin of the words of institution would of course be a direct attribution to the historical Jesus. At his last meal shared with his disciples in Jerusalem he is

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socially significant meals, see Stavrianopoulou 2009, 159–83; Standhartinger 2012, 69–73.

said to have spoken these words, which they then remembered following the events of Easter.[3] Yet what could Jesus have meant by these words? In his influential explanation, Joachim Jeremias (1990) sets Jesus's words within the context of the Passover liturgy. This is the evening on which the evangelists date Jesus's last supper. According to the Passover liturgy, the bread (מצה), bitter herbs (מרר), and lamb (פסח) are given special significance in recalling the story of the exodus from Egypt.[4] Likewise Jesus, at his last meal, gave new significance to the food and thus transformed the whole meal into a parable of his approaching death. In the words of Jeremias (1990, 224):

> Jesus made the broken bread a simile of the fate of his body, the blood of the grapes a simile of his outpoured blood. "I go to death as the true Passover sacrifice," is the meaning of Jesus' last parable.

However, differences between the Passover meal and the Last Supper can be detected immediately.[5] In the Passover meal, it is the various special elements of the menu—the unleavened bread, herbs, and lamb—that are assigned particular significance; in the Last Supper, it is the standard elements of bread and wine. More noteworthy is the complete lack of any hint at the Passover in the words of institution. The link is only to be found in the context

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[3] Some scholars still attribute the words to the historical Jesus, as they appear to remain otherwise inexplicable; cf. recently Löhr 2012, 82ff.

[4] The liturgy is first discussed in m. Pesaḥ. 10. The Pesach-Haggadah, on the other hand, is considerably younger (cf. Stemberger 1987, 145–58; Leonhard 2003, 201–31). To what extent m. Pesaḥ. 10 can be said to describe a common practice from the first century must remain open. Philo, *Spec.* 2.148 provides an all-too-general description.

[5] There is also the discussion of whether a Passover seder existed in the first century (cf. Hauptman 2001; Leonhard 2006). Even if one argues, like Marcus 2013, that there was a non-institutionalized family celebration of the Passover already in the first century CE, because the Gospels of Mark and moreover Luke presuppose it, the literarily independent scenes of Mark 14:22–25 and 1 Cor 11:23–25 cover no Passover atmosphere at all.

assigned to the meal by the author of the Gospel of Mark.[6] Paul does not refer to the Passover meal in any meal context.

Yet, with his reference to the Passover liturgy, Jeremias made two important observations: firstly, the significance assigned to the food indicates a narrative context, whether that of the exodus, or of the death of Jesus, without which the symbolic speech would be incomprehensible; secondly, the greatest puzzle is how the speaker can designate the food shared at the meal as symbolic of himself. The quest for the original *Sitz im Leben* of the words of institution must, I feel, begin with these two insights.

The first clue may be found in the oldest known literary formulation of the words, quoted by Paul in 1 Cor 11:23–26 (NRSV, adapted):

> For I received from the Lord what I also handed on to you, that the Lord Jesus on the night when he was handed over took a loaf of bread, and when he had given thanks, he broke it and said, "This is my body that is for you. Do this in remembrance of me." In the same way he took the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Do this, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me." For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes.

Paul refers to the words as a tradition that he had shared with the Corinthians during his first visit around 50 CE. His ultimate source is the Lord (κύριος).[7] Thus, Paul himself must have received the tradition either in direct divine revelation or through the Antioch

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[6] The miraculous discovery of the room (Mark 14:12–17) is part of a doublet with the discovery of the mule in Mark 11:1–7. The identification of the betrayer (Mark 14:18–21) is also to be found without the words of institution (cf. John 13:21–30). In both Mark 14:18 and 22, the narration begins with the formulation καὶ ἐσθιόντων. Cf. Robbins 1976, 21–40.

[7] The formulation "I have received from the Lord" (παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου) identifies the κύριος, i.e., the risen one, as the source, not the tradent, of the tradition; otherwise we would expect the preposition παρά with the genitive. See Bornkamm 1959, 147; Koester 1998, 344.

community; one possibility does not, of course, rule out the other.[8]

Paul's tradition of the words of institution refer to the night that Jesus was handed over to the authorities.[9] This means that it presupposes the narration of Jesus's passion. Paul's words of institution are only part of that story, a *story fragment*. To understand this fragment, one requires the appropriate context. Characters are barely introduced, and the night's events are never really explained. But it is an interesting story fragment, because it contains more action and direct speech than narration. If one found such a story-fragment on papyrus, one would probably assume that it must belong to a decisive moment, a turning point in the storyline. Paul's account of the meal forms a dramatic climax to the community's narration of that fateful night and its consequences (Koester 1993, 199–204; Aitken 1997, 359–70; 2004, 27–54). In v. 26, probably Paul's own words, it becomes clear that the whole event is a communal proclamation of the death of Jesus. In other words, with their meal the community itself is acting out the decisive part of the narrative that is evoked by the story of the night it refers to. But what is the character of that meal described in Paul's tradition?

III. PAUL'S EUCHARISTIC FORMULA AND FUNERARY BANQUETS

It is not only the implied passion account but even the words themselves that designate the meal as a "wake" or "funerary

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[8] Bradshaw and Johnson (2012, 23) assume: "St. Paul himself did begin to associate the sayings of Jesus with the supper that took place on the night before he died, and interpreted them as referring to the sacrifice of his body and blood and to the new covenant that would be made through his death." But this thesis proves unconvincing. Even if one argues that the παρέλαβον ἀπὸ τοῦ κυρίου refers to a private revelation to Paul, there is no link between the text of the sayings (i.e., 1 Cor 11:22–25) and the conflict in the community discussed in 1 Cor 11:17–34. Paul assumes that the Corinthians are already familiar with the sayings when he writes 1 Cor 11.

[9] Yet παραδίδωμι for Paul does not allude to Judas's betrayal but to the theological continuity of the coming of the Christ (see, for example, Rom 4:15).

banquet." The words τοῦτο ποιεῖτε εἰς τὴν ἐμὴν ἀνάμνησιν (1 Cor 11:24) are well attested in various memorials to the deceased:

> I (Aurelius Festus) donate and bequeath silver denarii to the village of the Rakeloi under the condition that they celebrate my memory ([ἐπὶ τῷ] τοῦτο ποιεῖν αὐτοὺς ἀνά[μ]νη[σ]ίν) within the neighbourhood of Dradizane.[10]

A meal of bread and wine is associated with mourning rituals in the Hebrew tradition; thus Jer 16:6 (LXX):

> They shall not lament for them . . . . And bread (ἄρτος) shall not be broken (κλασθῇ) in their mourning, for comfort over the dead; they shall not make him drink a cup (ποτιοῦσιν ποτήριον) of comfort over his father and mother.

There is also literary as well as archaeological evidence for Jewish funeral meals in which food was brought to the graves and shared with the deceased ones.[11] The question of whether and how far ancient Jewish funerary rites differ from their non-Jewish environment has been under dispute in recent scholarship. Yet, there is archaeological as well as textual evidence for the practice of eating with the dead at graveyards in Jewish contexts.[12]

The procedure for memorials and shared meals is also to be

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[10] Laum 1914, 2:141. The testament of Epicurus according to Diogenes Laertius 10.18 reads: εἰς τὴν ἡμῶν τε καὶ Μητροδώρου <μνήμην>. On this subject, see also Cicero, *Fin.* 2.31; cf. also Plutarch, *Mor.* 1129A. Cf. Heitmüller 1911, 71; Dölger 1922, 105–06; Klauck 1982, 82–86.

[11] Cf. also Ezek 24:17; Hos 9:4; Tob 14:17. Klauck (1982, 88) therefore suggests that the mourning banquet described in Jeremiah is the only parallel for a meal with bread and wine in which the bread is broken. See also Klauck 1982, 368; Zittwitz 1892, 1–12; Meding 1975, 544–52.

[12] For an overview, see Rebillard 2009, 18–19. See also Block-Smith 1992, 122–32; Wenning and Zenger 1990, 285–303, and the different interpretations of cooking pots and perfume bottles in Jewish cemeteries in Palestine by McCane 2003, 37–53, and Green 2008, 145–73.

found in classical obsequies.[13] An inscription found at Satafis (Ain el-Kebira) in the province Mauretania Sitifensis in North Africa from 299 CE reads:

> To the memory of Aelia Secundula
> We all sent many worthy things for her funeral.
> Further near the altar dedicated to mother Secundula,
> It pleases us to place a stone table
> On which we placing food and covered cups,
> Remember her many great deeds.
> In order to heal the savage wound gnawing at our breast,
> We freely recount stories at the late hour,
> And give praises to the good and chaste mother, who sleeps in
> her old age.
> She, who nourished us, lies soberly forever.
> She lived to be seventy-five years of age, and died in the 250th
> year of the province.
> Made by Stulenia Julia.[14]

So Stulenia Julia and her relatives set the table with food and drinks and recalled the great deeds of her mother, told stories about her, and praised her. Whether this means free narration or formal dirges, or a combination of both, we cannot know. Yet both antiquity and modernity attest to the practice of lamentation at the grave, followed by a shared meal. Thus Stears (2008, 149) supposes:

> The funeral itself was not the only occasion at which laments might be sung: ethnographic comparison suggest that they may have been performed in non-funerary contexts, such as when toiling in the fields or wool working. But perhaps a more certain retelling of these familial histories within lamentation came at the monthly and annual visits to the tomb site.

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[13] For funerary banquets, see Lindsay 1998, 67–80; Dunbabin 2003, 103–40 and 229–36; Tulloch 2006, 164–93 and 289–96; Jensen 2008, 107–43; Graham 2005, 58–64.

[14] *ILCV* 1.1570 = *CIL* 8.20277. Translation by Jensen 2008, 126 (cf. Quasten 1940).

Though, one has to ask, what do we know about the earliest practice of lamenting and remembering the death and deeds of Jesus of Nazareth?

IV. JESUS PASSION AND WOMEN'S LAMENTS

There is ample evidence of mourning rituals in the New Testament (Standhartinger 2010). After her death, Tabitha is laid out in her house and the widows keen over her (Acts 9:37–39). Loud weeping, wailing, and flute music is heard in the house of the recently deceased daughter of Jairus (Mark 5:38–39 par.). Mary and Martha's neighbors come to the house of mourning to console them (John 11:17) and accompany the sorrowful Mary to the tomb. Others follow in the funeral procession for the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:13). At the burial of Stephen, pious men raise a loud lament (Acts 8:2).

Despite resurrection, there are even some references to mourning practices in the passion stories (Osiek 2001). Jesus's body is washed and anointed twice, at Bethany (Mark 14:3–9 // Matt 26:6–13 // John 12:1–8) by a woman and at Jerusalem, as well, this time by males (Mark 15:42–47 parr.).[15] The latter might seem surprising, given the general tendency in antiquity to assign the preparation of the corpse for burial as a woman's task (Schroer 2004; Šterbenc-Erker 2011). Women are at least present at Jesus's burial (Mark 15:47 parr.) and visit the tomb on the third day (Mark 16:1 parr.). In Mark, the women come to anoint the body of Jesus (Mark 16:1), in Matthew "to see the tomb" (Matt 28:1), and in Luke they bring spices, which could represent an offering for the dead at the place of burial (Luke 23:56–24:1). John has Mary Magdalene weeping and wailing at the tomb (John 20:11).

In the Gospel of Peter, Mary Magdalene comes with her women

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[15] For features of mortuary rituals in Mark 14:3–9 parr., see Sawicki 2001. The identity of Joseph of Arimathaea is discussed among the Gospels. He might be a member of the (city-)council or the Sanhedrin (Mark 15:43; Luke 23:50), Jesus's disciple (Matt 27:57), or a friend of Pilate (Gos. Pet. 2.3 [≈ §2 in Swete 1893]).

friends to the tomb "to do what women were accustomed to do for the dead beloved by them" (Gos. Pet. 12.50 [≈ §11 in Swete 1893]). They try to enter the tomb "in order to sit beside him and do the expected things" (Gos. Pet. 12.53 [≈ §11 in Swete 1893]). But should that be impossible, they want at least to "throw against the door what we bring in memory of him" (Gos. Pet. 12.54 [≈ §11 in Swete 1893]). The Gospel of Peter does not say what they have with them. The Synoptics suggest ointment, oil, and spices, but in antiquity, flowers, milk, and honey or, in Jewish contexts, bread and wine, would be the offering most likely to come to readers' minds.[16]

There are at least some suggestions in the New Testament that Christians continued the practice of mourning for Jesus in the first century CE, although the location of Jesus's grave, if it existed at all, was presumably not known even to his friends.[17] In view of the early Christian practice of venerating martyrs at gravesites, it would seem unlikely that the location of the ultimate martyr Jesus would have been entirely forgotten and could only be relocated 300 years later through a vision on the part of Constantine's mother. But, as modern martyrdom cults demonstrate, the presence of an actual grave is dispensable to the lamenters of those who have none (D'Angelo 2000, 118). So, with or without a grave, Jesus's death has the effect on his disciples that he predicts to them in the Gospel of John: "Very truly, I tell you, you will weep and mourn (κλαύσετε καὶ θρηνήσετε), but the world will rejoice; you will have pain (λυπηθήσεσθε), but your pain (ἡ λύπη ὑμῶν) will turn into joy" (John 16:20).

Mourning and laments did not totally die out when various Christian groups and individuals in different places came to know the crucified one as the risen Christ through vision, experience, or reasoning.[18] As early traditions like 1 Cor 15:3–5 and Luke 24:13–27

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[16] See Volp 2002 concerning food for the dead (61–62) and for later Christian practice (214–24).

[17] On historical-critical problems of Jesus's burial in the Gospels, see, *inter alia*, Myllykoski 2001; Cook 2011.

[18] Paul got to know of the risen Jesus by vision (1 Cor 9:1; 15:8; perhaps

show, there is a need to tell of Jesus's crucifixion in order to make his resurrection meaningful. If those who believed in Christ wanted to convince others about the resurrection, they could not stick with short formulas like "Christ died for our sins in accordance with the scriptures, was buried and raised" (cf. 1 Cor 15:3–5). Hence, there must have been expanded narratives about Jesus's death.

How far those earliest oral passion accounts resembled the passion accounts we know from the Gospels of Mark and John is difficult to say. Obviously, the written passion accounts incorporated many motifs from psalms of lament, such as Pss 22, 34 or 69, into their stories.[19] Mark's and John's passion narratives are at least in part modeled on those psalms of individual lament (Ebner 2001; Janowski 2003; Ahearne-Kroll 2007). Unfortunately, we do not know much about the *Sitz im Leben* of those psalms in antiquity, or if they were used in ancient Jewish mortuary practice (but see Schuele 2010). Some scholars are of the opinion that women's laments inaugurated the passion accounts (Corley 1998, 215–16; 2010, 111–33). Others point to scriptural reflections (Crossan 1998, 527–73). But either way, the words of institution cited by Paul and the oral versions of passion stories are directly interconnected. So, are the words of institution influenced by mortuary rites and laments?

<div align="center">

V. THE LAMENTER AS A MEDIATOR OF
THE DECEASED'S VOICE

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The tradition related by Paul to the Corinthian community describes the sequence of events at a memorial meal, in which memory of the deceased and a shared meal are inexorably linked. Yet here the one who is being remembered appears himself as a character and speaks. We cannot tell to what extent the late mother of Stulenia Julia was considered present at the memorial banquet, yet parallels in antiquity suggest that the presence of the deceased could constitute

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also Gal 1:15–17), by an internal light (2 Cor 4:6), and by reasoning (Phil 3:6–10).

[19] Cf. Mark 15:24 // John 19:24; Mark 15:27–32a; Mark 15:36 // John 19.29; John 19:36–37, and others.

part of the experience of the meal.[20] So, a funerary banquet would be a meal in the presence of Jesus. But how could he be represented as an actor and speaker of those words?

My hypothesis is that women's laments might be the missing link in answering that question. But here we face a fundamental gap between what might be described as oral and scriptural cultures. Ritual songs of lament are part of the oral culture, which undoubtedly existed but which is almost completely undocumented in literary sources.[21]

In cross-cultural studies, Hedwig Jahnow (1923, 2–57), Gail Holst-Warhaft (1992), and Margaret Alexiou (2002) filled this gap through fieldwork in modern ethnography. Their goal was to outline the developments and continuities in such expressions of mourning, especially lamentations as sung by women. Such transhistorical and transcultural comparisons and constructions of a history of tradition might be seen as problematic today, because they can blur cultural differences and local specifics. In addition, ethnography does not simply open up the experience of those involved in foreign cultures, as the ethnographer has to interpret his or her field studies and interviews (cf. Medick 1989, 48–84). But one can also argue, with Sally C. Humphreys (1978, 13), that

> the combination of history and social anthropology . . . means
> a conscious recognition that the historian not only uses the
> technique of *Verstehen* to interpret sources and enter into the
> perception of actors in a foreign culture, but must also recreate

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[20] Petronius, *Sat.* 65.10ff.; Artemidorus Daldianus, 5.82; Lucian, *Luct.* 9 (see also Lucian, *Char.* 22ff.). There are graffiti within the catacomb of St. Sebastian that invoke the martyr-apostles Peter and Paul to the *refrigia* (funerary banquets). Cf. Jensen 2008, 124 and Snyder 1985, 251–58.

[21] Both sexes expressed their mourning, but "women lamented his [or her] loss for the family and described the death as tragic through the conventional formulae of oral poetry" (Šterbenc-Erker 2011, 51). See also Corley 2010; Hope 2011; Graham 2011. In Rome, status and class also entailed differences in mourning habits (Richlin 2001, 229–48; Mustakallio 2005, 179–90).

> imaginatively the material and institutional scenery which the anthropologist in the field can experience directly.[22]

Therefore, interviews and ethnographical fieldwork can be useful in an imaginative recreation of ancient experiences if there is some support in the evidence drawn from antiquity. For Alexiou and Holst-Warhaft, interviews conducted with professional mourners in rural Greece allow insights into experiences that remain inaccessible in ancient literature. Modern lamenters for instance point to a similar sentiment to that of Stulenia Julia: that songs of lament help them "to heal the savage wound gnawing at our breast."

Laments found in literary works such as epics and dramas provide a reflection of this culture, yet are not direct representations of it. Alexiou and Holst-Warhaft were, however, able to identify several elements of structure in common with modern evidence of rituals of lament. The lament for Hector at the end of the *Iliad* (24.722–777) is, for example, constructed as an antiphony (which can also be observed in modern laments [Alexiou 2002, 131–50; Seremetakis 1990]): Andromache, Hecuba, and Helen, three of his closest female relatives, lead the song, in which the rest of the townswomen join in the chorus. Each begins with an invocation of the deceased. Hector's mother Hecuba contrasts the divine beauty of her son with the particularly gruesome death he suffered, which she describes: "You, when he had taken your life with the thin edge of the bronze sword, he dragged again and again around his beloved companion's tomb, Patroklos, whom you killed, but even so did not bring him back to life" (24.754–756). The moment of death and the act of dying itself are still important themes in many modern laments. However, in Homer it is not, as in many modern lamentations, a protest against the injustice of death, rather purely an indication of the unsired beauty of the late Hector, and thus serves a higher purpose. As Christine Perkell (2008, 104) concludes: "Hekabe's lament . . . focuses on the fact that Hektor's body bears no

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[22] See also Martin 2008, 45–52.

signs of heroic struggle, treatment to his piety and to the god's love."

Modern lamentations also include records of suffering. Thus the song of lament performed by Chrysa Kalliakati in Crete and recorded by Anna Caraveli-Chaves (1980) during an interview, contains repeated appeals to the mother (lines 21, 41, 43). The singer contrasts the suffering her mother endured as a young widow with her abilities as a midwife and healer (lines 5–12). Just as in Homer, the lament is constructed as an antiphony, and the women of the village of Dzermiathes are invited to join in with the lament (lines 15ff.). From line 17 the focus on suffering intensifies; the singer finds her mother nowhere, while the holy places which she had visited and the prayers she had offered could not help her mother (lines 23–34). Finally, nonetheless conscious of her mother's death, she imagines meeting her again (lines 35–39):

> On the coming Sunday, I will go to church / to see my mother start to come, to give myself some hope / . . . I will stand aside / to see you pass, mother, carrying a tall candle / holding your child in your arms, leading him to communion, / leaning to kiss the icon, bowing down to it.

This reunion is seen both as a vision of the future and a memory of things past, a mimetic coupling of experience and hope. As Caraveli-Chaves (1980, 141) emphasizes:

> Laments bridge and mediate between vital realms of existence: life and death, the physical and the metaphysical, present and past, temporal and mythic time. The lamenter becomes the medium through whom the dead speaks to the living, the shaman who leads the living to the underworld and back, thus effecting a communal confrontation with death and through it, a catharsis. In her capacity as a mediator between realms, the lamenter affects the entire community.

In some laments, the deceased can even speak in the first person through the mouths of the lamenter. So in some laments she or he

addresses those bereaved by her or him with a last word of farewell; the following is noted by Loring Danforth (1982, 80ff.; see also Klaar 1938, 46ff.):

> Don't let my wife or my poor grandchildren hear you. Don't tell them that I am dead. Just tell them that I have married and taken a good wife. I have taken the tombstone as my mother-in-law, the black earth as my wife and I have the little pebbles as brothers- and-sisters-in-law.[23]

The deceased provides a detailed sketch of his grave as a marriage bed and of his future as the head of a family.

I am not aware of scenes of reunion and address in the first person as the deceased from ancient laments.[24] But they are to be found in another form of mortuary practice in antiquity, grave inscriptions and epitaphs. Alongside those which present the deceased as "This is the grave of . . ." and those in which the bereaved address the deceased with their own words, we have inscriptions dating back to the sixth century BCE in which the deceased speaks in the first person:

> Greetings, passers-by! I, Antistates, son of Atarbus, lie here in death, having left my native land.[25]

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[23] The lamenters do not, therefore, make up the text as they sing, but rather make use of a repertoire of various laments. For further laments, in which the deceased addresses the living in the first person, see Lardas 1992, 243–44 (nos. 778–81), 250 (nos. 792–93), and others. Compare also Joannidu 1938, 37–44.

[24] But see the epigram of the Hellenistic poet Anyte (third century BCE): "Often Kleino, the mother, full of sorrow, cried out at the grave of her daughter, calling for her dear child, gone from her so early, called back Philiaina's soul, which before her marriage had passed over the water of swift-flowing Acheron" (*Anth. Grae.* 7.486). For Anyte's poetry, see Greene 2005, 139–57.

[25] *CEG* 80 (= *IG* IV 50 = Friedländer 1948, no. 76). In Peek (1960) there are, for example, in the 105 epigrams dated before 320 BCE, twenty-one in which the deceased speaks in the first person, twenty-two in which the

Sometimes the reader is invited to share in mourning while passing by:

> Whoever was not present when I died and they carried me out,
> let him lament me now: it is the tomb of Telephanes.[26]

And sometimes one finds dialogues between the dead and the living, or the tombstone and the passer-by.[27] Finally, the reader of a grave epitaph may also be encouraged to offer some food or drink to the deceased, as in the case of a Roman sarcophagus from the second century CE:

> [W]hoever reads this inscription, [which] I have made for me
> and for her, let him pour unmixed wine for Titus Aelius
> Euangelus, a patient man. (Koch 1988, 24)[28]

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deceased is addressed, and eight in which the reader is addressed in the second person. See also Vestrheim 2010, 63.

[26] *CEG* 159 (= *IG* XII,8 396 = Friedländer 1948, no. 84). In some inscriptions the deceased provide words of comfort for the bereaved; examples from Merkelbach and Stauber (1998–2004) include: 04/08/02 (= *TAM* V,1 636 = Peek 1955, 969), Daldis on the west coast of Asia Minor (first century CE); 05/01/31 (= *ISmyrna* 233 = Peek 1955, 804), Smyrna (second century BCE); and 05/01/32 (= *ISmyrna* 249 = Peek 1955, 1879), Smyrna (second century CE). Sometimes the words of mourning are attributed to the reader (e.g., *CEG* 470 [= *IG* I³ 1273 bis]: "I grieve whenever I look on the tomb of young Autoclides and his death").

[27] See the collection of Peek 1955, 550–72, which, however, does not differentiate between the literary and inscriptional.

[28] See also the grave monument of Flavius Agricola mentioned by Dunbabin (2003, 104ff.). For more inscriptions on tombstones with banquet scenes and an inscription that let the deceased speak to the living, see in Merkelbach and Stauber 1998–2004: 03/03/01 (= *IMetropolis* 38 = Peek 1955, 1119), Metropolis in Ionia (first century BCE); 08/05/03 (= *IMT* LAp./Mil. 2255), Miletupolis (or Kyzikos) in Mysia (third century CE); 08/05/09 (= *IMT* LAp./Mil. 2288), Miletupolis (?) in Mysia (imperial era); 09/04/05 (= *IPrusaOlymp* 62), Prusa ad Olympum (late Hellenistic era); 10/03/03 (= Marek, Kat. Am. 51), Amastis in Paphlagonia (undated). See also allusions to a funerary banquet in the texts: 06/02/29 (= *MDAI(A)* 24:172,15), Pergamon (undated); 06/03/01 (= *MDAI(A)* 24:219,48), Stratonikeia on the Kaikos

In antiquity reading was performed aloud, so grave epigrams become the spoken word when read. In such cases where the deceased directly addresses the reader, it is the reader who thus lends his voice to the deceased. Whether and how such epigrams relate to laments is debated. Paul Friedländer (1948, 66) argues: "it is not impossible . . . that . . . the epitaph originally mirrored elegies of mourning that were sung to the flute at or after the burials of the great."[29] Joseph W. Day (1989, 27) suggests that "[a]nyone reading these inscriptions takes on the role of one singing the dirge, and so a mimesis of the funerary ritual is performed" (see also Day 2007, 29–47). Katharine Derderian (2001, 191) argues that the inscribed epitaph exists "as a durable verbal and material memorial following and marking the completion of death ritual" and therefore the "retrospective documentation" of its completion. Yet even for her, "though epigram differs from lament in its function as a record of the stable identity of the dead, it also both appropriates aspects of lament by standing in as an emblem of mourning at the gravesite, while also serving as a supplementary genre that looks back at the ephemeral lament" (194).

Whatever the concrete connection between oral laments, dirges, or eulogies at the graveside and the epigrams and inscriptions on tombstones might have been, there must have been an "inherent connection between the spoken and written forms" (Furley 2010, 153). And while abbreviation and compression were necessary due to the lack of space on a tombstone, modern parallels allow us to suppose that a first-person speech from the deceased in

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(undated). For inscriptions in which the lionized deceased encourage sacrifice, see Peek 1960, no. 168 (= *IG* XII,7 108).

[29] See also Raubitscheck 1969, 26: "Homerische Überlieferung, mündliche Tradition, zeitgenössische Poesie, Grab- und Weihekult, all diese Elemente haben zur Formung des Epigramms beigetragen, sie waren sozusagen das Rohmaterial aus dem das Denkmal-Epigramm geschaffen wurde." On the blurring of the boundaries between the living and the dead on grave epitaphs and their representations in poetry, see Erasmo 2008, 155–204.

contemporary laments suggests the possibility of similar forms in antiquity.[30]

Songs of lament as part of the passion account, the implied context of Paul's tradition of the Last Supper, could indeed, I propose, have taken the form of "someone in the community acting out the part of Jesus" (Smith 2003, 189). However, I found no parallel symbolism of the deceased as bread and wine.[31] Yet, one notices that the neuter demonstrative pronoun τοῦτο in τοῦτό μού ἐστιν τὸ σῶμα (1 Cor 11:24) is difficult to attribute directly to the masculine noun ὁ ἄρτος. The can be explained as a reference to the predicate nominal τὸ σῶμα. In this case it would refer to the bread (Löhr 2012, 57). Or, because οὗτος generally applies to what has come before, it might apply to the action of "took, gave thanks, broke."[32] If one hears it like this, the experience of sharing the bread and wine becomes comparable to that of those taking part in the wakes examined by Danforth (1982, 105) in his ethnography field studies:

> Women in Potamia hold that the food distributed at memorial
> services somehow finds its way to the other world, where it is

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[30] Compare with Alexiou 2002, 106: "These inscriptions are an invaluable source of evidence for the present study, since they are probably the closest reflection of popular language, style and thought in antiquity that we possess, although we cannot be sure of the exact manner of their composition."

[31] Self-identification with bread and wine does, however, occasionally appear in early martyr traditions. Thus Ignatius of Antioch on the way to his death utters: "I am God's wheat, and I am ground by the teeth of wild beasts that I may be found pure bread [of Christ]" (Ignatius, *Rom.* 4.1; trans. Lightfoot). So too Polycarp, while on the stake, desires "that God might find him worthy . . . to have share in the number of the martyrs to the cup of your Christ," and wishes to be received as a "sacrifice which pleases" (Mart. Pol. 14.2). At the same time, one's own martyrdom is to be seen as an imitation of the passion of Jesus (cf. Moss 2010). I therefore think it is at least likely that, in the experiences of those who composed the letters of Ignatius and the Martyrdom of Polycarp, the words of institution may have played a role (cf. Horsting 2011).

[32] Among others, see Schröter 2006, 128.

> eaten by the dead. They say that the distribution of food takes place 'so that the dead may eat' and 'whatever you give out becomes available for the dead'! Just as the body of the dead must be destroyed or eaten by the earth in order to pass into the other world, so the food distributed at memorial services must be consumed in order for it to reach the dead. Those who eat the food handed out by the relatives of the deceased substitute for the deceased. By consuming the food, they enable it to pass into the other world, where it nourishes the dead.

Bread and wine shared with the deceased at funerary banquets connected the living with the dead. There is ample evidence, both literary and archaeological, that food was shared in graveyards with the deceased again.[33] How far this was or is experienced as *real* or *symbolic*, and whether the remembered one experiences life again, depends as much on the perception of the individual participants as on whether the presence of Jesus, the *dead-yet-raised-one*, is mediated by speech, the shared food itself, or by remembering the intimacy of shared meals in the past. But either way, the meal in Jesus's presence brings him back to life.

VI. CONCLUSION

I hope to have demonstrated how someone at community meals might have acted out the part of Jesus and how he or, more likely, she might have designated the bread and wine as symbolic or realistic communication with the deceased and/or the risen Jesus. Through this sharing of bread and wine, the crucified Jesus might have been experienced for the first time as the risen one in some quarters of the early Easter movement. In other circles, a vision of the risen one might be celebrated with a meal. As Ellen Aitken (2004, 166–67; 2012) has shown, in early Christian narrative

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[33] For Greek and Roman literary devices see above, n. 19. For early Christianity, see Rebillard 2009, 141–53; 2010. For archaeology, see among many Lepetz and Andringa 2009.

traditions like [Luke 24:13–32](#), [41–43](#) or [John 21:1–14](#), Jesus's resurrection was first experienced in the context of a meal.

The so-called words of institution, conveyed to the Corinthians by Paul, relate to the night on which the events leading to Jesus's passion and death began. The words of institution themselves contain a fragment of that story. With their dense alternation of action and speech, they mark the climax of an important scene. Moreover, the words of institution coincide with a feasting practice. A community celebrating its meals with these words reenacts a decisive moment of that night.

Admittedly, it is not clear from the context of 1 Corinthians 11 that those words of institution were indeed spoken by anyone at community meals.[34] However, some observations suggest this, at least as an assumption. For Paul the meal itself is an act of proclaiming the death of Jesus ([1 Cor 11:26](#)). Early Christians would not be the only group to have celebrated feasts as part of a dramatic retelling of history and myth. Philo's Therapeutae celebrated a banquet that ends with a dramatic performance of Israel crossing the Red Sea, whereas the Iobacchoi in Athens performed a play, the cast of characters of which included Dionysus, Kore, Persephone, Aphrodite and other gods at table.[35] Moreover, we know of more than five variations of similar but not identical versions of the words of institution to those in [1 Cor 11:23–25](#). In addition, the fact that every single author who cited these words up to the third century felt a need to reformulate them into her or his own manner suggests that they were in current use, at least in some communities.[36] When in the longer version of [Luke 22:19–20](#) the anamnesis order is added, and when Matthew includes an invitation to "eat" ([Matt 26:26](#)) and

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[34] Therefore, some deny that they played a role at all (cf. McGowan 1999). But a catechetical or any other function cannot be proven either.

[35] [Philo, *Contempl.* 83–89](#); [*SIG*³ᐟ⁴ III 1109.124–127](#) (= [*IG* II² 1368.124–127](#); 178 CE). See also Ebel 2008.

[36] [Mark 14:22–24](#); [Matt 26:26–28](#); [Luke 22:17–20](#); [1 Cor 10:16–17](#); [Justin, *1 Apol.* 66.3](#); [Gos. Heb. frag. 7](#) (= Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 2, available in both [*NPNF*²](#) and [PL](#)), and others.

"drink from the cup" ([Matt 26:27](#)), the appeal to those participating at such meals becomes even more direct.[37] Therefore, it seems highly likely that these words played some role at some early Christian feasts.

Based on its elements and on the *anamnesis* order, the meal described in this story-fragment reveals itself to be a funerary banquet. Here, family, friends, and associates remember the life and deeds of the departed in order to comfort one another and to heal "the savage wound gnawing at their breast." One form of remembrance testified many times in antiquity, including in the Hebrew Bible and New Testament, is dirges and laments. Early oral accounts of Jesus's sufferings and death might have grown out of such laments. At the very least, multiple features of the ancient funeral ritual as well as motifs from the psalms of lament are woven into the oldest passion narratives we know of.

Both modern ethnography and the epitaphs on ancient gravestones suggest that dirges and laments were experienced as a means of communicating with the dead. Food and drink shared at funeral meals mediate symbolically between the realms of the living and the dead. Through their mouths and bodies, the lamenters raise the dead by allowing them to speak symbolic words through their voices and to perform symbolic acts through their bodies. In so doing, they would indeed have become "actors in a divine drama" (Smith 2003, 189; for a similar assumption, compare Aitken 2012, 114–15; Corley 2010, 106–09). As Jesus's medium, they brought him back to life. The enigmatic words "This is my body," spoken in the name of the dead and risen Jesus, might thus have originated at funerary meals in the context of dramatic retellings of Jesus's passion.

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[37] Matthew also links the meal to the community rules for forgiving sins (compare [Matt 26:28](#) with [18:15–21](#)).

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Guarding His Body, Mourning His Death, and Pleading for Him in Heaven: On Adam's Death and Eve's Virtues in the Greek Life of Adam and Eve[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Dated to the beginning of the second century BCE, Ben Sira's statement, "From a woman sin had its beginning and because of her we all die" (25:24), is often cited as the first mention of death as the first woman's fault. [2] Numerous early Jewish and Christian hermeneutical interpretations of the Adam and Eve story in Genesis 2–3 frequently characterize Eve in the same manner, as responsible for bringing death upon humanity and Adam. The apocryphal Greek Life of Adam and Eve (GLAE), [3] the focus of this paper, correspondingly adopts this perennial opinion. For example, GLAE

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[1] Ellen Aitken was my colleague and friend. Over the years I have been privileged to engage in exciting and meaningful conversations with her, and am honored to continue our dialogue through this contribution. Her scholarship, insights, gracious spirit, and open heart will always inspire me.

[2] The interpretation of Ben Sira's statement as a reference to Eve is widely accepted (see Trenchard 1982, 8). For a different view, see J. Levison's (1985) suggestion that the whole content of this passage is about the behavior of wives but not Eve.

[3] Because one of the GLAE manuscripts had a prologue identifying the work as a "revelation [*apokalypsis*] to Moses," Constantin von Tischendorf (1866) titled the work accordingly. Most scholars see this later title as a misnomer because it is based upon the superscript rather than the contents of the text, and tend to refer to it as the Greek Life of Adam and Eve. For a different view in favor of Apocalypse of Moses, see Dochhorn 2005, 3. In this paper I adopt the title Greek Life of Adam and Eve, and the abbreviation GLAE.

[7.1](#) employs Adam's first-person voice to blame Eve for causing his death: "When God made us, me and your mother, through whom also I die." Similarly, in [GLAE 14.2](#) he affirms her culpability for inflicting death on him and all humanity: "O Eve, what have you done to us? You have brought great wrath upon us which is death which will rule over our entire race." These and parallel condemnations of Eve are scattered throughout most of the GLAE's various accounts.

Surprisingly, one short GLAE narrative scene, known as *the account of Adam's death* ([GLAE 31–42](#)), disregards Eve's accountability for inflicting death on Adam and all humanity.[4] Narrating in detail the course of Adam's passing, assumption, and burial, this account not only avoids traditions of Eve's liability, but it also remarkably represents Eve as playing a beneficial role in the context of Adam's death.

In a previous publication I have posited that the GLAE is not a univocal source, representing one dominant tradition about Eve (Arbel 2012, 60–86). Its depictions of her are not limited to any conventional single set of standards or formulae. Instead, it incorporates into its one narrative a range of varied representations and traditions about the archetypal first woman, paradoxically associating her with notions that are considered theologically and socially both loathed and laudable. These aspects are manifested in *the account of Adam's death*, among other GLAE narrative scenes. I have already demonstrated how this account characterizes Eve as a culpable figure. Yet, it also associates her with valued death-related and funerary practices, typically performed by women in the multicultural landscape of antiquity in which the GLAE emerged, as well as with the cultural-social esteem attached to them, and consequently it subtly subverts common traditions about Eve's liability. In this paper, I employ reading strategies drawn from gender literary criticism, and explore additional elements embedded in *the account of Adam's death*, which further destabilize widespread traditions of a culpable Eve.

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[4] Compare, for example, [GLAE 7.1](#), [14.2](#), [21.6](#).

Following a brief introduction to the GLAE, its *account of Adam's death* ([GLAE 31–42](#)), and the reading strategies utilized in this paper, I bring to the surface and examine how this account associates Eve with a host of benevolent angelic beings by representing them as performers of analogous death-related practices directed to care for Adam's body and spirit. I then consider possible ideological implications of this representation in the context of the *account of Adam's death,* the complete GLAE*,* and the broad cultural context of its writers and audience.

II. The Account of Adam's Death ([GLAE 31–42](#))
and my Reading Strategies

Before we begin our examination, it is important to provide a brief introduction to the GLAE in general, its *account of Adam's death* in particular, and the reading strategies I employ in this paper. The GLAE belongs to a cluster of narratives designated by Michael Stone as the primary Adam and Eve Books, which have survived in Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Coptic.[5] Inspired by the biblical story of Adam and Eve (Genesis 2–3) as well as departing from it, these apocryphal works narrate rich and fascinating tales about the life of the first two people after their expulsion from the Garden of Eden.

The primary Adam and Eve Books were probably composed between the third and seventh centuries, yet contain certain literary units that are older. These narratives gained enormous popularity and influence in antiquity, and also had a considerable impact on later works in the medieval world, especially in European art, literature, and theology.[6]

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[5] On the Books of Adam and Eve (including the Greek, Latin, Armenian, Georgian, Slavonic, and Coptic versions) manuscripts, editions, translations, relationship of texts, and dates, see discussions and references in Anderson, Stone, and Tromp 2000; Anderson and Stone 1999; Jonge and Tromp 1977; Stone 1992.

[6] For a detailed survey of the literature of Adam and Eve, and its development and influence, see Stone 1992, 66–70, 84–121. On the impact of

As scholars have long maintained, and Johannes Tromp (2005, esp. 96–105) has recently substantiated, the earliest text forms of the Adam and Eve Books were in Greek, from which all other versions in other languages stem.[7] But, as Tromp (2000, 223–24) and others have further shown, there is no fixed Greek text but rather a series of extant witnesses to a textual tradition, since the apocryphal nature of the Greek Life of Adam and Eve and its huge popularity resulted in numerous copies. The present form of the work is the result of a complex redactional process that integrated different source materials into a single story.

Most scholars have situated the GLAE somewhere in the period of 100–300 CE.[8] Its provenance and religious-historical background, however, are debated. Several scholars have argued for a Jewish origin, while others have posited Christian roots for the work.[9] Additional suggestions regarding both the fluid traditions of the GLAE and its non-theological concerns have been put forward recently in several studies (Levison 2003, 15; Tromp 2004, 205). Reflecting on the literary nature of the GLAE, scholars have observed the apparent tension between its disjointed nature, formed as it is by an amalgamation of accounts, and its textual-conceptual

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this narrative on later traditions, see Anderson 2001 and Quinn 1962. For Islamic references to the story, see Sūrahs 2:31–39, 7:11–18, 15:31–48, 17:61–65, 18:50, 20:116–120, and 38:71–85. For the significance of the Books of Adam and Eve in Islamic traditions, see Awn 1983.

[7] On the Greek Life of Adam and Eve, see Bertrand 1987; Eldridge 2001; Jonge 2000a, 2000b; Jonge and Tromp 1977, 18–20, 31–35, 45–55; Johnson 1985, 252; Levison 1988, 2000a; Nagel 1974; Sharpe 1969; Sweet 1993; and Tromp 2005, esp. 3–27.

[8] See Levison 2000a, 4; Levison 2003, 1 (for a full discussion, see 1–16); and Tromp 2005, 28. For a detailed discussion of the GLAE's date in light of other textual evidence, see Eldridge 2001, 20–30.

[9] On the Jewish origin of the work, see discussions and references in Johnson 1985, 252; Dochhorn 2005; Eldridge 2001, 233–64. See further the important questions and observations raised by Kraft 2001, 371–95 and Davila 2005, 232–33. On the Christian origin of the GLAE, see, for example, Jonge and Tromp 1977, 65–78 and Jonge 2000a.

unity. That is, on the one hand the GLAE is built up from a series of brief but more or less self-contained tales, which were later integrated into the complete GLAE narrative in an attempt to create a consistent whole (Levison 2003, 15; Tromp 1997, 25–41; 2004, 205–23). On the other hand, as Tromp (2000, 223–24) has amply argued, the redacted GLAE is a purposefully composed, complete literary unit that amounts to more than the sum of the points made in the separate accounts, and that should be read, treated, and comprehended as a whole. In consideration of these aspects I first focus on one GLAE account, *the account of Adam's death* and its distinct representation of Eve. I then consider the meaning and implications of this representation in the larger context of the complete GLAE narrative, and the social context in which it emerged.

The short *account of Adam's death* includes a number of confusing and conflicting details. Through efforts to elucidate the literary process that led to these inconsistencies, scholars have shown that the existing GLAE 31–42 combines two separate original stories. The first, presently included in GLAE 31–37, describes Adam's death, heavenly afterlife, and his assumption into the heavenly paradise. The second, now found in GLAE 38–42, describes the burial of Adam's body near the earthly paradise and the promise of his eschatological resurrection.[10] As Tromp (1997; 2004), among others, has recently concluded, both stories introduce related subject matter and were at some point clumsily unified into one narrative. The authors of the GLAE likely adopted various views of the afterlife and put them together in a story, "not bothered by literary aspirations, and logical consistency" (Tromp 1997, 36; compare Tromp 2004). Instead, their main objective was to emphasize the central concerns of everyday life, such as the unavoidable reality of illness, the necessity of death, as well as the prospect of life after death. Combined with these concerns, I suggest, are unique representations of the archetypal first woman and the roles she plays

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[10] For a comprehensive discussion and references to key studies, see Tromp 1997. See further Eldridge 2001, 60–64.

during the process of Adam's death, burial, and final ascent to heaven—in particular, descriptions of her actions as a compassionate performer of death and burial practices, just like the angels.

References to specific practices that Eve and the angels are made to carry out are short and concise. They are not presented in an orderly fashion, as though they were standard practices of a particular ritual. Nor do they seem to bear the clear marks of either a Jewish or a Christian theological tradition. Nonetheless, a careful reading reveals an interesting correspondence between distinct death-related roles allocated to both Eve and the angels in the event of Adam's death as they care for his body, mourn his decease, plead for him after his passing, and witness his final ascent to heaven. These aspects become particularly noticeable when one employs several methods suggested by gender/feminist literary criticism, and thereby develops a nuanced reading of the account.

Obviously "gender/feminist criticism" designates a huge, heterogeneous body of work and includes a variety of diverse methodologies. Here I embrace several key positions that are particularly beneficial for this investigation. These include, most notably, Joan Wallach Scott's famous understanding of gender, in this case femininity, as an historical category of analysis,[11] as well as views promoted by Judith Butler that, from their emergence in the early 1990s, have provided rich insights into the socially constructed

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[11] For Wallach Scott's understanding of gender, in this case femininity, as an historical category of analysis, which emphasizes the context dependency and diverse constructions of gender in changing historical-social circumstances, see Wallach Scott 1986, 1053–75. For example, noting "the specificity of female diversity and woman's experiences," Wallach Scott (1986, 1067) has articulated the ideas of multiplicity and diversity as based on "culturally available symbols that evoke multiple (and often contradictory) representations—Eve and Mary as symbols of woman, for example." While in her more recent publication (2010, 7–14) Wallach Scott has observed how the term "gender" has been recuperated and become commonplace, she has nonetheless emphasized the need to disrupt the notions of "fixity" and normalization associated with gender and to acknowledge multiplicity and diversity as based on distinct cultural and historical contexts.

aspects of gender/femininity in diverse cultural settings. [12] Embracing these positions, the following discussion treats the GLAE's Eve not as a static theological symbol, but rather as a culturally constructed figure, and explores both apparent and vague traditions about the role she plays during Adam's passing in the GLAE. In my reading, I further employ the method of "reading against the grain." Among its other aspects, this strategy treats ancient narrative as constructed texts, gives attention to gaps in their dominant ideological coherence, considers their less obvious themes, and brings to the surface alternative traditions that may be subtly embedded in the writings. [13]

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[12] While the concept of "woman" as a social construct has been explored by scholars in a variety of academic disciplines, the pioneering work of Judith Butler has particularly established the foundation for theorizing concepts of gender construction. For her views of femininity, as being not a biological, natural, and homogeneous category, but instead performative and historically constructed in multiple ways, through acquiring fluctuating social conventions and culturally prescribed roles, see, for example, Butler 1990, 33–35. In her words (1990, 33): "*woman* itself is a term in process, a becoming, a construction that cannot rightfully be said to originate or to end. As an ongoing discursive practice, it is open to intervention and resignification" (emphasis original).

[13] For a concise, perceptive discussion of "reading against the grain," see, for example, David J. A. Clines 1995, 191–92; John J. Collins 2005, 75–98, esp. 85. Charlotte Elisheva Fonrobert (2000, 9) has succinctly articulated strategies of "reading against the grain" which guide our present discussion: "'Reading against the grain' can take various forms, just as its goals can be variously formulated. One may, for example, search for lapses in ideological coherence of a text or set of texts, or one may interrogate texts with respect to traces of possible choices not made. One can locate what appears to be the 'repressed' of a text; one can emphasize what the text hides, embedded in overt rhetorical structure; or one can highlight what are only moments of disturbance in the overall dominant ideology of the text. What characterizes most of such readings is the highlighting of the cultural, textual or rhetorical construction of gender."

III. EVE, THE ANGELS, AND ADAM'S PASSING

Let us consider several key examples.[14] The *account of Adam's death* opens with Adam on his deathbed. Awaiting his inevitable demise, the dying Adam plans his end by issuing a set of instructions regarding distinct procedures that he expects Eve to undertake during and after his passing.[15] Eve is appointed to anoint Adam's body after his death; she is required to guard his body and prevent people from touching it, possibly until his spirit reaches heaven; and she is asked to pray to God for Adam's sake when his spirit departs from his body and faces God's judgment:

> "But when I die, anoint me and let no one touch me until the
> angel says something concerning me. For God will not forget
> me, but will seek the vessel he made. Now, arise, and pray

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[14] In his *Texts in Transition* (2000a), Levison has identified four GLAE text-forms and demonstrated how they represent different stories and should be treated independently. In his *The Life of Adam and Eve in Greek* (2005), Tromp has further undertaken a detailed examination of the manuscript tradition and the relationships between the individual versions, and he has used this work to produce a single critical edition that is perceived to be as close as possible to an original text. Since this paper primarily centers on select representations of the first woman rather than the GLAE's inner development, text forms, or its comprehensive depiction of Eve, the citations used are based on the GLAE English translation included in the *Synopsis of the Books of Adam and Eve* (Anderson and Stone 1999) in order to provide the reader with direct access to the text. See the embedded hyperlinks for easy access to Anderson and Stone's (2005) online site, *The Life of Adam and Eve: The Biblical Story in Judaism and Christianity*, where GLAE can be viewed as a single text (= Apocalypse of Moses) or in synoptic comparison.

[15] As Tromp (1997, 25–41) has demonstrated, in its depiction of Adam's death the account employs a cluster of parallel terms, including "dying" (e.g., 31.3), "gone out of his body" (e.g., 32.4), and "falling asleep" (e.g., 42.3). In turn, these terms reveal several dissimilar anthropological concepts and speculations about afterlife. While the significance of these references is indisputable, they do shed a significant light on the representation of Eve in the *account of Adam's death* and thus will not be explored further in this context. For a broader examination of relevant anthropological terms and afterlife theories related to the GLAE, see note 26 below.

even more to God until I give back my spirit, which he gave to me, into His hands; for we do not know how we will meet our Maker, whether He will be angry with us or will turn to show mercy on us." Then she [Eve] rose up and went outside. Falling upon the ground, she said: "I have sinned O God; I have sinned O Father of All . . . ." ([31.3b–32.2a](#))[16]

The next scene depicts the angel of humanity immediately directing Eve to witness the ascent of Adam's spirit to heaven. Subsequently, Eve beholds a chariot of light borne by four bright eagles, and gazes at angelic rituals of incense offerings at the heavenly temple:

> Even as Eve prayed on her knees,[17] behold, the angel of humanity came to her, and raised her up and said: "Rise up, Eve, from your penitence, for behold, Adam your husband has gone out of his body. Rise up and behold his spirit borne aloft to meet his Maker." And Eve rose up and put her hand on the face [of Adam], and the angel said to her, "Lift up your hand from that which is of the earth." And she gazed steadfastly into heaven, and beheld a chariot of light, borne by four bright eagles, [and] it was impossible for any man born of woman to tell the glory of them or behold their faces; and angels going before the chariot; and when they came to the place where your father Adam was, the chariot halted and the Seraphim were between the father and the chariot. And I

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[16] Compare Tromp's (2005, 160–61) critical edition: κἄν ἀποθάνω κατάλείψόν με καὶ μηδείς μου ἅψηται ἕως οὗ ὁ ἄγγελος λαλήσῃ τι περὶ ἐμοῦ. οὐ γὰρ ἐπιλήσεταί μου ὁ θεός, ἀλλὰ ζητήσει τὸ ἴδιον σκεῦος ὃ ἔπλασεν. ἀνάστα μᾶλλον εὖξαι τῷ θεῷ ἕως οὗ ἀποδώσω τὸ πνεῦμά μου εἰς τὰς χεῖρας τοῦ δεδωκότος μοι αὐτό, διότι οὐκ οἴδαμεν πῶς ἀπαντήσωμεν τοῦ ποιήσαντος ἡμᾶς, ἢ ὀργισθῇ ἡμῖν ἢ ἐπιστρέψει τοῦ ἐλεῆσαι ἡμᾶς. Τότε ἀνέστη καὶ ἐξῆλθεν ἔξω. ἥμαρτον ὁ θεός, ἥμαρτον ὁ πατὴρ τῶν ἁπάντων. There is considerable variance among the manuscripts in the phrasing of Eve's prayer here: "I have sinned O God; I have sinned O Father of All . . . " See Tromp's notes on lines 295–299 (pp. 160–61).

[17] Three manuscripts (*a l c*) add the phrase "on her knees" (ἐπὶ τὰ γόνατα αὐτῆς οὔσης) after the phrase "while Eve was still praying" (ἔτι εὐχομένης τῆς Εὔας); the added phrase ("on her knees") is part of Anderson's translation, but Tromp (2005, 160–61) does not include it in his critical text.

beheld golden censers and three bowls, and behold all the
angels with (after?) censers and frankincense came in haste to
the incense-offering and blew upon it and the smoke of the
incense veiled the firmament. (32.3–33.4)[18]

Next, the angels pray to God for mercy on Adam, Eve beholds
two great and fearful mysteries before the presence of God and she
weeps:

And the angels fell down to God, crying aloud and saying,
"JAEL, Holy One, have pardon, for he is Your image, and the
work of Your holy hands."[19] And then I, Eve, beheld two great
and fearful mysteries before the presence of God and I wept
for fear . . . . (33.5–34.1a)[20]

After this, an angel announces God's favorable judgment, the
angels praise the glory of the Lord, and a seraph then washes Adam
three times in the Acherusian lake:[21]

But when the angels had said these words, behold, there came
one of the seraphim with six wings and snatched up Adam

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[18] Compare Tromp's (2005, 160) edition: ἔτι εὐχομένης τῆς Εὔας, ἰδοὺ ἦλθεν
πρὸς αὐτὴν ὁ ἄγγελος τῆς ἀνθρωπότητος, καὶ ἀνέστησεν αὐτὴν λέγων: ἀνάστα, Εὔα,
ἐκ τῆς μετανοίας σου. ἰδοὺ γὰρ ὁ Ἀδὰμ ὁ ἀνήρ σου ἐξῆλθεν ἀπὸ τοῦ σώματος αὐτοῦ.
ἀνάστα καὶ ἴδε τὸ πνεῦμα αὐτοῦ ἀναφερόμενον εἰς τὸν ποιήσαντα αὐτὸν[18] τοῦ
ἀπαντῆσαι αὐτῷ. καὶ ἀτενίσασα εἰς τὸν οὐρανόν εἶδεν ἅρμα φωτὸς ἐρχόμενον ὑπὸ
τεσσάρων ἀετῶν λαμπρῶν ὧν οὐκ ἦν δυνατόν τινα γεννηθῆναι ἀπὸ κοιλίας, ἢ εἰπεῖν
τὴν δόξαν αὐτῶν, ἢ ἰδεῖν τὸ πρόσωπον αὐτῶν καὶ ἀγγέλους προσάγοντας τὸ ἅρμα.
εἶδον δὲ ἐγὼ θυμιατήρια χρυσᾶ καὶ τρεῖς φιάλας, καὶ ἰδοὺ πάντες οἱ ἄγγελοι μετὰ
λίβανον καὶ τὰ θυμιατήρια ἦλθον ἐν σπουδῇ ἐπὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον καὶ ἐνεφύσουν αὐτά,
καὶ ἡ ἀτμὶς τοῦ θυμιάματος ἐκάλυψεν τὰ στερεώματα.

[19] Compare Tromp's (2005, 160) edition: καὶ προσέπεσαν οἱ ἄγγελοι τῷ θεῷ
βοῶντες καὶ λέγοντες· Ἰαὴλ, ἅγιε, συγχώρησον, ὅτι εἰκών σου ἐστὶν καὶ ποίημα τῶν
χειρῶν σου τῶν ἁγίων.

[20] Compare Tromp's (2005, 160) edition: εἶδον ἐγὼ Εὔα δύο μεγάλα καὶ
φοβερὰ μυστήρια ἐνώπιον τοῦ θεοῦ. καὶ ἔκλαυσα ἐκ τοῦ φόβου . . . .

[21] On the origin of the Acherusian Lake and the ritual of washing in it, see
Jonge and White 2003.

and carried him off to the Acherusian lake, and washed him thrice, and led him before God. (37.3)

Following, God hands Adam over to the archangel Michael and commands him to bring Adam to paradise in the third heaven until the final Day of Judgment:

> [T]he Father of all, sitting on his holy throne stretched out his hand, and took Adam and handed him over to the archangel Michael saying: "Lift him up into paradise unto the third Heaven, and leave him there until that fearful day of my reckoning, which I will make in the world." (37.4–5)

The second story of Adam's death, in GLAE 38–42, immediately follows and provides additional details about Eve's and the angels' acts during Adam's demise. The angel Michael is portrayed as crying to God for the sake of Adam: "But after this joyous event of Adam, the archangel Michael cried to the Father concerning Adam" (38.1). Then God, the cherubs, and the angels descend to earth where Adam lies, and God speaks about the eschatological future in which Adam will regain his position of glory. Following God's promise of resurrection (39.1–3), the angels Michael, Gabriel, and Uriel prepare Adam's body for burial by oiling it and then dressing it with three shrouds of linen and silk from paradise:

> Then God said to the archangel Michael: "Go away to Paradise in the third heaven, and carry away three fine linen clothes." And God said to Michael and to Gabriel and Uriel: "Spread out the clothes and cover the body of Adam." And they bore the sweet olive oil and poured it upon him. And the three great angels prepared him for burial. (40.1–2)

Next, Eve grieves over Adam, mourns his death, and weeps "bitterly about Adam's falling asleep" (42.3).[22]

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[22] Compare Tromp's (2005, 174) edition: "ἔτι δὲ ζώσης αὐτῆς ἔκλαυσεν περὶ τῆς κοιμήσεως τοῦ Ἀδάμ. οὐ γὰρ ἐγίνωσκεν ποῦ ἐτέθη . . . ." While one manuscript

The *account of Adam's death* develops further and provides additional details. However, this discussion is concerned solely with the above-cited passages, in which Eve and the angels are featured, both implicitly and explicitly, as the main protagonists who carry out particular key practices when Adam dies. In general, direct relationships between literary descriptions and the realities to which they are connected cannot be assumed. Here, too, it is not certain that the *account of Adam's death* describes genuine death-related customs and actual funerary rites. Yet, although plausibly motivated by literary and rhetorical purposes, the account integrates into literary references certain practices and norms that were apparently known in the days of the GLAE's authors and audience, as Marinus de Jonge and Johannes Tromp (1977, 71) have noted.[23]

IV. ANALOGOUS PRACTICES

Obviously, different social and religious groups enacted a variety of death-related practices in the hybrid social world of antiquity in which the GLAE emerged. As Peter Brown (1981, 24) reminds us,

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(d) adds "bitterly" (πικρός) after the phrase "she wept" (ἔκλαυσεν), Tromp does not include this word in his critical text. In the following GLAE description the reason given for Eve's weeping is "for she knew not where Adam was laid." Yet this is not the explanation that all the GLAE text versions evoke. Instead, as John Levison (2000a) has noted, several text versions link Eve's bitter weeping to her feelings of pain, sorrow, and grief for Adam's death. For example, the text form identified as NIK indicates Eve "did not know in great grief, and was weeping much about his [Adam's] death" (see GLAE 42.3, Text Form III in Levison 2000a, 110); see also Levison's (2000a, 19, 44–45) discussion of the dating and salient features of this text form; Levison 2000b, esp. 268–69.

[23] It has been widely recognized that rhetorical strategies and literary conventions often affect the shaping of literary narrations. Accordingly, the combined GLAE *account of Adam's death* may also have been shaped by literary conventions or by other rhetorical purposes. Nonetheless, the distinct nature of this account, which reflects interest in, knowledge of, and concern with an array of everyday cultural life issues—allows for the plausibility that its descriptions convey aspects of the cultural world in which it emerged, including both cultural perceptions and the realities of women. See the discussion in Arbel 2012, 60–86.

though, death-related practices and burial customs have remained among the most stable cultural features of the ancient Mediterranean world. From the passages quoted above we can glean that the *account of Adam's death* portrays Eve as well as the angels as performers of a number of these stable practices during all stages of Adam's death and interment. Principal roles include anointing and washing his body and otherwise preparing him for burial, grieving and mourning his passing, praying for Adam when his spirit departs from his body and faces God's final judgment, beholding his ascent to heaven and consequently partaking in God's sacred realm.[24]

Treating the dead body immediately after death, including washing, anointing, and dressing it with shrouds, were common burial practices in the ancient world. Characteristically, the living closed the eyes and mouth of the deceased; they then washed the corpse and anointed it with scented oil and herbs. Next, the body was wrapped in garments, and dressed in shrouds. The *account of Adam's death* ascribes analogous activities to Eve and the angels. Accordingly, the ritual of washing Adam's dead body is performed by a seraph, who washes Adam three times in the Acherusian lake (37.3–4); the rituals of preparing Adam's body for burial, including oiling and dressing it, are performed by the angels Michael, Gabriel, and Uriel, who anoint Adam's body with sweet olive oil and wrap it with three fine linen cloths (40.1–2), as well as by Eve, who guards Adam's body and anoints him after his demise (31.3).[25]

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[24] Numerous studies from different positions and disciplinary backgrounds have examined a variety of death related practices. Key studies consulted here include: Alexiou 1974; Brown 1981, 1–22; Corbeill 2004; Corley 2002; Davies 1999; Feldman 1977; Garland 1985, 23–24; Goff 2004; Holst-Warhaft 1992, 103–14; Kraemer 2000; Kurtz and Boardman 1971; Neusner and Avery-Peck 2000; Rush 1941; Sourvinou-Inwood 1995; and Toynbee 1971, 43–72.

[25] Catherine Bell's observations shed further light on Eve's position of power as a performer of rituals. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu (*Outline of a Theory of Practice*), Bell (1992, 19–66, 69–170) has argued that rituals do not express underlying power relationships but are themselves the strategic agents of power and can be seen as a strategic arena for the embodiment and negotiation of power relations.

Practices of mourning and grieving over the dead, typically associated with women throughout the ancient world, were frequently part of numerous death rituals. Notably, in the *account of Adam's death,* not only do Eve and the angels grieve over Adam—God is also depicted in a similar mourning role. Accordingly, [GLAE 39.1](#) recounts how God "came to the body of Adam and grieve[d] greatly over him," and [GLAE 43.3](#) describes how Eve grieved over her husband and "wept bitterly about Adam's falling asleep."

As many death-related traditions confirm, the living were seen as continually involved in advocating for the dead's spirits at heavenly courts. In the *account of Adam's death*, both the angels and Eve play this role. Unlike the view of the dead frequently found in the Hebrew Bible, which shows them in Sheol, barely existing and never to return, here Adam's spirit continues to have some kind of existence and is expected to face God's judgment, a view that accords with beliefs about the resurrection of the body and immortality of the soul/spirit that were prevalent in the Greco-Roman world of the early centuries CE.[26] In this context, the angels are depicted as praying for Adam in an attempt to prevent him from having to face God's harsh sentence ([33.5](#)) after his passing. Similarly, Eve is appointed to pray to God for Adam's sake after his demise, apparently in order to exculpate Adam and thereby avert a harsh sentence in heaven when he faces God's unknown anger or mercy ([31.3b–32.2a](#)).[27]

It was often presumed in antiquity that psychopomps—literally the "guides of souls"—guided passages from life to death. These

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[26] For a variety of biblical and post-biblical views regarding the afterlife, see a comprehensive discussion by Segal 2004, 120–638. For discussions of death practices and afterlife beliefs in the first centuries CE, see esp. pp. 351–95. For a discussion of afterlife concepts in the GLAE and other pseudepigrapha, see Eldridge 2001, 50–52.

[27] While the description associates Eve's prayer with her atonement for her sins, as Levison (2000b) has observed, it is noteworthy that her prayers are primarily intended to intercede on Adam's behalf in heaven after his spirit departs from his body and he faces God's unknown anger or mercy when his spirit departs from his body and faces judgment.

psychopomps were envisioned as angels or deities whose primary function was to safely escort newly deceased souls and lead them safely in their journeys from earth to their afterlife in heaven or paradise.[28] It is not surprising that in the *account of Adam's death,* the angel Michael is responsible for transferring Adam's soul to heaven at death, since that is one of this angel's typical roles.[29] It is rather unexpected, however, for the figure of Eve to be allocated a similar role, as she witnesses the ascent of Adam's spirit to heaven and beholds visions in the celestial realm before the presence of God (32.3–4). True, in contrast to Eve, who only observes the ascent of Adam's spirit to heaven (32.4), the angel Michael plays a more active role as a psychopomp. Nonetheless, just like the angel Michael, Eve rises above natural human limits and witnesses Adam's spirit transferred to heaven as she partakes in the transcendent reality of God and his angels. While this representation of Eve is not developed in a full narrative plot, it nonetheless characterizes her as a figure of spiritual capabilities, visionary powers, and elevated standing—all particularly manifested in the aftermath of Adam's death. Accordingly, Eve beholds awe-inspiring visions and sees God's chariot of light descending to the place where Adam is lying (33.2). She then witnesses angelic rituals in the celestial sacred realm that is considered inaccessible to most humans (33.3–4), and further gazes at fearful mysteries before the presence of God (34.1a). What exactly these mysteries entail remains ambiguous in this laconic statement. Rather than providing details about the nature and

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[28] There are classical examples of psychopomps in Greek, Roman, and Egyptian mythologies. Likewise, in apocalyptic literature angels or archangels often serve as the psychopomps of select visionaries. Thus, for example, the *Book of the Watchers* (= *1 Enoch* 1–36) presents Michael as a psychopomp; in *2 Enoch* the seventh antediluvian patriarch, Enoch, is taken to heaven by two angels. In the same apocalyptic account Melchizedek is transported on the wings of the angel Gabriel to the paradise of Eden. See Hannah 1995, 46 and Orlov 2015, 161–62.

[29] See examples in Hannah 1995, 46–47.

content of the mysteries, however, this description subtly says something about Eve's spiritual capabilities.[30]

To summarize, thus far we have examined how Eve and the angels are cast to play analogous virtuous roles in standardized funerary practices of anointing and treating the dead body. Particularly notable are the two realms of caring for the body, and weeping for and mourning the dead. Additionally, both are depicted as benevolent intercessors for Adam in heaven, worthy and able to solicit God's mercy and to influence divine judgment. Moreover, both partake in the experience of Adam's spiritual ascent, and gain access to God's transcendent sacred realms.

V. A TRADITIONAL AND SUBVERSIVE DISCOURSE?

To fully recognize the significance of this exceptional portrayal of Eve it is important to consider her overall depiction in the complete GLAE as well as the conceptual-cultural context in which it emerged. How does this representation of a virtuous Eve function within the unified GLAE narrative and its overall conceptualization of a sinful Eve? What, if anything, can be inferred about the significance of this characterization of Eve within the cultural reality of the GLAE's narrators and audience? Crucial to understanding these issues are common dominant Eve discourses that were widespread in the cultural landscape in which the GLAE was formed. As noted earlier, prevalent early Jewish and Christian exegetical traditions typically portray Eve as the bane of Adam, the root of all evil, and the liable

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[30] Moreover, I have previously demonstrated (Arbel 2012, 87–110) how these three visions with which Eve is associated—visions of God's chariot, angelic celestial rituals, and divine mysteries—share a common hallmark. They all correspond to formulaic themes and tropes that are typically associated with a series of "ideal figures"—exemplary righteous, patriarchs, priests, scribes, prophets, and visionaries—in a variety of Qumranic, pseudepigraphic, and *merkabah* traditions, and who are frequently evoked to emphasize the worthiness, authoritative status, and high position of these figures. By utilizing these stock themes and tropes, this representation of Eve's visions seems to associate her implicitly with these ideal figures and their elevated spiritual characteristics and high status.

source of death in the world.[31] In accordance with these characterizations, several narrative scenes throughout the complete GLAE narrative similarly represent Eve as a blameworthy figure, who is eternally responsible for inflicting death not only on Adam but also on all humanity.[32] The *account of Adam's death*, as we have just seen, departs from this dominant view. While it does not explicitly align Eve with the high angels, its depiction of her and them performing similar practices suggests a close affiliation.

This exceptional portrayal of Eve does not seem to be a value-neutral presentation. More than a merely interesting literary description at work, this representation implicitly asserts, I suggest,

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[31] For example, *2 Enoch* states in Adam's first voice: "And while he was sleeping I took from him a rib. And I created from him a wife, so that death might come [to him] by his wife (*2 Enoch* J 30.17 [= A 30.17 in Charles 1913]); the Midrash *Gen. Rab.* 17.8 portrays Eve as the one who "shed the blood of Adam" and "extinguished [his] soul." And, according to *Gen. Rab.* 19.5, Eve gave the fruit to the animals and thus also brought death into the animal world. A famous Mishnaic passage in the Palestinian Talmud likewise blames the entire sin and its consequence of death on Eve, explaining why women are obligated to follow three particular commandments related to *niddah*, the laws of family purity; *hallah*, setting aside dough from the bread that they bake; and lighting the Sabbath candles (*y. Šabb.* 2.6). The author of the gnostic Gospel of Philip (150–300 CE) expresses a similar view: "When Eve was still with Adam, death did not exist. When she was separated from him, death came into being" (68.16–24 in Layton 1989, 1:179). In the same way Irenaeus, Bishop of Lyons, states, "By disobeying, Eve became the cause of death for herself and for the whole human race" (*Haer.* 3.22.4). Tertullian of Carthage a few years later likewise accentuates Eve's culpability in Adam's death, in the famous "gateway passage": "You destroyed so easily God's image, man. On account of your desert—that is death—even the Son of God had to die" (*Cult. fem.* 1.1; quoted in Clark 1994, 169). See further Elizabeth Clark's (1994, 166–69) observations regarding the common mechanisms of stereotyping, universalizing, and naturalizing, by which patristic views often amalgamate all women into one sinful Eve. Compare similar rabbinic views discussed by Judith Baskin 2002, 161.

[32] See, in particular, her depiction as a transgressor of God's way (e.g., 7.1–3, 9.2, 10.2, 19.3), as Satan's vessel (e.g., 21.3), and as a wicked figure who brought death upon Adam and all humanity (e.g., 7.1, 14.2, 21.6).

an alternative ideological stance. True, the account neither overtly challenges nor targets specific traditions. Yet, it constructs Eve, like the supreme angels, as a performer of corresponding compassionate practices that comfort and assist Adam rather than cause his demise. In an implicit manner, the account thereby both disrupts prevalent cultural and theological conceptions concerning Eve's inferiority, blame, culpability, and spiritual limitations, and forms a remarkable discourse about her valued role and standing.

However, as noted above, in its present redacted form, the GLAE embraces multiple accounts and traditions and integrates them into a single, complete narrative, which should be read, treated, and comprehended as a whole. Consequently, it is important to ask: How does the representation of a worthy Eve in the *account of Adam's death* function in the framework of the complete GLAE narrative, which is preoccupied with Eve's liability?

In recent years, several scholars have raised significant suggestions regarding both the fluid, multifaceted traditions of the GLAE and its non-theological concerns. Levison (2003) and Tromp (2004) have convincingly inferred that beneath the GLAE's concern with theological themes lies a fundamental interest in everyday life issues. For instance, Levison (2003, 15) has discerned that "the narrative is driven not only by theological concerns but equally, perhaps even more so, by the basic realities that drive human beings to the brink of their experience." In a similar vein, Tromp (2004, 218–20) has explained the narrative's tendency to escape classification as either a Jewish or a Christian writing, to treat questions of everyday life, and to integrate various truths and self-contained tales into its main outline. From this perspective, the complete GLAE does not seem to be entirely controlled by any specific group or ideology.

Accordingly, unlike more dogmatic and authorized documents, in which views were typically formulaic and restricted to expressing authorized messages of dominant Jewish or Christian theologians, it is plausible that not all of the varied GLAE accounts and traditions were compiled within official theological circles. Rather, some of its

traditions may have been formed by different individuals and groups in the context of their everyday life situations and fluid communications between people—where, characteristically, diverse traditions and views are continuously expressed and renegotiated—and subsequently integrated into the complete GLAE by its authors/redactors.

Of course, in light of the ambiguity surrounding the provenance and date of the GLAE traditions, there is no accurate, concrete evidence against which to verify this proposition. Nonetheless, the GLAE, one the earliest and most significant postbiblical accounts of Adam and Eve, provides unique access to what appears to be a discourse that juxtaposes a number of overlapping and at times conflicting possibilities, both traditional and subversive. In other words, emerging as a multivocal narrative, the complete GLAE gives expression to well-known, established traditions about a blameworthy Eve, as well as to less-known alternative traditions about a praiseworthy Eve, which were not necessarily compatible with dominant cultural and theological views of the time. As we have seen, the GLAE's *account of Adam's death* appears to reveal one of the latter traditions. In a subtle voice it constructs Eve as a compassionate figure, asserting views about her caring role, virtues, elevated status, transcendent spheres of experience, and access to holiness, all manifested in the drama of Adam's decease.

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The Material and Conceptual Porosity of Death

If So, How?
Representing "Coming Back to Life" in the
Mysteries of Mithras

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In his essay *On the Cave of the Nymphs in the Odyssey (De antr. nymph.* 6 [≈ §2 in Taylor 1823]), Porphyry, the late third-century "scholar, philosopher, and student of religion,"[1] tells us that the Mithraists, whom he terms "the Persians,"[2] "perfect their initiate by inducting him into a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again, calling the place a 'cave'" (οὕτω καὶ Πέρσαι τὴν εἰς κάτω κάθοδον τῶν ψυχῶν καὶ πάλιν ἔξοδον μυσταγωγοῦντες τελοῦσι τὸν μύστην, ἐπονομάσαντες σπήλαιον <τὸν> τόπον).[3] "This cave," Porphyry continues, "bore for him the image of the cosmos (εἰκόνα . . . κόσμου) which Mithras had created, and the things which the cave contained, by their proportionate arrangement, provided him with symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos" (τῶν δ᾽ ἐντὸς κατὰ συμμέτρους ἀποστάσεις σύμβολα φερόντων τῶν κοσμικῶν στοιχείων καὶ κλιμάτων).[4]

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[1] As the *Oxford Classical Dictionary* well describes him (s.v.).

[2] If the term "Persians" is outdated, "Mithraists" is purely a scholar's neologism.

[3] Throughout this essay I reference and cite the Arethusa edition of Porphyry's essay (Seminar Classics 1969). Though the significantly older and inferior translation of Thomas Taylor (1823) is hyperlinked for quick reference, Taylor's translation should not detract from the better Arethusa edition.

[4] "Him" is Zoroaster, Mithraism's putative founder. In form, this is a myth of origins; but since Porphyry nowhere says or implies that what Mithraists do "now" differs from what Zoroaster did "then," we can accept that Porphyry is

In sum, we are told here that the mithraeum[5] (1) was known esoterically as a "cave"; (2) that it was designed and constructed as an "image of the cosmos"; (3) that it was so designed and constructed for the purpose of "inducting the initiate into a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again"; and (4) that it realized its intended form as a literal microcosm by incorporating "symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement."

Strangely, however, what appears at first sight to be germane information from a contemporaneous source about the design and function of the mithraeum is generally either ignored or dismissed offhandedly by modern scholars. For example, Jan Bremmer (2014, 130 n. 109), in an otherwise exhaustive book titled *Initiation into the Mysteries of the Ancient World*, even though at one point he cites this very passage from *On the Cave*, fails to mention its assertion that "induction into a mystery" was precisely the intent behind the mithraeum's design! The only modern scholar of Mithraism to engage with this issue in a substantial way—the present author excepted—has been Robert Turcan. This he did in his 1975 monograph *Mithras Platonicus: Recherches sur l'hellénisation philosophique de Mithra*. The title, as the saying goes, "says it all." What the Neoplatonic authors, Porphyry foremost among them, give us is not really Mithraism at all, but a *Neoplatonic construction* of Mithraism. I have challenged this view in my monograph on the cult (Beck 2006), specifically in an appendix with the title "On Porphyry's *De antro nympharum* as a reliable source of data on the Mithraic mysteries." I shall expand these arguments here, focusing particularly on what Porphyry had to say about the mithraeum as a mechanism for "inducting the initiate into a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again" (*On the Cave* 6 [≈ §2 in Taylor 1823]).

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speaking (or supposes he is speaking) of the standard mithraeum of his own day.

[5] "Mithraeum" too is a scholarly neologism.

Let us ask, then, if Porphyry's information is accurate, at least for *some* mithraea and thus for the Mithraic communities which constructed, maintained, and used them. That *all* mithraea were constructed to this template for the purpose of enabling "a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again" I shall not argue, since it would presuppose the sort of detailed, universally binding teaching alien to the mystery cults, as to all forms of ancient paganism. I shall claim only that the template was current in the city of Rome, its port of Ostia, and in areas to the northwest (Etruria) and southeast (as far as Campania) during the late second and the third centuries CE. Even that should not be taken to mean that it was the norm in those areas at that time. Nor shall I argue that it was some sort of package deal in which commitment to a part entailed commitment to the whole. Mithraea might be called "caves" and as such considered "images of the universe" in a general way without the sort of detailed microcosm-to-macrocosm correspondences and initiations that Porphyry intimates. One size, emphatically, does *not* fit all.

On the first of the four propositions there is no dispute. That the mithraeum was a "cave" is confirmed both epigraphically—it is called a "cave" in inscriptions[6]—and occasionally by instantiation in natural caves, where available,[7] and elsewhere often in barrel-vaulted inner rooms which *ipso facto* look like caves and which are sometimes decorated naturalistically with lumps of pumice, sea

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[6] See the epigraphical indices to both volumes of *CIMRM*, s. *antrum* and *spelaeum*.

[7] A spectacular example is the cave recently discovered in Doliche in ancient Commagene, containing two separate mithraea (see Schütte-Maischatz and Winter 2000). Sometimes the relief of the bull-killing Mithras was carved into a cliff or rock face, thus forming one of the mithraeum's four sides (e.g., *CIMRM* 1901–02 [Jajce, Dalmatia]; Beck 1984 [Arupium, Dalmatia]). For images of Mithraic monuments (both mithraea and icons), see Google Images, s. "Mithras." One should, however, exercise caution: some of the images are make-believe modern fantasies.

shells, etc.[8] That mithraea were "caves" is probably as close to a truth about the cult acknowledged *semper et ubique* as one gets.

The second proposition is nowhere confirmed epigraphically. No inscription calls a mithraeum an "image of the universe." Verification depends therefore on examining the fourth proposition: put as a question, do extant mithraea incorporate in "proportionate arrangement symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos"?

In one respect, however, the mithraeum qua cave certainly does resemble the apparent universe. A natural cave is an inside without a clearly defined outside;[9] so is the apparent universe. And so, usually, are mithraea. Frequently they are rooms or suites of rooms within larger buildings. And when they are self-contained buildings, in dramatic contrast to the standard temples of classical antiquity, they seem to have had no exterior decoration at all. A mithraeum, literally, is all interior.

Porphyry's third point, that the mithraeum is designed to "induct the initiate into a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again," is of course the claim that concerns us most. Again, however, we cannot test it until we have looked more closely at the fourth proposition that the mithraeum achieves its status as microcosm by incorporating "symbols of the elements and climates of the [macro]cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement," since it is precisely the mithraeum's authenticity as microcosm that enables the mystery of the cosmic "descent of souls and their exit back out again."

In excavated mithraea, then, do we actually find "symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement"? Short answer: Yes we do. Immediate qualification: yes, but not in many. However, bracketing off those that have "cosmic symbols proportionately arranged" from those that do not and treating the former as a special and very limited class is far too simplistic. For it is entirely possible that what is *explicit* in the few

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[8] Pumice and seashells (e.g., *CIMRM* 389 [Barberini Mithraeum, Rome]).

[9] See Porphyry, *On the Cave* 5 (≈ §2 in Taylor 1823).

Porphyrean mithraea (if we may term them such) is *implicit* in many, many others. How so?

All, or almost all, mithraea contain a representation of the bull-killing Mithras in relief or freestanding sculpture or in fresco at the end of the room opposite the entrance. A reproduction *in situ* of what was probably the original tauroctony of the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres at Ostia, the mithraeum which will concern us most in the present study, may be seen at the "Regio II—Insula VIII—Mitreo delle Sette Sfere (II,VIII,6)" website, which is devoted to this mithraeum (see further n. 12 below).

Mithras is the Sun, and the Sun, qua one of the seven planets, is technically an "element" of the cosmos. It follows that at least one symbol of an important "cosmic element" is positioned in a particular place in the vast majority of mithraea. It is a *norm* of their design, not merely an option.

The image of the god in the sanctuary, or its equivalent, is a feature of many religious structures, not just Mithraism's. A more unusual feature of the mithraeum is the pair of side-benches, intended principally for feasting and fellowship, on either side of the central aisle leading from the entrance to the cult-niche.

Opposition, as I have demonstrated at length in my book on the cult (Beck 2006), is a fundamental concept in Mithraism.[10] If, then, we can establish from explicit symbols that in *some* mithraea the side-benches represent opposite sides of the universe, then it is probable that in others lacking such symbols the side-benches still carry the same representational freight, with Mithras in the cult-niche, both separating and linking the two sides of the physical mithraeum carrying some corresponding significance in the macrocosm represented. It is indeed a matter of probabilities. For how can we determine whether in a *particular* mithraeum the potential implicit in *all* mithraea was realized cognitively and ritually by the initiates of the community in question?

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[10] See the numerous subentries under "opposition(s)" in Beck 2006, General Index.

We should now look at the disposition of explicit "symbols of the elements and climates of the universe" in order to determine whether they are "proportionately arranged" so as to realize an accurate microcosm and thus enable "a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again." By "elements of the universe" one is to understand the seven planets and the stars, in particular the background of stars against which the planets move and which constitute the band of the zodiac with its twelve familiar signs (Aries, Taurus, Gemini, etc.). "Climates" in this cosmic context are bands circling the celestial sphere north and south of the celestial equator.[11]

So let us take a tour of the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres ('Sette Sfere') in Ostia.[12] This, I must admit, is a thoroughly loaded choice: of all mithraea, it is the one that most explicitly instantiates Porphyry's archetype. Its floor plan is shown in figure 1. The "cosmos" of which it is an "image" is shown in figure 2. In taking a tour of the mithraeum we, like the initiates before us, are taking a tour of the cosmos.

Both figures are diagrams of three-dimensional structures. Figure 1 is essentially an interior view of the mithraeum from above, as if through a glass ceiling. Figure 2 is an exterior view of the universe (were it possible!), if all its spheres—the seven planetary spheres

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[11] A celestial "climate" is the projection of a terrestrial climate, which is a band of terrestrial latitude parallel to the terrestrial equator, outwards on to the sphere of the fixed stars. The number of terrestrial climates was never definitively fixed. In one popular system, for example (see Neugebauer 1975, 1:44), there were seven climates extending north from equator to pole.

[12] Fortunately, such a tour can now be done online at "Regio II—Insula VIII—Mitreo delle Sette Sfere (II,VIII,6)," a webpage devoted to this mithraeum! The images of the black-on-white mosaic figures on the side-benches are excellent (many not available elsewhere). For the time being, however, ignore the various interpretations of the symbols offered in the text. In particular, ignore the drawing of the four cardinal points in the second diagram ("Schematic representation . . . Gordon 1976, fig. 2"). By the time you have finished the present article you will understand why this representation is entirely mistaken!

Figure 1:
Plan of the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres (Sette Sfere), Ostia

Drawing based on Vermaseren 1956–1960, 1.122, fig. 71
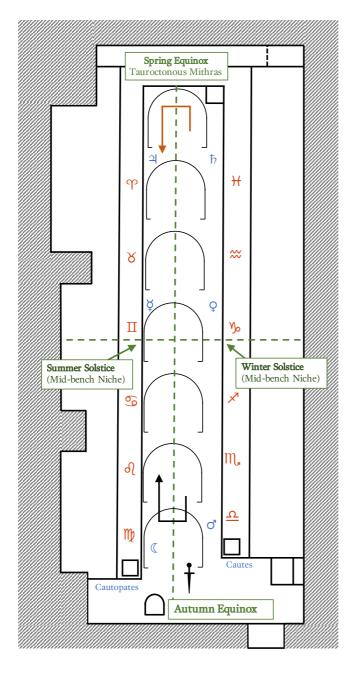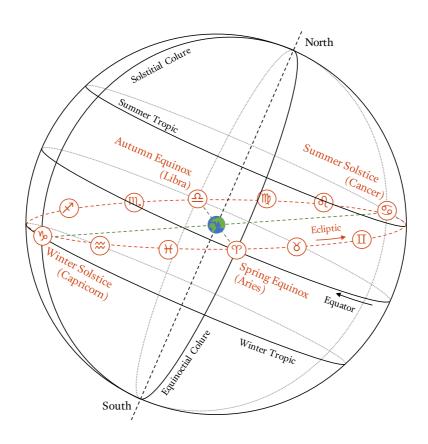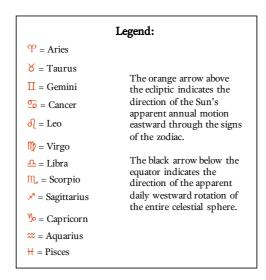Redrawn and adapted by R. Beck and F. S. Tappenden

Figure 2:
Diagram of the Cosmos as apprehended at the Time of the Mysteries of Mithras
Drawing by R. Beck and F. S. Tappenden

Legend:

♈ = Aries

♉ = Taurus

♊ = Gemini

♋ = Cancer

♌ = Leo

♍ = Virgo

♎ = Libra

♏ = Scorpio

♐ = Sagittarius

♑ = Capricorn

♒ = Aquarius

♓ = Pisces

The orange arrow above the ecliptic indicates the direction of the Sun's apparent annual motion eastward through the signs of the zodiac.

The black arrow below the equator indicates the direction of the apparent daily westward rotation of the entire celestial sphere.

(not shown) as well as the ultimate sphere of the fixed stars—were transparent. In figure 2, the off-vertical dotted line represents the axis on which the universe appears to revolve once a day in a westerly direction (indicated by the arrow above the word "Equator"). At the ends of this axis are the north and south celestial poles. Joining the poles as great circles on the circumference of the celestial sphere are the colures.[13] If you travel down one of the colures—it doesn't matter which—from the north celestial pole to the south celestial pole, or up from the south pole to the north pole, at the midpoint you will cross the celestial equator. Your celestial journey would be precisely analogous to a terrestrial journey in which, travelling down or up any line of longitude from earth's north or south pole, you reach our terrestrial equator midway. Too important to relegate to a footnote is my calculated lapse into the boreocentric equation: north = up / south = down.

Consider next the celestial equator and the two circles parallel to it, the summer tropic to the north and the winter tropic to the south. The equator is the path traveled by the Sun on the days of the spring and autumn equinoxes (when day and night are of equal length); the summer tropic is the Sun's path on the day of the summer solstice (the longest day); and the winter tropic is the Sun's path on the day of the winter solstice (the shortest day). This apparent daily journey of the Sun is caused, in ancient thinking, by the westward rotation of the universe, carrying with it both stars and planets. (We now know of course that it is merely an epiphenomenon of the earth's own daily rotation.)

Lastly, consider the ecliptic (represented as a red dotted line). The ecliptic is the path around which the Sun appears to travel eastward (the direction indicated by the arrow above its representation in the diagram) in the course of a year. The ecliptic is the central line of the zodiac, the band around which the other six "planets" (i.e., the Moon and the five planets proper) also appear to

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[13] The equinoctial colure also passes through the points of the equinoxes in Aries and Libra and the solstitial colure through the points of the solstices in Cancer and Capricorn.

travel westward in their proper periods (from the Moon's approximately twenty-seven-and-a-third days to Saturn's approximately twenty-nine-and-a-half years). The speed of the seven planets in orbit varies. At regular intervals, the five planets proper even appear to slow to a stop, then move westward ("retrograde" motion) for a while, then slow down and stop again, and finally resume eastward motion. The band of the zodiac is composed of the twelve well-known "signs," in a sequence of four quadrants:[14] (1) the *spring* quadrant, beginning at the spring equinox (in the centre of the diagram, near side) and comprising the signs of Aries, Taurus, and Gemini; (2) the *summer* quadrant, beginning at the summer solstice (upper right) and comprising Cancer, Leo, and Virgo; (3) the *autumn* quadrant, beginning at the autumn equinox (centre, far side) and comprising Libra, Scorpio, and Sagittarius; and (4) the *winter* quadrant, beginning at the winter solstice (lower left) and comprising Capricorn, Aquarius, and Pisces. We shall also speak of the "northern" half of the ecliptic, which is the semicircle lying "above" the equator in the northern celestial hemisphere, and of the "southern" half, which is the semicircle lying "below" the equator in the southern hemisphere.

Let us next see how the mithraeum, specifically the Mithraeum of the Seven Spheres in Ostia, instantiates this macrocosm. The diagram in figure 1 is a "plan" of this mithraeum. One cannot call it precisely a "floor plan," since what one sees is partly the central aisle and partly the tops of the benches on either side. As in all plans, the view is from *above*. It follows, then, that macrocosmically it is a view from the *north*. But a view of what? From the presence of emblems of the zodiacal signs on the front edges of the side-benches, one might well answer: the plane of the ecliptic. That answer is true—

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[14] (1) We follow here the system by which the four tropic points are set at the beginning of their signs. (2) Fortunately for us, in antiquity the *signs* of the zodiac, qua equal lengths of 30° measured from the point of the spring equinox, corresponded quite well with the *constellations* after which they were named. Since then, signs and constellations have parted company, but this need not concern us.

but it is incomplete. The view is also, or alternatively, a view down onto the equator, a view *straight* down from the north celestial pole.

But how can it be both? The answer lies in the comprehension of the initiates reclining on their benches, not in *a priori* deductions from the architecture of the macrocosm. As academics, we must work with the latter, but it would be a mistake to suppose that this was how the designers and cult leaders saw it, still less the rank-and-file members. Conversely, it would be just as mistaken to discount the initiates' sense, acquired from teaching and experience, of where they were in the universe by virtue of being in a particular place in the microcosm of their mithraeum. Remember, too, that while this celestial architecture is for us an abstraction of relevance only to positional astronomy on the one side and astrology on the other, for the ancients it was apprehended as reality.

From a modern cognitive perspective, one might say, following Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner (2002, 89–137), that in the constructed "mental space" blending macrocosm and microcosm, the initiates "compressed" the planes of the ecliptic and the equator.[15] This would enable them (well below the level of conscious thought, of course) to reconcile their sense of location on the level among the signs of the zodiac with their sense of the cosmos turning on a straight floor-to-ceiling axis at right angles to their benches.

In the macrocosm the planes of the equator and the ecliptic are joined—hinged, as it were—at the celestial diameter running between the equinoxes. It follows that if both planes are represented in the mithraeum by the side-benches, *the central aisle*—strictly, the central line of the central aisle—*of the mithraeum represents the equinoctial diameter of the universe*. We may confirm this by noting that in the mithraeum, at least in the Sette Sfere Mithraeum, the two signs of the zodiac on the bench ends closest to the cult-niche are Pisces on the right side in the diagram and Aries on the left, and on the bench ends closest to the entrance they are Virgo (left) and Libra

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[15] In effect, the initiates collapse the famous chi-cross fashioned by the demiurge in Plato's *Timaeus* (36).

(right).[16] The spring equinox lies at the end of Pisces and the beginning of Aries, the autumn equinox at the end of Virgo and the beginning of Libra. It follows that in the mithraeum the cult-niche end of the aisle is indeed the spring equinox and the entrance end the autumn equinox.

In a very dense and difficult passage of *On the Cave* (24 [≈ §11 in Taylor 1823]) Porphyry tells us:

> To Mithras, as his proper seat (οἰκείαν καθέδραν), they [i.e., the Mithraists] assigned the equinoxes. Thus he carries the knife of Aries, the sign of Mars, and is borne on the bull of Venus; Libra is also the sign of Venus, Like Taurus.[17] As creator and master of genesis, Mithras is set on the equator with the northern signs on his right and the southern signs to his left.

For all its complexity, however, it is clear that Porphyry is talking here about the logic by which the Mithraists matched the microcosm of their mithraeum to the macrocosm as they apprehended it—in other words, how they incorporated "symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement."

Once we have established the basic equations, that the aisle of the mithraeum represents—and so *is*—the equinoctial diameter of the universe and that the spring equinox lies at the cult-niche end and the autumn equinox at the entrance end, much else falls into place. Furthermore, the intent of the passage of Porphyry quoted above becomes much less opaque.

Just as described by Porphyry, Mithras is indeed "set on the equator" and the equinoxes are his "proper seat." Specifically, his cult image occupies the spring equinox, commanding the diameter

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[16] Of these four signs, only the image of Libra is reproduced at the Ostia: Sette Sfere website. Unfortunately, the images on this site, although labelled, are not numbered.

[17] The function of this middle part of the passage is to furnish proof from a combination of Mithraic iconography and astrological lore. I have suggested the supplement "Libra is Aphrodite's" in order to restore logic to the argument (Beck 1976).

of the universe from there to the autumn equinox at the foot of the aisle. Set where he is, Mithras does indeed have "the northern signs on his right and the southern signs to his left," the northern signs, as we have already noted, being those to the north of the equator (Aries to Virgo) and the southern signs those to the south of the equator (Libra to Pisces).[18]

The diameter at right angles to the equinoctial diameter in the macrocosm is the solstitial diameter, joining the summer solstice in Cancer (upper right in the diagram in fig. 2) to the winter solstice in Capricorn (lower left). How is this diameter instantiated in the microcosm of the mithraeum? There is no obvious feature that *crosses* the mithraeum at its midpoint that would correspond to the aisle that runs its length. Perhaps a notional line running from the beginning of Cancer to the beginning of Capricorn, if we can determine those points on the benches from the positions of the mosaic images of the signs of the zodiac? Fortunately, however, we are not reduced to this unsatisfactory expedient. Not coincidentally, surely, we find at the midpoint in the side of each bench a small niche.[19] These niches are non-functional. We may postulate, then, that by replication in the proper position—"proportionate arrangement" again!—they are the solstices, the summer solstice on the bench to the left in the diagram and the winter solstice on the bench to the right.

The solstices, from a Mithraist's perspective, are the most important points in the universe. For in Mithraic thinking they are the points at which the soul-journey, intimated by Porphyry in *On the Cave* 6 (the "mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again" [≈ §2 in Taylor 1823]), starts and finishes. The Mithraists were not alone in this belief. We find it also in Neoplatonic

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[18] Of the northern signs, the images of Taurus and Gemini are reproduced in the Ostia: Sette Sfere website; and of the southern signs, the images of Libra, Scorpio, Sagittarius, Capricorn, and Aquarius.

[19] See detailed illustrations of the niches at the Ostia: Sette Sfere website. The location of these niches can also be seen in figure 1 (in this essay, above).

speculation, where Proclus (*In R.* 2.128.26–129.13) attributes it to Numenius explicating Plato's "Myth of Er":

> By 'heaven' he means the sphere of the fixed stars, and he says there are two chasms in this, Capricorn and Cancer, the latter a path down into genesis, the former a path of ascent . . . and introduces a further enormous fantasy (τερατολογίαν) with leapings (πηδήσεις) of souls from the tropics to the equinoxes and returns from these back to the tropics, leapings that are all his own and that he transfers to these matters, stitching the Platonic utterances together with astrological concerns and these with the mysteries (συρράπτων τὰ Πλατωνικὰ ῥήματα τοῖς γενεθλιαλογικοῖς καὶ ταῦτα τοῖς τελεστικοῖς).[20]

Numenius, in Proclus's rather censorious view, makes a patchwork of Plato, astrology (τοῖς γενεθλιαλογικοῖς), and the mysteries (τοῖς τελεστικοῖς). It should now be obvious whose mysteries—more strictly, "initiations"—Numenius intended: the Mysteries of Mithras. The astrology simply rode in with these "initiations."

Porphyry too alludes to this belief that the soul enters through a gate at the summer solstice in Cancer and departs through another gate at the winter solstice in Capricorn (*On the Cave* 21–22 [≈ §10 in Taylor 1823]):

> Taking the cave as an image and symbol of the cosmos, Numenius and his pupil Cronius assert that there are two extremities in the heavens: the winter tropic than which nothing is more southern and the summer tropic than which nothing is more northern. The summer tropic is in Cancer, the winter tropic is in Capricorn. . . . (22) Two of these [i.e., signs of the zodiac], Cancer and Capricorn, the theologians treated as gates. . . . Numenius and Cronius say that the gate through which souls descend is Cancer and the gate through which they ascend is Capricorn. Cancer is northerly and suited for descent, Capricorn southerly and suitable for ascent.

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[20] Greek text from Kroll 1899–1901; trans. Lamberton (1986, 66–67), with minor changes and a correction (ἰσημερινά = "equinoxes," not "solstices").

It is noteworthy that neither Proclus nor Porphyry in *On the Cave* 6 (≈ [§2](#) in Taylor 1823) speaks of *teaching* the initiates anything about "the descent of souls and their exit back out again" through these solstitial gates. The mithraeum was indeed an instrument, but it was not a teaching aid. It was an instrument for getting the initiates down from heaven and back out again *in a mystery*. How precisely the mystery was effected must wait until further pieces of the picture are in place.

After the passage from *On the Cave* 24 (≈ [§11](#) in Taylor 1823) quoted earlier, Porphyry continues: "They [i.e., the Mithraists] set Cautes to the south because of its heat and Cautopates to the north because of the coldness of its wind."[21]

Cautes and Cautopates are deities of the Mithras cult—and of no other.[22] In appearance they are small clones of Mithras and they are present in representations of his adventures, notably the bull-killing scene. They are twins, differentiated solely by the fact that one of them, Cautes, carries a raised torch, the other, Cautopates, a lowered torch. Cautes thus represents, among other things, ascent and Cautopates descent. In our present context, then, the descent of the soul into mortal genesis through the gate of the summer solstice (Cancer) would be represented by Cautopates, and the soul's ascent back out again into immortality through the gate of the winter solstice (Capricorn) by Cautes (Beck 2006, 107–12). And this is precisely what we find both in Sette Sfere and in the texts of Porphyry quoted above. Mosaic images of the torchbearers are found on the bench ends closest to the entrance.[23] Cautopates is set on the end of the bench carrying the northern signs (Aries to Virgo) and is

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[21] "Cautopates" was recovered in a brilliant emendation in the Arethusa edition of *On the Cave*.

[22] On Cautes and Cautopates see Hinnells 1976; Beck 1977; Beck 2006, index under "Cautes and Cautopates." See also the [website of Roger Pearse](#), which has a good illustration of *[CIMRM](#)* 254, a pair of statues of the deities from the Mitreo di Palazzo Imperiale, where they were positioned opposite each other in the mid-bench niches.

[23] The images are reproduced in the [Ostia: Sette Sfere](#) website.

thus to the right of Mithras in the cult-niche; Cautes is set on the end of the bench carrying the southern signs (Libra to Pisces) and is thus to the left of Mithras in the cult-niche. This is not only so at Sette Sfere, but also at every other mithraeum—admittedly rather few—where the torchbearers are represented as an opposed pair elsewhere than in the composition of the principal cult icon (Gordon 1976, 127 with n. 47). Once again cosmic symbols are found appropriately positioned.

Before turning from zodiacal signs to planets, we should look briefly at the "climates," whose symbols are also said to be "proportionately arranged" in the mithraeum. The climates of the universe are bands circling the celestial sphere to the north and south of its equator.[24] The arrangement of the celestial climates in both macrocosm and microcosm is shown in figure 3. In the upper diagram (fig. 3a) we view the macrocosm side-on,[25] essentially as in figure 2, though with the celestial equator and the ecliptic shown simply as straight lines. In the lower diagram (fig. 3b) we see the plan of the mithraeum from above, as in figure 1. However, the benches with their signs have been opened out so as to pair the signs into their proper climates, three north and three south of the ecliptic. The climates will play no further part in our story, but it was important to introduce them in order to show that Porphyry and/or his sources knew what they were talking about *technically* when they spoke of "symbols of the elements and *climates* of the cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement" in the archetypal mithraeum.

And so to the planets. Symbols of the planets are shown in two forms at Sette Sfere. One form is as anthropomorphic representations in mosaic on the fronts of the benches,[26] as shown by name and placement in figure 1. Since the benches represent the ecliptic/zodiac, the placement of the planets in particular signs would seem to replicate an actual or ideal celestial configuration
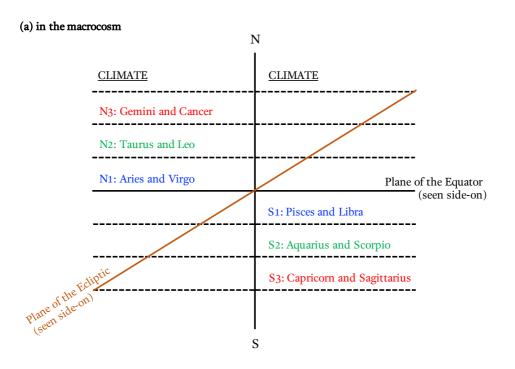
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[24] See above, n. 11.

[25] The point of view is from *outside* universe, supposing such a thing possible!
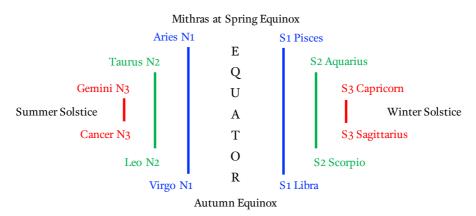
[26] These images are all reproduced in the Ostia: Sette Sfere website.

Figure 3:
The disposition of the "climates of the universe" (a) in the macrocosm and
(b) in the microcosm of the mithraeum (the example of Sette Sfere)

Drawings by R. Beck
Fig. 3a reproduced (with permission) from Beck forthcoming (Fig. 3)
Fig. 3b reproduced (with permission) from Beck 2015, 1672 (Fig. 150.2) and Beck forthcoming (Fig. 4)

(a) in the macrocosm

N

CLIMATE   CLIMATE

N3: Gemini and Cancer

N2: Taurus and Leo

N1: Aries and Virgo   Plane of the Equator
                                        (seen side-on)

S1: Pisces and Libra

S2: Aquarius and Scorpio

S3: Capricorn and Sagittarius

Plane of the Ecliptic
(seen side-on)

S

(b) in the microcosm

Mithras at Spring Equinox

Aries N1   S1 Pisces
            E
Taurus N2   Q   S2 Aquarius
            U
Gemini N3   A   S3 Capricorn

Summer Solstice   T   Winter Solstice

Cancer N3   O   S3 Sagittarius

Leo N2   R   S2 Scorpio

Virgo N1   S1 Libra

Autumn Equinox

(Beck 1979). Only six of the seven planets are represented on the side-benches. The missing seventh is the Sun. The obvious inference to be drawn is that he is not missing at all, but is present as Mithras in the icon of the bull-killing, set in the cult-niche at the spring equinox, which is the point of transition from Pisces into Aries![27]

More important from our perspective is the other representation of the planets as a sequence of seven undifferentiated mosaic arcs extending up the aisle. These seven arcs are understood by all to represent the seven planetary spheres—hence of course the mithraeum's name.

This feature is unique to Sette Sfere, and it is not possible to argue that it is implicit in other mithraea in the way one can argue that the replication of the northern and southern semicircles of the ecliptic/zodiac in the side-benches is implicit in an indeterminate number of mithraea lacking explicit symbols of the zodiacal signs on the benches. Nevertheless, one can plausibly claim that at Sette Sfere—and only at Sette Sfere—there is a representation of that other part of the soul-journey, the descent down through and the ascent back up through the seven planetary spheres.

Origen (*Cels.* 6.22) alludes to both parts of the journey, and says, moreover, that the Mithraists have a symbol for them—not indeed one constructed into the mithraeum itself, but a "seven-gated ladder and an eighth [sc. gate] on top":

> These things [i.e., the celestial ascent of souls] the λόγος of the
> Persians [i.e., the Mithraists, as in Porphyry] and the τελετή of
> Mithras intimate. . . . for there is therein a certain σύμβολον of
> the two celestial revolutions (περιόδων), that of the fixed stars
> and that assigned to the planets, and of the route of the soul
> through and out (διεξόδου) of them. Such is the σύμβολον: a

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[27] As I have already mentioned, the tauroctony on display *in situ* at Sette Sfere is a reproduction of what was *probably* the mithraeum's original icon (see the illustration at the Ostia: Sette Sfere website). If so, it is interesting that here at Sette Sfere the lining of Mithras's billowing cloak displays five stars and a crescent—i.e., the Sun's six planetary colleagues who appear in mosaic on the side-benches!

seven-gated ladder and an eighth gate on top (κλῖμαξ ἑπτάπυλος, ἐπὶ δ᾽αὐτῇ πύλη ὀγδόη).

In sum, then, the soul descends into mortal genesis through the summer solstice in Cancer, located in the mithraeum at the midpoint of the bench on the left, marked at Sette Sfere (and in some other mithraea in the area of Ostia, Rome, and vicinity) by a small niche; it departs back out again in apogenesis through the winter solstice in Capricorn, likewise marked by a niche in the bench opposite. From the gate of entry in the sphere of the fixed stars at the summer solstice the soul descends sequentially through the spheres of the planets, represented at Sette Sfere—and at Sette Sfere only—by the seven mosaic arcs in the floor of the aisle; and through the same seven spheres, in reverse order of course, it ascends again to the gate of exit at the winter solstice.[28]

Porphyry, in section 6 of *On the Cave* (≈ §2 in Taylor 1823), claimed in effect (1) that the mithraeum was known esoterically as a "cave"; (2) that it was designed and constructed as an "image of the cosmos"; (3) that it was so designed and constructed for the purpose of "inducting the initiate into a mystery of the descent of souls and their exit back out again"; and (4) that it realized its intended form as a literal microcosm by incorporating "symbols of the elements and climates of the cosmos" in "proportionate arrangement." The evidence of actual mithraea as well as of two other literary sources (Proclus and Origen) confirms Porphyry's assertions, at least for a limited number of Mithraic communities in central Italy.

The mystery instantiated in the mithraeum affords an answer *in experience* to the twofold question: "whence, by what route, and under whose aegis did I come here?" and "whither, by what route, and under whose aegis do I depart?"

The experience will have been of two sorts: (1) *cognitive*, the experience of *apprehending* the mithraeum in whole and in its parts as an authentic and functional image of the universe; and (2) *ritual*,

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[28] On the planetary spheres in Mithraic thought about the soul-journey, see Beck 1988, 73–85.

the experience of *enacting* within this microcosm "the descent of souls and their exit back out again."

The specifics of the ritual are lost. Presumably it involved movement or, more likely, signaling by gesture descent from the summer solstice (middle of the left bench in the diagram in fig. 1) to earth in the centre of the mithraeum at the intersection of the universe's solstitial and equinoctial diameters; then ascent and "exit back out again" from the central earth to the winter solstice in the middle of the opposite bench (on the right in the diagram). Proclus (see above) mentions "leapings of souls from the tropics to the equinoxes and returns from these back to the tropics," and ties them with "initiations," which are surely Mithraic. Could this allude to some dimly comprehended ritual of processing around the mithraeum with stations at both ends, i.e., the equinoxes, as well as at the midpoints of the benches, i.e., the solstices (tropics)? If so, we already know the significance of processing clockwise or counterclockwise. To move clockwise (black arrow at bottom of diagram in fig. 1) is to move westward and so replicate the westward rotation of the universe; to move counterclockwise (orange arrow at top of diagram) is to move eastward and so replicate the eastward revolutions of the planets around the zodiac. Finally, at Sette Sfere, to process up the aisle across the seven mosaic arcs is self-evidently to pass through the seven planetary spheres. But does this movement replicate descent or ascent—or both? If one has to choose between the two, I would favor the latter, i.e., ascent, if only because the anthropomorphic representation of the Moon, whose sphere is the lowest and closest to earth, is at the entrance end of the left bench, while the representation of Saturn, whose sphere is the highest and closest to heaven, is at the cult-niche end of the right bench. Further, it is appropriate that progress "up" the aisle from entrance to cult-niche should replicate ascent from earth to heaven rather than descent from heaven to earth.

The routes of genesis and apogenesis we have determined. To the question "under whose aegis?" the answer, if it was ever in doubt, is surely now evident: Mithras. The soul descends and

returns under the aegis of Mithras, as "demiurge and lord of genesis," set on his "proper throne" . . . "at the equinoxes." In the mithraeum, he is represented as the bull-killer,[29] set in the cult-niche at the spring equinox facing the autumn equinox at the opposite end of the aisle, which is the diameter of the universe, a setting intimated, as Porphyry (*On the Cave* 24 [≈ §11 in Taylor 1823]) attests in tortuous astrological logic, by symbols of both equinoxes.[30] There enthroned, he has on his right the northern signs of the zodiac, the gate of entry in Cancer, and Cautopates, the Mithraic divinity carrying a lowered torch who presides over descent into genesis; and on his left the southern signs, the gate of exit in Capricorn, and Cautes, the divinity with a raised torch who presides over ascent back out into apogenesis.

Two questions remain. First, was the cycle of genesis and apogenesis and the soul's "descent and exit back out again" thought to be repeated? Unfortunately, there is not a scrap of evidence pointing one way or another. Secondly, was genesis considered a misfortune and apogenesis desirable? Did Mithraism harbor the "life is death and death is life" paradox? Generally, the ethos of the monuments suggests that in Mithraism material life and corporality were considered good, a legacy, I would still say, from its Iranian antecedents. There is no intimation of gnostic horror at the material, and no intimation of the soul's ascent as an escape through essentially malevolent powers at the gates through the planetary spheres. In Mithraism the seven planets were benevolent, and especially so as the guardians of the seven grades of initiation (Beck

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[29] There is no evidence that the bull-killing *enables* the descent and ascent of souls—of all souls or just Mithraic souls. Of course, there may have been some speculative talk among Mithraists about it, but it cannot be a lost item of Mithraic "theology" or "doctrine" for the simple reason that Mithraism was not that sort of theologically doctrinal religion.

[30] In Sette Sfere (fig. 1), observe that "the knife (μάχαιραν) of Aries, the sign of Mars" appears not only in the icon of the bull-killing in the cult-niche, i.e., at the spring equinox, but also by itself as a mosaic in the floor at the entrance—where it is close to the image of Mars on the bench on the right!

1988, 1–11). One concludes, then, that both the way down and the way up were good. For a Mithraist the universe was well disposed.

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The Cosmology of the Raising of Lazarus (John 11–12)

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I. Method and Questions

The aim of this essay is to bring out the function of chapters 11–12 within the overall structure of the Fourth Gospel in order to elucidate the precise manner in which this text imagines the "porosity" between death and life, of which Jesus's raising of Lazarus is a striking example. With such an agenda and relatively few pages at our disposal, we need to be brisk in presenting and arguing for the essential claims. The method of what follows has two sides to it, the practice of which calls for the reader's anterior appreciation. There is first a literary approach which considers the text from the usual perspective of agents, time, place and events and their connections or the opposite.[1] Here the question is whether John chapters 11–12 should be taken to form a single unit or not. And the answer is that they should. Then there is a philosophical approach which delves below the narrative level to a more conceptual level and asks for broader explanations for the actions and events described at the narrative level. Here the question is whether—corresponding to the supposed unity at the literary level—there is a unifying theme or point of substance that the text is intended to bring across to its readers. And the answer is that there is. It is a premise of this essay that John is consciously working on both the literary and the philosophical level and that the collocation of narrative elements is meant to point to the broader philosophical motifs that together articulate the point of the text.

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[1] The classical account of John's various techniques in this field is Culpepper 1983.

The reader should be warned, however. What I offer below is an intense, that is, detailed, analysis of various sections in John 11–12 that may easily lead the reader off track. It is necessary to proceed in this manner in order to bring out the precise way in which certain texts in chapter 12, not least, the concluding section of 12:44–50, serve to explain in philosophical and cosmological terms how the story of the raising of Lazarus that is narrated in chapter 11 is to be understood. If one is after exactly how the "porosity" of life and death shown in the Lazarus story should be understood, then one has to bring in chapter 12 (so I argue and aim to show against most other interpreters).

The reader should also be warned that the reading I am offering here reflects a much broader understanding of the Fourth Gospel that employs Stoic cosmology and epistemology as a heuristic reading lens.[2] Essential features of this reading that are directly relevant to understanding the raising of Lazarus are these:

(i) The λόγος of the Prologue and the πνεῦμα of John the Baptist's witness about Jesus's baptism (1:32–34) are two sides of the same phenomenon (one cognitive and the other physically active) that is present in Jesus during his lifetime, governing both what he says and what he does, including his raising of Lazarus from death to life.

(ii) By contrast, neither the πνεῦμα nor the full λόγος is present among any of Jesus's followers during his lifetime, and this explains why although they may well come to "believe in" him in some less than fully adequate form, they will never during his lifetime obtain a full understanding of who he was and is. An example of this is Martha in the Lazarus story.

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[2] I develop this approach in a forthcoming book, provisionally entitled *John and Philosophy: A New Reading of the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press). The practice of employing Stoicism to throw light on New Testament texts has a certain pedigree by now (not to speak of all its predecessors, e.g., Bultmann 1910). See in general Rasimus, Engberg-Pedersen, and Dunderberg 2010 and Thorsteinsson 2010. For Paul, see Engberg-Pedersen 2000, 2010, and—behind it all—the collected works of Abraham J. Malherbe (2014). For John in particular, see Buch-Hansen 2010.

(iii) However, the πνεῦμα and the full λόγος do become available to Jesus's followers after his death and resurrection, itself engineered by the πνεῦμα. Then Jesus both blows the πνεῦμα into the disciples (20:22) and sends it to them in the form of the 'Paraclete' (cf. chapters 13–16). From then on they will both fully understand who Jesus is and will also themselves become able to "enter the kingdom of God" (3:5), that is, be resurrected into eternal life in heaven, and again as engineered by the πνεῦμα (3:8). It is this final event that is prefigured—even prematurely so: already during Jesus's lifetime—in the raising of Lazarus.

In all this it is the unity of the cognitive side (the λόγος) and the concretely physical side (the πνεῦμα) as reflected in Jesus's sayings and doings during his lifetime and even after his death and resurrection (chapter 20) that explains the "porosity" between death and life that is narratively shown in the story of Lazarus. For this unity suggests that the overall cosmological framework within which John sees the story of Lazarus (and indeed the whole story of Jesus Christ) is one that may be further elucidated in terms of Stoicism. And then one may actually come to see how the "porosity" of life and death may be understood in the case of Lazarus.

II. ARGUMENTS FOR LITERARY UNITY

The first argument for literary unity of the two chapters focuses on the roles of Mary, Martha, Lazarus, the high priests and Pharisees and the crowd in 11:1–12:19.[3] (i) The three major narrative figures

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[3] Few scholars see John 11–12 as a single unit. Dodd (1953) took chapter 11 as a "sixth episode" called "The victory of Life over Death" (1953, 363) and 12:1–36 as a "seventh episode" called "Life through Death. The Meaning of the Cross" (1953, 368), while 12:37–50 constitutes an "Epilogue to the Book of Signs" (1953, 379). Barrett (1978) just divided the two chapters up into six separate sections (11:1–44; 11:45–54; 11:55–12:11; 12:12–19; 12:20–36; 12:37–50). Theobald (2009) found three sections in them (10:40–11:54; 11:55–12:36; 12:37–50). Brown (1966–1970) is better. He argues (1966–1970, 1:427–30) for seeing the two chapters as "an editorial addition to the original gospel outline" (1966–1970, 1:414), a claim that at least holds them together. Still, his "Part Four" ("Jesus Moves Toward the Hour of Death and Glory") only comprises

of chapter 11, Mary, Martha and Lazarus, are of course not forgotten in chapter 12. On the contrary, their roles are very distinctly carried over into that chapter when the occasion on which Jesus is anointed (12:3–8) is said to be a dinner party given by the three relatives at Bethany (12:1–2). Moreover, the literary equality of the two sisters that is strikingly spelled out in 11:21 (Martha: "if you had been here, my brother would not have died," NRSV) and 11:32 (Mary: "if you had been here, my brother would not have died," NRSV) is maintained by the anointing in 12:3–8: whereas Martha had a major role to play in chapter 11 in dialogues with Jesus (11:20–28, 39–40), Mary makes up for that in chapter 12 (12:3–8).[4]

(ii) The role of Jesus's raising of Lazarus as triggering the decision of the high priests and Pharisees to have him killed (11:45–46 plus 11:47–53, 57) is spelled out even more clearly in chapter 12 when it is connected with their decision to put Lazarus to death as well, and for the same reason (12:9–11).

(iii) The role of the crowd of "the Jews" behind the decision of the high priests and the Pharisees (11:45–46; 12:9–11) is spelled out further in chapter 12 when it is explicitly connected (12:12, 17–19) with the traditional motif of Jesus's entry into Jerusalem (12:13–15).

11:1–12:36, while 12:37–50 constitutes a wholly independent "Conclusion to the Book of Signs" (1966–70, 1:xii), with 12:37–43 being "An Evaluation of Jesus's Ministry to His Own People" and 12:44–50 "An *Unattached* Discourse of Jesus Used as a Summary Proclamation" (1966–70, 1:xii, my italics). Better, though with little explicit argument, is Dietzfelbinger (2004, 7–8), who divides the text up a bit like Barrett (11:1–54; 11:55–12:11; 12:12–19; 12:20–36; 12:37–43; 12:44–50), but at least brings the whole text together under the title "Teil C: Der Weg zur Passion" (2004, 7). Lincoln (2005) both sees the whole of chapters 11–12 as a "Conclusion: move toward the hour of death and glory" (2005, 4, cf. 9) and also includes 12:36b–50 as the last subsection, called "Summary statement about the response to Jesus's signs and words" (2005, 5, cf. 9). But he also argues for seeing 12:16b–50—relatively independently, that is—as corresponding with 1:19–51 (2005, 7).

[4] This was well seen by Lincoln (2005, 316–17) when he asks whether the Lazarus episode goes as far as 12:19 (which he ends up denying, settling instead for 11:53).

In fact, it is highly noteworthy how skillfully John has woven the two traditional motifs of the anointing (12:3–8) and the entry (12:13–15) into a knot of narrative threads that hold chapters 11 and 12 tightly together.[5]

(iv) With 12:20 begins a new stage of the story line.[6] But it is closely connected with what precedes. The mention in 12:20 of "some Greeks" who were "among those who went up" (NRSV) to Jerusalem refers back both to 12:19 ("Look, the world [ὁ κόσμος] has gone after him!", NRSV) and also to 11:55 ("many went up . . . to Jerusalem," NRSV). Much more importantly, the motif of Jesus's "glorification"—meaning his death on the cross *and* subsequent resurrection (12:32–33)—is now brought in with full force, first when Jesus declares that "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified" (12:23 NRSV), and secondly when a voice from heaven responds to Jesus's prayer that God should now glorify his own name: "I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again" (12:28 NRSV). But the same motif had already been voiced at 11:4 when Jesus first heard of Lazarus's illness and then declared: "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it" (NRSV). Even more importantly, in 12:35–36 and 12:46 Jesus explicitly identifies himself with the "light" (φῶς) that has come into the world. But that idea was already adumbrated (if only more implicitly) in 11:9–10. In this way, not only is chapter 11 tied closely together with everything in chapter 12 up until 12:19, but the whole section of 12:20–50 belongs within the same literary unit.[7]

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[5] This observation may be extended to include also the traditional motif rehearsed in 12:37–40 of the lack of understanding of Jesus as having been generated by God.

[6] Brown (1966–1970, 1:469) is quite right in stating this: "From the viewpoint of thought sequence, the scene [of 12:20–36] is an ideal conclusion to chs. xi-xii." As we shall see, however, he should have included 12:37–50 in this.

[7] The point about the reference to φῶς across the supposed divide between 12:36 and 12:37–50 is particularly important. Bultmann (1941, 260–72) at least saw the connection when he excised both 12:44–50 and 12:34–36 from their

We should conclude that there are very good reasons for reading John 11–12 as a single literary unit. As we shall see, it makes good sense *also* to take 12:37–50 to conclude the whole of the Book of Signs.[8] But the primary task should be to see whether, and if so how, the various narrative elements of the literary unit together point to a unity of the two chapters also at the conceptual level.

III. A UNITY OF THEME

Literary unity is one thing; thematic unity is something else. Here the focus should be on Martha's dialogue with Jesus in chapter 11 (11:20–27, 39–40) and on the latter half of chapter 12 (12:20–50).

The overall theme is the proper understanding (cognition) of who and what Jesus is as shown by two actual events (fact): the raising from death to life of Lazarus and Jesus's own death and resurrection into eternal life. And the idea behind John's making this the theme is that if—and only if—Jesus's *followers* have that understanding (cognition), will they themselves obtain resurrection into eternal life (fact). In this—admittedly, quite complex—single theme, there is a tight interconnection between understanding (epistemology) and event (cosmology). As already noted, this reflects an intimate connection in John—reflecting the same in Stoicism—between λόγος and πνεῦμα.

The theme itself and its implication for believers are spelled out with all clarity in Jesus's dialogue with Martha when during their discussion of Lazarus's fate Jesus declares this (11:25–26): "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even though he dies, will live, and everyone who lives and believes in me will never die" (my translation). In other words, the fates of Lazarus, Jesus himself and all believers are the very same: overcoming death.

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present position and placed them together with material from chapter 8 (8:12 and 8:21–29) as remnants from an earlier "Lichtrede" ("Speech of Light"). However, 75 years later Bultmann's daring in his handling of the transmitted text seems altogether baffling.

[8] Cf. Dodd (1953), Brown (1966–1970), and Lincoln (2005) as quoted above in n. 3.

At the same time, the two verses also show the intimate connection that we need somehow to explain between "believing in Jesus" (cognition), and hence understanding who and what Jesus is, and oneself overcoming death (fact). We shall see that the two verses constitute the core of John 11–12 as a whole.[9]

Jesus immediately continues: "Do you believe this?" (11:26 NRSV), and Martha obligingly replies: "Yes, Lord, I believe that you are the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming into the world" (11:27 NRSV). However, as the later exchange between Martha and Jesus shows (11:39–40), the point of 11:25–27 is that Martha precisely does *not* understand what Jesus has just told her.[10] This theme of not fully understanding is then spelled out in 12:20–50.

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[9] I take the meaning of the two verses in the most literal sense, precisely as exemplified in the Lazarus story: "even though he dies," namely, literally and concretely, he "will live," again literally and concretely (though presumably in heaven). Similarly, "everyone who lives," namely, at present and quite literally and concretely, "will never die"; that is, *if* he dies—literally and concretely— then he will immediately come to live again—literally and concretely—though presumably again in heaven. For a characteristic German reading of the two verses that (in the wake of Bultmann) has John radically reinterpret in a present-oriented direction what is understood as "the whole future-oriented, dramatic eschatology" of "pharisaic-rabbinic expectations of the end time," see Theobald 2009, 734–36, esp. 734. Theobald himself cites another German, Jörg Frey (1997–1999, 3:452), for "inserting into the text the notion of a future *bodily* resurrection of believers" (2009, 735, his italics). To my mind, the identity of meaning in ζήσεται in 11:25 and ζῶν in 11:26 and the clarity and simplicity of such a reading point decidedly in Frey's favour. By contrast, the exegeses of Brown (1966–1970, 1:425) and Lincoln (2005, 324) seem marred by the fact that they operate with something called "spiritual life" (which is not explained). The general understanding of eschatology in John is treated exhaustively—and to my mind wholly convincingly—in Frey 1997–1999. Frey's primary target was the whole tradition going back to Bultmann.

[10] The reading of 11:27 is a famous *crux interpretum*. Bultmann (1941, 308) found it "impossible to understand how many exegetes could say that Martha did not understand Jesus correctly." Theobald (2009, 736) defends Bultmann's reading by the wholly apposite reference to 20:31, where the first two of Martha's epithets are again mentioned as constituting the proper content of πιστεύειν. He does not, however, note that 20:31 adds this: "that

In this section, Jesus partly describes his own upcoming fate of death and resurrection (12:23, 27–33). Like Martha, however, the crowd does not understand: "We have heard from the law that the Messiah remains forever. How can *you* (then) say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who *is* this Son of Man (anyway)?" (12:34 NRSV, with added italics and words in parenthesis). Here it is quite clearly implied that there are two elements in the crowd's expectations that are mistaken. They think that if Jesus were the Messiah, then he should "remain forever." And they do not at all understand Jesus's talk of the Son of Man's being lifted up. By implication, if one believes in Jesus in the proper way, one will understand him not just as the Messiah, but as the Messiah who is going to be lifted up (on the cross and into heaven).

The theme of not understanding is spelled out further in 12:37–43, which states that in spite of all Jesus's signs (not least, of course, the greatest one of Lazarus's revival) "they did not believe in him" (12:37). Well, many did, even among the authorities, but not enough to confess it (12:42). The reason given for this (12:43) is that "they loved human glory more than the glory that comes from God" (NRSV). This is of crucial importance since it brings in the notion of "glory" (δόξα), which John has also introduced immediately before when he states that Isaiah had seen Christ's "glory" (12:41). What the authorities who "believed in him" (12:42) should have seen—and already in all Jesus's signs since they were precisely signs—was Jesus's "glory," which was also God's "glory." In fact, they should have seen the intimate relationship between Jesus and God to which God himself has just referred when he claimed that he had

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through believing you may have *life* in his name" (NRSV). What one must believe is that Jesus is the Messiah and the Son of God *as* giving (resurrection and) life. *Then* one will also *get* it. Lincoln (2005, 324–25), who also refers to 20:31, is on the right track when he notes that it is "striking . . . that, complete as Martha's Christological confession is, it makes no explicit reference to what Jesus has said about resurrection and life" (2005, 325). His further reflection points in exactly the correct direction, also by invoking Martha's lack of understanding at 11:39–40.

"glorified" his name, namely, in Jesus, and is about to "glorify it again" (12:28). Moreover, this is precisely the "glory" that will become wholly clear when Jesus is "lifted up" and resurrected. Once again we see that what is called for in "believing in Jesus" is believing in him as having a quite special identity which is about to be revealed in his resurrection.

In both 12:34 and 12:37–43, then, the theme is that of either not believing in Jesus at all or believing in him as the Messiah within a more or less traditional Jewish frame of thinking. What the text aims to show is that whether one believes in that way or not will in any case not be enough. Jesus is *more* than that.

This comes out in the whole section when Jesus also describes both those who follow him (for the term, see 12:26) in the proper way (12:24–26, 35–36) and also who and what he himself is (again 12:35–36 and then 12:44–50). His followers must die, for example, by hating their souls (12:25). Then they will keep their souls "for eternal life" (12:25 NRSV) and God will "honour" them (τιμήσειν, 12:26 NRSV), which probably equals "glorify" them (δοξάζειν). Also, while they have "the light," they must "walk" accordingly (12:35) and "believe in *the light*" (12:36). Then they will "*become* children of light" (12:36).

It should be immediately clear that this kind of "believing in Jesus" differs quite drastically from the kind of "believing in Jesus" reached—or not reached—by the crowd or the Jewish authorities. It is a cognitive attitude to Jesus which results in people's obtaining "eternal life"—a notion we should no doubt take completely literally in the way it has just been prefigured by the raising of Lazarus—and in that sense becoming "sons of (the) light," that is, of Jesus himself. *The whole purpose of the concluding section of the text, 12:44–50, is to spell out what "believing in the* properly *understood Jesus" (cf. 12:35–36) will then mean.* And the answer is: their own resurrection to eternal life.[11]

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[11] Note in this reading how 12:35–36 and 12:44–50 come out as spelling out the "extra" content of "believing in Jesus" *in relation to 12:34 and 12:37– 43*, respectively. This is further—and I think quite strong—confirmation that

IV. Light, Reasoning, Spirit, and
Afterlife in Stoicism

John 12:35–50 takes up three crucial concepts from the Prologue: light (φῶς), reasoning (λόγος) and life (ζωή). In addition, as we shall see, it presupposes one more concept—that of spirit (πνεῦμα)—which is also implicitly present in the Prologue (1:13), but which comes to the fore later in chapter 1 (1:32–33)—and also makes an initially enigmatic appearance in connection with the raising of Lazarus (11:33, cf. 38). To see what is implied in John's use of these four concepts, we must now make a detour over the way they were connected in Stoic cosmology and epistemology.[12]

Cosmogony and Cosmology

In the Stoic monistic and materialistic cosmology, the whole world is kept together by πνεῦμα, which is an especially fine form of the two uppermost (fire and air) out of four material elements (fire, air, water, earth) that together constitute the world. Πνεῦμα extends throughout the world—in inanimate substances in the form of ἕξις ("tenor"), in plants in the form of φύσις ("physique") and in animate beings in the form of ψυχή ("soul")—but is found in its most refined and powerful form in heaven (e.g., in the stars). At the famous Stoic "conflagration," when the whole world as it were returns into God, the lowest worldly elements are gradually transformed and refined into their upper neighbours and the whole process comes to an end when everything has become πνεῦμα in a single flash of light, which is also God. Out of this flash—variously called αὐγή and φλόξ by the

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across various supposed divisions, 12:34–50 constitutes a single, coherent text. Just as 12:35–36 goes with 12:34, so 12:44–50 goes with 12:37–43. In the latter case we might bring out the inner connection (in the form of an explicit *contrast*) of 12:44–50 with 12:37–43 by translating the transition at 12:44 as "Jesus, however [δὲ, marking the contrast], cried aloud, saying . . . ."

[12] The following account is intended to be standard. I will give references where matters may be controversial. An extremely helpful presentation of central texts with brief and lucid discussion is to be found in the relevant parts of Long and Sedley 1983.

Stoics—the world is then created anew, only to undergo the same transformation back into God at a later stage.[13]

Cognition

This materialistic account of the world also has a cognitive side to it. God is not only materially creative: he also knows (in fact, everything). God is knowledge. To the material entity of the πνεῦμα corresponds the λόγος, which is God's cognitive reasoning as expressing his knowledge.[14] The reason why one should understand the λόγος here as (active) reasoning instead of (passive) knowledge is that the Stoics understood everything in the world in fundamentally dynamic terms. It is all a matter of change and transformation.[15]

Human Knowledge

With the πνεῦμα as the bearer of God's λόγος in shaping and transforming the world in all its corners, the conceptual duality of πνεῦμα and λόγος also has a special role to play in relation to human beings. Here the λόγος—and a correspondingly powerful, "high-tension" πνεῦμα—is what distinguishes human beings from all other beings in the world, apart from God himself.[16]   In fact, the

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[13] For φλόξ (Cleanthes) and αὐγή (Chrysippus), see Philo in *SVF* 2.611. For texts and discussion of the cosmology I have summarized, see Long and Sedley 1983, §44 ("Principles"), §45 ("Body"), §46 ("God, fire, cosmic cycle") and §47 ("Elements, breath, tenor, tension"). For the possible relevance of the Stoic notion of conflagration to early Christianity, see van der Horst 1998.

[14] For the intimate connection of πνεῦμα and λόγος in Stoicism, see a quotation from Origen in *SVF* 2.1051: "God's λόγος, which descends to human beings, even the lowest ones, is nothing other than bodily πνεῦμα."

[15] This basic feature is developed very well in Christensen 2012, which remains "the most philosophically sophisticated short introduction [to Stoicism]" (as noted by Anthony Long 1974, 254). Christensen contrasts the dynamic character of the Stoic worldview with the much more static character of the world in Plato and Aristotle. Compare also Long and Sedley (1983, 1:321), who speak of the Stoics' "dynamic materialism."

[16] For "high tension" of the πνεῦμα in νοῦς ("reason") and λόγος ("reasoning"), see Philo in *SVF* 2.458–59.

possession of λόγος connects human beings so closely with God that the Stoics operated with an ideal human being—the Sage—who was in the last resort identical with God.[17] He was also as rare as the Bird Phoenix and hence no threat to the universal fallibility of human beings.[18] Still, ordinary human beings were able—from time to time and only partially—to reach an understanding that could be aligned with that of the Sage and God. When that happened, they had knowledge.[19]

Speech

Such knowledge was to be found in the "governing part" of the human soul, which the Stoics placed in the heart. It took the form of what they called the "*logos* of the mind" (ἐνδιάθετος λόγος) or thought as opposed to the "*logos* of expression" (προφορικὸς λόγος), which consisted in speech. The Stoics developed a detailed theory about the way in which the λόγος of the mind was materially transported by πνεῦμα from the heart into the throat and was there articulated by the tongue, etc., into intelligible speech.[20]

Survival After Death

The central role of the πνεῦμα and the Sage in Stoicism also comes out in what they had to say about human survival after death.[21] Of the human soul they said this: "that is why it is a body (σῶμα) and remains after death (μετὰ τὸν θάνατον ἐπιμένειν). But it is destructible

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[17] Compare Christensen 2012, 20: "only God has indubitable knowledge, or perhaps someone structurally identified with God, which will turn out to be the Stoic Sage." See also Diogenes Laertius and Cicero in *SVF* 3.606–07.

[18] See Sextus Empiricus in *SVF* 3 Diogenes of Babylon 32: "since their Sage has not been found until now."

[19] Importantly in connection with John, the Stoics held that full or genuine "knowledge (ἐπιστήμη) was only to be found in the Sages," see Sextus Empiricus in *SVF* 2.90.

[20] See *SVF* 2.144, 836, 880, and 894; also Long and Sedley 1983, §53 ("Soul").

[21] For this see, in particular, Hoven 1971; also Long 1982.

(φθαρτή)."[22]   There is a difference, however, in the length of their survival: "Cleanthes, on his side, (said that) all (souls) remain (ἐπιδιαμένειν) until the conflagration; Chrysippus, by contrast, (said that) only those of the Sages (did so)."[23] Another fragment makes the same point:

> (1) They [the Stoics] say that the soul is subject to generation and destruction. When separated from the body, however, it does not perish at once but survives on its own for certain times, the soul of the virtuous up to the dissolution of everything into fire, that of fools only for certain definite times. (2) By the survival of souls they mean that we ourselves survive as souls separated from bodies and, while the souls of non-rational animals perish along with their bodies.[24]

The difference is probably to be explained by the fact that the souls of ordinary human beings consist of πνεῦμα that is less refined, whereas that of the Sage is so refined that it belongs cosmologically at the level of the stars and will therefore not be transformed until the conflagration.[25]

What happens at death, then, is that the fine πνεῦμα which makes up the human soul in the living person is detached from the body of flesh and bones, which was held together and made fit for being the body of a human being by another, less refined portion of πνεῦμα.[26] In the words of Anthony Long (1982, 53), it rises "balloon-like" from the body that is now left behind as a corpse.

Strange as the theory may seem to us, what we find in Stoicism is a coherent account of the creation and destruction of the world

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[22] Diogenes Laertius in *SVF* 2.774. See also *SVF* 2.809–22.

[23] Diogenes Laertius in *SVF* 2.811.

[24] Eusebius in *SVF* 2.809, see Long and Sedley 1983, §53W, whose translation I have quoted.

[25] Compare Galen in *SVF* 2.788, who says that "the wisest soul is a dry flash (αὐγὴ ξηρή)," which is appropriate since "the stars (ἀστέρας) are flashy (αὐγοειδεῖς) and, being dry (ξηρούς), have the sharpest understanding."

[26] For this interpretation, which operates with two types of 'soul' in the living human being, see, in particular, Long 1982.

pivoting around God: God creates the world and the world returns to God. Within this cosmological—and indeed, cosmogonic—picture of the world, the Stoics also situated human beings by positing that they in principle had a chance to enter into the return to God, a chance that would however only be fulfilled by the proverbial Sage, who would survive after death until the conflagration.[27] The key to all this lies in the material πνεῦμα, which also had a cognitive side to it.

V. THE UNITY OF THEME CONTINUED

If we read John 12:35–36 and 44–50 in the light of various features of this Stoic theory—and also, as we shall see, in the light of John's Prologue and chapter 1 as a whole—what we get is the following.

Jesus, so he claims, is "the light" (12:46 and 35–36). He is also, as we know from the Prologue, the λόγος that was with God at the creation (1:1). In that λόγος was "life," "and the life was the light of human beings" (1:4). Elsewhere, I have argued that Jesus came to be these things when—as witnessed by John the Baptist—the fourth relevant entity, the πνεῦμα, descended upon him from heaven and remained there (Engberg-Pedersen 2012; for more detail, see also Engberg-Pedersen forthcoming). Quite literally and cosmologically, the physical πνεῦμα that came from God's heavenly, life-spending light and was a carrier of God's λόγος came to be present at a single place in the world: in Jesus of Nazareth. That is how the λόγος "became flesh" (1:14). From then on, Jesus—and he alone until the end of the Gospel when he blows it into his disciples (20:22)—carried around in him the πνεῦμα, which enabled him to do and say what he did.

Seen in this light, Jesus's injunction in 12:36—"While you have the light, believe in the light, so that you may *become children of light*" (NRSV)—obtains its full meaning. The hearers must believe in him not just as what they have (half-)understood him at 12:34 to claim to be: the Messiah. Instead, they must understand him to be

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[27] In a way, *everything* in the world returns to God. Only in the Sage, however, will the ascent be perfect.

God's own, heavenly, life-spending light in the full cosmological sense of this.[28] Then they will themselves become "sons of that light." What this alludes to is their own resurrection. They only have "the light" among themselves for a little while (12:35). Then Jesus himself (12:32) as the Son of Man (12:34) will be "lifted up" (12:32, 34), that is, both crucified and resurrected. If they believe in that light (cognition), then they will also themselves be resurrected (fact).

This is one of the places where one should begin to see the inner unity of theme of chapters 11–12 taken together: from the raising of Lazarus by Jesus, who is himself "the resurrection and the life" (11:25), via Jesus's own death and resurrection, which is prefigured by the raising of Lazarus, to that of those who believe *fully* in him: "the one who believes in me, even though he dies, will live" (11:25). But exactly how are these events understood to take place—the raising, the resurrection, the belief and the consequent resurrection of believers? And how are they connected?

Let us consider the raising of Lazarus. When Jesus saw Mary and the Jews weeping, "he snorted in (his) spirit and stirred (or shook?) himself" (ἐνεβριμήσατο τῷ πνεύματι καὶ ἐτάραξεν ἑαυτόν, 11:33). This sounds far more physical than what one finds, for instance, in the rendering of a distinguished Johannine scholar, Raymond Brown (1966–1970, 1:421): "he shuddered, moved with the deepest emotions."[29] Later when he came to the tomb itself, Jesus "again

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[28] Note that cosmology was introduced in John already at 1:3: "All things *came into being* through it (the λόγος), and without it not one thing *came into being*." (NRSV with a repeated change of "him" to "it" and parenthesis added).

[29] Similarly, Theobald (2009, 738), in a good discussion, argues for finding a reference to an *inner* agitation, both in ἐμβριμᾶσθαι and in ταράσσειν ἑαυτόν. This might be supported, in the case of ἐμβριμᾶσθαι, by the addition in 11:38 of ἐν ἑαυτῷ ("in himself"). The reference for ταράσσειν to four other places in John where the same term is used (12:27; 13:21; 14:1, 27) is of little help, however, since there the verb appears in middle and passive forms and in two cases with an explicit reference to the "heart." By contrast, in 11:33 Jesus "agitates himself." Bultmann (1941, 310 n. 4) took this—rightly, I think—to refer to a "pneumatic agitation" ("pneumatische Erregung") and emphasized

snorted in himself" (ἐμβριμώμενος ἐν ἑαυτῷ, 11:38). He then tells people to remove the stone in front of the tomb (11:38–39) and after a brief conversation with Martha that shows her utter lack of understanding (11:39–40), when the stone has been removed (11:41), Jesus does something very odd: "Jesus looked upwards and said, 'Father, I thank you for *having heard* me. I knew that you always hear me, but I have said this for the sake of the crowd standing here, so that they may believe that you sent me'" (11:41–42). Then he proceeds to "cry out with a loud voice, 'Lazarus, come out!'" (11:43)—and so he did (11:44).

When is Lazarus "raised," that is, brought back from death to life? And how did it happen? The clear implication of 11:41 is that even if we decide—as we no doubt should—that it happens when Jesus calls to Lazarus to come out of the tomb, the precondition for its happening must have occurred *prior* to Jesus's prayer to God, in fact, on the two occasions when he "snorts."[30] And the meaning of that must be that Jesus here actualizes the πνεῦμα, which in itself always links him with God (by 11:42), so that it will produce the revival of Lazarus for which he has come. Lazarus was raised by means of the πνεῦμα which Jesus had received from God in the way described by John the Baptist in chapter 1 of the Gospel. This physical power from above, which Jesus is constantly carrying around, was able to perform a radical transformation of Lazarus's corpse into a living human being.

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that the expression identifies the affect as being "self-generated" ("selbsterzeugt"). I suspect that whatever Jesus did, it was both "inner" and "outer." Theobald (2009, 738) is on the right track when he comments on a suggestion of Bultmann's: "Erwähnenswert ist die These, dass *embrimasthai* ursprünglich ein thaumaturgischer Terminus ist, der die pneumatische Erregung des Wundertäters vor seiner Tat bezeichnet (»er schnaubte auf«, seine ganze göttliche Kraft zusammennehmend . . .)." However, both he and Bultmann found this meaning only in John's supposed source, not in the evangelist himself.

[30] The aorist ἤκουσας in 11:41 clearly means "you heard me" on an earlier occasion (which I rendered as perfect above).

Let us consider in this light the conclusion of the whole piece: 12:44–50. This text is far more carefully constructed than immediately appears.[31] It both draws explicitly on the Prologue and also constitutes a distinct conclusion to chapters 11–12, in particular to the underlying question in these two chapters of what it is that one must believe in believing in Jesus. As the conclusion to chapters 11–12, it also constitutes a kind of summary of the whole Book of Signs, articulating—in a way that reaches back to the Prologue—the ultimate understanding of Jesus that the whole Book of Signs is pointing towards. Obviously, the text merits our close attention.[32]

John 12:44–45 gives a first answer to the question of who and what Jesus is. Believing in (12:44) and "seeing" (12:45) Jesus—presumably for what he in fact is—are believing in and seeing "the one who has sent me," that is, God. We know in what way God has "sent Jesus," namely, by sending his πνεῦμα over him. It is by having God's πνεῦμα in him that Jesus has the kind of direct access to God himself that he actualized in raising Lazarus. The point of 12:44–45 is, then, that believers "in Jesus" should see *that*. They should see *God* in Jesus. And they should see Jesus as *sent by* God when he sent his πνεῦμα over him.

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[31] Barrett (1978, 433) rightly notes that "it is important to note the points that are selected and the way in which they are combined." I am not convinced, however, that he himself quite succeeds in this. Ashton (2007, 518) rightly states that the passage "is a carefully constructed piece, belonging . . . to the last stage of the composition of the Gospel." His own suggested "chiastic" analysis (2007, 518–19 n. 42) is neither very convincing nor very helpful and leads him to this slightly baffling comment: "In my view, detailed literary analyses of this kind have only a limited value, since the most they can prove is that the passage in question *can* be read as a tightly structured whole. It is idle to pretend that this method is more objective than any other. None the less it does serve to direct attention to certain features of the text which might otherwise be disregarded" (2007, 519 n. 42 his italics). Theobald (2009, 837) ascribes the passage to a "Redaktor" who intended "ein kleines johanneisches Glaubenskompendium zu schaffen." As the conclusion to chapters 11–12—prefigured in 12:35–36—it is much more than that.

[32] I have found no commentator to voice the reading given below of 12:47–48, in particular.

With 12:46 the text explicitly recalls the Prologue and states the ultimate purpose of God's activity in Jesus. The "I" (ἐγώ) that is Jesus is also the light (φῶς) of the Prologue that has come into the world, sent by God in order that "everyone who believes in me should not remain in the darkness" (NRSV), that is, in order that all who believe in Jesus as the full figure of the Prologue and the present passage may *themselves* move into the light or (in the words of 12:36) "become sons of the light." Here the focus is very clearly on God's purpose in having "sent" Jesus (12:44–45) and Jesus's in having "come" (12:46). That purpose lies in removing believers from the "darkness" of the world. What this concretely means becomes clear at the end of the text: that they will obtain "eternal life" (12:50). How it will be achieved is stated in the next two verses (12:47–48).

In 12:47–48 Jesus makes clear a number of points about his mission that are all concerned with the proper way of believing in him. He does it in negative terms by focusing on the person who "hears my words (ῥήματα) and does *not* keep them" (12:47 NRSV, italics added) or "rejects me and does not receive my word[s] (ῥήματα)" (12:48 NRSV, with additions at the end).[33] Such people will be judged. At this point of summarizing the whole of the Book of Signs John obviously aims to have Jesus repeat the point that he has made many times before: that this is a time of "judgement"— compare 3:17–19, but also within our text itself 12:31: "Now is the judgement of this world" (NRSV).

Just as important, however, are the positive points that Jesus makes. First, Jesus "has come not to judge the world, but to save the world" (12:47). So, the positive point already stated in 12:46 of

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[33] In the light of the mistranslation that NRSV unfortunately shares with so many others of λόγος in John as the "word" (12:48), or even the "Word" (1:1, 14), it is particularly baffling that they translate ῥήματα here in the singular as "word"—in a verse where they also go immediately on to translate λόγος as "word." Have they not seen at all John's play on the relationship between Jesus's spoken utterances (the ῥήματα) and the λόγος that lies behind them? (More on this below). Or is it just a misprint?

removing believers from the darkness is about "salvation." Secondly, the precondition for this is both "hearing" Jesus's "words" (ῥήματα), "keeping" them and "receiving" them. This is clearly important. For Jesus has been speaking ῥήματα all through the Gospel. But it also remains somewhat unspecific: what ῥήματα, in particular? The answer is twofold: both everything Jesus has said throughout the Gospel and now says in this final speech in the Book of Signs from 12:23 onwards and also much more specifically his ῥήματα, that is, his individual spoken words, as reflecting and being an expression of the λόγος that lies behind them all. This comes out, thirdly, in Jesus's play in the two verses on who or what it is that will judge those to be judged "on the last day" (12:48): "the λόγος that I have spoken, *that* (ἐκεῖνος) will judge" the unfortunate person on the last day, not Jesus himself.[34] What Jesus does here is clearly to invoke the divine λόγος as lying behind his own individual ῥήματα. And that is also how the text proceeds (12:49). What matters to us at present, however, is the relationship John presupposes here between Jesus's ῥήματα and the λόγος. In the light of the Stoic theory of speech alluded to above, we may take it that John saw the divine λόγος, which also lies behind God's having "sent" Jesus and his own having "come," as being present within Jesus as an ἐνδιάθετος λόγος (a *logos* in the mind), carried there by the πνεῦμα he received from heaven and then being expressed in the spoken, articulated "words" (ῥήματα) that stream out of his mouth, that is, in his προφορικὸς λόγος (a *logos* of expression). Or to be wholly explicit: Jesus's ῥήματα express the λόγος *together with* the πνεῦμα which wholly literally carries the underlying, inner λόγος into Jesus's mouth to be articulated there in the form of individual ῥήματα. Or as John has it elsewhere, "He whom God has sent speaks the words (ῥήματα) of God, for he [God]

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[34] I propose that we understand ὁ λόγος ὃν ἐλάλησα as follows: "the reasoning (or plan, see below) that I have spoken," that is, *expressed* and *articulated* in speech. (See more below). Incidentally, it is highly noteworthy that where in the Gospel of Mark (3:28–30) Jesus draws a somewhat similar distinction between "blaspheming" against himself (implied) and against something else (which is what matters), the other thing is "the holy πνεῦμα."

gives the Spirit (πνεῦμα) without measure" (3:34 NRSV).[35] We begin to see here that one may discover a whole theory of Jesus's relationship with God that has a striking—and wholly concrete—simplicity to it (once one has seen it). When Jesus received God's πνεῦμα from above, he also received God's divine λόγος within him. *Both* entities lie behind what Jesus says throughout the Gospel (at the level of cognition and speech). And *both* also lie behind what he does (at the level of action and event, as in his raising of Lazarus).

With such an understanding of the relationship between Jesus's ῥήματα and the divine λόγος, how, more precisely, should we understand the latter? How should the term be translated? Earlier in this essay I have hinted at the translation "reasoning." This may be supplemented with a close neighbour: "plan." What will judge nonbelievers on the last day is God's own plan for saving human beings from the "darkness" of the world, the plan that was put into practice when God "sent" Jesus and so forth. That plan is, of course, all that the Prologue speaks about—as does, precisely, 12:44–50 at the end of the Book of Signs. Jesus himself—as sent by God to save the world—*is* the plan (the λόγος carried in him by the πνεῦμα).

With 12:49–50 the text reaches its conclusion. Jesus now explicitly states that it is God who lies directly behind everything he has said. In this way he refers back both to 12:44–45, which spoke of God's having *sent* Jesus as does 12:49, and to 12:46–47, which spoke, as we have just seen, of the relationship between God's divine λόγος and Jesus's concrete ῥήματα. It is noteworthy in this connection that Jesus now speaks twice of God's "injunction or ordinance" (ἐντολή) given to Jesus about what he should say and speak. The content of that injunction will clearly be everything Jesus has in fact said throughout the Gospel, which has all been directed at making clear the central truth about himself. Equally clearly the content will be

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[35] Let it be noted here that a full analysis of John 11–12 would bring in the whole of the programmatic chapter 3, too, which is focused on the πνεῦμα, together with 5:17–47, which among other things speaks of "the dead (οἱ νεκροὶ)" "hearing (ἀκούσουσιν) the voice of the Son of God" and coming to "live (ζήσουσιν)" as a result (5:25, 28–29).

what Jesus has just said in 12:23–48 since that section has precisely articulated that central truth. Then it is particularly striking that the text ends by explicitly stating what God's injunction is, means or implies: "eternal life" (12:50). With this we are again back in the Prologue (cf. 1:4). But even more importantly, the reader is now made to see exactly what is meant by "eternal life" and how it will be brought about. "Eternal life" is resurrected life, and it will be brought about when the πνεῦμα and λόγος that lie behind Jesus's ῥήματα *operate in those* who come to believe in Jesus *as* the φῶς and the carrier of the λόγος and πνεῦμα. That happens when they do not merely "listen to" Jesus's ῥήματα, but have themselves come into possession of the λόγος and πνεῦμα that *underlie* those ῥήματα and so "hear" them properly (cf. 12:47). Then they will come to believe in Jesus in the full sense: as one who has been sent by God and carries around God's λόγος and πνεῦμα, and as one who died, but whose death only had the form of a "lifting up," which means that he has returned to God borne there in some transformed form by the πνεῦμα which he had received to begin with. When human beings come to "believe in the light" (cf. 12:36) in *that* sense, then they will also eventually themselves be transformed by the πνεῦμα into "becoming sons of the light" (again 12:36) and obtaining "eternal life" (12:50). Just as Jesus has risen to heaven ("balloon-like" like the Stoic Sage and by means of the πνεῦμα that God has given him), so his followers will rise to heaven in the same way once they have obtained the πνεῦμα.

Summarizing on 12:44–50, I am claiming that two features of 12:44–50 bring in the πνεῦμα even though it is not explicitly mentioned. The first is the concatenation of notions which this text shares with the Prologue, namely, light, λόγος and life. These three notions are connected in the Prologue—so I have argued elsewhere and also described here—as part of a wholly concrete cosmology with affinities with Stoicism, the fourth entity of which is the πνεῦμα that is brought in at 1:32–33. The second feature of 12:44–50 is the theory of Jesus's speech (the relationship between ῥήματα and λόγος) that is articulated in 12:47–48, which also presupposes the πνεῦμα as

the physical side of the λόγος. The further claim is, then, that the text almost explicitly connects two things about believers: how they come to believe, at the cognitive and epistemological level, in Jesus in the full sense that entails a proper understanding of his relationship with God and his role in God's plan (the λόγος), and how alongside obtaining such a belief they will also come to obtain eternal life on an ontological and cosmological level. In both cases, the responsible agent is the πνεῦμα that Jesus possesses since he has and is the λόγος. And in both cases, too, the result comes about through the way the πνεῦμα acts on those human beings who have received it and thereby have become full believers.[36]

VI. CONCLUSION ON JOHN 11–12

John 11–12 is held tightly together in literary terms not just across the chapter division but also across the divides at 12:19/12:20 and 12:36/12:37, where scholars have almost universally found strongly marked divisions. This unity is further substantiated by a unity of theme at the conceptual level. The latter has two sides to it. It first consists in bringing out the inner connection between the raising of Lazarus, the eventual resurrection of Jesus himself and then, as the ultimate goal, the resurrection of believers away from the "darkness" of the present world. Secondly, it consists in human beings' coming to believe in Jesus as representing just that set of events, namely, that "I am the resurrection and the life. The one who believes in me, even though he dies, will live" (11:25), as said by Jesus just before he proceeds to raise Lazarus from the dead. Not only must people understand him to be the Messiah, the Son of God, the one coming

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[36] I should make it explicit here (see also below) that as I understand John's account, none among Jesus's followers during his lifetime on earth managed to obtain the understanding of who Jesus is that goes into "believing in him" in the fullest sense. For such "believing" they needed the πνεῦμα, and during Jesus's time on earth only he was in possession of that (cf. 7:37–39). The πνεῦμα was only made available to Jesus's followers after his death (cf. 20:22 and chapters 13-16 on the 'Paraclete') when they would also obtain it through baptism (3:3–8) and in the Eucharist (6:51–63).

into the world or someone who has been sent *from* God: they must also understand that having been sent by God, he will now return *to* God through his resurrection.

The two sides of the unifying theme are more closely connected than might initially appear. Human beings will only come to believe in Jesus in the proper way once they have themselves come to possess the whole λόγος that lies behind those individual ῥήματα of his that stream out of his mouth. That happens after Jesus's own death and resurrection when he blows the πνεῦμα into them (20:28) and gives them the 'Paraclete' (chapters 13–17). During Jesus's lifetime on earth, by contrast, "there was no Spirit, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (7:39 NRSV). When they have received the λόγος through the πνεῦμα, the πνεῦμα, which lies directly behind the raising of Lazarus and is also operative—one must suppose—in the resurrection of Jesus himself, will also bring about the resurrection of his followers so that they may at long last "enter the kingdom of God" (3:5). In this way the λόγος-πνεῦμα duality has both an epistemological and cognitive role—of making people fully understand Jesus—and also an ontological and cosmological role—of eventually resurrecting them into eternal, heavenly life.

VII. Radical Transformation and Porosity
between Life and Death

The Fourth Gospel understands the resurrection of human beings (Jesus included) into eternal life concretely as a radical transformation that will leave the present world of "flesh" (σάρξ) completely behind.[37] Everything points in the direction of taking John to have seen the (physical) πνεῦμα as the power that would operate this transformation, as it is almost explicitly said to have done in the case of Lazarus. This whole, superficially quite strongly dualistic

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[37] This is the clear implication of a text like 3:3–21, with its strong emphasis on the need for the πνεῦμα "from above" (3:3–13) in opposition to σάρξ (3:6) below (3:12) as a precondition for "seeing" (3:3) and "entering" (3:5) the kingdom of God.

conception does not appear to leave much room for a notion of a form of "porosity" between life and death.

In fact, however, the precise cosmological, almost Stoic way in which John appears to have understood his notion of resurrection opens up for a more differentiated view. If the present argument has been on the right track, there is a cosmological story (already adumbrated in [John 1:3](#)) underlying the idea of resurrection to the effect that it is God's πνεῦμα that may literally and physically penetrate the world (in the first instance, Jesus) from above—that is, from its (cosmological) abode in heaven—and perform the (still quite radical) transformation on and of human beings that Jesus is striving through its means to achieve. In the Stoic picture on which we have been drawing, the πνεῦμα belongs both above and below (though with different degrees of refinement) and so overcomes any dualism. But here too there is an especially refined form of πνεῦμα that belongs above and probably accounts for the particularly long-term survival of the human Sage when at his death it rises balloon-like from his dead body to stay in heaven like a star. In John the πνεῦμα is much more exclusive since it is very specifically divine as belonging above. Still, here too it may come down into the world (in Jesus) and also become operative in human beings at large, thereby turning them into full believers who will eventually themselves be literally resurrected through its means. Thus in both Stoicism and John the supposed radical transformation of resurrection from death to life is generated by a power that is physical and directly active in the world, though perhaps more as *part* of the world in Stoicism than in John. To that extent—that is, if we understand the Johannine notion of radical transformation and resurrection from death to life within a unified cosmological framework along Stoic lines—there is in fact a kind of porosity between death and life, even in the Johannine case. The Johannine idea of resurrection is not just "mysterious" or "spiritual" in a more modern sense, but well situated within an ancient cosmological way of thinking that allows for even radical changes of human beings within a unified cosmology.

At the same time, however, it has to be recognized that the Fourth Gospel thrives upon a sense of a dualism between the divine and the human. It was only when the πνεῦμα had been literally *sent* from above—marked by God with an explicit voice from heaven (1:33)—that Jesus became the carrier of this new power. Similarly at the end, when Jesus was about to be "glorified" (11:4) through Lazarus's illness and "lifted up" (12:32, 34) as a result of it, the operative power would presumably once again be the πνεῦμα, and here too distinctly marked by God with an explicit voice from heaven: "I have glorified, and I will glorify again" (12:28). The same sense of a divine-human dualism obviously lies behind the highly dramatic force of the story of the raising of Lazarus, even though we may now claim to understand its cosmological, pneumatic mechanics. Nobody expected anything other than that Lazarus was dead and a stinking corpse. But based on the divine power of the πνεῦμα, Jesus was able to call: "'Lazarus, come out!'" (11:43). In the last resort, this story speaks, not so much to a sense of porosity between death and life—even through a radical transformation—as to the presence of the divine on earth in the shape of the divine πνεῦμα.

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Coming Back to Life in and through Death:
Early Christian Creativity in Paul, Ignatius, and Valentinus[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Few figures in the early Christian movement were so variously understood and vigorously interpreted as the apostle Paul. Prominent within the spectrum of early Pauline interpretation are issues of resurrection and the nature of risen bodies. In this paper I explore trajectories of Pauline Christianity that emerge in the first two centuries of the Common Era. I am specifically interested in how Christ-devotees of this period understand themselves to be embodying death and coming back to life. I will demonstrate that, in the Pauline tradition, there are many ways of mapping notions of death and life to the human body; that, though Paul is quite forthcoming regarding the body and its place in his resurrection ideals, among his early readers we find a vast array of interpretive options and opinions. This is evident already in the earliest post-Pauline voices. For example, both the Epistle to the Colossians and the text we know as Ephesians build upon Pauline ideas of dying with Christ, while casting notions of resurrection within an explicitly realised framework (see Col 2:11–15; 3:1–17; Eph 2:1–10). These texts are usually located within a trajectory of thought that is traced

back to Paul,[2] and indeed related themes are pregnant in Paul's writings (comp. Rom 6:1–14).[3] But with equal weight, one cannot miss the apostle's very clear expectation of resurrection as a future event (e.g., 1 Cor 15; 2 Cor 5:1–5; 1 Thess 4:13–18), and this is brought forward into the Second Epistle to the Thessalonians and subtly in the much later Pastorals (cf. 2 Tim 2:18). The memory of Paul's thinking about resurrection, it seems, is marbled by interpretive creativity; creativity that attempts to negotiate both the apostle's own writings and the lines between death and life for those who follow in his footsteps.

One of the main axes on which early Christian creativity turns is that of temporality—*when has/will resurrection happen/ed*—and indeed, this is where much modern discussion has taken place.[4] But Paul and his early interpreters should not be so quickly put into a simple already/not-yet binary. Even a cursory reading of the sources quickly demonstrates that Paul utilises cosmological and somatic categories as much as he does temporal categories (see Tappenden 2016). In this paper I explore some of the conceptual mechanisms at work in early Pauline interpretive creativity as they relate to issues of death, life, and resurrection. My analysis will be anchored in the conceptual intertextures of 2 Cor 3–4, and the ensuing discussion will explore how two second-century readers of Paul—Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus—make use of the conceptual structures identified therein. I make no explicit claim to textual dependence, as if to say that Ignatius and Valentinus knew 2 Cor 3–4, or that they (un)consciously sought to read/interpret this specific Pauline passage. My interest is less in the exegetical use of Paul (e.g., citations or echoes) but rather in the extent to which Pauline modes of thought impress themselves upon these later writers, shaping

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[2] See, for example, Wedderburn 1987 or Käsemann 1969.

[3] For more, see my previous work on the subject (Tappenden 2016).

[4] See Lehtipuu (2015, 159–201) for a recent and thorough engagement of the issues surrounding resurrection and temporality in early Christian literature.

their mindsets and dictating their practices.[5] That is to say, I am interested in patterns of thought that are shared by Paul and those who self-consciously imitate/idealise him.

II. PAUL

Though it is generally recognised that Paul's resurrection ideals are bodily ideals, ancient and modern readers alike usually take up this dictum into debates about the precise nature of resurrected bodies. Surprisingly, much less emphasis is given to how Paul uses language of death and coming-back-to-life to frame human experience here-and-now. Such a usage can be demonstrated in 2 Cor 4, the passage with which this study begins.

In its present form, 2 Corinthians is a composite text consisting of various fragments that stem from a series of correspondences in the middle of the first century CE (cf. Mitchell 2005). For various reasons, distrust has festered between the Corinthians and Paul, and the former have been impressed by a certain group of Judean Christ-devotees who speak of ascent to heaven and other ecstatic experiences as the true signs of an apostle. Faced with the prospect of losing this *ekklēsia* to these so-called "super-apostles" (2 Cor 11:5), Paul offers in our fragment (preserved in 2 Cor 2:14–6:13 and 7:2–4) a reasoned and cordial, though also acute, intervention. The key passage is 2 Cor 3:12–4:18, where the apostle draws on the same kinds of traditions as his "super-apostle" counterparts, but does so in ways that creatively reconfigure those traditions.[6]

Before turning to the passage in detail, it will be helpful first to say a brief word regarding the kinds of themes I am looking for, and

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[5] Scholars generally agree that Ignatius did not know 2 Corinthians (Foster 2005; Holmes 2007, 174–75; cf. Koester 2000, 2:284). For Valentinus, there is some thematic overlap between Frag. 6 (= G) and 2 Cor 3:2–18, specifically with respect to the humanity-as-writing metaphor (cf. Perrin 2011, 129). Beyond this, however, our knowledge of Valentinus is so scant that we cannot make a secure judgment concerning his knowledge of 2 Corinthians.

[6] This examination of 2 Cor 3–4 draws on my previous work. For a full discussion, see Tappenden 2016, 190–207.

the theoretical framework in which those themes are identified. In recent decades, cognitive linguists have made important contributions to our understanding of the relationship between language, thought, and practice.[7] For these theorists, *concepts* are understood to be *embodied*, and metaphor is understood as a ubiquitous aspect of human cognition. So, for example, basic spatial concepts such as UP–DOWN, NEAR–FAR, and IN–OUT are understood to emerge organically from the kinds of bodies we have functioning in the kinds of environments in which we live. We learn these concepts because we have bodies that exist within a world where things can be above or below us, near or far from us, or where we can move into and out of things. Mark Johnson's (1987, 21) description of the CONTAINER schema is an excellent example of what is meant by the embodied foundations of concepts:

> Our encounter with containment and boundedness is one of the most pervasive features of our bodily experience. . . . From the beginning, we experience constant physical containment in our surroundings (those things that envelope us). We move in and out of rooms, clothes, vehicles, and numerous kinds of bounded spaces. We manipulate objects, placing them in containers (cups, boxes, cans, bags, etc.). In each of these cases there are repeatable spatial and temporal organisations. In other words, there are typical schemata for physical containment.

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[7] See especially Lakoff and Johnson 1980, 1999; Lakoff and Turner 1989; Lakoff 1987; Johnson 1987; and Fauconnier and Turner 2002. The intellectual roots of these theorists' works are somewhat opaque. To my knowledge a full intellectual history of the cognitive linguistic project has not been written, though some have offered cursory reflections (cf. Wolf 1994, 38–41). Lakoff and Johnson (1999, 97–98) briefly trace their project back to the work of phenomenologists such as John Dewey and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, though their discussion at this point is quite general and does not offer a detailed or thorough engagement. One of the richer assessments, even if it is not focused on cognitive linguistics specifically, is the work of Varela, Thompson, and Rosch (1991, 15–33), which engages both Western and Eastern philosophical and scientific traditions.

Such "repeatable spatial and temporal organisations" can also be identified for notions of verticality and proximity (cf. Johnson 1987, xiv and 14–21). Another way of putting all this is to say that we understand concepts such as VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT because we first experience these concepts with our bodies. And, as a correlate, this embodied grounding renders such concepts both intuitive and readily perceptible. Cognition and performance, then, are interrelated inasmuch as the substance of thought is found in everyday happenings and practices.

When considering Paul's address to the Corinthians, it is precisely these kinds of basic concepts—VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT—that are of interest in this study. How do these concepts relate to one another? How are they creatively blended, and are there recurrent patterns of blending? How are these concepts employed in the process of Paul's and his interpreters' construction of meaning? In answering questions such as these, the insights drawn from cognitive linguistics carry implications that are far-reaching, for conceptual and theological abstractions are always configured and understood metaphorically in relation to the concrete. And indeed, this is what we see Paul doing, even if his descriptions are at times convoluted.

The primary passage in 2 Corinthians that will command our attention is 4:7–18. In the broader epistolary context—throughout the address of 2:14–6:13—Paul employs a series of container metaphors that continually contrast and complement that which is IN to that which is OUT. At the fragment's outset (2:14–15), Paul's address is geared toward public (= outward) displays of credentials, and at its conclusion, Paul invites his readers into one another's hearts (= inward) with the hope that such inward conjoining will produce external boasting (6:11–13; 7:2–4). In 3:2–3, Paul characterises the Corinthians as letters written on the human καρδία, and this somatically inward letter stands in contrast to the (external) documents of papyrus that others might demand. The theme carries on into ch. 5 (esp. vv. 11–17), where Paul hopes that the Corinthians will boast about their knowledge of Paul that exists in their

"conscience" (συνείδησις), not like the super-apostles who "boast in appearances [πρόσωπον] but not in the heart [καρδία]" (5:12). This somatic mapping finds clearest articulation, however, in 3:12–4:6, where Paul contrasts Moses, the one who ascended to the presence of God, with those who are in Christ, who similarly ascend to the presence of God, though are privy to see the face of God's Great Glory, Jesus (4:6). While the ascent of the former was mountainous, the ascent of the latter is somatic; the one who sees the face of Christ does so not at a mountainous/heavenly pinnacle but rather in their own body's interior—indeed, in their "heart" (καρδία, 3:15–16). For Paul, ascent to heaven is simultaneously a movement into the body.[8] In all of this, Paul blends notions of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT together to create conceptual correlations between that which is UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT.

It comes as little surprise, then, that our passage opens in 4:7 with the metaphor of a clay jar. Here, the human body is characterised not only for its container-like quality, but also for the frailty and temporariness of its earthly state. I cite the passage here at length:

> But we have this treasure in clay jars. . . . We are being afflicted in every way, but not crushed; perplexed, but not despairing; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed; always carrying the death of Jesus in the body, so that the life of Jesus might also be revealed in our bodies [πάντοτε τὴν νέκρωσιν τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι περιφέροντες, ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ ἐν τῷ σώματι ἡμῶν φανερωθῇ]. For we who are living are always being delivered over into death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh [ἵνα καὶ ἡ ζωὴ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ φανερωθῇ ἐν τῇ θνητῇ σαρκὶ ἡμῶν]. So death is at work in us [ἐν ἡμῖν], but life in you [ἐν ὑμῖν]. . . .
>
> Therefore, we are not discouraged, because even though our outer person [ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος] is being destroyed, our inner person [ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν] is being renewed day by day. For our slight momentary affliction is bringing about for us an

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[8] It should be noted that this correlation finds resonance in Judean literature from the same period and just after (cf. Morray-Jones 2006).

> eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, [because] we are
> looking not at what can be seen but [at] what cannot be seen;
> for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is
> eternal. (2 Cor 4:7–18)

Paul maps notions of life and death to the spatial coordinates of the body, specifically the somatic interior and exterior. There are two key points I want to make regarding the passage. First is the recognition that Paul draws these connections not in ways that advocate strong binaries between opposites, but rather in ways that are premised on the interrelation of opposites. That which is IN *affects* that which is OUT; that which is UP *affects* that which is DOWN, and so on. There is a dynamic of mutual affectivity at work in Paul's understanding of the body here, such that distinct parts are seen to stand in both coherence and tension with each other. For this reason, Paul's use of the body thematic is developed not so much in the specific definitions that he gives to body parts and terminology, but more in the relationships that exist between spatial coordinates. How does that which is ABOVE the body relate to that which is BELOW, that which is FAR from the body relate to that which is NEAR, and crucially, that which is OUTSIDE of the body relate to that which is INSIDE? In 2 Corinthians (and throughout the undisputed letters; see Tappenden 2016), these somatic coordinates exist symbiotically, which is to say that they are premised on interrelated connectivity and mutual dependence.

This mutual dependence between somatic spaces is explicit in 4:7–18. The *death* of the exterior produces *life* on the interior, which in turn produces *life* on the exterior. Death *now* effects a coming-back-to-life *now* and a coming-back-to-life *then*. Crucially, the temporal referent is both present and future; thus Paul speaks of "always being delivered over into death for Jesus's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be revealed in our mortal flesh" (v. 11, the present dimension), and he contrasts outer and inner persons (the ἔξω and ἔσω ἄνθρωπος) with a teleological eye toward the invisible and the eternal (vv. 16–18, the future dimension). While the goal of coming back to life is certainly anchored in the future, in the present there is

a revivification process that is worked out on the spatial coordinates of the human body.

The second point, which builds on the first, is that Paul's logic of somatic interrelation and mutual dependence has specific communal import.[9] The sufferings and hardships that Paul and his apostolic counterparts endure are done not in isolation but rather on behalf of the Corinthians. No doubt this plays into the apostle's polemic with the so-called super-apostles. The logic is as follows: what happens to individuals (in this case, Paul and his companions) affects the community (the Corinthians). So Paul, "death is at work in us [ἐν ἡμῖν], but life in you [ἐν ὑμῖν]" (4:12; see also v. 15). In this way, Paul's suffering/dying produces life for the Corinthians.

Paul's resurrection ideals, then, are both individually and socially embodied. They are coordinated to the spatial parameters of the human body and are played out in the relationship between those somatic spaces. By employing the human body in this way, Paul is able to interchange creatively notions of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. This is seen in vv. 16–18, where the temporal present and future (i.e., NEAR and FAR) are brought into coordination with the somatic interior and exterior (i.e., IN and OUT). The text reads as follows:

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[9] This communal import is already seen in 3:12–18, where Paul develops this dynamic of mutual-affectivity with respect to communities and their idealised figures. There is a movement in these verses from somatic exterior to interior and back again. It begins in 3:13–15, where the veiling of Moses's face (OUT) in turn effects a veil on the hearts (IN) of those who read Moses, and continues in 3:16–18 where those who ascend to Christ have the interior veil (IN) removed such that their exterior face (OUT) is similarly unveiled. This latter movement from interior to exterior is less explicit in the text but is conveyed perhaps in the mirror metaphor of 3:18; it is a determinative limitation of the human body that one is unable to see one's own face without an external reflective aid, and a mirror enables such sight. For Paul, the mirror metaphor is a way of characterising the unveiled, already radiant inner heart looking out at the external, earthly face in anticipation of future pneumatic glory. For more, see Tappenden 2016, 193–99.

> Therefore, we are not discouraged, because even though our outer person [ὁ ἔξω ἡμῶν ἄνθρωπος] is being destroyed, our inner person [ὁ ἔσω ἡμῶν] is being renewed day by day. For our slight momentary affliction is bringing about for us an eternal weight of glory beyond all measure, [because] we are looking not at what can be seen but [at] what cannot be seen; for what can be seen is temporary, but what cannot be seen is eternal. (2 Cor 4:7–18)

Where is this *unseen renewed-life* to be found? I suggest it is both interior and upward. Where is the temporal referent in this text? I suggest that it is both now and then. That is to say, that which is "unseen" is itself embodied; it is both the transformed somatic interior that looks upon the face of God (4:7), and it is also the future risen body that will one day be transformed into a heavenly form. Hence where Paul's address moves next, as he goes on immediately in 5:1–10 to discuss the heavenly body (vv. 1–5) and then to speak of the interplay between earthly and heavenly somatic states (vv. 6–10). In all these ways, we find in 2 Cor 4:7–18 a vision of the apostle and his communities *coming back to life* as he/they *simultaneously die*.

It would seem, then, that for Paul death and life, mortality and immortality, present and future mutually interlace each other within the apostolic body and its relation to the Corinthian community. In Paul we find a dynamic of mutual affectivity that is elaborated somatically in relation to concepts of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. By blending spatial concepts such as UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT, Paul is able to conceptualise the process of coming back to life in various ways. He can at once express both life *in* death (movement from OUT to IN) and life *through* death (movement from DOWN/FAR to UP/NEAR). The two notions are isomorphic. In fact, the blending of these spatial orientations creates a kind of interpretive richness in Paul's writings. The conceptual complexity of UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT betrays a robustness in Paul's thought that should not be easily parsed out or separated. Accordingly, here, as elsewhere in the undisputed letters,

we encounter the Pauline conviction that bodies matter; in this instance, it is with respect to the permeability of life and death, and the insistence that both individuals and communities encounter death (DOWN/FAR/OUT) and life (UP/NEAR/IN) in their somatic selves and their communal identities. In 2 Cor 4:7–18, bodies serve not only to connect Christ-devotees to one another, but they also function as the primary carriers and spaces in which death and coming back to life are realised.

III. IGNATIUS OF ANTIOCH

We have seen that correlated blends of UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT constitute a rich conceptual web within Paul's address to the Corinthians. How might these conceptual configurations be received and used by those who self-consciously follow in Paul's footsteps? In this section and the next I explore the surviving writings of two early and roughly contemporaneous readers of Paul's letters: Ignatius of Antioch and Valentinus. There is nothing about these two figures that naturally links them, other than the fact that they both admire and seek to emulate Paul, and further that they, like Paul, hold convictions about notions of coming back to life that permeate their thinking and practices. Of particular interest are the ways that Ignatius and Valentinus configure notions of death and coming back to life via concepts of VERTICALITY, PROXIMITY, and CONTAINMENT. In the analysis that follows I explore the extent to which shared patterns of description can be found between the writings of these two figures, and further how those patterns compare with Paul's blending of the same concepts.

We know of Ignatius principally from the seven letters that bear his name.[10] In this series of epistles, which were penned presumably in the early to mid-second century,[11] the self-identified bishop of Antioch is currently in transit under imperial escort to Rome where

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[10] With the majority of modern scholars, I take as genuine the sevenfold Ignatian corpus (see Foster 2005, 2007; Holmes 2007).

[11] Cf. Holmes 2007, 167. On the date of Ignatius, see Foster 2005; Holmes 2007.

he expects he will die. In many ways, the bishop's journey from Syria to Italy is more spectacle than history (cf. Schoedel 1985, 11–12). Exactly what has precipitated Ignatius's journey is not known; what is clear is that the prospect of death stands squarely before him. It is perhaps because of this strong realisation that Ignatius turns unequivocally to the heroes of his faith—especially Paul. His writings are replete with reflections on impending death and are self-stylised in a way that imitates the Pauline epistles.[12]

However else we read Ignatius's letters, we must see them within the context of one who believes that his expectations of coming back to life are about to be tested.[13] On more than one occasion he insists that he is "not yet perfected in Jesus Christ" and that he is "only beginning to be a disciple" (*Eph.* 3.1; see also *Eph.* 1.2; *Pol.* 7.1); similarly, it is only when death and suffering are complete that Ignatius will "rise up free in [Christ]" (*Rom.* 4.3).[14] The relation of life to death advocated here takes a more linear focus: life follows death rather than emanating within it,[15] and resurrection remains

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[12] See, in part, Reis (2005), but also Smith (2011) and Pervo (2010). Like Paul, Ignatius travels from east to west, writing letters, encouraging and warning various *ekklēsiai*, and ultimately welcoming suffering (and death) as the medium/means of true life in Christ. On this point, Pervo (2010, 138) notes: "he was following the path of the great apostle. Ignatius knew, identified with, and imitated Paul as an itinerant, a writer of letters, and a leader who suffered for his faith."

[13] Paul Foster (2007, 102) rightly notes that the "prospect of death in Rome shaped Ignatius's thinking and the rhetoric he employed throughout all seven [of his] epistles."

[14] Translations of Ignatius are either my own or, when indicated, from Holmes 2007 (at times with slight alteration); the embedded hyperlinks connect to the older Loeb edition (Lake 1912–1913).

[15] For example, death is the necessary passageway through which one "attain[s] God" (θεοῦ τευξόμεθα, *Magn.* 1.3 [≈ 1.2 in Lake 1912–1913]; see also *Rom.* 1.2; 4.2; 5.3). This is expressly clear in the *Epistle to the Magnesians*, where the bishop insists that Christ's life is "in us" (ἐν ἡμῖν) only if we "freely choose to die into his sufferings" (ἐὰν . . . αὐθαιρέτως ἔχωμεν τὸ ἀποθανεῖν εἰς τὸ αὐτοῦ πάθος, 5.2). The statement is made in the context of employing a two-ways theology so as to insist, "all things have an end, and two things together

squarely in the future (for example, *Trall.* Salutation; 9.2; *Pol.* 2.3).[16] In the *Epistle to the Smyrnaeans*, for example, God is described as the believer's "reward," and the Smyrnaeans are to "endure all things" so as to "attain him" (9.2).[17] Earlier in that same letter (*Smyrn.* 4.2–5.3), in a passage presumably formulated with docetic ideologies in mind, Ignatius makes an experiential appeal:

> For if these things were done by our Lord in appearance only, then I am in chains in appearance only. Why, moreover, have I surrendered myself to death, to fire, to sword, to beasts? But in any case, "near the sword" [ἐγγὺς μαχαίρας] means "near to God" [ἐγγὺς θεοῦ]; "in the middle of the beasts" [μεταξὺ θηρίων] means "in the middle of God" [μεταξὺ θεοῦ]. Only let it be in the name of Jesus Christ, so that I may suffer together with him [συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ]! I endure everything because he himself, who is the perfect human being, empowers me. (*Smyrn.* 4.2; trans. Holmes 2007, slightly adapted)

The spatial metaphors are worth noting in detail. Ignatius blends both "suffering" and "God" into a single location; being *with* or *in* death means being *with* or *in* God. Outi Lehtipuu (2015, 167 and 170) notes the ambiguity that surrounds *resurrection* in Ignatius's letters, particularly highlighting this blurring of suffering/death with expectations of coming-back-to-life. For Lehtipuu, this ambiguity reflects broader trends within martyrological literature whereby "the suffering and death of the martyr is his or her resurrection. . . . resurrection [is] a direct ascent to heaven" (p. 170). In a way, then, Ignatius does integrate life *into* death, and for this reason it is not surprising that he too, like Paul, speaks of "suffer[ing] together with

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lie before [us], death and life" (*Magn.* 5.1). Here, the way of life is marked not so much by wisdom or righteousness, but rather by martyrdom.

[16] Eschatology is generally muted in the Ignatian letters. For example, there is no discussion of a future judgment/setting right (Schoedel 1985, 18 and 20–21; see also Koester 2000, 2:286).

[17] The notion of "attaining God" is frequent across the Ignatian letters (occurring some 19 times) and is always expressed as a future possibility (as noted in Schoedel 1985, 28–29).

[Christ]" (συμπαθεῖν αὐτῷ, 4.2).[18] But for Ignatius, the experience of suffering/death is of a different kind than it was for Paul. Death and life are certainly intertwined, though the bishop's expectation is absolute in nature (i.e., an encounter with God in *conclusive* suffering and death) while the apostle's is more dynamic (i.e., an encounter with God in the midst of *ongoing* suffering and death). For Ignatius, life is not so much being realised in the present as it is beckoning from the grave.[19] This betrays a life *through* death rather than a life *in* death pattern.

Much like Paul in 2 Corinthians, Ignatius too develops the theme of individual-affecting-community, though for him the direction of impact is reversed. Central here are metaphors of VERTICALITY, which are developed with respect to the hierarchy of ecclesial offices and the rhetoric of concord. Thus, for Ignatius, "ecclesial harmony manifests, imitates, and arises from divine concord" (Maier 2005, 314; cf. *Eph.* 3–6; *Magn.* 2–3, 6–7, 12–14; *Trall.* 2–3).[20] In such a formulation there is a blending of VERTICALITY and CONTAINMENT; because earthly concord (DOWN) imitates divine concord (UP), social boundaries of unity (IN/OUT) are understood as manifestations of celestial order. Accordingly, UP and IN are blended, though Ignatius elaborates these spatial categories not with a view toward coming back to life (as Paul does), but rather with an eye toward establishing communal unity to bolster his bid for life *through* death.[21] That is to

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[18] See also *Magn.* 5.3, where Jesus's passion is understood as believers' resurrection.

[19] Ignatius's strong sense of *telos* is evident in the fact that when he talks about death he also talks about resurrection (e.g., *Phil.* 9.2), which indicates the sense of progression he presumes: one leads to the other.

[20] While Ignatius at times draws comparisons with divine and apostolic figures (e.g., *Trall.* 3.1), emphasis is consistently placed upon obedience to the bishop; so Foster (2007, 94), "the relationship of believers to the bishop reflects the union between the Church and Jesus, and that of Jesus to the Father (*Eph.* 5.1)."

[21] Hence Ignatius's plea to the Romans: "Pray for me, that I may reach the goal. I write to you not according to human perspective [κατὰ σάρκα] but in

say, Ignatius deploys his stress on communal oneness in a way that reverses Paul's logic of one-affecting-all. It is not that Ignatius's sufferings benefit those who read him, but rather that the oneness and concord of his addresses enables his own *achievement of God*. Accordingly, when writing to the Romans, Ignatius insists that their inactivity and their silence plays an active role in enabling his martyrdom (*Rom.* 7.1). Whereas martyrdom is reserved only for certain figures, concord and ecclesial oneness are the proper activities to which all Christ-devotees should ascribe (Maier 2005). To eschew such concord and oneness is to engage in a "schismatic" (σχίζω), and those who do so "will not inherit the kingdom of God" (βασιλείαν θεοῦ οὐ κληρονομεῖ, *Phil.* 3.3). The *telos* of "attaining God"—of gaining life *through* death—is achieved not only through martyrdom (as for select individuals) but also through proper concord, harmony, and oneness (for communities).

This is not to say that notions of death's permeability are only teleological in Ignatius's writings. In his *Epistle to the Ephesians*, the bishop notes that believers have already been "rekindled" (or "inflamed with new life" [ἀναζωπυρέω], 1.1),[22] and he describes the eucharistic bread as "the medicine of immortality, the antidote which [we take] not to die but to live in Jesus Christ through all [things]" (20.2). For Ignatius, there is a sense in which the lines between death and life are eroded in ritual performance; as also in Luke, the meal functions as an encounter with both Christ's crucified and risen bodies (*Smyrn.* 6.2; comp. Luke 22 and 24; on Luke, see Tappenden 2012).[23] Both sides of the Christ narrative are maintained, and

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accordance with the mind of God [κατὰ γνώμην θεοῦ]" (*Rom.* 8.3; trans. Holmes 2007).

[22] Similarly, Ignatius is quite happy to envision the Ephesians as engaged in celestial worship, "hoisted up to the heights by the crane of Jesus Christ, which is the cross" (*Eph.* 9.1). This brings the eschatological into the present.

[23] Though note, Ignatius refers not to the "body and blood" of Christ in the Eucharist but rather to the "flesh and blood" of Christ (cf. *Phil.* 4.1; *Smyrn.* 6.2; see also *Smyrn.* 3.2). The Gospel of Luke contains its own variety here, speaking both of the "body . . . [and] new covenant in my blood" (22:19–20) while also describing the risen Christ "being made known in the breaking

Ignatius's own conviction regarding his impending suffering and coming back to life is likened to the post-apparition experiences of the apostles:

> For I know and believe that he was in the flesh even after the resurrection; and when he came to Peter and those with him, he said to them: "Take hold of me; handle me and see that I am not a disembodied demon." And immediately they touched him and believed, being closely united with his flesh and blood [κραθέντες τῇ σαρκὶ αὐτοῦ καὶ τῷ αἵματι]. For this reason they too despised death; indeed, they proved to be greater than death. And after his resurrection he ate and drank with them like one who is composed of flesh, although spiritually he was united with the Father. (*Smyrn.* 3.1–3; trans. Holmes 2007)

The language here is not only that of PROXIMITY but also of CONTAINMENT—the verb κραθέντες (aorist passive participle from κεράννυμι) draws from a culinary frame so as to indicate the "mixing" of separate substances (e.g., water and wine) into a single product. One thing is put *into* another, an image of blending that is complemented by (presumed) eucharistic echoes whereby bread and drink are similarly consumed *into* those who partake.[24] For Ignatius, those who take hold of the Lord's flesh/blood in a meal context take on life within themselves.[25]

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of the bread" ([24:28–43](#)). In this latter instance, the risen body of Christ is identified not so much for what it is but for what it is not; namely, it is not a "spirit" (πνεῦμα). For a recent treatment of the development of and discourse that surrounds intra-Christian disputes about resurrection of the flesh, see Lehtipuu 2015.

[24] The echoes are particularly strong when [Luke 24](#) is seen as one of the possible intertexts. In the Gospel, it is the *risen* Christ, who already had suffered, that is recognised when bread is broken ([Luke 24:30–31](#)).

[25] Indeed, for Ignatius the Lord's day is that "on which our life arose through him and his death," and it is this conviction that serves as the grounds in which Ignatius's present suffering is rooted and which provides life in which all Christians can live (*Magn.* 9.1).

Taking the above together, there is a tendency within the epistles of Ignatius to individualise the process of suffering, death, and coming back to life. Though he does, like Paul, set bodily experience within the framework of communal oneness and unity, Ignatius nevertheless relegates the dynamic interplay of life and death to the suffering, individual body of the martyr. Ignatius does hold to a notion of present interior life (as does Paul), but this life is not enacted through an ongoing process of *death-affecting-life*. Instead, the attainment of life remains a future hope; one comes back to life *through* death.[26] For Ignatius, conceptual categories of UP/DOWN,[27] NEAR/FAR,[28] and IN/OUT[29] coalesce, though the centre of gravity has shifted. Paul touts suffering as the mechanism of ongoing life in Christ, while Ignatius objectifies suffering as the final passageway to life in Christ. Accordingly, there is a tendency in Ignatius to emphasise life *through* death rather than life *in* death.[30]

IV. VALENTINUS

Valentinus was a second-century philosophical teacher who was born in the Egyptian delta.[31] The surviving fragments of his works are few, but their use of rhetoric, philosophy, and scriptural exegesis

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[26] Indeed, the eucharistic meal seems more oriented toward life than death—the Lord's Supper is "the medicine of immortality" (*Eph.* 20.2), and consciously abstaining from the meal causes one to "perish" (*Smyrn.* 7.1). When compared with Paul, there is an incongruence here inasmuch as death does not lead to life but is rather the consequence of abstaining.

[27] For Paul, ascent to heaven; for Ignatius, proper hierarchical order in the *ekklēsiai*.

[28] For Paul, ascent to the Great Glory (i.e., Christ); for Ignatius, proximity to Christ's risen flesh in the eucharistic bread.

[29] For Paul, oneness with the Lord, the spirit; for Ignatius, sharing the mind of God/Christ.

[30] This point must be held tentatively, for the circumstances that surround Ignatius's letters necessitate that we not push the conclusion too far. Indeed, Ignatius's strong teleology may well be reflective of his imminent suffering.

[31] Layton (1987, 217) locates Valentinus's birth in Phrebonis, though it is not clear from what source Layton draws this information.

nevertheless betray a learned author.[32] While it is possible that Valentinus began and ended his career in Alexandria,[33] by the early mid-second century CE (ca. 130) he relocated to Rome and became active among the Christ-devotee communities there. The few indications we have suggest that Valentinus was not marginalised at Rome but rather experienced some degree of (at least initial) acceptance in establishing his own school of Christian thought.[34] As for Valentinus's relationship to Paul, the surviving fragments indicate the former knew at least Paul's Epistle to the Romans[35] and perhaps even 2 Cor 3:2–18.[36] Given his placement in the early to mid second century, we are justified in presuming his awareness of other Pauline letters, perhaps as part of a collection.[37] We are on firmer

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[32] For example, they betray Valentinus's breadth of literary abilities (sermons, letters/treatises, poems) and conceptual and ecclesial impact (e.g., he is Christocentric, he was influenced by Greek philosophy [both Platonic and Stoic thought] and likely some form of Sethianism).

[33] It is noteworthy that virtually all of the surviving fragments of his writings come from Alexandrian sources.

[34] Ismo Dunderberg (2005, 72) rightly notes that, "unlike Marcion, [Valentinus] was never expelled from the Roman Christian community," and Tertullian relates that Valentinus even ran for bishop of Rome but lost to another who had confessed his faith in the midst of persecution (Tertullian, *Val.* 4.1–2 [≈ ch. 4 in *ANF*]).

[35] See esp. Frags. 5 (= D) and 6 (= G), of which Layton (1987) notes connections with Romans. Clement of Alexandria (*Strom.* 7.17) notes that some later Valentinians from Alexandria insisted that Valentinus himself claimed to have been taught by a certain Theudas, who in turn had been taught by Paul. The reliability of this tradition is unknown but doubtful. That said, however, it is impossible to offer any kind of global or systematic assessment of Valentinus's ideas and teachings—so Einar Thomassen (2006, 430), the fragments "do not allow the reconstruction of a coherent body of teachings in the sense of the preserved Valentinian systems . . . [and it remains] doubtful whether Valentinus ever put such a system into writing."

[36] As noted above (n. 5), Perrin (2011, 129) draws attention to the humanity-as-writing metaphor in both texts.

[37] Pervo (2010, 23–62) argues that the first collection of Pauline letters was compiled in Ephesus, ca. 100 CE. On the canonisation of Paul, specifically the

ground, however, in the writings of later Valentinians, which clearly betray knowledge and approval of the apostle's writings.[38]

Only a handful of fragments from the writings of Valentinus survive, and those that do are not without problems;[39] they are embedded in contexts of intra-Christian conflict and refutation. Accordingly, caution and nuance are required. For the purposes of this study I want to focus specifically on Frag. 4 (= F),[40] which reads as follows:

> From the beginning you [plur.] have been immortal, and you are children of eternal life. And you wanted death to be allocated into yourselves [εἰς ἑαυτούς] so that you might spend it and use it up, and that death might die in you and through you [ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν]. For when you nullify the world and are not yourselves annihilated, you are lord over creation and all corruption. (trans. Layton 1987, slightly adapted)

The fragment is known to us from Clement's *Stromata* (4.89.1–5 [≈ 4.13 in *ANF*]), where it is identified as originating from one of Valentinus's homilies (4.89.1). Beyond this we know very little of its origin,[41] and its precise focus/intent is debated. For Clement this

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shape and interpretive import of specific Pauline collections, see Scherbenske 2013.

[38] See especially Pagels 1992. According to Pervo (2010, 210–11), Valentinian texts betray knowledge of Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 Thessalonians, and Hebrews.

[39] For a succinct overview of the fragments and their authenticity, see Dunderberg 2005, 73 (n. 38). Though Layton (1987, 251) also attributes to Valentinus the so-called Gospel of Truth from Nag Hammadi Codex I, this is by no means certain nor generally accepted (cf. Thomassen 2006, 146–47).

[40] Fragment numbers correspond to Völker 1932; letters to Layton 1987. The Greek text of Frag. 4 [= F] is from Camelot 1951–; both the English translation and embedded hyperlinks are from Layton 1987.

[41] Layton (1987, 240) suggests the language of composition was probably Greek and the provenance likely Alexandria (since the fragment comes to us from Clement). Further, it is worth noting that in the lines following this fragment (4.89.6–90.1 [≈ 4.13 in *ANF*]) Clement cites another statement of

citation betrays two supposed aspects of Valentinus's thought: (a) the assertion of a special/unique "race" or "class saved by nature" who are to abolish death, and (b) the assertion that death originated in the creator god (= the god of the Hebrew scriptures). Modern scholarship has questioned the extent to which Valentinus held these beliefs. For some, Valentinus is speaking critically of other Christian understandings of either the Eucharist or of martyrdom.[42] Others, however, suggest Valentinus is speaking not to opposing interlocutors but rather to his students; that is to say, "Valentinus [does] not condemn the attempts of his addressees to 'use up' death . . . [but rather insists that such] attempts lead to a *positive* outcome: [namely, the demise of death]" (Dunderberg 2008, 37; emphasis original). For Ismo Dunderberg (2008, 39–42), the fragment speaks toward both practical and ethical ends: Valentinus seeks to instil in his pupils a strong sense of immortality that affects self-mastery here-and-now (hence what it means to "nullify the world"). In many ways this is not unlike Paul's logic in Rom 6:1–14, where believers are to take on Christ's death so as to live in self-mastery (cf. Tappenden 2016, 135–63), or even 2 Cor 3–4, where Paul and his apostolic counterparts embody suffering/death so as to impart life to the Corinthian *ekklēsia*. Following Dunderberg, I want to press this line of interpretation, first relating Frag. 4 (= F) to 2 Cor 3–4, after which I will turn briefly to the Treatise on the Resurrection, a later text that likely emerges from the Valentinian school and which similarly conveys ideas of coming back to life in/through death.

The intertextual contours of Frag. 4 (= F) are immediately worth highlighting. Dunderberg (2008, 37–39) rightly notes that certain interpretations of Gen 2–3 find resonance with this fragment. What makes Valentinus's interpretation of Genesis "exceptional," Dunderberg suggests, is the positive view that is given to death's

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Valentinus (Frag. 5 [= D]); it is possible the two come from the same homily (Layton 1987, 236).

[42] So argued by Paul Schüngel (1996) and Jens Holzhausen (2005), conveniently summarised in Dunderberg (2008, 36–37).

bestowal; the fall "leads not to [humanity's] destruction, but to the destruction of death" (p. 38). Building upon this, I see no reason not to suggest that 2 Cor 3–4 also may have served as a source for Valentinus's positive assessment of death. Both texts place death and life in a temporal perspective that centres on the present; both describe a dynamic overcoming of death by life through the actions of subjects; and both map this revitalisation process spatially to human subjects—"in you and through you" (ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν).[43] There is a paradoxical logic at work here. The fragment betrays the "idea of consuming by assuming" so that the *taking on* of death becomes the means by which death is *exhausted* (cf. Thomassen 2006, 460–65; citation from p. 460). When one endures death, death itself dies, and so the addressees engage in the soteriological drama. Crucial to all this is the spatial dimension; death is "allocated/divided *into yourselves*" (μερίσασθαι εἰς ἑαυτούς) such that it is destroyed "in *you* and through *you*" (ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν). Here the paucity of evidence leaves us wanting. The spatial orientation of the addressees as those *into* whom and *in* whom and *through* whom things happen suggests a somatic affair.[44] If Paul (esp. 2 Cor 3–4) is lurking somewhere in the background of Valentinus's homily, the body becomes the primary location on which death and life are played out. Those hearing the address are compelled to embody death while simultaneously embodying life.

Like the other texts we have been looking at, this tiny fragment presumes a certain dynamic of how individuals and communities mutually affect one another. Einar Thomassen (2006, 460–65) notes

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[43] Beyond 2 Corinthians, this text also echoes ideas from the Pauline tradition whereby death and suffering are objectified in ways that have instrumental ends. In [Phil 1:18b–26](#), where Paul rhetorically flirts with suicide, death is objectified as an inconsequential passageway that will ultimately lead to a better situation. In a different way, [Col 1:24](#) commemorates an image of Paul whereby the apostle's own sufferings and death are part of the soteriological drama, thus quantifying death as something that must indeed be "used up" (in the language of Valentinus) so as to fully enact life.

[44] Drawing on comparative examples (esp. Philo), Dunderberg (2008, 39–42) asserts that the body and its moral praxis (or lifestyle) is in view here.

the peculiarity of the fragment: it is not the Saviour who overcomes death but rather the addressees themselves. For Thomassen, this reflects something similar to later Valentinian ideas whereby Saviour and saved mutually participate with one another in the soteriological equation. Though we must be cautious not to retroject uncritically later Valentinian ideals, it is worth noting that conjoinment with the divine is a theme found elsewhere in the surviving fragments (1 [= C]; 2 [= H]; and 5 [= D]). This has important points of comparison with the other texts we have examined. Whereas 2 Corinthians envisions a process in which the apostle's sufferings bring life to Christ-devotees, Valentinus appears to insist that the elect together suffer and take on death. That is to say, while Paul retains a strong sense of mimetic (and hierarchical) authority over his communities (e.g., 1 Cor 4:6; 11:1; Phil 3:17; 1 Thess 1:6; cf. Castelli 1991), Valentinus appears to insist that the elect together—rather than the singular apostle—suffer and take on death (as evinced by the repeated plural pronouns).[45] Here the role of the individual is diminished; Valentinus and Ignatius are distinguished from each other, the former stressing the present sufferings of the community and the latter the future sufferings of the individual, while 2 Corinthians maintains a balance between part and whole.

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[45] "*You* have been immortal [ἀθάνατοί ἐστε] . . . *you* wanted [ἠθέλετε] death to be allocated [in]*to yourselves* [εἰς ἑαυτούς] so that *you* might spend it and use it up [ἵνα δαπανήσητε αὐτὸν καὶ ἀναλώσητε], and that death might die in *you* and through *you* [ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι᾽ ὑμῶν]" (trans. Layton 1987). Within the Pauline tradition, especially the earliest expressions of Pauline pseudepigrapha, it is perhaps not surprising that the apostle's strong mimetic assertions of apostle-affecting-life-for-*ekklēsiai* result in the figure of Paul himself taking on a soteriological function. Colossians 1:24 is the prime example, where Paul himself has some amount of death allocated to him to "fill-up" what is lacking of Christ's own sufferings (cf. Koester 2000, 2:270, who draws on Standhartinger 1999). While such a development in many ways flows naturally from the logic of texts like 2 Cor 3–4, Valentinus does not share this same individuated soteriology, but rather lumps the saved together and conflates them with the Saviour into a single referent.

In this fragment, then, there is a kind of participatory dimension that finds resonance with certain themes in Paul's writings. Though this participatory aspect is only implicit with respect to individual/communal dynamics, it is certainly explicit with respect to death/life dynamics. Whereas 2 Cor 3–5 presents a dialectical movement between death and the *pneumatic* Christ's risen life (comp. also [Phil 3:10–11](#) and [1 Cor 15](#)), for Valentinus the endurance of death is in the service of realising the ever-constant immortal or spiritual seed (comp. [Frag. 1 [=C]](#)). In addition to Dunderberg's aforementioned ethical dimension, this seems to be what Valentinus means by "nullify[ing] the world [but not being] annihilated" ([Frag. 4 [= F]](#)). Though our knowledge of this fragment's context is admittedly lacking, in this tiny excerpt we find Valentinus stressing spatial concepts of PROXIMITY (divine/human propinquity) and CONTAINMENT (somatic allocation) more than concepts of VERTICALITY. In doing so he appears to favour a more collective process than the mimetic hierarchy presumed by Paul. There are of course important differences between Paul and Valentinus,[46] and our knowledge of the latter is so sparse that it is difficult to assess with any confidence the degree of similarity and difference between the two. It is unclear, for instance, to what extent Valentinus understands this embodiment of death to include also a future, risen embodiment (as advocated by Paul).[47] Accordingly, we cannot tell exactly how Valentinus configures bodily experience in the present. Certainly the human body has a role to play in the process toward salvation, and this may even be intimately tied to

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[46] For example, while both Valentinus and Paul assert the immortality of humanity, Valentinus presumes this immortality remains unbroken among the elect while Paul insists on the universality of mortality and the acquisition of immortality through πνεῦμα (cf. [Rom 5:12](#); [6:23](#); [8:1–30](#); [1 Cor 15:35–50](#)).

[47] If [Frag. 3 (= E)](#) refers to the risen Christ (rather than the pre-crucifixion Christ), then we can certainly insist that resurrected bodies were important to Valentinus. But whether the process of resurrection takes the same emphasis for him as for Paul is unknown.

Christ, but for Valentinus such somatic importance may be more terrestrial than celestial.

Scholars have often noted connections between Valentinus's fragments and a number of later Valentinian texts, and the themes examined above are no exception.[48] Space does not permit a full assessment of these later writings, though I will briefly draw attention to the late second-century Treatise on the Resurrection, which develops many of these same ideas and spatial relations.[49] In this text too, as with 2 Cor 3–4 and Frag. 4 (= F), there is an interplay of PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT concepts that is explored as a way of articulating the already/not-yet nature of resurrection. Priority is given to referents that are both IN and NEAR. The Treatise, for example, states that "the thought . . . [and] mind of those who have known him shall not perish" (Treat. Res. 46.22–24).[50] Note the key somatic coordinates: "thought . . . [and] mind" (both IN) are oriented specifically toward "know[ing] him" (that is, being NEAR). It is here, in this emphasis on the somatic interior, that we find the locus of salvation (Treat. Res. 47.1–3). When one ceases to "think in part" but rather recognises the "all which we are" (Treat. Res. 49.10 and 47.26–29, respectively), then one will realise that "already you have the resurrection" (Treat. Res. 49.15). By stressing the NEAR/IN

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[48] For example, Thomassen (2006, 460–65) reads Frag. 4 (= F) in relation to the Excerpta ex Theodoto 21–22, 35–36 and the Tripartite Tractate, while Layton (1987, 240–41) draws connections with the Gospel of Truth and Treatise on the Resurrection.

[49] Though surviving only in Coptic, the Treatise is usually dated to the late second century, thus locating it within the context of broader intra-Christian debates concerning the nature of the resurrection. Indeed, the text itself is written with the express purpose of indicating that "it [i.e., resurrection] is necessary" (Treat. Res. 44.6b–7; cf. 47.1–3), and further with the goal of describing and giving definition to resurrection.

[50] Unless stated otherwise, English translations of the Treatise on the Resurrection are from Peel 1985a; the same translation also appears in Peel 1990, the text of which is hyperlinked throughout this essay. Unfortunately, however, the online text of Peel 1990 does not include a numbering system.

nature of the elect's risenness, the author of the Treatise configures resurrection as possessing a decidedly present component.

This present, internal dimension is developed elsewhere in the Treatise, specifically in relation to the author's teleological vision of future resurrection. A key text is found in Treat. Res. 45.14–46.2:

> The Savior swallowed death. You must not be ignorant: for he put aside the world which is perishing. He transformed into an imperishable age, he raised himself up, having swallowed the visible by means of the invisible, and he gave us the way to immortality. Then indeed, as the Apostle [Paul] said, "We have suffered with him, and we arose with him, and we went to heaven with him." Now, if we are visible in this world wearing him, we are that one's beams, and we are embraced by him until our setting, that is to say, our death in this life. We are drawn to heaven by him, like beams by the sun, not restrained by anything. This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection]. (trans. Petrey 2016, 43–44)[51]

This passage simultaneously looks back to Jesus's resurrection while also affirming the future resurrection, when those who believe will be "drawn to heaven by him." The language is thoroughly Pauline, as is seen in the constellation of resurrection echoes and descriptions: "swallowing" (cf. 1 Cor 15:50, 53–54; 2 Cor 5:4), "perishable/imperishable" (cf. 1 Cor 15:50–54), "visible/invisible" (cf. 2 Cor 4:8–11, 16–18), the language of "wearing" him (cf. 1 Cor 15:49; 2 Cor 5:1–5; Gal 3:27), and the trio of fleshly, *psychic*, and spiritual (cf. 1 Cor 2:14–3:3; 15:45–50), not to mention also the amalgamated Pauline citation (cf. Rom 8:17; Eph 2:5–6). More pressing is the curious description in Treat. Res. 45.39–46.2 of three different kinds of resurrections: "the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection]."[52]

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[51] The translation is reproduced exactly *as is*, and thus all parenthetical content is original to Petrey 2016.

[52] Petrey (2016, 44) notes that the parallel adjectives "spiritual," "psychic," and "fleshly" all agree in gender and thus stand in apposition to one another,

Taylor Petrey (2016) suggests, I think rightly, that these three resurrections refer to stages within the soteriological progression, thus linking them to the garment metaphor of the same passage— "we are visible in this world wearing him . . . [until] our death in this life." That is to say, already while in the flesh, some kind of resurrection is granted to the Christ-devotee, which is only partially experienced in the present. This more immediate resurrection is further elaborated later in the Treatise, in 48.34–49.8, which reads as follows:

> [Resurrection] is the revelation of what is, and the transformation of things, and a transition into newness. For imperishability [descends] upon the perishable; the light flows down upon the darkness, swallowing it up; and the Pleroma fills up the deficiency. These are the symbols and the images of the resurrection. (trans. Peel 1985a)

The attitude toward the earthly body is particularly noteworthy here. As noted by Petrey (2016, 45): "the language is not at all about leaving behind or escaping from the flesh, but rather about fulfilment and (again) enveloping. Transformation and manifestation in this life thus include a period of 'resurrection' while in the mortal flesh." Viewed within the conceptual categories of this study, resurrection is mapped to the somatic interior of the human body, finding expression primarily through the categories of somatic CONTAINMENT (though it is worth noting that the image of "sun beams," which both radiate from and are drawn to heaven, draws also on notions of cosmological VERTICALITY and divine–human PROXIMITY [Treat. Res. 45.31–38]). In terms of temporal mapping, then, the Treatise balances immediacy and teleology; thus Lehtipuu (2015, 190): "the treatise combines a past, present, and future aspect of resurrection, embracing both the not yet and the already" (see also Lundhaug 2009, 204; Petrey 2016, 44–45).

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hence the reference to three different resurrections: "This is the spiritual resurrection which swallows the psychic [resurrection] just as fleshly [resurrection]."

This already/not-yet dimension of the Treatise is not unlike Paul, who similarly maintains the immediacy and inwardness of resurrection (thus, *life in death*) with an eye toward somatic transformation in the future (thus, *life through death*). There are, however, important differences between not only the apostle and the author of Treatise, but also with the fragments of Valentinus. While it is true that the Treatise places a high value on the risen body/flesh (OUT),[53] the full import of this idea runs a different course. Both Paul and the Treatise draw strong caricatures between earthly and risen states, even opposing the two definitely, but for Paul the space between these states is much more interactive and interlaced such that subjects are in the process of coming back to life as they are dying. As we saw above, Paul works this out on the apostolic body quite concretely with respect to suffering (2 Cor 3–4) and the eventual "clothing over" (ἐπενδύομαι) of one body onto the other (2 Cor 5:1–5). In the Treatise, by contrast, there is much less interaction and mutual affectivity between these somatic states. On the one hand, some positive function is given to the earthly body in Treat. Res. 47.17–24, which reads:

> The afterbirth of the body is old age, and you exist in
> corruption. You have absence as a gain. For you will not give
> up what is better if you depart. That which is worse has
> diminution, but there is grace for it. (trans. Peel 1985a)

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[53] See recently Lehtipuu 2015, 191–92 and Petrey 2016, 35–51. The key text in this debate is Treat. Res. 47.2–16, which has been notoriously debated (see Peel 1985b, 178–80; Lehtipuu 2015, 191–92). While some maintain that only the mind will be raised, most scholars recognise that Valentinians generally held to a resurrection of a transformed flesh that was properly suited for the heavenly realm (on this point, see Lundhaug 2009, 190–91). Petrey (2016, 41) has compellingly argued for a "correspondence between the mortal and resurrected selves . . . [such that] the resurrected subject appears as a human body, with recognizable parts." In principle, then, there is no strong difference between Paul and our author: the apostle looks ahead to an ethereal, pneumatic body (1 Cor 15:42–44), while the Treatise toward a kind of ethereal, pneumatic flesh (Treat. Res. 47.2–24).

As Lundhaug (2009) has shown, the Treatise uses gestational metaphors to convey the idea of the risen interior as *birthed out of* the corruptible body. That is to say, the earthly body functions as the vehicle through which resurrection is achieved and, as Lundhaug (2009, 195–96) rightly notes, what is in view is the full maturation and ageing process of the human subject (note the reference to "old age").[54] Yet, on the other hand, the positive functioning of the earthly body does not seem to be the ongoing interlacing of somatic death and coming-back-to-life that Paul (and perhaps also Valentinus?) advocate(s). The earthly body has a role to play in the cosmological and soteriological process, but this role appears more incubative than generative; more custodial than formative. Hence, in Treat. Res. 47.17–24, somatic alteration of the earthly body can only be diminutive; it is part of corruption and mortality, it marks frail flesh in all its earthiness vis-à-vis the stability of the spiritual. Like Paul in 1 Cor 15 there is a strong emphasis placed on transformation as a future and definitive break,[55] but unlike Paul there is no process of embodying positive somatic transformation here and now.

In the Treatise, then, it is not so much that one comes back to life in the midst of earthly embodiment, but rather that one bears the inner resurrection within the midst of the earthly embodiment (cf. Treat. Res. 45.28–35). Accordingly, in the Treatise, resurrection is the "disclosure of those who have risen" (Treat. Res. 48.3–6); it is

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[54] On this point, the author of the Treatise appears to value the whole course of earthly life, even though the earthly body itself is disparaged. Lundhaug (2009, 196–97) is worth citing in full: "the decay of the material body is thus presented in a positive light, and death is conceptualized as birth . . . [I]t is the material body that serves the metaphorical function of the womb in the metaphorical conceptualization of life as a pregnancy, and this conceptual blend highlights the importance of the material body and life in this world as the time and place of the development and maturation needed to effectuate the birth of what we may regard as the resurrection-body . . . [In this text, there is] a pronounced emphasis on the relatively higher value of the inner body *in relation to* the outer" (emphasis original).

[55] It is worth noting that Treat. Res. 48.31–38 relies quite strongly on 1 Cor 15, precisely where Paul's language is most categorical.

the act or process of making known that which already is,[56] namely the deposit of immortality *within* oneself (Treat. Res. 47.4–6, 24–31).

The extent to which the Treatise reflects Valentinus's own ideas is difficult to determine. There is perhaps a connection between Valentinus's Frag. 4 (= F) and Treat. Res. 47.4–6, 24–31, both of which intimate notions of possessing *immortality from the beginning* (to use the language of the former). Similarly, both Frag. 4 (= F) and the Treatise place priority on spatial conceptions of PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT. That being said, there is a greater emphasis in Frag. 4 (= F) on notions of "spend[ing] . . . and use[ing-up death] . . . in you and through you [ἐν ὑμῖν καὶ δι' ὑμῶν]." This suggests that Valentinus might have held a more dynamic understanding of life and death as somatically interlacing each other *within* the subject here-and-now rather than at some future *telos*. If this is true, then Valentinus is closer to Paul than is the Treatise. Regardless of our judgment on that matter, from the little bits that we have, there certainly is a tendency in Valentinus/Treatise to emphasise notions of life *in* death rather than life *through* death.

V. CONCLUSION

As noted at the outset of this paper, Paul's resurrection ideals proved difficult to pin down in the post-Pauline period. Paul certainty advocates the permeability of death and life; death is not the end but rather a necessary path or process through which all must move. But how Paul made sense of this permeability was both complex and nuanced. He advocated an intricate balance between spatial concepts, correlating UP/NEAR/IN vis-à-vis DOWN/FAR/OUT in such a way as to envision death and life as mutually affecting one other in the present while placing the human body within a transformative *telos* toward future risen life. What Paul holds in tension, his later interpreters tend to parse out and prioritise. Both Ignatius and

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[56] In many ways this extends Paul's address in 2 Cor 3–4 (and even Phil 3) and shares many similarities also with Col 3:3 ("your life is hidden with Christ in God").

Valentinus utilise the same conceptual categories, though they do so with emphases placed on differing aspects. Ignatius stresses all three (PROXIMITY, CONTAINMENT, and VERTICALITY) though does not share Paul's logic of in-out affectivity; Valentinus stresses PROXIMITY and CONTAINMENT over VERTICALITY. In one way, we might see Ignatius and Valentinus/Treatise as occupying different ends of the same conceptual pole; the former maintains a strong sense of teleology and sequence (namely, *life through death*), while the latter emphasises containment and somatic replacement (namely, *life in death*).

Importantly, however, both are "Pauline" in the sense that they find impetus and rooting in Paul's writings; but they are "Pauline" in very different ways. Interpretive creativity marbles the reception of Paul's writings. While the germ of coming back to life persists across these textual expressions, differing voices—each echoing Paul's ideals—negotiate the apostle's thought in various ways. The image of Paul in 2 Corinthians as one *coming back to life in and through death* does not seem to have been easily emulated. Certainly the general textures and mechanics of this image impressed themselves upon individuals like Ignatius and Valentinus, though the creativity of these later readers is both liberated and constrained by what they inherit from the apostle. There are at least two fronts to this creative impulse. On the one hand, there can be little doubt that later interpreters prune and shape the apostle's resurrection ideals in ways that serve their vision of the porosity between life and death. But, on the other hand, the germ of this interpretive creativity—that is, the centrality of *coming back to life in/through death*—already is sown by Paul himself. To this end, the apostle's writings do much to spark the imagination of those who read him as a book (cf. Pervo 2010, 23–61) and who advocate "Pauline" ideas of the porous boundaries between life and death. To this end, Paul is as much implicated in this creative process as are his interpreters.

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"Tell Me What Shall Arise":
Conflicting Notions of the Resurrection Body in Fourth- and Fifth-Century Egypt[1]

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I. SETTING THE STAGE

In a polemical letter targeting his former friend Rufinus, Jerome complains that there are some who claim to believe in the resurrection of the body without actually believing in it. According to Jerome, "they use the word 'body' instead of the word 'flesh' in order that an orthodox person hearing them say 'body' may take them to mean 'flesh,' while a heretic will understand that they mean 'spirit'" (Jerome, *Ep.* 84 [= 84.5 in *NPNF²*]).[2] In this letter from 399, Jerome is thus accusing Rufinus and others of willfully redefining key terms to suit their own heretical notions, allowing them to keep using seemingly orthodox phrases, while disagreeing with their intention. Rufinus defends himself, however, by stating that what rises in the resurrection "will be this very flesh in which we now live." He says it is not true "as is slanderously reported by

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[2] Translation of Jerome is from Dewart (1986, 145). For all primary sources throughout this essay, the embedded hyperlinks connect to open-access scholarly editions, many of which are now dated. While these offer the reader ease of reference, preference should always be given to the more recent scholarly editions/translations noted throughout the essay.

some men" that he believes "another flesh will rise instead of this."
On the contrary, he affirms a resurrection of "this very flesh"
([Rufinus, *Anast.* 3–4](#); cf. [*Apol. Hier.* 1.9](#)).[3] It is clear that while
words and phrases were being redefined, what mattered to the
contestants was not just the phrases used, but also the concepts
through which they were understood.

The debate between Jerome and Rufinus was part of the
controversy over the legacy of Origen in the late fourth and early
fifth centuries. The resurrection was a hot topic in this controversy
(e.g., Clark 1992, 3, 5, 8, 12; Kelly 1955, 150 n. 268; Russell 2007,
25–26), and the anti-Origenists agreed that Origen and those
inspired by him denied bodily resurrection.[4] While Jerome and
Rufinus were notable participants in the debate, the Origenist
controversy raged hardest in Egypt, and well before Theophilus of
Alexandria turned against the Origenists at the turn of the fifth
century, the staunch anti-Origenist heresiologist Epiphanius had
noted opposition to the idea of the resurrection of the body among
the monks of Egypt, as well as in the writings of Origen himself
(Dechow 1988). In his first major heresiological writing, the
Ancoratus, Epiphanius says that the Origenist monks in the Thebaid
"think like the Hieracites" and believe in "a resurrection of our
flesh," but do not interpret it to mean a resurrection of this material
flesh, but rather of "another in its place" ([*Anc.* 82.3](#)]).[5] Hieracas,

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[3] Translations of Rufinus's *Apologia adversus Hieronymum* are from
Dewart (1986).

[4] Shenoute and Theophilus extend this complaint to include a denial of the
real presence of the body and blood of Christ in the Eucharist.

[5] Indeed, in the *Life of Epiphanius*, this notion is attributed to Hieracas of
Leontopolis as well, a figure he describes in the *Panarion* as being "awesome
in his asceticism, and capable of winning souls over to him" (*Pan.* 67.1.6).
According to Epiphanius (*Pan.* 67.1.6), "many Egyptian ascetics were led
astray by him," although he predictably claims that Hieracas's followers were
not as sincere in their asceticism as their master. While "Hieracas himself
really practiced considerable asceticism," claims Epiphanius (*Pan.* 67.3.8), "his
disciples after him do it as a pretense." Epiphanius elsewhere connects the

Epiphanius claims, "took the cue for his denial that the resurrection of the dead is a resurrection of the flesh from Origen—or spat this up out of his own head" (*Pan.* 67.1.6).[6] According to Epiphanius, Hieracas "says that there is a resurrection of the dead but that it is a resurrection of souls, and also tells some fairy story about 'spirit'" (*Pan.* 67.2.8).[7] Epiphanius counters the notion of a resurrection of the soul by stating that "We cannot speak of the 'rising' of something that has not fallen" (*Pan.* 67.6.1). In his mind this rules out the soul, for "a soul neither falls nor is buried" (*Pan.* 67.6.2).

Epiphanius uses the same argument against Origen himself: "there is no resurrection of souls, which have not fallen; but there is a resurrection of bodies, which have been buried" (*Pan.* 64.63.12; cf. *Pan.* 64.63.10), and adds that in any case resurrection must apply to the whole body: "There cannot be parts of the body which are raised, and parts which are laid to rest and left behind" (*Pan.* 64.63.13). It is evident that the integrity of the body in the resurrection was important to Epiphanius, but this did not mean that he thought that the body would remain constant and unchanged. He is adamant that the resurrection is not a resurrection of the soul only, or of a resurrection body without flesh, but neither is he imagining a resurrection body that is exactly the same as the body that died. What he envisions is a resurrection body that, while being a risen form of the buried body, is in fact a spiritual body consisting of spiritual flesh (*Pan.* 64.64.1–9), indeed "a spiritual flesh that will never again have needs," as he puts it, citing the example of Elijah (*Pan.* 64.64.2). Here Epiphanius also brings in the example of Christ's resurrection body, arguing that "the ensouled body is the same as the spiritual body, just as our Lord arose from the dead, not by raising a different body, but his own body and not different from

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Melitians to the Hieracites, saying that Melitus was both a contemporary and successor of Hieracas (*Pan.* 68.1.1).

[6] Translations of Epiphanius's *Panarion* are from Williams (1994); of *Ancoratus* are my own.

[7] Cf. Epiphanius, *Pan.* 67.1.5: "Hieracas too believes that the flesh never rises, only the soul. He claims, however, that there is a spiritual resurrection."

his own." The reason why Christ could pass through closed doors, Epiphanius argues, was because "he had changed his own actual body to spiritual fineness and united a spiritual whole" (*Pan. 64.64.3–4*).

II. SHENOUTE

The polemics brought to bear by Epiphanius against Origenist conceptions of the resurrection are also reflected in Coptic sources. One prominent Coptic author who read Epiphanius's writings with great interest was Shenoute of Atripe,[8] the famous abbot of the White Monastery near modern day Sohag in Upper Egypt.[9] Shenoute confronts the Origenists and their heretical teachings on the resurrection in several places. In the partly preserved writing known as *Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, Shenoute confronts the idea that another flesh will arise in place of the material one at the resurrection, together with other erroneous notions of the resurrection, including those of the pagans and Manichaeans.

The introduction to the section where Shenoute deals with those teachings that have an Origenist flavor to them is unfortunately lost in a four-page lacuna, but where the manuscript witnesses pick up, Shenoute is arguing against some people who claim that "'it is another body that shall sprout up in that very body on the day of the resurrection,' and 'this very body shall rot away and perish and it shall not at all come into being (again) after the other new body sprouts up [in] it'" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, DD 80).[10]

Interestingly, Shenoute here shows his opponent arguing on the basis of the seed metaphor of 1 Cor 15 while taking issue with Paul's

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[8] On Shenoute's use of Epiphanius, see Timbie 2007, 627–28.

[9] For a convenient short introduction to the life and importance of Shenoute, see Emmel 2004, 1:6–14.

[10] I cite works of Shenoute using a two-letter code for the White Monastery manuscript cited (following Tito Orlandi's Corpus dei Manoscritti Copti Letterari [CMCL] project and database, and listed in Emmel 2004, 1:xxiii–xxiv), followed by manuscript page number. All translations are my own. DD 80 is unpublished and has been read from a photograph kindly provided by Stephen Emmel.

own interpretation of it, stating that "I do not see that the grain of wheat dies. It became earth and the straw came out of it" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 59). Shenoute also quotes this person saying that "there is another body that comes on the day of the resurrection, and this one which we are in now becomes earth, and will not at all come into being (again)" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 59–60),[11] thus prompting Shenoute to quote Paul, saying "You fool! What you sow does not live unless it dies. And it is not the body that shall come into being that you sow, but it is a naked grain of wheat or some other seed. God gives it a body as he wished" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 60, citing 1 Cor 15:36–38). While Shenoute's interlocutor claims that "it is another body that will sprout up in this one" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, DD 83),[12] Shenoute counters by arguing that "it is this very body that shall rise in the resurrection" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 60). He continues by somewhat disingenuously pointing out that Scripture does not explicitly state what his opponent understands Paul to be saying: "we read in the Scriptures that the dead shall rise," he says, "we have not read that it is another body that will sprout up in the bodies of the dead" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, DD 83). Shenoute indeed continues this line of scriptural argumentation at some length, citing numerous passages where something "sprouting up" from the dead body is not mentioned. One of these is the example of Lazarus: "Lazarus who arose on his fourth (day). Did another body sprout up in the dead body and come out and abandon the dead lying in the tomb? Was it not the smelly body that arose?" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 63;[13] cf. John 11:39–44). For Shenoute, "it is this very body that shall arise, not in weakness, not in shame, but in glory according to the Scriptures" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 64–65;[14] cf.

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[11] ZM 59–60 is published in Amélineau 1907–1914, 2:191–92.

[12] DD 83 is unpublished and has been read from a photograph kindly provided by Stephen Emmel.

[13] Coptic text in Munier 1916, 136.

[14] Coptic text in Munier 1916, 137 + Wessely 1909–1917, 5:127.

1 Cor 15:43), and he makes clear that "no other body shall arise in place of this body, nor shall any other body sprout up in this body" (*Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, ZM 64).[15] Nevertheless, although he is adamant that it is the dead and buried body that shall also arise, he does reckon with a transformation of the body, as is clear from another writing of his, where he follows 1 Cor 15:52 and Phil 3:21 in saying that "the Lord and his saints have raised others, signifying the great resurrection of the day when he shall sound the trumpet and the dead shall rise incorruptible. And as for us, we shall change, as it is written: 'this one who shall change the body of our humility into the likeness of the body of his glory'" (Shenoute, *I Am Amazed*, 390 = HB 41).[16]

The nature of the resurrection body is described in yet another text, entitled *Good is the Time for Launching a Boat to Sail*, where he explicitly states that "it is as a spiritual body that you will arise" (Leipoldt 1906–1913, 4:190).[17] Despite this emphasis on change, Shenoute is nevertheless concerned about bodily integrity in the resurrection, as is evident when he states elsewhere in the same text, perhaps in conscious rejection of Gos. Thom. 22 or 114 (cf. Layton and Lambdin 1989, 62–63, 92–93), that in heaven "the male as male and the female as female all exist together in the kingdom of Christ" (*Good is the Time for Launching a Boat to Sail*; Leipoldt 1906–1913, 4:191).

III. THE TREATISE ON THE RESURRECTION

From the archimandrite of Atripe we turn south to the manuscripts known as the Nag Hammadi Codices and two texts that circulated

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[15] Coptic text in Munier 1916, 137.

[16] In citations of *I Am Amazed* I use the numeration scheme established by Orlandi (1985) and followed by Cristea (2011) in addition to the manuscript and page number. The Coptic text consulted is that of Cristea (2011, 166 = HB 41); translations are my own.

[17] For *Good is the Time for Launching a Boat to Sail* I cite the page number in the Leipoldt (1906–1913) edition of the Coptic text.

among fourth- and fifth-century Egyptian monks.[18] The first, entitled the Treatise on the Resurrection and preserved in Nag Hammadi Codex I, is styled as a letter by an unnamed author to a person named Rheginos, addressed as "my son," together with his "brothers."[19] The text sets out to explain the nature and significance of the resurrection, since there are many who do not believe in it (Treat. Res. 44.8–9).

First of all, the resurrection should not be doubted (Treat. Res. 47.2–3), and should not be regarded as "a fantasy" (Treat. Res. 48.10–13). But what is it? The explanation given is complicated, and unfortunately presented in relatively cryptic terms, as the (implied) writer of the letter acknowledges, stating that "I know that I am presenting the solution in difficult terms," although he tries to reassure Rheginos by saying that "there is nothing difficult in the word of truth" (Treat. Res. 44.39–45.4).[20] The treatise affirms that "the dead shall rise" (Treat. Res. 46.7–8), but this is not the kind of resurrection advocated by Shenoute or Epiphanius, for we are told in no uncertain terms that the present physical body will be left behind (Treat. Res. 47.34–35), and that "the visible members" shall not be saved (Treat. Res. 47.38–48.1). "What, then, is the resurrection?" (Treat. Res. 48.3–4).

Importantly, despite the dismissal of a resurrection of "the visible members," the text nevertheless operates with the concept of a resurrection *of the flesh*. Rheginos is told that even "if you did not (pre-)exist in flesh, you received flesh when you came into this world. Why shall you not receive flesh when you ascend into the aeon?" (Treat. Res. 47.4–8). The Treatise on the Resurrection thus argues that we receive flesh in connection with our entry into this

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[18] For the monastic provenance of the Nag Hammadi Codices, see Lundhaug and Jenott 2015.

[19] The Treatise on the Resurrection is the actual subscript title of the text in the only manuscript in which it is preserved. I have used Malcolm Peel's (1985a) edition of the Coptic text. Translations are my own.

[20] For a detailed analysis of the resurrection theology of the Treatise on the Resurrection, see Lundhaug 2009.

world, and therefore we should logically also receive flesh when we leave this world and enter into the next.[21] Why is this logical? It is logical on the basis of the main conceptual metaphor underlying the text's understanding not only of the resurrection, but also of the nature of this present life and of death. In fact, the text seems to conceptualize this earthly existence in terms of the conceptual metaphor of a pregnancy, and death is understood as a birth (Lundhaug 2009). This is seen especially clearly when the text elaborates on the LIFE IS A PREGNANCY metaphor, stating that "the χόριον of the body is old age." The term χόριον does not have any direct English equivalent, but can denote both the membrane that surrounds a fetus in the womb, and this membrane together with the entire afterbirth. Both these aspects of the χόριον are important in the elaboration of this conceptual metaphor in the Treatise on the Resurrection—both the membrane that the baby has to pass through and come out of at birth, and the afterbirth, which is discarded at birth as the newborn baby no longer needs it. "The χόριον of the body is old age," states the Treatise on the Resurrection, and explains that "you exist in corruption having the deficit as a profit. For you shall not give (away) that which is better when you depart" ([Treat. Res.](#) 47.17–22),[22] thus implying that what is discarded is simply that which is no longer needed. Indeed, Rheginos is reassured that everything that really constitutes us will be saved

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[21] Cf. Peel 1985b, 179. Contrary to Bentley Layton (1979, 77), I do not interpret this passage as a "dialogue between the author and an imaginary interlocutor . . . in which the lecturer himself adduces possible objections and then answers them." From this premise Layton translates rather freely as follows: "Now (you might wrongly suppose) granted you did not preexist in flesh—indeed, you took on flesh when you entered this world—why will you not take your flesh with you when you return to the realm of eternity?" (23). Peel (1985b, 179) argues that the passage is "addressed straightforwardly by the author to Rheginos," and characterizes Layton's translation as "a tendentious effort to make the text conform to orthodox Middle Platonic teaching about survival of the bare soul after death."

[22] The text is here drawing on the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS DEPARTURE.

(Treat. Res. 47.24–27). So, what is it that is actually saved, and what is discarded?

The metaphor of the χόριον is also employed by Origen in his *Contra Celsum*. The way he uses it, however, is as a metaphor for the body itself (*Cels. 7.32*; cf. Peel 1985b, 182). Using the term specifically in its sense of afterbirth, in Origen's usage it denotes simply that which is discarded. While scholars have suggested that the usage in the Treatise on the Resurrection is similar (Peel 1969, 84; cf. Peel 1985b, 182; Lona 1993, 225), there are in fact important differences. Origen explains that when a baby is born it puts on a new body suitable for its new existence, but discards the χόριον, which is no longer necessary. Origen uses this to explain the resurrection, stating that the soul "at one time puts off one body which was necessary before, but which is no longer adequate in its changed state, and it exchanges it for a second; and at another time it assumes another in addition to the former, which is needed as a better covering, suited to the purer ethereal regions of heaven" (*Cels. 7.32*).[23] Like Origen, the Treatise on the Resurrection is clearly working with the same conceptual framework of pregnancy and birth, but Origen's metaphorical use of the χόριον is only superficially similar to that of the Treatise on the Resurrection, for in contrast to Origen, the Nag Hammadi text does not use χόριον as a metaphor for the body as such, but rather as a metaphor for old age. It is old age that is "the χόριον *of the body*." Thus the body cannot itself be the χόριον. Instead, the χόριον is a metaphor for the bodily effects of aging. "Rheginos" is in effect told not to worry about having to arise in the same old body that dies, but rather in a new one, once old age is broken through and left behind through the metaphorical birth that is the death of the visible body.[24] And in contrast to Origen, the Treatise on the Resurrection also plays on the metaphorical implications of the membrane-aspect of the χόριον, indicating the boundary that is broken through at death.

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[23] Translations of Origen are from *ANF*.

[24] For the use of the conceptual metaphor DEATH IS BIRTH elsewhere in Coptic literature, see, e.g., the *Dormition of Mary* (Sellew 2000, 58, 67).

The Treatise on the Resurrection is in agreement with Origen, however, with regard to the nature of the pregnancy prior to the metaphorical birth constituted by the death of the material body. What is gestated is the resurrection body, a resurrection body that is explained in terms of an inner human being—an inner man.[25] This resurrection body is born when the material body dies, but needs to be cultivated in this life. As the Treatise on the Resurrection explains it, the resurrection is to be understood as "the uncovering of those who have arisen," which can be understood as a reference to the uncovering of the already risen "inner man" at the shedding of the external material body at death.

The resurrection body is envisioned in relatively concrete terms, and the Treatise on the Resurrection speaks about the "living members," and "the visible members," and the reception of new "flesh." The letter explains to "Rheginos" that "you received flesh when you came into this world," and rhetorically asks: "Why shall you not receive flesh when you go up into the eternal realm?" ([Treat. Res.](#) 47.5–8). But what is the nature of this new "flesh" that one will receive when leaving this world? The reference to two different, but conceptually analogous, "receptions" of flesh, one at birth and the other one at death, is similar to Origen's description in *Contra Celsum*, and as Origen speaks of a new body for the soul that is fit for life in heaven, the Treatise on the Resurrection indicates that the new flesh is indeed different from the old.

The Treatise on the Resurrection does not so much distinguish between flesh and spirit as between the internal and the external, the visible and the invisible, the perishable and the imperishable. The treatise envisions bodies constituted by internal, invisible, living members and bodies constituted by external, mortal, visible members. Both of these bodies have flesh, but different kinds of flesh—one associated with this present world, and another associated with the next. The view that the material this-worldly flesh shall arise is directly opposed, but the resurrection nevertheless involves a new kind of "flesh" that emerges as the flesh of an inner

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[25] This is clearly based on an interpretation of [2 Cor 4:16–18](#).

embryonic body that needs to be cultivated in the present life. At the death of the material body, it is this perfectly cultivated inner body that will ascend.

How should this inner body be cultivated? "Rheginos" is told that he should not "live in accordance with *this flesh*" ([Treat. Res.](#) 49.11–12), by which the text refers to the this-worldly material body. What does this imply? How should one conduct oneself? "Rheginos" is not only told that he should realize that he has already risen, stressing the importance of faith, but he should also "practice asceticism (ⲣ̄ⲁⲥⲕⲉⲓ) in a number of ways" so that "he will be let loose from this (material) element" ([Treat. Res.](#) 49.32–33). So the gestation of the inner man, or cultivation of the resurrection body, seems basically to require faith and ascesis, as well as (to stay within the text's main metaphor) some form of prior conception of the resurrection body in this life. The latter is not further specified in this text, but is likely to be of a ritual nature. Indeed, conception and birth metaphors are common in baptismal texts of this period (see, e.g., Johnson 2001), and baptismal initiation would certainly fit the context here as well, as the time when the inner resurrection body is conceived, whereupon the rest of the earthly life of the Christian could be regarded as a pregnancy that terminates with the birth of the resurrection body at death.

IV. THE GOSPEL OF PHILIP

One text in which the ritual aspect is an integral part of the resurrection theology is the Gospel of Philip in Nag Hammadi Codex II.[26] Like the Treatise on the Resurrection, the Gospel of Philip is trying to define the correct way of understanding the resurrection and the resurrection body.[27] Interestingly, the Gospel of Philip does so by distancing itself from, on the one hand, an understanding of the resurrection that, according to the anti-Origenist church fathers,

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[26] For an edition of the Coptic text of the Gospel of Philip, see Lundhaug 2010.

[27] For detailed treatments of the Gospel of Philip's understanding of the resurrection, see Lundhaug 2010, 2013.

is close to that of Origen, and, on the other hand, from a Shenoute-like emphasis on the resurrection of the same body that died.

Thus the Gospel of Philip argues against people who believe in the resurrection of the material body, who are described as those who are afraid to "arise naked," but it also argues against those who deny a resurrection of the flesh altogether, who say that "the flesh will not arise." The latter apparently do advocate some kind of resurrection, but not of "flesh," prompting the Gospel of Philip to ask its interlocutor to "tell me what it is that will arise," before proceeding to reject the idea of a resurrection of either a "spirit in the flesh" or a "light in the flesh." The Gospel of Philip cannot accept these solutions and closes its argument by stating that "it is necessary to arise in this flesh, for everything is in it" (Gos. Phil. 56.26–57.19).

"It is necessary to arise in this flesh" (Gos. Phil. 57.18). This sentence provides us with the key to understanding the resurrection theology of the Gospel of Philip. It is a polemical statement that clearly emphasizes the necessity of arising "in this flesh," at least in some sense. But how should this statement be interpreted, when we take into consideration the text's rejection of the resurrection of the material body? For the text ridicules those who are afraid to rise naked, who do not realize that they are the ones who are naked. What these people are afraid of is to arise without their material bodies, which is why they "wish to arise in the flesh" (Gos. Phil. 56.26–29). This argument may give the impression that the Gospel of Philip is actually *against* the resurrection of the flesh. It even cites 1 Cor 15:50 in support, stating that "flesh and blood shall not inherit the kingdom of God" (Gos. Phil. 56.29–34).[28] Nevertheless, the Gospel of Philip still argues that a resurrection of the flesh—and even of "this flesh"—is absolutely necessary, because "everything is

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[28] Already Irenaeus complained that 1 Cor 15:50 was a passage that was "adduced by all the heretics in support of their folly," namely "that the handiwork of God is not saved" (*Haer.* 5.9.1). Irenaeus's own solution was that, while flesh and blood shall not *inherit*, they shall be *inherited*—by the Spirit (*Haer.* 5.9.1–4).

in it" (Gos. Phil. 57.18–19). The questions that need to be answered are thus, on the one hand, how to understand "everything" (ϩⲱⲃ ⲛⲓⲙ), and on the other, what kind of flesh "this flesh" (ⲧⲉⲉⲓⲥⲁⲣⲝ) is, if it is not the flesh of the mortal material body?

The reference to nakedness is important, for it shows that the Gospel of Philip is using the common conceptual metaphor of the body as a garment. The opponents confronted by the Gospel of Philip who are afraid to arise naked, and who therefore believe in the resurrection of the material body, are wrong because they do not realize that there is not just one body, or one garment, but in fact two different ones. The other garment, which the Gospel of Philip holds to be essential for the resurrection, seems to be attainable only through the Eucharist, where we are told that one not only receives "food and drink," but also a "garment" (Gos. Phil. 57.1–8). It is this "garment" that is to be understood as the resurrection body. This again implies that the resurrection body is here actually identical to the body of Christ, as received in the Eucharist, and what "It is necessary to arise in this flesh" means is that it is necessary to arise in the body—and flesh—of Christ. This is the flesh that will clothe the soul, which in the Gospel of Philip is associated with the Logos.

The Gospel of Philip quotes 1 Cor 15:51, "Flesh [and blood] shall not inherit the kingdom [of God]," but proceeds to distinguish this flesh from another kind of flesh. The flesh that "shall not inherit" is identified as "this (flesh) which is on us," while the flesh "that shall inherit" is "the flesh of Jesus and his blood" (Gos. Phil. 56.32–57.3). The "flesh of Jesus and his blood" are acquired by ingesting the eucharistic elements, which are further specified as the Logos and the Holy Spirit respectively: "His flesh is the Logos and his blood is the Holy Spirit" (Gos. Phil. 57.6–7).

Now where does the Gospel of Philip actually stand in the resurrection debate? Cyril of Alexandria, like his predecessor Theophilus, as well as Epiphanius and Shenoute, all accuse Origen and his followers of denying bodily resurrection. As Cyril says in a letter to the monks of Scetis, "Such an evil doctrine is from the

madness of Origen" (*Ep.* 81.2 [= <u>PG 77.373A</u>]).[29] This supposedly "Origenist" position is also confronted in the Gospel of Philip when it argues against the statement that "the flesh will not arise." It is notable and striking that in refuting this position the Gospel of Philip presents a solution similar to that given by Epiphanius against Origen in chapter 64 of his *Panarion*, where he affirms the resurrection of a "spiritual body" with "spiritual flesh," against Origen's notion of a resurrection of the soul (*Pan.* 64.63.14–64.8). Moreover, both the Gospel of Philip and Epiphanius connect this "spiritual" flesh to the body of Christ. It was the spiritual nature of Christ's post-resurrection flesh, Epiphanius explains, that made it possible for him to walk through closed doors (*Pan.* 64.64.2–9).

V. Concluding Discussion

We have seen in the examples given here that while bodily integrity and continuity is stressed by some, others instead put the emphasis on transformation and difference. And while they work on the basis of certain shared assumptions, they interpret them differently. The insistence on the absolute integrity of the body in the resurrection, which is so clear in Shenoute, becomes even clearer in later Coptic texts, such as the pseudo-Athanasian homily *On the Resurrection of Lazarus*, which goes to great lengths in describing in detail the physical processes of the decomposition and subsequent reanimation of Lazarus's body.[30] In a way, what this pseudo-Athanasian text is doing is elaborating—in the extreme—on the example of Lazarus given by Shenoute in his anti-Origenist argument for the resurrection of the body in *Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, when he asks: "Was it not the smelly body that arose?" (ZM 63).[31]

In the examples given above, it is evident that we are witnessing different, and even clashing, cognitive models. As we have seen, resurrection was understood in terms of the metaphors of the seed

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[29] Translations of Cyril are from McEnerney (1987).

[30] For an edition of this text, see Bernardin (1940). For a recent discussion of it, see Brakke (2000).

[31] Coptic text in <u>Munier 1916, 136</u>.

and the plant, pregnancy and birth, and an implicit sleep and awakening model. In addition, we have seen the importance of the metaphor of the body as a garment. Not only do these different conceptual metaphors work in different ways and promote different understandings of the nature of the resurrection and the resurrection body (cf. Bynum 1995, 6–7), but the metaphors themselves could be utilized in different ways to promote different understandings of the degree of continuity, or integrity, of the resurrection body in relation to the mortal material body.

In his use and explication of the seed and plant metaphor in [1 Cor 15](), Paul succeeded in highlighting both similarities and differences, both continuity and discontinuity, between the old and the new body, while simultaneously stressing the transformation from the one to the other. According to Paul, the seed dies before the plant sprouts, and there is little resemblance between the two. We have seen that Shenoute, in *Who Speaks Through the Prophet*, opposes what seems to be an understanding of the resurrection that sticks very closely to the seed and plant metaphor as it is used by Paul. Indeed, Shenoute even reports that his interlocutor believes that a new body "will sprout up from" the dead body, just like a plant from a seed. Shenoute reports, however, that this is in opposition to Paul's own understanding of the implications of the metaphor since his opponent disputes Paul's claim that the seed has to die before the plant can emerge.

Shenoute himself, however, while acknowledging the importance of transformation, still seems to reason more along the lines of an implicit sleep-and-awakening model, with clear continuity between the dead body and the resurrected body. Clearly Shenoute's model stresses continuity to a much higher degree than Paul does in [1 Cor 15](),[32] where the latter reckons with different bodies, different flesh, and different glories to an extent not picked up on by Shenoute. The archimandrite is highly aware of Paul's terminology, but for him transformation from a psychic to a spiritual body does not seem to involve anything more radical than the purging of sin: While the

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[32] On Paul's metaphor of the seed, see Bynum 1995, 3–6.

psychic body, like the bodies of Adam and Eve, is subject to sin, the spiritual body is free from it (Shenoute, *Good is the Time for Launching a Boat to Sail*).

In addition to Scripture, the creed also played an important role in the debate. This is hardly surprising. By the early fifth century, "Not only would the validity of doctrinal propositions by this time be measured against the creed as an authoritative norm in general," notes Thomas Graumann (2009, 545–46), "but theological reasoning would often also be based directly upon it. Theological treatises attempted an exegesis of the creed and interpreted its wording almost like Scripture." We have seen that Rufinus did this, and we see it clearly in the Gospel of Philip. Creedal statements serve as the basis for theological reasoning and polemic (Lundhaug 2010, 2013). In the period when the Nag Hammadi Codices were manufactured, there is nothing surprising about this—it was common practice.[33]

Statements concerning the resurrection are found in many creeds and professions of faith made in connection with baptism. As Cyril of Alexandria puts it in a letter to the monks of Scetis: "They say that some of those among you deny the resurrection of human bodies, which is part of our confession of faith, made when we go forward to our saving baptism. When we are confessing the faith, we add that we also believe in the resurrection of the flesh" (*Ep.* 81.1 [= PG 77.372D–373A]). In this way, denials of bodily resurrection, and denials of the resurrection of flesh were curtailed. Nevertheless, in another letter to the monks Cyril laments the fact that some people misinterpret the words of the creed. He has been made aware, he

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[33] "From about the second half of the fourth century, concern with creed spilled over from the sphere of specialized debate to a wider audience and into liturgical and homiletical contexts. Catechetical instructions began to include explanations of the creed's central theological tenets, and its recitation became a feature in the context of preparation for baptism" (Graumann 2009, 546). Instruction in key points of doctrine, including memorization of the creed, was an important part of the pre-baptismal preparations in this period, and some kind of creedal interrogation (*redditio symboli*) was an integral part of the initiatory process (see Finn 1992, 4–5), the relevance of which we will see below.

says, of the fact that "some are diverting what is in the creed into a channel which is not the proper one either because they do not understand the meaning of the words in it or because they are carried away to wrong thinking by an inclination toward the writings of certain men" (*Ep.* 55.7 [= PG 77.293C]).

In light of Cyril's concern and Rufinus's reference to creedal formulations on the resurrection in his defense against the accusations of Jerome, it is interesting to note that the Gospel of Philip in fact stresses the importance of no less than a resurrection "in this flesh," while still maintaining that what actually rises is a flesh that is different from the material one—exactly the kind of reinterpretation of dogmatic vocabulary that Cyril accuses certain monks of doing, and which Rufinus is accused of, but claims not to be doing. Some years earlier, Epiphanius also complained about prominent "Origenist" ascetics in Egypt who twisted the meaning of the resurrection of the flesh, "and say there is a resurrection of our flesh, yet not this (flesh), but another in its place" (*Anc.* 82.3).[34]

We have seen several sources that oppose the "Origenist" model of the resurrection of a disembodied soul or spirit, but no text that advocates it. While both the Treatise on the Resurrection and the Gospel of Philip clearly oppose the idea of a resurrection of a material body, they still advocate the need for a body of flesh in the resurrection, albeit one consisting of a very different kind of flesh. But then even Origen himself talks about the necessity of a proper resurrection body, fit for heaven, rather than a resurrection of a disembodied soul.

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[34] Questions concerning the resurrection stayed on the agenda in Egypt for a long time, and "Origenist" views remained a concern well into the fifth century, as attested by Shenoute and others. The discussions of these matters reflected in the Gospel of Philip and the Treatise on the Resurrection are, regardless of the dates of authorship of their hypothetical originals, very much at home in the context of the Origenist controversy in Egypt in the late fourth and early fifth centuries, in the probable time and place of the manuscripts in which they have been preserved.

The debate over the resurrection body did not take place in a vacuum. There were certain, albeit shifting, parameters that had to be taken into account by everyone. In the various examples given here, we have seen that creedal statements and key scriptural passages not only defined the boundaries of the debate, but also constituted key building blocks with which competing conceptualizations of the resurrection were constructed. We have seen that a major difficulty confronting those who took part in the resurrection debate was how to make sense of Paul's rather confusing explanation in 1 Cor 15, and getting it to fit with other biblical passages, creedal formulations, and their own preferred conceptual metaphors. The solutions we have seen here all try to account for continuity and transformation, the change from a psychic to a spiritual body, and the importance of the flesh, but in distinctly different ways. The challenge facing them consisted in making sense of key biblical texts together with the creed in ways that conformed to their preferred cognitive models of the resurrection, and they came up with very different ways of doing so.

On the level of phrases, terminology, and allusions there is much agreement in the treatment of the resurrection between the various texts discussed in this essay, but there are also important disagreements regarding how to conceptualize it, leading to distinctly different interpretations. While creeds were introduced to curtail certain interpretations, attempts to narrow down interpretive possibilities by specifying creedal wording had only limited success, and indeed contributed to the creation of new interpretations as creedal phrases were simply redefined and reinterpreted to suit the preferred conceptual models of the interpreters.

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SECTION III

Identity Formation and the Return from Death

"We Are Called to Monogamy":
Marriage, Virginity, and the Resurrection of the Fleshly Body in Tertullian of Carthage[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

Tertullian of Carthage has often offended the sensibilities of his modern readers. Over the last hundred years, scholars have at once acknowledged his place in the history of Christian thought, and simultaneously cast his writings as mired in inconsistencies, claiming that at times they even reveal the workings of an irrational mind, certainly a disagreeable personality (Osborn 1997, 5–6). Pierre de Labriolle's (1924, 51) foundational study of early Christian Literature exclaims: "Tertullian became for the early centuries of Christianity a famous example of a lamentable falling away to which men of rare intelligence are exposed."

Of all his writings his four treatises on marriage (or more precisely against remarriage), written in the order of two letters "To His Wife," and the treatises "Exhortation to Chastity" and "On Monogamy," have contributed to Tertullian's unfavorable reputation amongst modern scholars. In the 1959 edition of the Fathers of the Church series, William Le Saint (1959, 41), charged with the task of introducing his readers to "On Monogamy," seems to throw up his hands in exasperation declaring: "All of his Montanist tracts are characterized by a warped and exaggerated asceticism; in all of them Tertullian's indignation is impressive, even when his position is

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[1] The quotation in the title is a paraphrase of Tertullian, *Mon.* 7.9. I am thankful to Fred Tappenden and the anonymous reviewers for their insightful suggestions and editorial comments on earlier drafts of this article.

impossible and his arguments absurd." Troubling to Le Saint is that "On Monogamy" treats sexual intercourse and childbearing as ungodly, potentially damning enterprises, with little utility for the faithful (e.g., *Mon.* 14.1–7).[2] Le Saint states his preference for the more solid and edifying ground of Tertullian's earlier work, "To His Wife," which ends with a stirring encomium to Christian marriage: "Where the flesh is one, the spirit is one too. Together they pray, together they prostrate themselves, together they perform their fasts . . . such things Christ sees and hears and he rejoices!" (*Ux.* 2.8.7–9).[3] In "On Monogamy," while Tertullian insists that monogamy is good, he finally disparages the expression of a carnal bond between a husband and wife (*Mon.* 5.7).[4]

It is perhaps little surprise that Tertullian's later two treatises on marriage "On the Exhortation to Chastity" and "On Monogamy" have either been overlooked by scholars, or labeled evidence of Tertullian's suspect orthodoxy.[5] Yet attempts to tie their contents to

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[2] Latin: *Gratus esto, si semel tibi indulsit deus nubere* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1028). All references to Tertullian's treatises refer to the Corpus Christianorum Series Latina, two volumes dedicated to Tertullian's works (Dekkers et al. 1954). The embedded hyperlinks, however, take readers to either volumes 3 or 4 of the *Ante-Nicene Fathers* (Roberts and Donaldson 1885–1887). Readers will note that the CCSL and *ANF* numbering varies.

[3] Latin: *Ubi caro una, unus et spiritus: simul orant, simul volutantur, simul ieiuna transigunt . . . talia Christus videns et audiens gaudet* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 393–94).

[4] For a consideration of the two letters to his wife, in view of his two treatises "On the Apparel of Women," see Lamirande (1989), who reads both works as part of Tertullian's catholic period.

[5] More recently, scholars have seen in them an ascetic rigor that accords with this movement (for instance, Osborn 1997, 10 and 210–12), and has also supported dating this treatise toward the end of Tertullian's literary career. A comparison of the treatises on marriage also shows that "On Monogamy" repeats and extends material in "Exhortation to Chastity." For a helpful summary of Tertullian's views on marriage in the recent volume, see Burns and Jensen 2014, 442–50. It should be noted, however, that the discussion there frames the differences among the treatises as reflecting the influence of Montanism on Tertullian's thinking.

"Montanism" fail to register the scant and polemical data for that movement (Barnes 1971, 17),[6] or to consider how these treatises may reflect themes from across his corpus. In this paper, I read Tertullian's four treatises on marriage together, mapping the shifts in his rhetoric between them not as inconsistencies, or as a product of his Montanist proclivities, but as reflecting a soteriology rooted in the claim that the fleshly body will endure in the resurrection, but sexual desire will not. Highlighting the connection between Tertullian's soteriology and his treatises on marriage, I participate in recent approaches to his work which emphasize that the salvation of the flesh—"in all its sexually differentiated messiness and variety"— is a consistent theme across his corpus (Petrey 2016, 86–102; Dunning 2011, 124–50; Daniel-Hughes 2011; Glancy 2008 and 2010, 118–33; Burrus 2008, 52–57; Perkins 2007).[7]

I begin by outlining Tertullian's understanding of the resurrection of the fleshly body in light of early Christian debates about salvation. His philosophical and theological commitments to Stoic materialism as well as to a cosmological aesthetic in which beginning and end converge ultimately give shape to his view of a sexed, but sexless resurrection body. Such a view makes sexual difference a productive part of his soteriological equation. Yet sexual difference also necessarily exceeds Tertullian's attempts to manage

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[6] The epithet "Montanist" did not emerge in Christian discourse in fact until the fourth century, thus Tertullian never uses it (see Nasrallah 2003, especially 155–62 and, for a discussion of Tertullian's conception of the prophetic, 129–54).

[7] The quote is from Dunning 2011, 128. Dunning explores the tensions that emerge in Tertullian's writing as the result of his commitment to working out the "salvation of the flesh" in terms of Paul's Adam/Christ typology. Recent studies of Tertullian's defense of the flesh move away from earlier discussions of his writing which considered his rhetoric (and disparaging comments about women in the *ecclesia* in particular) in terms of Tertullian's misogyny (e.g., Forrester Church 1975; Lamirande 1989; Turcan 1990; Finlay 2003).

its possible meaning.[8] This problematic informs Tertullian's recommendation of monogamy and not, as we might expect, virginity (given his ascetic orientation) as the figure of resurrected life.[9]

Ultimately, Tertullian's writings on marriage illuminate how speculation about the resurrected body could be implicated in early Christian views of social and communal life. Such speculation was not an abstract enterprise. Resurrection operated as a means by which early Christians negotiated the boundaries of their communities in ways that served productively in their attempts at self-legitimation and the assertion of difference, as Claudia Setzer (2004) has shown. Speculation about the nature of the resurrected body, I demonstrate, also had implications for Christians' intra-

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[8] See also Dunning 2011 and Petrey 2016, who likewise highlight Tertullian's (and other early Christians') attempts to grapple with the instability of the sexually differentiated body. Feminists of difference, of course, argue that sexual difference necessarily escapes attempts to manage or contain it; see the note below.

[9] Throughout the essay, I employ the terms "sexual difference" and "gender" somewhat interchangeably. The former reflects the complexities in Tertullian's rhetoric that the modern distinctions between sex, as pre-discursive or biological, gender, as cultural codes and behaviors, and sexual expression or desire, treat as separate. My terminological choice is informed by Dunning (2011, see especially 13–17), who utilizes Irigaray's concept of "sexual difference" as a heuristic category for reading early Christian texts, including Tertullian's. In this case, sexual difference, as Judith Butler explains, "is a border concept" with "psychic, somatic, and social dimensions that are never quite collapsible into one another but are for that reason not ultimately distinct" (Butler 2004, 186). A matter of bodies, psychic dispositions, and social formations, sexual difference might also be understood as a question that is posed repeatedly and without resolution (Wallach Scott 2011, 15–16). Gender, argues Joan Wallach Scott, might be understood in tandem with sexual difference as the "culturally and historically specific attempt to resolve the dilemma of sexual difference" (Wallach Scott 2011, 4). Wallach Scott's framing of these two concepts informs my usage of them in this essay.

communal debates about social and sexual practices, gender roles, and marital and familial arrangements in the here and now.[10]

II. ARGUING THE RESURRECTION OF THE FLESH

While early Christians variously proclaimed the resurrection of the dead, not all, perhaps a minority in the ante-Nicene period, insisted on the resurrection of the flesh (Walker Bynum 1995, 26). Tertullian ranked among this group as one of its most persistent and vehement spokesmen. Indeed, the resurrection of the flesh can be seen as a concern that permeates and animates all of his writings, as the vision of salvation promised by and symbolized in Christ's own sinless flesh. Tertullian, however, was aware that he promoted such a view in a competitive landscape in which other possibilities for what resurrection might entail proliferated.

All of Tertullian's writings that treat resurrection, "On the Resurrection of the Dead," "On the Flesh of Christ," and of course, "Against Marcion," are polemical in character and directed at Christians like Marcion, Apelles, and Valentinus, who (from Tertullian's perspective) were informed by a Platonic metaphysic that valued the spiritual over the material.[11] These writers, he complains, envisioned that in the resurrection Christians would obtain some better, glorious, ethereal body, abandoning their flesh in the kingdom of heaven. This perspective led them to conclude that Christ prefigured this glorified body, appearing on earth perhaps donning a star-like body or something comprised entirely of soul (for instance, *Carn. Chr.* 6.1–13 and 15.1–6).

Early Christian views of the resurrection picked up Paul's language where the apostle writes: "There are both heavenly and

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[10] In this way, Tertullian anticipates the theorizing about and experimentation with ascetic performance that dominated Christian culture in late antiquity, with its emphasis on the connections between the resurrected body and sexual renunciation (among other disciplines); see, for instance, Shaw 1998.

[11] On different Valentinian views of spiritual transformation, for instance, see Thomassen 2009.

earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly body is one thing, and that of the earthly body another" (1 Cor. 15:40). The distinction between earthly bodies and heavenly or celestial bodies, with their attendant "glory," suggests stark differences between bodies that exist in the heavenly and earthly realms. Indeed, Paul goes even further and states explicitly: "flesh and blood will not inherit the kingdom" (1 Cor. 15:50). Defenders of the "resurrection of the flesh," like Tertullian, wrestle mightily with this text (Moss 2011, 1002; Lehtipuu 2009). He spends nearly one third of his "On the Resurrection of the Dead" negotiating its possible challenge to his vision of material resurrection.

Over the course of his writings Tertullian not only insists on the biblical foundation for his views, he also strikes out against views that reject the salvation of the material flesh as the product of philosophizing. "Be wary of that Christianity produced from Stoic, Platonic, or dialectics! . . . With our faith, we desire nothing more except to believe!" he rails (*Praescr. 7.11–13*).[12] We should not, however, fall prey to Tertullian's polarizing rhetoric. Early Christian theorizing about the resurrection in the second and third centuries was expressed in the intellectual landscape of Greek and Roman philosophy—including Tertullian's own. Deeply informed by Stoic metaphysics, Tertullian holds fast to the notion that the material world furnishes evidence of divine providence, which deeply shapes his conception of salvation of the fleshly body.[13]

Tertullian's soteriology relies on a Stoic notion of the convergence of opposites, argues Eric Osborn (1997, 67). In his cosmology, God is alpha and omega, both creator and judge, who stands at the beginning and end of all things (see *Apol. 48.11*). Tertullian links birth and death, creation and resurrection as

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[12] Latin: *Viderint qui Stoicum et Platonicum et dialecticum christianismum protulerunt . . . . Cum credimus nihil desideramus ultra credere* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 193).

[13] Moss (2011, 1008) outlines ancient Christians' increasing interest in materialistic views of heaven, particularly how they inform the soteriology of Augustine.

bookends of the soteriological drama in which Christians all find themselves. "Resurrection" for Tertullian, explains Osborn (1997, 69), "simply repeats creation" in that "creation from nothing implies resurrection from death." Tertullian's theological aesthetics holds that God creates the world and restores it (Osborn 1997, 101).[14] He argues that God enables redemption by means of his model Christ, who reestablishes divine likeness lost with the onset of sin.

III. Imagining the Perfected Resurrected Body

For Tertullian, then, resurrection is best understood as "change into changeless," and not a new existence altogether. His vision of the resurrection stresses continuity and improvement over transformation, so as to preserve God's providential role as creator of both souls and fleshly bodies. What God creates in the beginning, he insists, must endure in the end. Supported by Stoic physics, Tertullian repeatedly highlights the mutual interdependence of the soul and the body. For Stoics, material and immaterial substances cannot be distinguished in terms of corporeality and incorporeality. They held that all the cosmos was comprised of bodies acting upon one another—infused to greater and lesser degrees with spirit (see Tertullian, *An.* 6.4–7).[15] Thus Tertullian imagines the soul as merely an invisible body, and the flesh as a more-dense and visible one. Though the flesh and soul are differentiated, they are deeply bound to one another. Tertullian concludes that in the final judgment soul and body will be reunited, altered not in substance, but in kind: they

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[14] For a discussion of the importance of justice in Tertullian's soteriology, see Petrey 2016, 87–88.

[15] For a survey of Stoic physics as it pertains to materiality, see Sellars 2006, 81–106. Sellars notes that despite their commitment to materialism, Stoics imagined some "entities" as incorporeal (asomatic), such as the meaning of speech. It should be noted as well that Tertullian's encounter with Stoicism was eclectic and "opportunistic"; see Gonzalez 2013, 448 (citing Colish).

will be the flesh and soul created by God, but improved by spirit, made perfect (*Res.* 52.9–12). [16]

Wholeness, integrity, and perfection define Tertullian's image of the resurrected body. In his "On the Resurrection of the Dead," he assures his Christian audience that the entire complement of their organs and limbs will endure, though their usage in the kingdom of God would be suspended (*Res.* 62.1–4). He mentions the digestive organs, stomach, entrails, and shining rows of teeth as parts that will be retained (*Res.* 60.2–9). God judges a person entire, he explains: "For God's judgment-seat demands the complete restoration of a person" (*Res.* 60.6).[17] Likewise the kingdom of heaven demands integrity and wholeness. He turns then to the corporeal markers of sexual difference, the generative parts, womb, and testes, noting that they too will persist in the kingdom, but have no utility (*Res.* 61.1–7).

Tertullian's complete, ordered, and perfected resurrected body recalls an ancient aesthetic ideal that saw symmetry, neatness, and order as befitting the celestial realm (Moss 2011). But it is not an aesthetic of absolute sameness in Tertullian's view—for the corporeal markers of sexual difference remain. Yet Tertullian insists that desire, which moves the generative organs, will be eradicated in the resurrected state (*Res.* 61.6–7). Here too we see the influence of Stoicism, in this case in his account of the duplicity of the passions.[18] Tertullian counts desire (*voluptas*) as a force that acts from outside the self, a source of disruption and impermanence, which even threatens the dissolution of soul and body.

In Tertullian's account of desire, we can begin to see how his vision of resurrected life could inform his larger concerns about his

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[16] See the discussion by Eliezer Gonzalez, who finds that Tertullian at points deviates from this perspective, imagining an embodied soul as the guarantor of continuity (Gonzalez 2013, 479–502).

[17] Latin: *Salvum enim hominem tribunal dei exigit* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1009).

[18] For a discussion of the Stoic view of emotions, see Nussbaum 2009, 359–401.

community's marital and sexual practices. Consider from the perspective of his sexual ethics his description of male orgasm in "On the Soul." The discussion here is aimed at establishing the codependence of soul and body at the very outset of human life. To make this case, he suggests that both soul and flesh are "discharged" at the moment of ejaculation, so that in conception neither part precedes the other, writing:

> . . . in this established function of the sexes when male and female come together in their common copulation . . . the man being excited by the effort of both natures [soul and body], his seminal substance is discharged, *its fluidity coming from the body, but its warmth from the soul* . . . . In short, I put modesty to the test in order to find the truth, by asking whether we do not, in that heat of our desire (*voluptas*) when that potent fluid (*virus*) is ejected, feel that somewhat of our soul has gone out? Do we not experience faintness and prostration as well as the dimness of sight? (*An.* 27.5–6, italics mine; Waszink 1947, 38–39).[19]

Tertullian asserts that orgasm is an effort of soul and body that unsettles the corporate unity. In a description of male arousal that anticipates Augustine's musings on this topic, seminal emissions are counted as an experience of psychic and somatic dissolution. Orgasm invites soul and body to "go out," with the present threat that repeated sexual encounters might make the recovery of the psychosomatic unity exceedingly difficult.[20] For a thinker who insists

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[19] Latin: *In hoc itaque sollemni sexuum officio quod marem ac feminam miscet, in concubitu dico communi . . . Unico igitur impetus utriusque toto homine concusso despumatur semen totius hominis habens ex corporali substantia humorem, ex animali calorem . . . Denique ut adhuc verecundia magis pericliter quam probatione, in illo ipso voluptatis ultimate aestu quo genitale virus expellitur, none aliquid de anima quoque sentimus exire atque adeo marcescimus et devigescimus cum lucis detrimento?* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 823).

[20] For a similar argument, made in relation to Augustine's work, see Miller 2007.

on the intimate harmony of soul and body—Tertullian writes of baptism, "flesh is washed, so soul is cleansed" (*sed et caro abluitur, ut anima emaculetur*, [Res. 8.3](#))—we might better understand why he insists in "On Modesty," another little-understood treatise, that fornication occupies a special class of sin, from which a Christian, once baptized, cannot be forgiven ([Pud. 1.20–21](#)).[21]

IV. Tertullian's Sexual Ethics in View of His Soteriology

Given Tertullian's view of the sexed, but sexless resurrected body, it is not surprising that he champions sexual chastity in his four writings on marriage as a corporeal discipline with the power to render changeable flesh unchangeable (Conybeare 2007, 433). In the earliest of these, the first letter "To His Wife," Tertullian advances the cause of widowhood and tells his female audience that marriage and childbearing merely "weigh down their flesh," while unmarried widows: "at the first angel's trumpet they spring forward able to endure whatever stress or persecution without the heavy weight of marriage in their wombs or at their breasts" ([Ux. 1.5.3](#)).[22] Widowhood, it seems, frees a woman's flesh from the burden of its reproductive functions. Yet this view implies a further question: if widowhood anticipates the resurrected condition, then does not virginity prefigure it? Should, in other words, Christians rather be

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[21] This treatise, a response to the "lenient" policies of the Roman bishop on the repentance of adulterers, modifies earlier discussions in "On Patience," which suggests that forgiveness of sins can be enacted in a second baptism; see [Pud. 1.6–10](#). In "On Modesty," Tertullian argues that based on biblical laws, adultery and fornication represent such a grevious denigration of God's law. But he claims that these sins (like idolatry and murder) were never absolved by the rituals of penance. For further discussion of penance in Tertullian's writings, see Burns and Jensen 2014, 304–09.

[22] Latin: *Ad primam angeli tubam expeditae prosilient, quamcunque pressuram persecutionemque libere preferent, nulla in utero, nulla in uberibus aestuante sarcina nuptiarum* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 379).

virgins than widows and in so doing live an embodied existence imitative of their future heavenly glory?[23]

Tertullian's writings on marriage seem on first blush to reach this conclusion. In his second treatise on the subject of remarriage, "On the Exhortation to Chastity," Tertullian holds up different, recommended options for his Christian audience: perpetual virginity from birth, virginity after baptism, celibacy within marriage, and celibacy after the death of a spouse (i.e., widowhood) (*Exh. cast.* 1.4). (Divorce, even of a non-Christian spouse, and a second marriage are, conversely, treated as adulterous practices to be avoided by the faithful). Yet over the course of these writings, moving from "To His Wife" to "Exhortation to Chastity," and finally to "On Monogamy," widowhood and celibate marriage appear diminished in grandeur when compared with perpetual virginity. In "To His Wife," he proclaims widowhood the harder course when compared to virginity. It is, he notes, a mode of life in which women give up the comforts that they have known (*Ux.* 1.6.2 and 1.8.2). But in later treatises, he calls virginity "immaculate"—mimetic of Christ's own sinless state (*Exh. cast.* 9.5 and *Mon.* 5.6). Widowhood and celibate marriage, on the other hand, result from the previous enjoyment of an "indulgence," the single marriage permitted Christians by God. "Give thanks," he exclaims, "that God conceded for you to marry one time" (*Exh. cast.* 9.4; see *Mon.* 3.10).[24]

Yet while Tertullian holds out perpetual virginity as exemplified in Christ's own sinless flesh, unlike his Latin successors Cyprian, Jerome, or Ambrose, he repeatedly insists that monogamy is the pattern established by God from the moment of creation and

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[23] On the connection between virginal and resurrected flesh in Tertullian, see Petrey 2016, 93. It should be noted, however, that Tertullian also commonly evokes the steely flesh of the martyr as emblematic of the resurrected body, for instance *Ux.* 1.5.3.

[24] Latin: *Gratus esto, si semel tibi indulsit deus nubere* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1028).

confirmed in the sacraments.[25] In "On the Exhortation to Chastity" and "On Monogamy," in particular, he argues that God set out this very law when he joined man and woman as two "in one flesh." God repeated the pattern through history: did not the animals embark two by two onto the ark, Tertullian queries? Monogamy is imprinted into God's cosmology—in Adam, monogamy was established, and in Christ, perfected, citing Eph 5:32: "[he is] a monogamist in spirit, having one church for a spouse—this is the figure of Adam and Eve, which the apostle interprets as the great sacrament of Christ and the Church," Tertullian explains (*Mon.* 5.7).[26] Even Christ's virginity is a species of monogamy, its most perfect expression, improving on Adam's carnal variety. Here Tertullian's soteriology reveals itself in his treatises on marriage. Linking beginning and end, he indicates that monogamy must likewise apply to the resurrection, just as it was established in creation.

This theological presumption—that beginning and end converge—shapes his conception of the nature of a marital bond, and its endurance into the afterlife as well. In fact, we can even trace a shift over the course of his writings on remarriage on precisely this point. In "To His Wife," his earliest treatise on marriage, Tertullian advises women to avoid remarriage because as widows, they are like the angels: "When Christians depart this world, no restitution of marriage is promised in the resurrection, because they will be transformed according to the character and sanctity of the angels" (*Ux.* 1.1.5).[27] Yet in his two later treatises on marriage, Tertullian threatens both women and men against remarriage, arguing that a second union would find them guilty of adultery, with serious

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[25] Petrey (2016, 94) suggests that Tertullian gives a "faint" support of procreation.

[26] Latin: . . . *monogamus occurrit in spiritu, unam habens ecclesiam sponsam, secundum Adam et Evae figuram, quam apostolus in illud magnum sacramentum interpretatur, in Christum et ecclesiam . . .* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1235).

[27] Latin: *Christianis saeculo digressis <sicut> nulla resitutio nuptiarum in die resurrection repromittitur, translates scilicet in angelicam qualitatem et sanctitatem . . .* (Dekkers et al. 1953, 374).

implications for their salvation. He admits that Christ asserts that "in the kingdom of heaven we will not marry nor be given in marriage"—sexual relations will of course cease. But the bond established in marriage participates in a scheme that is not simply carnal, but one that inheres in God's cosmological design. Its effects are necessarily spiritual as well.

In "Exhortation to Chastity," a treatise aimed largely at the men in his community, Tertullian argues that men are obligated to observe feast days and prayers on behalf of their deceased wives (see Burns and Jensen 2014, 492–96). A man married a second time cannot fare well when offering prayers to God on the behalf of two wives, "one in spirit, the other in flesh" (*una spiritu, alia in carne*), before the *ecclesia* of perpetual virgins, dedicated widows, and monogamous presbyters (a surely idealized view of the Christian assembly). Shaming such a spectacle, Tertullian questions how such a man could ever declare his second marriage respectably chaste—it is inherently adulterous (*Exh. cast.* 11.1–2). In "On Monogamy," Tertullian targets women in his community with a similar logic: even in death they will be tied to their first husband. They should assiduously honor a deceased's funerary feast day, offering up prayers for him, and, of course, rejecting a second marriage, knowing that ultimately they will be rejoined to him in the final days. It must be so, Tertullian writes: "But if we believe in the resurrection of the dead, assuredly we will be connected to those with whom we will be resurrected so that we can exchange an account with each other" (*Mon.* 10.5).[28] Tertullian warns his audience: you will continue to be connected to your spouses in the kingdom. He explains that the consciousness of that earthly bond is translated to a "spiritual fellowship" (*spiritale consortium*) in the

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[28] Latin: *Quid si credidimus mortuorum resurrectionem, utique tenebimur cum quibus resurrecti sumus rationem de alterutro reddituri* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1243).

afterlife, where Christians will reside in the very presence of God (*Mon.* 10.5–6).[29]

There are multiple reasons why Tertullian promotes the concept of monogamy, even as we might anticipate, given his negative appraisal of sexual desire, virginity would occupy him more forcibly. The first reflects his social context: in his own day, second marriages were the common, and even anticipated practice among the new elites in the Roman colony of Carthage.[30] A close look at Tertullian's arguments against remarriage suggests that for this group virginity would simply have been the harder sell. (It is interesting here to note that one of the very few things we know about Tertullian's biography is that he was married [see *Ux.* 1.1.1; see Conybeare 2007, 433]). We might consider, for instance, the practicalities that Tertullian has to address with his community in his effort to promote chastity and widowhood. Men, he admits, have need of someone to care for the house and children, distribution of clothing, and management of funds and supplies (*Exh. cast.* 12.1). Women and men alike feel the pressures of producing heirs, and ensuring the success of the following generations (*Ux.* 1.5.1 and *Exh. cast.* 12.3).

Yet, and more to my point, Tertullian's promotion of monogamy resonates with commitments to a Stoic materialism and a theological aesthetics in which beginning and end come together. As we have seen, Tertullian shares with the Stoics a metaphysics in which all that exists is material and held together, structured, and ordered by greater and lesser degrees of spirit. Such a perspective works against a view of the resurrection as radical change, which would imply discontinuity between the cosmos God creates and the one he

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[29] There is a tension here, for Tertullian also imagines women's chastity as a form of marriage to Christ. This tension would likewise appear in the writings of later church figures as well, who used the metaphor of Christ as a "celibate bridegroom" to promote ascetic life to women and men; see Clark 2008 and discussion below.

[30] See Daniel-Hughes 2014 for how debates over remarriage practices in Tertullian's community centered on differing interpretation of Paul's 1 Cor 7:1–40.

redeems.[31] Rather, Tertullian holds fast to the notion that the fleshly body and the soul created in the beginning will endure in the end. What guarantees this continuity is a particular construction of sexual difference, figured in a hierarchical mode, an intransigent part of God's cosmological design (see also Petrey 2016, 88–90). Thus in "On the Soul," Tertullian explains that the difference between male and female is revealed in the flesh and the soul, as it was established by God in creation. He directly appeals to Genesis 2 as scriptural evidence of the naturalness and endurance of this gendered hierarchy, explaining:

> . . . Adam was first (*prior enim Adam*), and the female was formed some considerable time later (*femina aliquanto serius*), for Eve came after (*posterior enim Eva*). (*An.* 36.4; Waszink 1947, 52)[32]

Adam's temporal priority and the subsequent completion of Eve's creation indicate their hierarchical relationship. Indeed, given the interdependence of soul and body (created at the same moment), Tertullian insists that sexual difference marks both soul and body equally.[33] It cannot be an accidental property of the flesh alone, discarded with the corruptible flesh at death, for such a view would imply that the fleshly body is not central to the soteriological equation. Nor can sexual difference be a property of the soul alone, imprinting the flesh, for again, that would complicate their interdependence. It must, therefore, be a distinction that obtains to

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[31] In distinction to the Platonists who differentiated between that which is immaterial and material, and who privileged soul as belonging to the former category, and body, to the latter.

[32] Latin: *Certe et hic se primordiorum forma testatur, cum masculus temperius effingitur (prior enim Adam), femina aliquanto serius (posterior enim Eva)* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 839).

[33] The complexity of Tertullian's views on this point have led some scholars to overlook this passage and to suggest that the soul is "genderless." See, for instance, Forrester Church 1975, 100; Kuefler 2001, 228–30.

soul and flesh alike (*An.* 36.1–3). Thus, sexual difference persists, even into the afterlife.

At this point, we begin to see why virginity, particularly female virginity—if understood as sexual impenetrability [34]—would be potentially unsettling for Tertullian. Daniel Boyarin (1998, 122) states: "By escaping from sexuality entirely, virgins thus participate in the 'destruction of gender' and attain the status of the spiritual human who was neither male nor female." Yet Tertullian does not hold out a soteriology in which the paradisiacal and eschatological states are defined by androgynous unity, or the transcendence of gender—a perspective that we find in more Platonically oriented thinkers, like Philo, Origen, or Gregory of Nyssa (on the latter, see Warren Smith 2006). As we have seen, he insists that sexual difference inheres in creation, and so too in the resurrection. Yet precisely how can sexual difference be retained in the resurrection, when, as Tertullian asserts, there is the absence of sexual desire and the genital organs will be stripped of their erotic content? What, in short, will be the indicator of that difference, the guarantor of that created order of male over female?[35] Tertullian's attempt to grapple with these contradictory impulses, both to insist on the eradication

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[34] Though Tertullian cannot make virginity entirely a characteristic of the body, for to do so would undermine the connection of body and soul (see Petrey 2016, 96). It is important to note too that this notion of virginity was not the only one operative in early Christian communities. Virginity could be understood as a discipline, available to women and men, and constructed as an office that one held. Charlotte Methuen (1997) has shown that in early Christian communities offices of women, married and non-married, retained a kind of fluidity, defined by a shared sense of purpose, and exhibited by their sexual chastity. Similarly, Susanna Elm (1994, esp. 181–82) has noted that even in the fourth century the category of "virgin" was variously understood; this class could be comprised of women who were once married but had taken a vow of celibacy (see also Methuen 1997).

[35] Sexual difference (at once about bodies, but that which exceeds it) shores it up and continually appears as, quoting Dunning (2011, 27), "an otherness that needs to be deferred or domesticated, insofar as it calls into question the dream of a single, divinely ordained fullness to human meaning." See also note 9 above.

of desire and to maintain a gender hierarchy, finds him ultimately coding flesh as feminine so that the female bodies are freed from sexual signification.

V. FEMINIZING THE FLESH

When Tertullian writes about flesh and soul, the two constituents of the self, his terminology is commonly gendered. Often the soul takes the dominant, masculine role, while the flesh takes the passive, feminine role. The flesh is persistently coded as feminine, a receptacle, queen, priestess, bride, and sister (e.g., *Res.* 15.1–8). Commenting on Tertullian's earliest letters on marriage, "To His Wife," Catherine Conybeare (2007) remarks that Tertullian's argument for Christian monogamous marriage likewise relies upon the gendered distinction between soul and flesh. While earlier scholars found in these letters a defense of Christian marriage, an argument for conjugal love (a view of marriage that Tertullian seemed to abandon in "Exhortation to Chastity" and "On Monogamy"), Conybeare instead identifies an underlying gendered logic—one that I have argued inheres in all of his writings on marriage. For Tertullian, marriage is a testing ground, a discipline for Christian men. "Wives are the ultimate in prospectively ungovernable property—the external demonstration of the desires of the flesh that must be controlled by the true philosopher Christian," Conybeare (2007, 437) concludes. In promoting monogamy in "To His Wife," Tertullian is not, ultimately, offering a compelling case for sexual expression, childrearing, or even sociability in marriage, but rather a "symbolic economy in which spirit represents the husband and flesh the wife" (Conybeare 2007, 439).

Recently scholars have pointed to Tertullian's commitment to the salvation of the flesh as indicative of his esteem for the material body, as notable in a culture context in which it was generally degraded as "shameful" (see, for instance, Perkins 2007). Yet such a perspective misses the ways in which Tertullian does not so much deny the "shameful" quality of the flesh, but instead he regularly trades on it, even embellishes it in articulating his view of salvation

over opposing theories. Holding, as we have seen, a view in which the fleshly body is subject to the passions as well as an essential constituent of the self and site of God's redemptive work, the flesh is necessarily also registered as in need of discipline. Tertullian's vision of salvation *highlights* rather than undercuts the volatility of material flesh. "Removing fleshiness from the flesh" animates Tertullian's arguments for sexual chastity, along with fasting and the avoidance of entertainment and luxuries (disciplines that he also recommends in his practical treatises; see Conybeare 2007, 433).

In Tertullian's writings the "flesh is at once despicable and beloved" (Glancy 2010, 120). Emphasizing rather than diminishing its shamefulness, Tertullian renders Christ's act in bearing the flesh all the more magnificent, or all the more scandalous (Burrus 2008, 54). In doing so, Tertullian necessarily recites and repeats the connection between femininity and the flesh. Having gendered this component of the self as feminine throughout his writings, we find him also shifting its semiotic burden onto female bodies (see Dunning 2011, 147).[36] In his writings these bodies come more often to signify the need for God's salvation, rather than the possibility of it.[37]

Despite Tertullian's pleas for chastity throughout his corpus, in fact, female flesh appears especially resistant to its pedagogic power. If men suffer from momentary "lapses" of the self in the moment of orgasm, for which chastity can provide a psychic and carnal barrier, a woman's role in the procreative process marks her so profoundly that Tertullian asserts that Mary, Christ's mother, emerged from the violence of birth no longer a virgin but a bride, deflowered by her own son, who opened her *vulva* when exiting (*Carn. Chr.* 23.4–5; see Glancy 2008, 285–87 and Dunn 2007, 482–83).

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[36] Earlier in the same chapter, Dunning (2011, 129) writes: "Tertullian's logic works to restrict the possible significations of female flesh, attempting to guarantee that the unpenetrated female body is not able to assume a representative function that might upset or endanger his gender hierarchy."

[37] For an elaboration of this part of my argument, see Daniel-Hughes 2011, especially 69–72, and on female virgins in particular, 93–114.

It is important to highlight at this point that Tertullian is constructing a category of "virginity" as one related to sexual status and bodily intactness, and in a social context in which the offices of virgin as well as that of widow were not uniform and often overlapped (Methuen 1997). Affiliation with these orders seems to have been flexible in practice, as were the duties and honors due women in them. Indeed, Tertullian himself complains about a virgin widow, that is a young unmarried girl, who has joined the order of widows (*Virg.* 9.2–3). Where our sources, such as the letters of Ignatius or church orders, highlight flexibility and overlap in these categories widow and virgin, Tertullian insists on firm boundaries: widows are the wives of one husband (echoing 1 Tim. 5:3–16), whereas virgins are women who have never been married (*Virg.* 7.32; see Methuen 1997, 292–93). The widow would diminish in status and even visibility in the writings of Tertullian's successors, like Jerome and Ambrose, who figured the female virgin as the symbol of the church itself (for instance, Burrus 1991 and 1994).[38]

In Tertullian's ethical treatises, however, women's claims to virginal status appear as something at best fictive and illusory, and at worse, a perilous threat to Christian salvation. In one telling instance in "On the Veiling of Virgins," Tertullian argues that a virgin's unveiled head, the sign of her "sanctity . . . actually puts her in danger of sexual slavery and degradation," writes Mary Rose D'Angelo (1995, 148). Virginity, Tertullian asserts, is all too often a cover, an attempt to hide unwanted bastard children (*Virg.* 14.6–8).[39] Few virgins can actually uphold their vows. Appearing in public, with heads uncovered, a virgin is easily dissuaded from her chastity; he writes:

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[38] As Burrus (1994, 31) notes, the exaltation of the virgin was enabled by her supporters, themselves often embattled clerics, whose proximity to and influence over chaste virgins served them rhetorically in the promotion of Nicene orthodoxy.

[39] A century later, John Chyrsostom would cast similar barbs at the virgins *sunintroductae*, who practiced their asceticism in spiritual unions with Christian brothers; see Leyerle 2001, especially 143–82.

> She is necessarily put to the test by public exposure, at the
> moment she is penetrated by undetermined, numerous eyes;
> titillated by pointing fingers; loved excessively and grows hot
> among embraces and ardent kisses. So her forehead hardens,
> so her shame wears away: it relaxes and in this way, she learns
> the desire to please in another way! (*Virg.* 14.5)[40]

The notion that a virgin, warmed by the admiration for her chaste state, would quickly crave carnal affection as well stands at odds with his claim in "On the Resurrection of Flesh" that Christians should look to the "many virgins wed to Christ" (*virgines Christi maritae*) as an image of their future sexless state in the kingdom of heaven (*Res.* 62.6).

In much of Tertullian's writing, virginity is a mode of life in which men, and not women, appear as imitators of Christ: voluntary eunuchs, who exemplify "valorized virginity" (see Elliott 2008, 30–31; Dunning 2011, 145–47). Fashioning them in the image of Christ himself, Tertullian treats their chastity as patterned after his very own—albeit, Dunning notes, configured not in terms of bodily impenetrability, but in terms of "ungendered sexual purity" (2011, 149). Female virgins and widows, on the other hand, are described with gendered and domestic language, which readily subordinates them to Christ, rather than equating their chastity with his own. These women are not voluntary eunuchs: they are the *sponsa Christi*, brides of Christ (e.g., *Virg.* 16.4).[41] Tertullian imagines the

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[40] Latin: *. . . necesse est publicatione sui periclitetur, dum percutitor oculis incertis et multis, dum digitis demonstrantium titillator, dum nimium amatur, dum inter amplexus et oscula assidua concalescit. Sic frons duratur, sic pudor teritur, sic soluitur, sic discitur aliter iam placere desiderare* (Dekkers et al. 1954, 1224).

[41] In later sources, the connection between virgins and brides would be embellished following early Christian reading of Eph 5 and the Song of Songs; see Clark 2008, 13. Tertullian likewise draws on Eph 5:31 (see *Mon.* 5.7), which would be utilized by later promoters of asceticism. Tertullian's application of the "celibate Bridegroom" metaphor in "To His Wife" shares the logic of later Christian ascetic promoters who used the metaphor "to valorize

bliss of the chaste woman's better union, replete with the trappings of its fleshly form. "With [the Lord] they live; to him they speak; he is the one they take in hand day and night," he explains when writing about women who refuse carnal marriage (*Ux.* 1.4.4).[42]

Even in celibacy, Christian women are pressed within the gendered scheme of the Roman household—a pattern that anticipates their glorified state in the resurrection. "Their bodies, sexually inactive, but gendered, are projected into the afterlife, scuttling all hopes for an androgynous *vita angelica*," Dyan Elliott (2008, 29) concludes. Indeed, here we see an example of how sexual difference escapes Tertullian's attempt to contain it so that he renders "the desire not to desire, or the desire for celibacy, as sexual" (Grosz 1994, viii). Though "sexually inactive," these female virgins are not desexualized, for they yearn for the affections of a celestial spouse, capable, it seems, of loving them in return.

VI. Concluding Thoughts

Scholars in the last century saw Tertullian's four treatises on marriage as plagued by contradictions and an increasingly ascetic rigor. For in them, we find little support for the expression of carnal union, and instead, arguments that promote an end to sexuality and childrearing altogether. I have suggested, however, that "Exhortation to Chastity" and "On Monogamy" do not represent his abandonment of an earlier idealized view of Christian marriage found in the letters "To His Wife." Rather together these treatises register tensions

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the institution of marriage while lauding (in a titillating manner) sexual continence" (Clark 2008, 1). While the metaphor proved fruitful in pastoral contexts, it could "collide" with eschatological speculation about the character of resurrected life, and thus, needed some controlling. Elizabeth Clark's analysis (2008) points interestingly forward to the ways that the tensions within Tertullian's writings emerge and inform ascetic theorizing and theologizing that would occupy Christian writers of the fourth and fifth centuries.

[42] Here Tertullian writes about widows specifically: *Cum illo vivunt, cum illo sermocinatur, illum diebus et noctibus tractant* (Dekkers et al. 1953–1954, 377).

inherent in his commitment to the salvation of the flesh, and to a theological aesthetic in which the pattern established in creation endures in the end. In pursuing this theological vision Tertullian does not eradicate sexual difference in favor of an "androgynous *vita angelica*," which the promotion of female virginity (figured in terms of sexual impenetrability) might imply, but rather recites it by linking female flesh and shame. Such a link, finally, undermines the utility of virginity for him and finds him promoting monogamy to his community in its stead.

We better understand the passion with which Tertullian pursues this enterprise when we keep in view the presence of female virgins within his community. On three occasions, Tertullian complains that these virgins were casting off their veils in the *ecclesia*, insisting upon a place of honor in that context. Dedicating an entire treatise to the matter, "On the Veiling of Virgins," he argues that these virgins no longer count themselves women and understand their virginity to place them above other women within the assembly (*Virg.* 9.3 and 10.1). Whether these virgins enacted an open challenge to Tertullian's arguments, or whether he continually challenged these virgins because he understood their ascetic performance to unsettle his vision, we cannot ultimately be certain.[43] Perhaps these women understood their sexual chastity to have deprived their flesh of its sexual content, to even signify the glory of the resurrected life in the present—claims that certainly cut at the heart of the soteriological scheme Tertullian constructs. To remove the veil was to expose the possibility that by means of sexual chastity that link could be easily unsettled. To suit down this possibility, Tertullian insisted that the veil be signified as a marker of shame, of sinfulness, a status that they share with all women (*Virg.* 16.4).

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[43] For a fuller version of the argument where I speculate that the virgins contested Tertullian's theological vision, see Daniel-Hughes 2010, 2011, 93–114; for a similar reading, one that emphasizes how the virgins' unveiling proclaimed a new gender status, which could unsettle ecclesiastical structures, see Upson-Saia 2011, 61–69.

Donning the veil, he imagines, these women perform not exaltation and glory, but rather subordination—and in so doing, shore up, rather than undermine, a creational hierarchy of male over female.

Virginity occupies a complicated place in Tertullian's thinking. When it comes to envisioning a sexual ethics for his community in his writings on marriage the concept of monogamy serves him more readily. Unlike virginity, monogamy easily retains the gendered language of husband and wife, of marital union, of a binary in which one side takes the lead. In this way, monogamy leaves intact the link between femininity and flesh, and concomitantly between masculinity and the spirit, upon which Tertullian's vision of salvation relies. As a concept, monogamy does not prohibit sexual renunciation, but rather enables it to fall safely with this gendered framework.

Monogamy, Tertullian explains, is a law established in creation that persists into the resurrection. So pervasive is it that virginity and marriage are both species of it—one spiritual, and the other earthly (*Mon.* 5.5–7). Tertullian is keen to point out the power of this "law" for his Christian audience: he reminds them that they are bound to it from the beginning: modeled in the creation of Adam and Eve; illustrated in their sacramental life; founded in the mystical union of Christ and the church (*Mon.* 5.7). Monogamy provides the very pattern of a Christian's existence. This law will likewise apply when at the "first sound of the trumpet," Christians look forward to the glorious existence that will be theirs in the resurrection.

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Death, Resurrection, and Legitimacy in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

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I. Introduction: Legitimacy, Resurrection, and Accounts Pertaining to Jesus

In Mark 10:35–41, James and John come to Jesus and ask for the right to sit at his right and left hand in the coming kingdom. The brothers fail to comprehend the foreboding nature of Jesus's response that they must "drink the cup" that he drinks and go through the "baptism" that he will experience. They do not understand that exaltation can only follow suffering. This was, however, to become a recurring motif in early Christian literature. Following the example of Christ to one's death was proof of one's authenticity as a representative of Christ, and in some cases walking in the savior's footsteps even includes rising from the dead, or raising others from the dead, as the ultimate proof of one's authority. This essay will demonstrate that in some early Christian literature, and particularly in the apocryphal acts, the image of resurrection serves to establish a figure's divinely recognized legitimacy as a type of Christ.[1]

Any discussion of Christian notions of resurrection must begin with Jesus. Studies on the accounts of Jesus's resurrection in the Gospels and Paul are numerous and represent a variety of

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[1] For the sake of this essay, I am focusing on examples of bodily resurrection, that is, cases in which the revivified person is described as having some kind of recognizable body. Whether or not resurrected bodies in early Christian texts are meant to be understood as *fleshly* is a matter of ongoing debate grounded in passages such as 1 Cor 15. That broader discussion is outside the scope of this essay.

methodological approaches (e.g., Lüdemann 1994; Koch 1959; Charlesworth 2006; Koester and Bieringer 2008; Perkins 1984; Perrin 1977; Bryan 2011; Davis, Kendall, and O'Collins 1997; Stewart 2006; Carnley 1987; Licona 2010; Swinburne 2003), so there is no need to rework that same ground here. Rather, our focus is on how this tradition was received and interpreted specifically as evidence of Jesus's exaltation and legitimacy. A clear articulation of this theological reading appears in two of the most important speeches in the Acts of the Apostles: Peter's sermon on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:14–36), and Paul's speech on the Areopagus (Acts 17:22–31).[2] In the midst of Peter's sermon in Acts 2, he turns directly to proofs of Jesus's legitimacy:

> You that are Israelites, listen to what I have to say: Jesus of Nazareth, a man attested to you by God with deeds of power, wonders, and signs that God did through him among you, as you yourselves know—this man, handed over to you according to the definite plan and foreknowledge of God, you crucified and killed by the hands of those outside the law. But God raised him up,[3] having freed him from death, because it was impossible for him to be held in its power. (Acts 2:22–24)[4]

After quoting Ps 16:8–11 (= Ps 15:8–11 LXX) as proof that David had prophesied about Jesus's resurrection, Peter continues, "This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses" (Acts 2:32). He

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[2] The passages analyzed here are meant to be illustrative, not comprehensive. There are also references to Jesus's legitimacy through his resurrection in Peter's speech to Cornelius (Acts 10:34–43) and in Paul's sermon in Pisidian Antioch (Acts 13:16–41).

[3] The Greek construction here is somewhat unusual, leading Barrett (1994, 1:143) to suggest that it "may be drawn from an early formulation of belief (cf. Phil. 2.6; Col. 1.15; 1 Tim. 3.16)." However, as I note elsewhere in this chapter, the specific reference to *resurrection* as proof of legitimacy is absent in the other passages cited by Barrett.

[4] All biblical quotations are from the NRSV. All translations of other early Christian writings are my own unless otherwise noted (cf. Eastman 2015a). On the wider significance of reference to the kerygma in Acts, see Bauckham 1996.

then concludes his sermon with the statement, "Let all the house of Israel therefore know for certain that God has made him both Lord and Christ, this Jesus whom you crucified" (2:36). Jesus was attested by God through his deeds of power, but the ultimate sign of his legitimacy was that God raised him from the dead and made him "both Lord and Christ" (Messiah). The resurrection of Jesus is the ultimate seal of divine action and divine approval,[5] and Peter proclaims these things as one who has witnessed the events.[6]

Later in Acts, Paul comes to Athens and attempts to contextualize his gospel message to an audience of philosophers (Epicureans and Stoics are mentioned by name). After appealing to their concept of "the unknown god," he finishes his speech with a reference to the impending judgment: "while God has overlooked the times of human ignorance, now he commands all people everywhere to repent, because he has fixed a day on which he will have the world judged in righteousness by a man whom he has appointed, and of this he has given assurance to all by raising him from the dead" (Acts 17:30–31). Jesus is never named specifically in Paul's speech, but the implication is clear.[7] God has guaranteed that, on account of this man's resurrection from the dead, he will preside

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[5] As Bruce (1988, 64) comments, "if his suffering and death were ordained by the determinate counsel of God, so were his resurrection and glory." Liggins (2016, 121–22) has summarized Peter's logic in this way: "Jesus through his resurrection and ascension better corresponds with the person described in these Psalms [those alluded to by Peter] than does David who died, whose tomb is well known, and who did not ascend to heaven. Only through the resurrection could a son of David rule forever."

[6] The element of Petrine witness is critical to the narrative. As Witherington (1998, 147) notes, "Peter does not merely proclaim the resurrection, he claims with the Eleven to have been a witness of the resurrection appearances. Thus Peter himself is in a double sense a witness— one who has seen and one who reports or bears witness."

[7] "All that the absence of the name means is that, at this stage, the speaker is more interested in the theme of judgment than in the details of the process. The next clause effects the identification—for the reader" (Barrett 1998, 2:853).

over the final judgment.[8] The resurrection is the proof of Jesus's authority and legitimacy, and it is this precise claim about resurrection that prompts the crowd to break into different groups: those who mock, those who remain uncertain and want to hear more, and those who believe ([Acts 17:32–34](#)).[9]

The framing of the speeches in Acts makes them especially significant for our consideration of the reception of the resurrection story. Peter, the apostle to the Jews, declares this message in Jerusalem. Paul, the apostle to everyone else, delivers his speech in Athens. The twin pillars of the church take the message to the center of Jewish faith and practice and to the center of Greek philosophical thought. There is a symmetry to these speeches that reveals the centrality of the resurrection narrative to the Lukan account of the earliest Christian missionary preaching. Jews and Gentiles should pay attention to, and ultimately surrender to, Jesus because he had come back to life.[10]

II. JESUS, DEATH, AND RESURRECTION

That Jesus served as a model for later Christians and for the stories told about later Christians has been recognized for a long time. This appears as early as the account of Stephen's stoning in [Acts 7](#) and his final words, "Lord, do not hold this sin against them" ([Acts 7:60](#));[11]

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[8] Thus, the resurrection of Jesus proves his legitimacy as a divine messenger and the future judge. See, e.g., Witherington 1998, 531–32; Gaventa 2003, 253; Conzelmann 1987, 146–48.

[9] Dunn (1996, 237) sees the judgment motif of [17:30–31](#) as the rhetorical setup for this fracture: "Luke cannot have been unaware of the offensive character of such an abrupt and bald declaration. It is almost as though he wanted to set in the sharpest possible contrast the fundamental claim of Christianity and the mocking rejection of the Athenian sophisticates."

[10] Strangely, the particular linking of resurrection with legitimacy does not appear in the Christ Hymn of [Phil 2:5–11](#). There, Paul mentions the crucifixion and exaltation of Jesus without any reference to resurrection.

[11] There has been considerable scholarly debate on whether this quotation was original to the text or added by a later scribal hand (see Pervo 2009, 198–99).

as early as the enumeration of Paul's ordeals in the latter chapters of Acts, which are clearly parallel to Jesus's ordeals in the final chapters of the Lukan Gospel (Meeks and Fitzgerald 2007, 171–72; Pervo 2009, 533–34, 592–93; Witherington 1998, 627–28; Talbert 1974, 17–18; Neyrey 1985, 98–107; Longenecker 1981, 515); and as early as the production of the Martyrdom of Polycarp, in which the aged bishop is described as being one of the "imitators of the Lord" whose death "took place according to the gospel of Christ" (Mart. Pol. 17.3; 19.1).[12] Christians describe their venerable figures as following in Christ's footsteps, even as "Other Christs," as Candida Moss (2010, esp. 54–59) has put it. These figures and others like them are remembered as types of Christ. Yet, all these examples also point to a fundamental distinction from the speeches in Acts that we saw above: the authority of these other Christ-like figures comes from their deaths, not their resurrections.

For other martyr examples of the late first or early second century, authority also comes through their deaths. A tantalizing passage on Peter and Paul in 1 Clement does not tell us many things we would wish to know about the apostolic deaths—though it might tell us more than is traditionally understood (Eastman 2014; Cullmann 1962, 91–110; cf. Tajra 1994, 79–84)—but the author does specify that their legitimacy is directly tied to their deaths:

> On account of jealousy and envy the greatest and most righteous pillars were persecuted and fought to the death. Let us place before our eyes the noble apostles. Because of unjust jealousy Peter endured hardships, and not once or twice but many times. Thus, after bearing witness he went to the place of glory that was due him. On account of jealousy and conflict Paul pointed the way to the prize for perseverance. After he had been bound in chains seven times, driven into exile, stoned, and had preached in both the East and in the West, he received the noble glory for his faith, having taught

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[12] Indeed, Polycarp is so much a Christ figure that a certain Nicetes even warns the magistrate to dispose of the body, lest the Christians "abandon the crucified one and begin to worship this man" (17.2).

> righteousness to the whole world and having gone even to the
> limit of the West. When he had borne witness before the
> rulers, he was thus set free from the world and was taken up
> to the holy place, having become the greatest example of
> perseverance. (1 Clem. 5.2–7)

Peter is credited with enduring many hardships and then going to
"the place of glory that was due him." Many of Paul's ordeals are
enumerated, and then he is described as "the greatest example of
perseverance."[13] The twin apostles are the "greatest and most
righteous pillars" because of what they endured, even to the point of
death. This model is particularly relevant for a Christian community
at risk of suffering persecution (Welborn 2004), but there is no
mention of resurrection.

III. RESURRECTION IN THE "APOCRYPHAL" ACTS[14]

Where, then, does the concept of coming back to life in the mold of
Christ enter the martyrological tradition? The first text in which it
plays a major role is the Acts of Peter (ca. 180 CE).[15] In this account
Peter comes to Rome to strengthen the Christians there after the
departure of Paul. The particular threat comes from Simon Magus, a
sorcerer who had first appeared in Acts 8. In Acts this local conjurer
hears the preaching of Philip and comes to believe. He is baptized
and travels around with Philip, amazed at the signs and wonders
that Philip performs. When Peter and John arrive and confer the
Holy Spirit by the laying on of hands, Simon offers them money if
they will grant him this ability. Peter rebukes him, telling him to
repent and beg God for forgiveness. Simon does repent and even

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[13] For further discussion concerning this list of apostolic trials, see Lona
1998, 158–67.

[14] The term "apocryphal" is used here because it is widely employed in
reference to stories about the apostles written in the second century and later,
but it is problematic on several counts (see Eastman 2015a, xviii–xxii).

[15] This text survives in Greek and in the Latin Vercelli Acts. On the
relationships between these texts, see Baldwin 2005, Thomas 2003, and
Poupon 1988.

asks the apostles to use their influence with God to ask for forgiveness on his behalf. Simon is left a sorrowful recent convert.

However, by the time of the Acts of Peter, Simon is back with a vengeance.[16] He has once again taken up his wicked ways and is claiming to be the "great power of God" ([Acts Pet.](#) 4).[17] He has come to Rome (for no apparent reason) and built a significant reputation for himself. He is now in the company of the emperor himself and has been attacking the church, particularly Peter.[18] Simon Peter ends up having a showdown with Simon Magus, and in the Acts of Peter this occurs in a triple resurrection cycle.[19]

In the first scene, the prefect Agrippa decides to use one of his slaves to settle the Simon versus Simon dispute. He tells Simon (Magus), "Take him and kill him." Then he says to Peter, "And you bring him back to life" ([Acts Pet.](#) 25). (We can only imagine the poor

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[16] Klauck (2000, 23) explains this condemnation of Simon in the Acts of Peter and elsewhere: "The common understanding . . . was that one whose conversion to the faith was motivated by sheer hypocrisy could not be capable of genuine repentance. Simon Magus is lost for ever to the Church; all he is fit for now is to be head of all heretics and founder of all heresies."

[17] The embedded hyperlinks connect to the older translation of the Acts of Peter produced by M. R. James (1924); the numbering corresponds to the Latin version (i.e., Vercelli Acts). For the Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Peter, see Eastman 2015a, 1–25.

[18] This conflict also features prominently in the Pseudo-Clementine literature (see Bockmuehl 2010, 94–113, and Kelley 2006, 135–78).

[19] Thomas (1998, 80) suggests that these three resurrection stories were crafted from different versions of the same *Vorlage*: "the author may have heard or read different versions of a single resurrection story that remained distinct in his or her mind: a version concerning the favorite of the emperor, in which Simon slays the boy, and Peter raises him; a version in which Peter raises the son of a poor widow, as Jesus did at Nain; and a version in which Simon demonstrates his insufficiency by moving only the head of the corpse, and Peter challenges him angrily before performing the act correctly. The author filled out these materials as well as could be done." However, this does not change the impact of the cycle for the reader of the Acts of Peter or the eager adaptation of the stories, such as in the history of Pseudo-Hegesippus and the Acts of Nereus and Achilles (both discussed by Thomas).

slave's response to this proposal.) Simon whispers something into the slave's ear, presumably some kind of curse, and the boy falls over, dead. Even before Peter can raise him, a widow bursts in and cries out that her only son has died but had asked for Peter with his waning breaths. Peter sends her with some men to bring back her dead son, but in the meantime he must deal with the dead slave. He prays to the Lord to raise the slave and then tells Agrippa to take the boy's hand. As soon as he does, the boy comes back to life, and all proclaim the truth of Peter's God: "There is only one God, the God of Peter" (Acts Pet. 26). In this first encounter, Peter is affirmed as an agent of the true God, because his power to bring the boy back to life is perceived as greater than the power to kill possessed by Simon, the other would-be conduit of divine power.

Then Peter turns his attention to the widow's son, who is brought to him in the Forum. Peter prays over the boy and raises him, causing the people to exclaim, "You are God the savior! You, the God of Peter, are the invisible God and the savior!" (Acts Pet. 27). Soon after, the third scene unfolds, as the mother of a senator named Nicostratus comes seeking Peter's help for her dead son. Peter announces to the crowd that the credit should go to God, not to him, and proposes a contest with Simon. If Simon can raise Nicostratus, then the Romans should recognize him as the messenger of God. If not, then Peter will raise the dead man and prove that Simon is a fraud. Simon's incantations are ineffective, but Peter raises Nicostratus from the dead. "From that time on," the author says, "they worshipped Peter like a god" (Acts Pet. 29). The apostle's ability to bring people back to life on three occasions is the proof of his legitimacy. Indeed, this power even grants him divine status in the eyes of the crowd, and Peter never says anything to discourage this enthusiasm (Acts Pet. 28–29). [20] This triple resurrection cycle has proven his legitimacy as the agent of the true God.

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[20] Compare with Acts 14:12–15, where Paul and Barnabas tear their garments when the people of Lystra identify them with the gods Hermes and Zeus.

Peter's final act of resurrection is his own, in a manner of speaking. After his death by inverted crucifixion, he appears in a dream to a certain Marcellus, a former follower of Simon Magus who had turned to follow Peter and had prepared the apostle's body for burial. This is indeed a peculiar scene. Peter does not come back to Marcellus as proof of his authority or the power of God; rather, he comes back to rebuke Marcellus for wasting money on his burial. Thus, this "resurrection" scene has no obvious function, except perhaps serving as a critique of those who may want to aggrandize a traditional Petrine burial site (Acts Pet. 40 [= Mart. Pet. 11]). At the very end of the Acts of Peter, an unnamed figure appears to Nero in a dream to castigate and warn him to leave the Christians alone. This figure is not identified in the Greek text but probably should be read as Peter (Acts Pet. 41 [= Mart. Pet. 12]), for although the Latin version (the Vercelli Acts) identifies the figure as "an angel of God,"[21] the fourth-century Latin translation and expansion of the Acts of Peter (wrongly ascribed to Linus) identifies this figure as none other than Peter himself. Peter *redivivus* in Nero's dream thus serves as the agent of divine retribution.

The Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul, which in its final form probably dates a bit later than the Acts of Peter, near the end of the second century, presents a different scenario related to resurrection.[22] Paul does raise someone from the dead—Patroclus, the imperial cupbearer. Patroclus is a member of the crowd that comes to hear Paul preach outside Rome. He is forced to sit in a

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[21] For a detailed comparison of the Greek and Latin texts of the martyrdom account, see Baldwin 2005, 251–301.

[22] The Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul is the third part of the Acts of Paul and very likely circulated independently before being incorporated into the larger text, as argued by Snyder (2013, 54–65). On the complicated relationship of possible dependence and interdependence between the Acts of Peter and Acts of Paul, and its importance for the dating of both texts, see MacDonald 1992, Valantasis 1992, and Perkins 1993. The second-century reception and reimagination of Paul has been the subject of important studies by MacDonald 1983, Pervo 2010, and White 2014, as well as a volume of collected essays, Bird and Dodson 2011.

window, eventually falls asleep, and tumbles to his death.[23] Nero is deeply saddened by the news of the loss of his trusted servant, but in the meantime the apostle has raised Patroclus from the dead. Patroclus returns to the service of the emperor, yet rather than causing the fame of Paul to grow among the Romans—as resurrecting the dead did for Peter—this event brings the apostle into direct conflict with Nero when Patroclus says that Paul serves a rival king, "Jesus Christ, the king of the whole world and the ages" (Acts Paul 10.1–2 [= Mart. Paul 1–2]).[24] Nero threatens Paul with death, but the apostle responds: "Caesar, it is not for a short time that I live for my king. Know that even if you cut off my head, I will do this: I will appear to you after I have been raised again, so that you may know that I did not die but am alive in my king Jesus Christ (cf. Rom 14:8), who judges the entire world" (Acts Paul 10.4 [= Mart. Paul 4]). This is meant as both a promise and a threat. Paul will not just appear to Nero in a vision or haunt him by night; he predicts that he will come back to life and visit the emperor.

Undeterred, the emperor has Paul killed. When Paul's head is severed, milk spurts onto the clothes of the executioner, and everyone, including Nero, is amazed at the report of this event. Soon Paul makes good on his promise to Nero:

> While Caesar was still amazed and at a loss, Paul came at around the ninth hour,[25] when many philosophers and leaders—both rich and distinguished—were standing with Caesar, and when the centurion[26] was present. Appearing to them all, Paul said, "Caesar, see that the soldier of God did not die but lives. There will be great evil for you on account of

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[23] The comparison to the story of Eutyches in Acts 20:7–12 is evident (Eastman 2015a, 121–29).

[24] The embedded hyperlinks connect to the older translation of the Acts of Paul produced by M. R. James (1924). For the Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Paul in Rome, see Eastman 2015a, 121–37.

[25] That is, around 3:00 p.m.

[26] A centurion named Cescus had been identified among Nero's entourage earlier in the text and would later become a convert.

> the many righteous people whose blood you poured out, and
> these things will happen to you after not many days." Nero
> was troubled and ordered that all the prisoners be set free,
> including Patroclus and all those remaining. ([Acts Paul](#) 10.6 [=
> Mart. Paul 6])

This story is qualitatively different from the account in the Acts of
Peter. Paul does not return to complain about his burial
arrangements; he comes back to prove to Nero that he is the
authorized servant of the true king. Paul's legitimacy is the primary
issue at hand, and here resurrection is the proof of that legitimacy.
Notably, this is not presented as a dream or a vision. Nero is fully
awake in the middle of the afternoon, and he is not alone.
Philosophers and other prominent Romans are present and witness
the event, for Paul appears "to them all" (καὶ πᾶσιν φανεὶς ὁ
Παῦλος).[27] As he had predicted, it is not his ghost but Paul himself:
"Caesar, see that the soldier of God did not die but lives."
Decapitation did not end Paul's life, for he has come back to life and
is alive.

Paul's public and physical visit to the imperial court is the closest
comparison to Jesus's resurrection that we find anywhere in
Christian literature from any period.[28] The author of the Acts of
Paul, like the authors of the Gospels, inserts narrative elements to
emphasize that this is not a dream. Paul appears in the middle of the
day, not at night like Peter did to Marcellus, and there are multiple
witnesses, also unlike Peter's castigating visit to Nero. It is not clear
what kind of body Paul has, but he is clearly recognizable to those in

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[27] Greek text from Eastman 2015a.

[28] In [Acts Thom.](#) 169–70, Thomas appears posthumously three times, but
these are clearly visions, not the result of a bodily resurrection. The author
specifies that Thomas "appears" (φαίνω and ἐπιφαίνω in the Greek text) and is
not actually present, because he has ascended into the presence of God: "I am
not here, but I have gone up and received everything that I was promised"
(169).

attendance.[29] And this Paul, like Jesus in the Gospels, had predicted that he would come back. The remembered Paul in the Acts of Paul not only shares in the sufferings of the remembered Jesus but also shares in his resurrection. Perhaps this is meant to be a literalistic fulfillment of Paul's desire to partake in Christ's suffering and resurrection, as stated in [Phil 3:10–11](): "I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the sharing of his sufferings by becoming like him in his death, if somehow I may attain the resurrection from the dead."[30] In any event, just as Jesus was validated and exonerated by his resurrection—according to the words of Paul in Acts no less—so is the apostle himself validated and exonerated in Rome by his own resurrection.[31]

In the accounts discussed so far, Peter and Paul are presented as dying and being raised separately, yet in later layers of the tradition there is an increasing emphasis on showing the harmony and collaboration of these two apostles (*concordia apostolorum*).[32] In one text this close connection between Paul and Peter extends beyond their deaths. According to the pseudonymous author of the Epistle of Blessed Dionysius the Areopagite to Timothy concerning the Death of the Apostles Peter and Paul, the apostles are condemned together in Rome and separated only moments prior to

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[29] Bolyki (1996, 103) emphasizes the reality, even physicality, of Paul's appearance by highlighting that "the martyr Paul comes (not: appears) to the court of Caesar."

[30] Lalleman (1996, 133) argues that in the Acts of Paul, "the resurrection of the believers," in this case Paul himself, "cannot be separated from that of Christ."

[31] Gregory (2011, 188) concludes, "thus, whereas the canonical Acts concludes by depicting Paul as preaching freely in the heart of the Roman empire, the *Acts of Paul* concludes by depicting him as sharing in the death and resurrection of his Lord, and so embodying the message that he proclaimed."

[32] See Huskinson 1982. In some cases, the apostles are so closely connected that they are confused with each other in literature and art (see Eastman 2015b).

their deaths.[33] However, "after their deaths I saw them one after the other entering the gates of the city hand in hand, and I saw them dressed in garments of light and adorned with bright and radiant crowns. I was not the only one who saw this, but Lemobia, a handmaid in the service of the emperor and a disciple of Paul, also saw it" (Ep. Tim. Dion. 8). Thus, although they had died apart from each other, the two apostles make a common posthumous appearance to a few of the faithful. Walking into Rome together hand-in-hand, they demonstrate their legitimacy as divine ambassadors, the unity of their teaching, and their equal victories over death.

IV. FALSE RESURRECTION, FALSE CHRIST

The apostles are not the only ones with claims to resurrection in the apocryphal acts, however. Their archnemesis, Simon Magus, also claims to have resurrection power because he is the Christ. In the Passion of the Apostles Peter and Paul, Simon attempts to prove his identity as the Christ to Nero by coming back to life—or at least seeming to come back to life (Pass. Apost. 1–2).[34] After inviting Simon into his court, Nero asks him about his background, and Simon says that he was sent by the divine majesty to the Jews. They rejected and killed him, but on the third day he rose again. Nero does not believe such a fantastic story, so Simon offers to reproduce the feat. He tells the emperor to have an executioner cut off his head in his presence, and he will rise again. Nero is finally convinced to do this and tells an executioner to take Simon, kill him somewhere else, and put his head in a basket that the emperor will seal with his own ring. Simon asks for this beheading to be done in a dark place, and in the dimness he tricks the executioner into cutting off the head of a ram and placing it in the basket. Nero seals the basket without checking its contents, and on the following day he opens it to look at

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[33] I analyze this text in more detail elsewhere (Eastman 2015a, 343–65; 2016a, 464–80); for text and translation, see Eastman 2015a, 343–65.

[34] This text dates from the late sixth or early seventh century; for text and translation, see Eastman 2015a, 317–41.

Simon's head but finds the ram's head instead. Nero is amazed and reports this to the Senate. On the third day after this failed execution, while Nero is in the Senate chamber, Simon walks in: "addressing the emperor he said in a loud voice, 'I am the one whom you ordered to be decapitated three days ago. Behold, I have been raised.'[35] Nero and all those who were with him were all the more amazed, and he ordered that a statue for Simon be set up in honor of this deed" (Pass. Apost. 3).[36]

A major theme that runs through the remainder of this text is the denunciation of Simon and his claims to being the Christ, first by a relative of Pontius Pilate who happened to be in the Senate, and then by Peter and Paul. Yet, Nero defends Simon to the very end, when Simon falls from the sky to his death because of the prayers of Peter. In Nero's eyes, Simon's apparent resurrection is proof that he is who he says he is and that he was indeed sent by God. The legitimacy that Peter and Paul ascribe to Jesus in Acts based on his resurrection is ascribed here to Simon by the emperor. Interestingly, Simon's claims to be the Christ appear in several of the apocryphal acts,[37] but only in this text does Simon go to this extreme to prove his identity. This late antique author is therefore reviving the ancient theme of resurrection as proof of authority, yet here it is Simon's failed resurrection that reveals his illegitimacy.[38]

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[35] Hippolytus recounts that Simon attempted to prove that he was Christ by having his followers bury him alive, claiming that he would rise again on the third day: "he remained there to this day . . . for he was not the Christ" (*Haer.* 6.20.3 [= 6.15 in *ANF*]).

[36] Justin Martyr records that a statue for Simon stood between two bridges on the Tiber (*1 Apol.* 26). He probably misinterprets the inscription on the statue, but it is not impossible that followers of Simon used this statue as a focus of worship (see Zwierlein 2010, 129–34).

[37] For more on Simon's claims that he is the Christ, here and elsewhere, see Eastman 2016b.

[38] On the theme of failed resurrection, perhaps the author of this later Passion of the Apostles Peter and Paul is indebted to the passage from Hippolytus discussed in n. 35 (above).

V. Conclusion

The rhetoric of resurrection permeates early Christian literature and is linked to the example of Jesus as the prototype. What had separated Jesus from other teachers and would-be messiahs and affirmed his identity as unique in history was his resurrection, for it was the ultimate stamp of divine approval and authenticity.[39] In several of the apocryphal acts, we see this same status being applied to the apostles Paul and Peter, while their rival Simon Magus fails to prove himself through the same means. The final evidence of divinely-sanctioned legitimacy, therefore, was not just living well or dying well, but coming back to life.

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[39] My argument here is that the authors of these texts present Jesus's resurrection as a unique event in history, not that the claim itself has no parallels. Cotter (2001), Smith (2006), Miller (2014), and Matthews (2016) are among those who have compared the resurrection accounts in the Gospels to Greek and Roman apotheosis traditions. Such traditions, as these authors note, are informative but not exact analogues to the Gospels.

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Life and Death, Confession and Denial:
Birthing Language in the *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons*[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION:
THE METAPHOR OF PROCREATION

Considerable scholarly attention has been given to how early Christian martyrologies portray women as rejecting biological motherhood in order to achieve salvation (Cobb 2008; Salisbury 2004), such as in the account of the noblewoman Perpetua and the slave Felicitas (*Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas*). In this paper, however, I propose that the language of birthing and motherhood was deemed useful by some early Christians for communicating the experiences of persecuted Christians. In her book *Making Christians*, Denise Kimber Buell (1999, 3) demonstrates how the metaphor of procreation was utilised by some early Christians to construct "an authoritative discourse of Christian identity." Because the notion of procreation is inscribed in power relations, the symbolic use of procreative language could be used to *naturalise* (that is, attribute to nature) power differentials.[2] This language, which favours sameness over difference (Buell 1999, 14), posited *natural* similarities and

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[2] That is, the metaphor of procreation could be used to make existing inequalities appear "even god-given" (Yanagisako and Delaney 1995, 1).

dissimilarities among early Christians and between Christians and non-Christians, thereby legitimizing or delegitimizing community members. That is, some Christians were rhetorically using a natural concept (procreation) to also mean legitimate. When the language of procreation was used in early Christian texts, Buell rightly demonstrates that it played an important and strategic role in authorizing and contesting early Christian perspectives.

In this paper, I will use Buell's work to frame my investigation into the notable and strange language of birth, abortion, and rebirth in the *Letter of the Churches of Vienne and Lyons to the Churches of Asia and Phrygia* (hereon referred to as *Lyons*). *Lyons* is a second-century martyrology preserved in Eusebius of Caesarea's fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History*.[3] This Greek-language letter was sent from two Gallic communities in Lyons and Vienne to communities in Asia Minor and Phrygia. *Lyons* projects a heightened awareness of and warning against those who have denied or lapsed in their confessions as Christians. Through the language of birthing, the text sets up a stark contrast between the experiences of Christian confessors and deniers, which I will argue is reflective of the author's attempt to construct his concept of Christian identity. The metaphor

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[3] In this article I treat *Lyons* as a second-century letter. Our only source for this text, however, is Eusebius's fourth-century *Ecclesiastical History.* This Christian polemicist and historian states that he repeats parts of the letter as may be *needful* for his present purpose. Additions or modifications may have been made to the original letter (Dehandschutter 2005, 5–6). However, Eusebius proceeds by quoting verbatim large portions of *Lyons* and only making marginal notes. According to Doron Mendels (1999, 29), Eusebius's preservation of the letter "confers a relatively high degree of credibility of the information." Other scholars agree, such as Paul Keresztes (1967, 75), who writes: "there is nothing in this moving description of the Lugdunum [Lyons] tragedy that would discredit the historical value of what we have, thanks to Eusebius's transmission of the original document." I agree with Keresztes; very few scholars accuse *Lyons* of being false and of those who do (see Thompson 1912, 1913), not many scholars have been convinced by their arguments. For these reasons, I have chosen to treat *Lyons* as a second-century production and have therefore analysed it within a second-century discourse interested in the construction of a Christian and martyr identity.

of birthing, particularly in its relationship to the Virgin Mother, is used to *denaturalise* deniers, or at least the act of denial, while *naturalizing* Christian confessors.

My aim is to demonstrate how the author of *Lyons* finds the language of birth, abortion, and rebirth particularly useful in putting forward his concept of Christian identity. This language also enables him to demonstrate how denying or lapsed Christians can come back to life through the act of confession. To begin, I will engage some of the scholarship on martyrdom by discussing how martyrologies were particularly fertile sites for the construction of Christian identity. As a second-century text, *Lyons* emerges within this flux and participates in (re)defining the concept of martyrdom and Christian identity. Next, through a rhetorical-critical analysis of *Lyons*, I will look at specific passages in order to demonstrate the ways in which the author uses the metaphor of birthing, and I will explain how this language is tied up in his construction of a Christian identity. Whereas Buell primarily investigates the metaphor of procreation in the works of Clement of Alexandria, I will use *Lyons* to extend her argument to the discourse of martyrdom.

II. Martyrologies and
the Construction of Identity

Early Christian martyrologies are important literary sources because they function as sites for the construction of identity among Christians (Matthews 2010, 7). The authors or communities that produced martyr texts negotiated a variety of categories, including what it meant to be a Christian and a martyr, as well as what it meant to stand outside these categories. In order to construct an identity, there needs to be an understanding of who or what does not belong to a given classification; that is, there needs to be an *other*.[4] Identity necessitates difference and so a boundary is created

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[4] L. Stephanie Cobb (2008, 6) writes: "Humans construct identities by aligning themselves with others, and since being a member of one group often requires not being a member of another . . . the social world is categorized and differentiated."

between *us* and *them*. On this topic, Judith Lieu (2004, 98, my italics) writes:

> Thus boundedness is integral to the idea of identity, for it is boundaries that both enclose those who share what is common and exclude those who belong outside, that both ensure continuity and coherence, and safeguard against contamination or invasion—or so it seems. *It is part of the seduction of identity that the encircling boundary appears both given and immutable, when it is neither.*

Identity, therefore, is in constant mediation. Early Christian martyrologies negotiate such boundaries; they set up those who belong to the Christian community by intending to clearly demarcate those who do not. Outsiders can include pagans, Jews, or other Christians/Christian communities considered to be misguided or outright erroneous. Although martyr texts imply that categories such as Christian or martyr are an absolute thing, the reality is that these categories were much more fluid.

Daniel Boyarin (1999, 21), for instance, explores ancient martyrologies in order to argue that such texts "seem to be a particularly fertile site for the exploration of the permeability of the borders between so-called Judaism and so-called Christianity in late antiquity." Although martyr narratives present categories such as Jew and Christian, or pagan and Christian, as well defined and impermeable, a careful reading actually suggests that these categories were in flux and much more porous than the reader is led to believe. Martyrologies should instead be approached as proof for the intimate contact between the communities the author of a text seeks to set apart. As I will demonstrate later, the author of *Lyons* uses his letter to negotiate the categories of confessor and denier, and although he advocates for a sharp distinction between the two, he nevertheless creates an opening that allows for much more permeability between the two parties. The author's negotiation of Christian identity marks an *intragroup* dispute.

Early Christian martyrologies are highly rhetorical texts. Although scholars have questioned the authenticity or accuracy of events depicted in martyr narratives, instead treating such texts as highly stylised forms of writing intended to be didactic (see, for instance, Hartog 2014, 63, 66), these texts nevertheless give us a lens into the concerns and interests of the communities which produced these narratives. Martyrologies, therefore, are perhaps best approached "as records of individuals' responses to persecution" (Cobb 2008, 4). In *Lyons*, one can read not only the types of responses Christians exhibited when faced with persecution (confession, denial, relapse, hesitation, etc.), but one can also analyse an author's or community's response to such moments of persecution. Unlike what much Christian martyr literature would lead one to think, the reality was that large numbers of Christians denied being Christian, or recanted previous confessions, during periods of persecution. Eusebius, for instance, confirms in his *Ecclesiastical History* that some denied their Christian allegiance: "But some advanced to the altars more readily, declaring boldly that they had never been Christians. Of these the prediction of our Lord is most true that they shall 'hardly' be saved. Of the rest some followed the one, others the other of these classes, some fled and some were seized" ([6.41.12](#)). Tertullian, writing around the beginning of the third century, also reports in his *On Flight in Persecution* that Christians, when faced with Roman persecution, fled in search of safer locales (6.1 [≈ [§6](#) in *ANF*]). Given the real possibility of denying or relapsed Christians, the author of *Lyons*, I argue, aimed to prevent such a probability. With every martyrological account, there lies a rhetorical purpose for preserving its events in writing. Therefore, a rhetorical-critical analysis of *Lyons* will allow me to explore the ways in which the author is using the language of birthing, and how such language is tied up in his construction of Christian identity. By coupling such an analysis with historical reflections, I will also consider the motivation behind *Lyons's* rhetoric.

In her book *Rhetoric and Ethic*, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza (1999, 108) states that rhetorical criticism is focused "on the persuasive power and literary strategies of a text that has a communicative function in a concrete historical situation." Such a rhetorical discourse is produced by a particular situation that invites a response among its audience, drawing out certain kinds of emotions, principles, and identifications that invite the possibility of altering the situation. Through rhetoric, Schüssler Fiorenza insists that an author attempts to convince his or her reader "to *act rightly*" (108, her italics). In this paper, I will demonstrate one productive way in which the author of *Lyons* promotes confession as the right action to be taken during times of persecution[5]—through the language of birthing. In turn, this concern defines, for the author, those who prove to be truly or legitimately Christian (that is, confessors) and those who fall outside that group (that is, deniers). Although this rhetoric is unsurprising for a martyrology, the language the author embraces to achieve this end proves more interesting. By adopting the symbolic language of birth, abortion, and rebirth, the author of *Lyons* articulates a discourse that portrays his conception of Christian identity as being *natural* and *valued*.

III. RHETORICAL ANALYSIS: LIFE AND DEATH IN *LYONS*

The letter of *Lyons* opens by narrating how Christians of Lyons and Vienne were at first excluded from public areas such as the baths and public square (1.5), and then some were physically attacked by an enraged mob, which dragged the Christians to the forum for

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[5] The fact that a martyr text would support confession over denial is to be expected. The discursive effort of early Christian martyr literature constructed confession under duress as the enactment of Christian allegiance. The writings of church fathers such as Tertullian and Ignatius also fervently participated in the ideological conceptualisation of martyrdom. They portrayed those who died for their religious affiliation as imitators of the passion of Christ (see Moss 2010). Tertullian argues in *Scorpiace* that one cannot deny his or her Christian identity without also refuting Christ himself (9.10 [≈ §9 in *ANF*]). However, not all Christians viewed martyrdom in the same favourable light as these writers. I will pick up this point again later in this paper.

interrogation before the tribune and city authorities ([1.7–9](#)).[6] This persecution appears to be a local event. Although the text gives no historical pretext for the targeting of these Christians,[7] it understands and imbues these events with apocalyptic significance. The author of *Lyons* presents the persecution as a "prelude to [Christ's] imminent final coming," where the opponent is "preparing and training his own against the slaves of God" ([1.5](#)). The martyrs are said to be assaulted by "the Evil One," but through their torture, they illustrate that "the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared to the coming glory which will be revealed for us," an allusion to [Rom 8:18](#).

The letter continues to recount in dramatic detail the excessive torments applied to Christians of all ages, genders, and social statuses.[8] For instance, there is the ninety-year-old Pothinus, the bishop of Lyons; Sanctus, the deacon of Vienne; Marturus, the newly-baptised Christian; Attalus, of Pergamene descent; and Blandina, the female slave. Despite the author's claim that "the holy martyrs endured punishments beyond all description" ([1.16](#)), he

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[6] The text of *Lyons* survives in Book 5 of Eusebius's *Ecclesiastical History* (see further, n. 3 above). Numbering of *Lyons* follows the chapter and verse of *Hist. eccl.* Book 5; thus, [*Lyons* 1.5](#) = [Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 5.1.5](#). Unless otherwise indicated, direct quotations of *Lyons* are from Weidmann 2000, with some slight modifications made; the embedded hyperlinks connect to the Loeb edition (Lake and Oulton 1926–1932).

[7] Elizabeth Castelli (2004, 45) remarks: "Indeed, the absence of any sort of legal precision in rationalizing the violence that took place is especially striking in this text." Although the text lacks clarity in this regard, it does suggest some possible charges made against the Christians. The text narrates how the elder Zechariah makes a defence "that neither atheism nor impiety" was found among the Christians ([1.9](#)). Later, the text indicates that gentile slaves "falsely alleged against us Thyestean feasts and Oedipean sexual intercourse and such things as for us it is neither appropriate to speak about or to think about, or even to believe might ever happen among human beasts" ([1.14](#)).

[8] As Moss (2012, 106) puts it, the Christians in *Lyons* "ran the gamut of possibilities (slave, free, wealthy, citizen, noncitizen, male, female, young, educated, and old)."

describes the tortures anyway, and in vivid detail. The bodies of Christians are broken, opened, and burned; they are dragged, suffer blows, and are exposed to the beasts. The pagans are creative in their methods of torture, and the author of *Lyons* does not hesitate to share the gory details. The martyrs Marturus and Sanctus, for instance, endure the gauntlet of whips, the mauling by beasts, and also the iron chair, on which their bodies are roasted (1.38).

In several passages, the author of *Lyons* promotes and understands Christian identity through confession under persecution. From the beginning of the letter, two separate factions emerge among the group of persecuted Christians. On the one hand, there are the "first martyrs," that is, those who "were clearly ready and who were fulfilling the confession of martyrdom with all enthusiasm" (1.11). On the other hand, there are those "who appeared unready, untrained, and still weak," and "of whom about ten in number were even aborted [ἐξέτρωσαν]." The author of the letter indicates that these weak Christians "effected in us great grief and immeasurable sorrow, and cut off the enthusiasm of the others who had not been arrested" (1.11). Their denial not only impacts themselves vis-à-vis their own salvation, but it also affects the other Christians, the *us* of the text, that is, those who have confessed and the soon-to-be-arrested community members. A stark division is set up between the first- and third-person plural subjects of the text.

The fear of denial is a central concern of the text from this point on. The author describes all Christians as fearful on account of "the uncertainty of the confession" and the dread "that a given individual would fall away" (1.12). The central fear is not of the impending punishments, but of Christians who are too weak to confess. The text attempts to reconfigure the meaning of imprisonment, stating that only the "worthy ones were being arrested" (1.13). For the author of *Lyons*, to be arrested becomes a sign of election. As the text moves forward, the ideal Christian identity becomes increasingly tied up with a martyr identity.

The author again emphasises a stark division between deniers and confessors in 1.33, which reads:

> Those who became deniers at the first arrest were themselves confined and shared in the terrors. At this time denial was no advantage. Rather, the ones confessing that which they were, were confined as Christians (no other charge being forwarded against them), while the others were held as murderers and foul creatures, being punished twice as much as the rest.

Denial provides no benefit to the Christian. In fact, it is a nonsensical choice, given that those who deny are punished twice as much. There is no physical relief in denial.

Significantly, this kind of punishment presents a different kind of pain than that of the confessors' suffering. The division at work in *Lyons* between pain and suffering has been noted by Candida Moss (2012). Although these two terms are oftentimes viewed as synonymous and as equally negative, she remarks that, according to the logic of this letter, "they are clearly demarcated from each other" (Moss 2012, 110). The confessors' suffering is not equivalent to pain. For instance, the martyr Sanctus is described as follows: "in him Christ, while suffering, was achieving great glory, rendering the opponent idle and showing, for the example of others, that there is nothing fearful where the Father's love is, neither is there anything painful where the glory of Christ is" (1.23). Suffering in Christ is not the equivalent of experiencing pain. In fact, the text is quite clear that there is no pain in Christ. Suffering is actually regenerating. We read in the following verse that Sanctus's "body was even straightened out in the subsequent tortures, and he assumed his former look and the use of his body parts, so that not punishment but *cure* was what, through the grace of Christ, the second torture became for him" (1.24, my italics). Similarly, Biblis, who had previously denied, regains her senses through torture. It is "as if to say she awakened out of a deep sleep [ἐκ βαθέος ὕπνου ἀνεγρηγόρησεν], having been reminded by these temporary torments about the eternal punishment in Gehenna" (1.26). If we take into consideration that wakening is a common metaphor for the notion of coming back to life, this verse almost suggests that Biblis is "coming to life" through the process of suffering. Likewise, the elder Pothinus,

despite his near inability even to breathe "on account of the bodily weakness affecting him," finds that he is strengthened "through the pressing desire for martyrdom [διὰ τὴν ἐγκειμένην τῆς μαρτυρίας ἐπιθυμίαν]" (1.29). In other words, the confessors' suffering is productive. It is curative.

Suffering is also productive in identity formation.[9] Moss (2012, 110) notes that the physical eradication of Sanctus through torture leads to de-identification, which, in turn, allows him to assume a new identity; that is, Christ inhabits Sanctus's body. In *Lyons*, torture of the confessors is a painless communion with Christ, enabling them to take up a new identity with Christ. On the other hand, the deniers' pain, their double punishments, does not allow them to assume an identity with Christ because they have no communion with Christ. Pain is not a productive experience in *Lyons*, whereas suffering is indeed productive.

In 1.35, the author of *Lyons* embellishes his account in order to distinguish between the two groups of Christians. The passage reads as follows:

> The former went ahead cheerfully, glory and great grace having blended together in their looks so that even their chains were draped around like a fitting ornament, as on a bride adorned with dappled gold brocade, and altogether they were smelling of the sweet smell of Christ so that to some it seemed that they had even been anointed with worldly perfume. The latter were downcast, humiliated, ugly, and filled with disgrace, and beyond that they were derided by the gentiles as being ignoble and cowardly. Holding the charge of murderers, *they had let go of the honorable, glorified, and life-giving title.* (my italics)

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[9] Judith Perkins (1995) takes up this point in *The Suffering Self*. She argues that the memory of suffering in early Christian narratives imparts "a self-definition that enabled the growth of Christianity as an institution" (12). Suffering acts as a triumphant force in martyrologies. She argues that "the discursive focus in the second century on the suffering body contributed to Christianity's attainment of social power by *helping to construct a subject that would be present for its call*" (3, my italics).

This verse is rich in sensory imagery. The "sweet smell of Christ" and the "worldly perfume" invoke the sense of smell. The sense of touch is alluded to in the description of the chains ("like a fitting ornament"). The sense of sight is appealed to, where attention is brought to the confessors' chains, which here appear like the gold fabric worn by a bride. The differences in physical form between the deniers and the confessors are observable enough to make up the minds of the non-arrested Christians. The text continues by stating the following: "The others, seeing these things, were strengthened, and the ones being arrested were confessing without any doubt, giving no thought to the devil's reasonings [μηδὲ ἔννοιαν ἔχοντες διαβολικοῦ λογισμοῦ]" (1.35).

The language of denial and confession becomes tied up in the metaphorical language of birth, abortion, and rebirth most discernably in 1.45–46. The two verses read as follows:

> The intervening time was neither idle nor fruitless. Rather, the mercy of Christ was manifested immeasurable through their endurance, because through the living the dead were being made alive [διὰ γὰρ τῶν ζώντων ἐζωοποιοῦντο τὰ νεκρά]. The martyrs were supplying grace to those who did not make testimony, and there was great joy for the Virgin Mother, who was recovering those living ones whom she had aborted as dead [οὓς ὡς νεκροὺς ἐξέτρωσε, τούτους ζῶντας ἀπολαμβανούσῃ]. For it is by the martyrs that most of the deniers were measuring themselves, and were conceiving again and coming alive again [καὶ ἀνεκυΐσκοντο καὶ ἀνεζωπυροῦντο], and were learning to confess. And now living [καὶ ζῶντες ἤδη] and braced up, they proceeded to the governor's judgment seat cheered by a God who does not wish for the death of a sinner but is kind with regard to repentance, in order that they might again be questioned by the governor.

This passage is the most striking for the purposes of this study. The author constructs his strongest boundary between the group of confessors and deniers, but instead of referring to them as such, in 1.45 he uses the terms "the living ones" (τῶν ζώντων) and "the dead"

(τὰ νεκρά). Therefore, he equates confession with life and denial with death. What is most paradoxical in this passage is the figure of the Virgin Mother, described as aborting Christian deniers who later return to her, alive, once they find the strength to confess.

In order to understand this passage, it is important to note that early Christians viewed the church as a figurative birthing mother, "the mother of the twice-born children" (Jensen 2008, 139), an image applied to the church from the second century onwards (Solevåg 2013, 82).[10] By using the figure of the Virgin Mother to represent which Christians are rejected from her womb and which ones are properly birthed, the author of *Lyons* can represent Christian confessors as true members of the church because they are legitimate or natural offspring of the Virgin Mother. Christians who cannot find the strength to confess are portrayed as aborted by the Virgin Mother (the verb used by the author of *Lyons* is ἐξέτρωσε).[11]

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[10] Baptismal fonts of two early Christian churches, in the Basilica of Vitales (5th–6th century) and in the Chapel of Jucundus of the Basilica of Bellator (4th–5th century) in Sbeïtla, modern-day Turkey, are remarkable in that they have an unusual shape resembling a vulva. I thank David Eastman for bringing these baptismal fonts to my attention. Robin Jensen (2008, 153) has remarked on the unusual shape of these baptismal fonts, writing that the Christian candidate undergoing baptism would have emerged "from the Mother Church's vagina."

[11] According to LSJ, ἐκτιτρώσκω can mean to "bring forth untimely," to "miscarry," or to "attempt to procure abortion" (522B). I have been taking this term to mean "abort" in *Lyons*, but the author may also be conveying that the Virgin Mother miscarries these Christian deniers. The difference lies in the intent. Abortion would suggest that the Virgin Mother is actively seeking to reject Christians from her womb, whereas miscarriage suggests that this figure is passively involved in the rejection. Evidently, these different scenarios evoke different images of the Virgin Mother. However, with either translation of ἐκτιτρώσκω, the term clearly suggests that Christian deniers cannot experience a proper birth.

The noun form of this verb is found in 1 Cor 15:8: "Last of all, as to one untimely born (ὥσπερεὶ τῷ ἐκτρώματι ὤφθη κἀμοί), he appeared also to me" (NRSV). Scholars have interpreted this passage in a variety of ways (for a succinct summary, see Schnabel 2008, 46–47). One reading applies this term

Therefore, when the author pushes his rhetoric to its uttermost logic, he concludes that denying Christians cannot be legitimate members of the church.

This portrayal of denying or lapsed Christians is not absolutely consistent in the letter. Although the Virgin Mother may have rejected those Christians who did not confess, 1.45–46 (cited above) also demonstrates that there is still the possibility for those deniers to return to her. Those who found death in denial can experience rebirth through confession. They can come back to life and experience a proper birth; abortion is reversible. The boundary between life and death is thus a permeable one. This permeability of life and death, a notion which cuts across the ancient Mediterranean, creates a conceptual space in which the rhetoric of "coming back to life" can flourish in *Lyons*.

Another scene in *Lyons* depicts Christians as coming back to life, but on this occasion it is through expulsion from the beast's stomach. At the end of the letter we read the following: "Indeed this was the greatest battle for them, on account of the genuineness of their love, that the beast [ὁ θήρ], having choked on those whom it had earlier thought to have swallowed down [πρότερον ᾤετο καταπεπωκέναι], might vomit up living beings" (2.6). The reference to ὁ θήρ could be an allusion to the beasts of the arena, that is, those who attacked and literally swallowed pieces of Christian confessors. At the same time, ὁ θήρ is almost certainly referring to the devil. According to the author of *Lyons*, the devil is the force that compelled some

to Paul's situation before his "conversion" experience; prior to becoming a follower of Christ, Paul was in a miserable state in which he persecuted the church (v. 9). On this reading, which perhaps finds some resonance in early Pauline interpretation (cf. Eph 2:3), Paul's use of the term highlights the fact that he was not worthy of encountering Christ, and further alludes to his pathetic pre-Christ condition (Schnabel 2008, 47). Accordingly, ἔκτρωμα can refer to a particular state vis-à-vis one's relationship with Christ. In the case of *Lyons*, one's denial of his or her Christian identity, which the author might have understood as one's denial of Christ, makes him or her unworthy of being Christian. Denial, akin to abortion or miscarriage, keeps community members in a miserable state where they cannot experience proper life.

Christians to deny, and the figure who thought he had swallowed up Biblis (ἤδη δοκῶν ὁ διάβολος καταπεπωκέναι; see 1.25). Thinking he had consumed these Christians, the devil must now vomit them out because they have learned to confess. For the author of *Lyons*, those Christians who were aborted from the Virgin Mother become swallowed up by the devil. Illegitimate members of the community are part of the devil and legitimate ones find life through a proper birth in the Virgin Mother.

Once deniers have found life again through confession (1.45–46, see above), there is a surprising switch in attitude by the imperial authorities towards the act of denial: "The emperor had written that they were to be beaten to death, but if particular ones were to deny, these were to be let go" (1.47). Until this point, the author of *Lyons* made it clear that, if any Christian were to deny, he or she would be (or was) treated more cruelly by the persecutors than if he or she were to confess. However, as soon as the deniers confess, the author of *Lyons* portrays the imperial authorities as having changed their methods; now the former deniers are given the chance to escape pain altogether through denial. Although there is now an incentive for them to recant, it is no longer a viable option for these Christians; they have found life through their testimony and there is no returning to their former state. The author of *Lyons* inverts the meaning of life and death in his letter. From the perspective of the pagans, denial means life and confession means death. For Christians, however, denial means death and confession means life.

A couple verses later in the text, Alexander the Phrygian, a physician by profession, encourages confession among those who have denied. His intervening actions read as follows:

> [Alexander] was advancing to the judgment seat and by signals encouraging them in their confession. He appeared as though in labor to those standing around the judgment seat [φανερὸς ἦν τοῖς περιεστηκόσιν τὸ βῆμα ὥσπερ ὠδίνων]. The crowd, irritated since those who had previously denied again confessed, shouted down Alexander as though the one making this happen. (1.49–50)

While Alexander is urging the Christians to make their confession, he appears as one who is giving birth. It is paradoxical that it is a *man* who is depicted in such a way. Although this image may at first appear unexpected and perhaps even comical, it nevertheless fits nicely into the text's rhetoric. If the author of *Lyons* equates confession with life, then anyone who struggles to help in producing life-giving confession among his or her community members is therefore involved in this production of life. Alexander appears as though in labour because he is in the process of delivering life to the Christian deniers. The author of *Lyons*, therefore, not only promotes confession as the right action to be taken during times of persecution, but he also uses birthing imagery to portray those who support confession as acting rightly.

Elsewhere in the text, maternal language is used to signal proper action. At the end of the letter, the author indicates that Christians provide support for those in need (the weak Christians) by developing "motherly feelings" (μητρικὰ σπλάγχνα) [12] and by shedding many tears before God (2.6). Having acted in such a way, these supporters ask for life, which the Father provides, and "they divided this life among others, thereby departing to God as victors in everything" (2.7). Thus, both confession and those who support it are tied up in the notion of coming back to life.

Without a doubt, the primary concern of the author of *Lyons* lies with Christians who deny or recant a previous confession when under the pressure of torture. Through his use of fear, the author of *Lyons* initially creates the choice between two stark ends: confession or increased torture through denial (1.33). The former option is presented clearly as the better option, and later in the text, he uses

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[12] Unfortunately, the letter does not indicate what it means to have "motherly feelings." This phrase suggests that certain qualities and characteristics were implicit in the concept of motherhood. For further information on motherhood in the ancient world, see historical studies of childbirth and the family in Roman antiquity, which examine literary, archaeological, legal, and epigraphic materials (e.g., Balch and Osiek 2003; Dixon 1990, 1992; Rawson 1991).

the language of life and death to the same effect. He employs deliberative rhetoric, which has the goal of persuading "the audience to take action for the future and to believe that this action is in its best interest" (Schüssler Fiorenza 1999, 114). The author of *Lyons* wishes to persuade his audience that the best action one can undertake in a similar instance is to confess one's identity as a Christian. Denial does not provide any advantage. Denial is death, regardless of whether the denying Christian is allowed to live.

Although the author of *Lyons* intends to create an outsider/insider dichotomy between those who are true Christians (confessors) and those who do not belong to this category (deniers) as something that is absolute, a permeability is nevertheless opened up between the two groups. The author sets up both porous and rigid boundaries for the Christian community—there exists a kind of grey space in which deniers can be reinstated as confessors. It seems, therefore, that the text produces or permits a space in which deniers are not fully on the outside. This fact is also supported by the compassionate and intimate relationship exhibited between confessors and deniers in the text. For instance, the female slave Blandina strengthens other Christians in their confession: "just like a well-born mother who has encouraged her children and sent them before her as victorious ones to the King, even repeating all the contests of the children herself, she hastened to them, being pleased and rejoicing exceedingly at the end" (1.55).[13] Moreover, deniers are revitalised not only through the Virgin Mother, but also through the martyrs themselves: "it is by the martyrs that most of the deniers were measuring themselves, and were conceiving again and coming alive again" (1.45). While it is true that denying Christians are presented as illegitimate community members, they are not, however, positioned as wholly separate from Christian confessors. In fact, it seems that confessors strive to keep denying Christians as "insiders" by motivating them to find strength to confess. Why, therefore, the simultaneous fixity and fluidity within the author's rhetoric? I suggest that this opening, which creates a degree of permeability

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[13] My translation. See also 2 Macc 7:20–21.

within the social group, may provide evidence that the lines between insider and outsider—between legitimate and illegitimate members—in some early Christian communities were also in fact quite porous.

The nature and significance of martyrdom was a contested space in the early church. Although martyr literature and early Christian writers such as Tertullian and Ignatius endorsed confession as the correct response to Roman oppression,[14] not all Christians viewed persecution in the same light. Evidence suggests that not all Christians understood dying for one's beliefs and the ideal of self-sacrifice as an essential component to their Christian identity. In North Africa, for example, surviving *libelli* (written certificates attesting that sacrifices were performed to the emperor or imperial gods) as well as the letters of the bishop Cyprian[15] suggest that perhaps some Christians did not identify "strategies of compliance or compromise with Roman authority as apostasy that called into doubt their identities as Christians" (Daniel-Hughes 2015, 37).

Some Christians, therefore, may not have regarded confession as the right action to be taken in times of Roman oppression. Other Christians, even if they wished to become martyrs, were unable to remain firm in their conviction when faced with persecution. Ancient sources tell us that many community members first admitted and then denied their Christian identity when questioned by Roman authorities (e.g., Pliny, *Ep.* 10.96). Although the author of *Lyons* uses birthing language with the aim of convincing his audience that denial is an illegitimate means of being Christian, it is likely that he

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[14] See above, n. 5.

[15] Cyprian's letters attest to a number of Christian responses to imperially sanctioned persecution: members fled, bought forged *libelli*, and bribed officials. Cyprian himself escaped during the Decian persecution to a secure area, asserting that he did so in order to guide the church from afar through letters (see, for instance, *Epistle* 14). Allen Brent (2010, 10) explains: "Cyprian was to insist that flight and exile were in themselves forms of martyrdom, and not examples of lapsing, in a convenient argument that . . . exonerated himself." Cyprian would, however, eventually perish under Valerian's persecution.

needed to account for Christians who denied but nevertheless remained community members. In the third century, for instance, Cyprian's writings confirm that apostatised Christians could, under certain circumstances, be readmitted into the church after suitable penance.[16] It is not unreasonable to think that earlier Christian communities also responded to lapsed Christians in similar ways.

The author of *Lyons*, therefore, seems to be negotiating a complicated social dynamic and he does so by means of a rebirthing rhetoric that highlights social permeability. The possibility of coming back to life is left open in order to account for the reality of denying or lapsed Christians within early Christian groups. The author of *Lyons*, therefore, both naturalises confessors as true Christians while simultaneously allowing for permeability within the early Christian gathering.

IV. CONCLUSION

Through his account of the events in Lyons and Vienne, the author of *Lyons* constructs a Christian identity around the concept of martyrdom. An individual's identification as a Christian is connected with his or her confession to be Christian. This identification stands above all else, as is evident in the following passage:

> [Sanctus] resisted them with such certainty that he did not declare his own name or nationality or from which city he came, not even whether he might be slave or free, but to all the questions he responded in Latin: "I am a Christian." This he confessed in place of name, city, ethnicity, and everything otherwise. (1.20)

In turn, this confession is also what will render these Christians into martyrs. Judith Lieu (2002, 213) picks up on this relation when she argues that a Christian identity was enacted in confession: "it is when confronted with the choice of confession or denial that the true commitment for or against identity is made, and so, implicitly,

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[16] See above, n. 15.

until that moment there is only potential." Martyrdom puts one's allegiance on trial. Therefore, in the logic of the letter of *Lyons*, it is through confession that a Christian achieves his or her true identity. In order to articulate his rhetoric against denial, the author of *Lyons* found the metaphor of birthing particularly useful in authorizing his discourse of Christian identity. Christian confessors are portrayed to be the legitimate or natural offspring of the church, whereas the author's portrayal of aborted deniers renders them illegitimate or unnatural children of the church. However, the author also finds the notion of coming back to life—communicated through the reversal of abortion—rhetorically useful in order to demonstrate that Christian deniers are still eligible for proper or natural birth through the Virgin Mother by means of life-giving confession.

By conceptualizing martyrdom as an act that enables life after death, the author of *Lyons* situates himself within broader Christian ideals about life after death, more specifically within salvation and resurrection modes of thinking, which are themselves tied up in birthing discourses. For instance, in her book *Birthing Salvation*, Rebecca Anna Solevåg (2013) explores how childbearing discourse interfaces with salvation discourse in some early Christian texts. She looks in particular to the Pastoral Epistles, the *Acts of Andrew*, and the *Passion of Perpetua and Felicitas* in order to demonstrate that these three texts configure childbirth and soteriology in radically different ways, actively creating a discourse which links the two. The discourses of salvation, resurrection, and martyrdom create the possibility of reversing death.

As I have demonstrated, the rhetoric of birthing serves a performative function in early Christian martyrologies. The peculiar language of birth, abortion, and rebirth in *Lyons* reflects the author's attempt to construct a particular conception of Christian identity. The metaphor of birthing plays an important and strategic role in authorizing and contesting one early Christian perspective of what a Christian martyr ought to be. The author's writing may also be reflective of intragroup disputes regarding the status of lapsed Christians in persecuted communities. Through his letter to

communities in Asia Minor and Phrygia, the author of *Lyons* tries to fix the permeable boundaries of Christian identity, and does so by constructing those boundaries around the concept of martyrdom. However, the grey space, which allows for deniers to be reinstated as confessors, suggests a communal, on-the-ground wrestling with the question of denying or lapsed Christians. The example of *Lyons* demonstrates how the legitimizing language of birthing and rebirthing was deemed useful for negotiating this complicated situation. The author, therefore, is able to leave open the possibility that all Christians can come back to life through life-giving confession.

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Weddings and the Return to Life
in the Book of Revelation

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I. INTRODUCTION

The climax of Revelation juxtaposes spectacular violence and a spectacular wedding, both of which are culminations of themes present throughout the book. Violence is manifest in the repeated evocations of the Lamb whose killing has been emphasized previously (Rev 5:6, 12; 7:14; 12:11; 13:8), and also in the references to those who have been "beheaded for their testimony to Jesus" (Rev 20:4; cf. 12:17; 19:10) and otherwise had their blood shed (17:6; 18:24; 19:2). Their mention here recalls others who are described as having suffered as witnesses (e.g., 1:10, 13; 6:9–11; 11:2–10; 12:11, 17; 13:5–7; 16:6). These figures experience resurrection during the narrative's climactic confrontation, at which time "the souls of those who had been beheaded for their testimony to Jesus and for the word of God . . . came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years" (20:4). The resurrection of the faithful receives further emphasis in the description of the New Jerusalem's divine throne room, in which "[God's] slaves will worship him; they will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads . . . and they will reign forever and ever" (22:3–5). It is from this throne room that flows "the river of the water of life . . . on either side [of which] is the tree of life with its twelve kinds of fruit, producing its fruit each month; and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of nations" (20:1–2). The setting right of their deaths is accomplished by resurrection, a resurrection which, I shall argue, caries a distinctly nuptial tone.

The situation in the New Jerusalem is mirrored by the one of "Babylon." It is also connected to it: a wedding acclamation follows

immediately (19:6–10) upon the punishment of "Babylon," that is, Rome and her vassal kings (17:1–19:5), just as the bride's arrival and the marriage banquet (21:1–22:5, 14–17) follow immediately upon the defeat (Rev 19:11–21) and judgment (Rev 20) of the satanic forces. Revelation embeds the wedding theme more deeply than is necessarily apparent to modern readers, using references that would have been plain to its initial audience: the song acclaiming the impending wedding of the Lamb and his bride (19:6–8a); the detailed description of the New Jerusalem's clothes and preparation (19:7–8) and adornment (21:19–21); the celestial Jerusalem's highly visible procession toward the Lamb (21:2–4); and invitations to the wedding feast (19:9; 22:17). A few authors have recently begun to devote some attention to this theme (notably: Miller 1998; McIlraith 1999; Zimmerman 2003; Tavo 2006, 296ff.; Huber 2007, 127–78). In partial keeping with some of them, notably Zimmerman (2003), I suggest that Revelation's repeated references to multipurpose festival accoutrements, especially crowns and the bestowing of new clothes, acquire a nuptial resonance as the text's imagery of victory and celebration coalesce in the nuptial finale.[1]

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[1] Two caveats are necessary before proceeding in this discussion. First, my focus is on Revelation's bridal figure, which is a shifting collective of the faithful. Revelation's nuptial imagery, like ancient wedding imagery generally, tends to emphasize the bride and treat the bridegroom's nuptial role only incidentally. Gendered transformations are very much connected to the Lamb, as Stephen D. Moore (1995) and Christopher Frilingos (2003) have both notably explored in depth. As Revelation's fundamental nuptial dichotomy is between the bride and the anti-bride, however, the gendered transformations of the Lamb form a separate subject of inquiry that I have not attempted to incorporate systematically here. Second, ancient nuptial imagery operates on an implicit set of gender, sexual, and status norms. My aim here is to illuminate how Revelation's narrative of resurrection participates in this nuptial imagery, not to reiterate the findings of a vast literature on gender and sexuality in antiquity.

II. VIRGIN BRIDES

Revelation presents the nuptial reward of the faithful as recompense for the suffering they are exhorted to endure. Similar constructions are not uncommon in biblical and classical narrative, where marriage can be the key result of athletic or military victory as it is in Rev 20–21. Other examples include David's marriages to both Michal (1 Sam 18) and Abigail (1 Sam 25), the reunion of Odysseus and Penelope in last quarter of the *Odyssey*, the victories of Perseus and Theseus, Aeneas's marriage to Lavinia in book 12 of the *Aeneid*, and the winning of Atalanta's hand (see further Schear 1984; Glass 1987; Archer 1990, 194; Satlow 2001a, 163–64; Campbell 2003, 110–11; Brodsky 2006, 91–103; Hersch 2010, 114–22). Visual art can draw this association through elements shared by the celebrations of marriage and victory, such as crowns and wreaths, acclaiming musicians and crowds, festive decorations, and chariot processions. Such associations have been explored at length in Athenian vases by Oakley and Sinos (1995, 44–45) and E. A. Mackay (1995, 299–301). Revelation's juxtaposition of massive violence and extravagant wedding celebrations would have been familiar as well. Odysseus's slaughter of Penelope's suitors, the massacre of the men of Shechem's city by the sons of Jacob (Gen 34), and Samson's blood wedding (Judg 14) are only a few such instances. In many of these cases, the juxtaposition is presented as poetically just: the wicked and the faithful have been earning their respective recompenses over the course of the narrative. Revelation expands this justice by resurrecting the fallen faithful for their wedding.

When Babylon falls, those who were responsible for the slaughter of the witnesses receive their wages, and in the wedding that follows, the faithful receive theirs. The justice of this outcome, in Revelation's logic, emerges in tracing the appearances throughout the vision report of groups of martyrs. Three are of special note: the martyr souls under the altar who cry out for vengeance and "were each given a white robe and told to rest a little longer, until the number of both their fellow slaves and of their brethren, who were soon to be killed as they had been killed themselves, would be

complete" (Rev 6:11); those "who have come out of the great ordeal and have washed their robes and made them white in the Lamb's blood" (Rev 7:14); and above all, the hymn-singing "144,000 redeemed from the earth [who] have not defiled themselves with women, for they are virgins [παρθένοι]" who "have been redeemed from humanity as first fruits for God and the Lamb, and in their mouth no lie was found: they are blameless [ἄμωμοί]" (Rev 14:1–5). The situation of the first two groups is appropriate for a resurrection that occurs at a wedding, given that the literary figures and visual conventions are based on actual practices. The bride's bath and the special vessel (λουτροφόρος) used for it are regular subjects on Greek ceramics (especially λουτροφόροι), while Latin elegiac poetry in particular refers to the bride's wardrobe, with the bridal veil and sometimes shoes serving as metonymy for the bride in Greek and Roman visual art and in Latin poetry.[2] New clothes and special baths were, however, also characteristic of a number of transitions and ceremonies (e.g., baptism, *toga virilis*, burial). They gain a nuptial cast in Revelation in part because it is with a wedding rather than, for example, a baptism that the narrative concludes. This cast takes on a stronger tint given their similarity to the 144,000 who are called παρθένοι, a designation contributing to the sense of consummation in the resurrection at the book's conclusion.

Throughout the ancient Mediterranean world, first-time brides, but not first-time grooms, were expected never to have had sexual intercourse before their weddings. The observances of the wedding chamber itself (e.g., other women "bedding down" the bride) focused solely on the bride's initiation into sexual activity. This was a significant enough part of observances that the epithalamium, literally "[a song] for the bridal chamber," originally was a genre exclusive to this occasion. By the turn of the eras, it had broadened

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[2] On the bride's wardrobe and its representation, see Bennett and Tyrrell 1991; Oakley and Sinos 1995, 6–8, 16–21, 25–26; Vérilhac and Vial 1998, 304–12; La Follette 2001; McNeil 2005; Hersch 2010, 94–112; Hersch 2009. On the bridal bath, see Rehm 1994, 14, 30–32; Oakley and Sinos 1995, 15–16, 43–47; Vérilhac and Vial 1998, 293–97; Smith 2005, 1–9.

to mean a wedding song of any kind, but as Sissa (1990), Alberici and Harlow (2007), and Hanson (2007) observe, authors as diverse as medical writers, satirists, and political moralists mark female, and only female, sexual debut.[3] In fact, Rev 14:4 may be the earliest instance of a masculine form. Its only potential competitor, Joseph and Aseneth, addresses the strangeness of it directly. While the text repeatedly designates Aseneth a παρθένος without any comment, characters explain their application of the term to Joseph. Aseneth's father Pentephres tells her that "Joseph is a man who worships God, self-controlled [σώφρων], and a virgin [παρθένος] like you today" (4:9).[4] As Joseph himself later explains, "it does not befit a man who worships God to sleep with his wife before the wedding" (21:1). The exceptional character of male virginity persisted, such that in Achilles Tatius's third-century CE romance *Leucippe and Clitophon*, the eponymous hero assures his faithful beloved that "I have imitated your virginity, if there can be any virginity in men (με παρθενίαν μεμιμημένον, εἰ τις ἔστι καὶ ἐν ἀνδράσι παρθενία)" (*Leucippe and Clitophon* 5.20.5).[5] Longus's romance *Daphnis and Chloe* is also among the handful of narratives concerned with male "chastity," but retains the conventional view of virginity as female. When Chloe attains nubility, her foster mother advises Chloe's foster father "to give Chloe in marriage [ἐκδιδόναι] and not to keep a girl [κόρην] of her age at home much longer. After all, any day now she might terminate her virginity [τὴν παρθενίαν ἀπολέσαι] while she is out with the flock and make a man [ἄνδρα ποιήσεται] out of a shepherd boy in exchange for apples or roses" (Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 3.25.1–

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[3] See also Zeitlin 1996, 234–36; for a related phenomenon in rabbinic contexts, see Langer 1995.

[4] All translations of Joseph and Aseneth are from Burchard 1985; the Greek text is from Burchard 2003. The embedded hyperlinks direct to the older translation of Brooks (1918).

[5] All translations of *Leucippe and Clitophon* are either from or adapted from Gaselee 1969; the embedded hyperlinks direct to the earlier Loeb edition, Gaselee 1917.

[2](#)).[6] The text presents sexual debut as a loss (that of virginity) for females, but an entry for males (that into adulthood). Artemis was the companion and special protectress of παρθέναι, not παρθένοι, and virginity was a state that she inhabited along with Athena and Hestia, but none of her many brothers. The period of life between early childhood and full adulthood was ritually and culturally marked for girls in a way that it was not for boys. Virginity was the characteristic of girls serving in the early classical cults of Artemis and other deities, and these religious activities were connected to their social position as παρθέναι, as Ken Dowden (1989) explores in depth, and Cole (1984), Kouki (1993), Lonsdale (1993, 170–76), Larson (1995, 116–21), Too (1997), and Ingalls (2000) also investigate. There seems to have been nothing comparable for boys. Poetry such as Erinna's and Sappho's elegizes, or eulogizes, the play and other activities of παρθέναι in a way that no extant poetry does for boys. Notably among many others, Rosenmeyer (2004) observes that this is the case from the archaic Greek period through its classical Latin echoes (see also Lonsdale 1993, 193–201 and Derderian 2001, 117–20).

In literature and myth, the premature deaths of παρθέναι are lamented with a prominence that belies the limited representation of female characters in literature generally. The victims of sacrifice in this literature are usually maidens whose deaths are often represented as substitute weddings, a phenomenon that Dowden (1989), Larson (1995, 101–09), and Launderville (2010, 246–53) explore widely; others have contributed individual case studies.[7] Iphigenia and the daughter of Jephthah ([Judg 11:29–40](#)) are the two most famous, among many examples. Ancient narratives that depict

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[6] All translations of *Daphnis and Chloe* are either from or adapted from Morgan 2004; the embedded hyperlinks direct to the earlier Loeb edition, Thornley, Edmonds, and Gaselee 1916.

[7] See, for example, Rehm (1994, 43–58) on the *Agamemnon*; Connelly (1996), Lyons (1997, 137–43) on Iphigenia and Polyxena; Thompson (2001, 104–11, 114–16) on Jephthah's daughter; and Roselli (2007); Kamrada (2009, 80–85).

human sacrifice without explicit condemnation often present maidens on the threshold of marriage as its victims, willing or otherwise. Again, the daughter of Jephthah is the clearest example in the Hebrew Bible. Later Jewish and early Christian authors, as Thompson (2001, 104ff.) details, emphasize the similarities between her story and those of Iphigenia and Polyxena, both of whom are led to the altars of their deaths under the guise of being led to their marriages. Parallel figures were not lacking. Larson (1995, 101–12) lists Herakles's daughter Macaria, Aglauros, the Hyperborean maidens, the Koronides, the Hyacinthides, Androcleia and Alcis, the daughters of Erechtheus, and the daughters of Leos (see also Seaford 1987; Rehm 1994, 43–58; Knapp 1997, 69–85; Lyons 1997, 137ff.). Such παρθέναι could become the subjects of what Larson (1995) identifies as "heroine cults," with sanctuaries and other sites at which brides-elect dedicated locks of hair or offered lamentations before their marriages. This is part of a larger discourse in which the end of a girl's or young woman's status as a παρθένος is viewed as a kind of death, with marriage, if it occurs, constituting an immediate return to life.[8] This is a systematic, almost mythological discourse, visual and verbal, on a phase of female life that has no parallel in male life. Virginity is a state that men and boys do not inhabit.

By designating its "144,000 who have been redeemed from the earth" as παρθένοι, therefore, Revelation ascribes a status deeply marked as feminine to these figures who are "blameless" and the "first fruits" of God and the Lamb ([Rev 14:5](#)). This terminology and the sacrificial setting reinforce their connection to virgins of the usual, female kind. The fact that it is *with women* that these παρθένοι have not defiled themselves reinforces their status as in some sense "actually," and not only grammatically, male. Ancient Mediterranean socio-sexual mores conceived of a number of ways of defiling oneself sexually, but the overwhelming concern that its texts reflect with female sexuality is illicit activity with men. Although a handful of almost exclusively male authors, including Martial and Ovid, display

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[8] Further discussion below. See also Dowden 1989; Lyons 1997, 143–49, 154–57; Derderian 2001, 77–81, 145–57.

an awareness of sex between women, most do not acknowledge it. This near silence is a rhetorical trope—women in ancient Mediterranean societies were having sex together, and men demonstrably did know about it.[9] The very quietness of the sources, however, indicates a culturally entrenched assumption that it would be men who defiled themselves with women or, just as easily, with men, and that women who defiled themselves sexually would do so with men. The grammatical gender of παρθένοι and the emphasis on sexual defilement *with women* doubly reinforce the maleness of the 144,000, even as the root term παρθένος associates them strongly with a female realm. The bride in Revelation, consisting of others who were killed and came back to life, is a collective whose "maleness" comes into focus in its very "feminization" into the figure of a bride especially characterized by παρθενία. Its groom, the Lamb who was slain and returned to life, is a military victor who has made a total and permanent conquest of the enemy: a masculine figure indeed.

The sacrificial quality of this nuptial imagery, while consonant with larger discourses, is distinctive within the New Testament. The imagery itself, however, is not. Rather, it draws on the Hebrew Bible's analogical language of God : Israel :: husband : wife. Such imagery occurs notably throughout Deutero-Isaiah and the first five chapters of Hosea, as well as in Jer 2–5, 31; Lam 1; and Ezek 16, 23. Although prophetic texts use this rhetoric most heavily, it also occurs in some wisdom texts (e.g., Ps 19:4b–6; 45; Cant 3:6–11). It also justifies laws governing the relationship between God and Israel. Winiarski (2006, 43), for example, argues that the prohibition against making and venerating icons (Exod 20:5–6)

> construes Israel as the bride of God [and] further secures his
> exclusive status as the husband of Israel . . . Yahweh's stated
> rationale for prohibiting [this] is his jealous nature, the quality
> of a human husband: "for I the Lord thy God am a jealous

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[9] For some very focused work on this body of evidence, see Brooten 1996, esp. 42–72.

(Hebrew: *qanna'*) God." Here we may observe erotic passion animating the *quid pro quo* legalism of the contract.

Such images reflect a social system in which husbands had the upper hand in marriage both figuratively and, in wedding ceremonies, literally. This social system remained in place into and centuries beyond the later Second Temple period. However, the marital metaphor that reflected this system did not remain, instead becoming marginalized or transmuted in late biblical and many pseudepigraphical texts. Michael Satlow (2001b, 17) even concludes that, with the exception of Jesus followers, "no Jew writing in Greek uses this metaphor [even though they] do use marriage as a metaphor . . . that describes other things." Suggesting a number of theological and social reasons for this shift away from it, he observes that where the marriage metaphor does occur in early Jewish literature from outside the Jesus movement, it is reoriented to preserve a masculine status for Israel, that of son or son-in-law to God as father or father-in-law. The end of the Second Temple period saw an intensification rather than a reversal of the rejection of the metaphor. Whereas Greek-speaking Jewish authors in the former period largely ignored the metaphor, their rabbinic successors actively distance it from their vision of the relationship between God and Israel. Thus Satlow (2001a, 50–51) observes that

> the midrashim tend to use the marital metaphor to illustrate God marrying off a son or daughter rather than God actually marrying . . . . A few parables that advance the metaphor that Israel "married" God's daughter, Torah [or the Sabbath] . . . In the very few places outside the later homiletical works that the image of God's "marriage" to Israel does appear, it is transformed. A midrash on [Hos 2:18](#), for example, changes [its] meaning . . . into a teaching about the conduct of a human couple . . . . The Babylonian Talmud presents a series of exegeses [of the name Gomer] that emphasize her promiscuity, but do so in a fashion that completely obliterates the fact that she represents Israel . . . God has become Israel's *father* rather than *husband* . . . Israel is the child of adultery rather than the adulteress.

But though the metaphor appears to have died in early Jewish literature, it returned to life in New Testament and other early Christian writings. The figuring of "generic" and implicitly or explicitly male groups as brides resumed, however, in more than one religious milieu of the Roman period. In the New Testament, Matthew likens believers not only to male wedding guests ([Matt 22:1–12](#)) but also to female wedding attendants ([Matt 25:1–13](#)). In the midst of discussing the behaviour of actual husbands and wives, Ephesians blurs these literal husbands into eschatological brides:

> He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does the church, because we are parts of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. ([Eph 5:28–32](#))

Elsewhere, the second-highest grade of Mithraic initiation was νύμφος, "[male] bride," a construction that might be seen as parallel to παρθένοι, "[male] virgins," in [Rev 14:5](#). Direct information about this grade is all but nonexistent, consisting only of inscriptions of the bare name, a painting from the Santa Prisca catacomb, and the relatively late glosses of Firmicus Maternus and Jerome. This small body of evidence does at least indicate that the term really meant "male bride." Richard Gordon (1996, 50), for example, notes a wall painting from the Santa Prisca catacomb in which "occurs a representation of the *Nymphus* with his face covered by a veil; [elsewhere] on the same wall, the *Nymphus* hold[s] a *flammeum* [bridal veil] in his hands" (see also Turcan 2000, 87). How Mithraists interpreted it is another question. Gordon (1980, 49) hypothesizes "a sort of marital androgyne, a fusion of male and female at the point of marriage," and elsewhere he suggests that "a parallel use of marital paradox in an esoteric context is the phrase 'I am the bride and bridegroom' in one of the revelation tractates from Nag Hammadi, *The Thunder, Perfect Mind* (VI, 2: lines 27 = 39)"

(Gordon 1996, 113 n. 53). Robert Turcan (2000, 87) offers the more straightforward reading that "the rank of *Nymphus* suggests a kind of marriage or *hieros gamos* between the god and the initiate."[10] Whatever νύμφος may have "meant," however, it was not the ultimate Mithraic grade. That was πατήρ, and the initiate who attained it, it would appear, was shedding the previous feminized state in favour of a position of authoritative masculinity. This does not seem to be the case in Revelation, where the male bride remains a bride in the eschaton. Revelation's nuptial language, then, is part of a larger rhetoric within which it distinguishes itself by keeping its men brides, where Ephesians makes such men into husbands, and Mithraism into fathers.

III. Weddings and Funerals

The constituent members of the eschatological bride are different from real brides, not only because at least some of them are male but also because many of them died before the wedding, having been beheaded or otherwise slaughtered for their testimony. The wedding of "Jerusalem" itself follows immediately upon the spectacular demise of and lamentation for "Babylon." The juxtaposition is significant and is part of larger rhetorics. New Testament nuptial imagery, including Revelation's, can be interwoven with loss and violence, as in the case of John the Baptist. The Synoptic Gospels have Jesus saying that his disciples dine while John's fast because "the wedding guests cannot fast while the groom [ὁ νυμφίος] is with them, can they? The days will come when the groom is taken away [ἀπαρθῇ] from them, and then they will fast on that day" (Mark 2:20; cf. Mark 2:18–20 // Matt 9:14–15 // Luke 5:33–35 // John 3:27–30). In the parallel in the Fourth Gospel, John the Baptist (who in the Synoptic Gospels is "beheaded for his witnessing") insists that Jesus and not he is the messiah, a confirmation expressed through the melancholy proclamation: "the groom is the one who has the bride [ὁ ἔχων τὴν νύμφην νυμφίος ἐστίν]. But the groom's friend [ὁ δὲ φίλος

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[10] My translation; French original: "Le titre de *Nymphus* suppose une sorte de mariage ou *hieros gamos* entre le dieu et l'initié."

τοῦ νυμφίου] is the one who stands and hears him and rejoices greatly at the groom's voice . . . He must increase, but I must decrease" (John 3:29–30).

Juxtapositions of weddings and funerals such as these were ripe for dramatic irony, which was the stronger for similarities between the two sets of observances. A wedding was represented as (and was) the bride's leaving her paternal household and her maidenhood to enter her marital household in the new role of wife. The funeral was represented (and was) similarly the deceased leaving his or her domicile in the city and position in its living community for a new residence in the necropolis and a place in the community of ancestors. There were practical similarities as well: "judging from the surviving literature, Roman authors themselves, like their Greek predecessors, decided that the wedding was most like a funeral" in part because they were among the only public processions that neither led to a public sacrifice nor exclusively honoured a set deity (Hersch 2010, 228). The centrality of female actors seems to have been another similarity. Male actors did have prominent roles at funerals: adult men carried the bier and delivered funeral orations, and a dead man was certainly the subject of his own funeral. Nonetheless, many funerary tasks were designated as women's work. The washing, anointing, and dressing of the corpse; the singing of laments; and in Rome the "kissing up" of the dying breath, if it was possible, were all supposed to fall to female relatives of the deceased (see Derderian 2001, 24–52; Cairns 2009; Corley 2010, passim). This is evident in the tendency of prophetic literature to attribute laments (or taunts) for fallen cities not only to masculine figures such as kings but also to grammatically masculine general populaces that presumably include women (e.g., Isa 14:16–17; Jer 51:34–35; Micah 2:3–4), to mourners designated as "daughters," mothers, or other female figures (e.g., Isa 16:2–4; 23:4, 12, 15–18; 47; Jer 48:3–6; Lam 1–2; Micah 4:8, 13), or to men likened to widows or other mourning women (e.g., Micah 4:9–10). Revelation, however, follows the lament over Tyre in Ezek 27 by attributing the lament for Babylon to grammatically masculine monarchs (οἱ βασιλεῖς, Rev 18:9),

merchants (οἱ ἔμποροι, Rev 18:11, 15) and "all shipmasters and all seafarers, and sailors" (πᾶς κυβερνήτης καὶ πᾶς ὁ ἐπὶ τόπον πλέων καὶ ναῦται, Rev 18:17b). These are roles in which literary and visual sources acknowledge female participation either much more rarely than male participation (monarchs) or not at all (merchants and seafarers—even if women did sometimes practice these professions in reality). No grammatically female subjects or typically feminine roles (e.g., virgins, mothers, weavers) appear in the chorus. Babylon is lamented by at least some men and no identified women. This parallels the equally striking fact that the saints whose "righteous deeds" constitute the fine linen (τὸ γὰρ βύσσινον τὰ δικαιώματα τῶν ἁγίων ἐστίν, Rev 19:8b) of the bride's clothing are grammatically masculine. This, too, stands out for the fact that weaving and sewing seem overwhelmingly to have been "women's work" throughout antiquity. They are consistently represented as quintessentially feminine tasks, from the positive depictions of Penelope in the *Odyssey* and the woman of valour in Prov 31:10–31 to the veneration of Athena and Minerva as goddesses of wisdom and weaving, from Xenophon's hard-working housewife to the image of Lucretia and the commemoration of Turia to early Christian and early Jewish enumerations of the duties of every wife (see Scheid and Svenbro 1996, esp. 56–72, 83–107; Peskowitz 2001; Lang 2004; Bundrick 2008; Cottica 2014; Lovén 2014).

Revelation's climactic wedding and funeral observances thus share the distinction of being made by at least some men, or in the case of the lament, mostly or even all men, instead of by women, as would be expected. The unusual gender script, not the proximity of the events, is distinctive. Weddings and funerals corresponded not only in being women's work but also in many details. Acknowledgments of the similarities abound in ancient literature, perhaps most explicitly in Artemidorus (second century CE):

> To dream that one is dead, that one is being carried out for
> burial, or that one is buried . . . signifies marriage for a
> bachelor. For both marriage and death are considered *teloi* in
> a person's life. So if a sick person dreams of marrying, it

portends death, because the same things happen to someone wedding and to someone dying: that is, for example, a procession of friends both male and female, wreaths, spices, unguents, and written records of their possessions [i.e., in wills and marriage contracts]. (*Oneir.* 2.49; see also 2.61; 2.65; and 4.30; trans. White 1990, 143 [adapted])

Such commonalities underlie what Seaford (1987) calls the "tragic wedding," which was a staple of fifth-century Athenian drama and the traditions, existing and subsequent, in which it participated. Alcestis, Antigone, Glauce, Iphigenia, Persephone, and Polyxena are all famous examples and subjects of extensive discussion (e.g., Dowden 1989; Rehm 1994; Ormand 1999, 25–28, 90–98, 153–61; Derderian 2001, 145–58). Wedding/funeral conflations drew heavily on this repertoire of shared elements. Hersch (2010, 165) draws special attention to torches, which "stood as metonymy for the wedding in both Greek and Roman literature" and the fact that the "juxtaposition of the torch of the funeral and the torch of marriage, so common in Greek literature, was eagerly imitated and expanded by Roman authors . . . [they] represented the bookends of an adult's married life." The theme is also present in epigraphy. The memorial for nineteen-year-old Julia Sidonia, for example, describes her as someone "whose threads the Fates broke before the day that Hymen's torches were lit at the wedding . . . Lucina [the goddess of childbirth] wept for the quenched fire of her torch, for she was a virgin and also her parents' only child" (*CLE* 1997; trans. Courtney 1995, 181 [adapted]). Revelation reverses the tragic formulation by having the heavenly chorus sing of Babylon's pyre as a prelude to announcing Jerusalem's bridal arrival (Rev 19:1–10).

While the cosmic scale in which Revelation uses this rhetoric is distinctive, the juxtaposition itself is not. Indeed, the lament over Babylon bewails the fact that "the voice of the bridegroom and bride will be heard in you no more" (Rev 18:23), quoting a scriptural formulation that Jeremiah especially favours (e.g., Jer 7:34; 16:9; 25:10). As in the case of torches, this bit of irony is a commonplace in non-biblical literature as well, for example, "Hymen did not

attend your wedding to preside at the feast . . . Black-robed Hades interrupted [as he did for Persephone] and the cruel fates beside him changed a dirge for the dead" (*Anth. Graec.* 7.188, attributed to Antonius Thallus; cf. *Anth. Graec.* 7.547).[11] Burial itself could express related sentiments. Martin-Kilcher (2000, 71), surveying thirteen rich and well-preserved graves of adolescent girls from the western Roman Empire, identifies an almost standard assemblage of nuptial items that she terms the "non-attained marriage" (see also Denzey 2008, 2–11, 17–20; Harlow 2012). Sgourou and Agelarkis (2001, 340–42) have made similar findings in fifth- through second-century BCE Thasos, where the burials of adolescent girls, like those that Martin-Kilcher considers, often included crowns similar to brides' and in which the "intermediate age of the deceased between childhood and adulthood was further emphasized by the placement of characteristic items of female adornment [typical of postnuptial gifts] . . . next to the toys [normally dedicated to Artemis before marriage]" (see also Strömberg 1993, 39–51, 100–07). Families who could not afford elaborate burials for their daughters (and probably could not have afforded elaborate weddings) could still commemorate their losses as especially painful by evoking the "non-attained wedding" in more modest funerary inscriptions.[12]

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[11] All translations of *Anthologia Graeca* are adapted from Paton 1916–1919; the embedded hyperlinks direct to the same edition.

[12] Thus one from Ptolemaic Kanares (*SEG* 1.567.3–6 = *Inscr.Métr.* 83.3–6) has the deceased proclaiming, "My father provided for me for twenty years. I did not even attain the bridal chamber. I never lay on its couch, and there was no knocking on the cedar doors by girls my age all through the night" (trans. Lattimore 1962, 192 [adapted]). A first- or second-century CE Sinope epitaph muses that "stone blooms bright no less than gold, and shows even brighter if it is robed in a virgin's modesty [παρθενιής αἰδοῖ]" (*IG* 1.172 [= *ISinope* 172]; trans. French 2004, 125 [adapted]). An inscription from the Vigna Randanini catacombs, dating from the third or fourth century CE, states simply that "Parcharius the *gerusiarch* [of the Jewish community] set this up for his daughter Dulcitia, a virgin [παρθένος] and a bride-elect [μελλονύμφη]" (*CIJ* 1.106 [= *JIWE* 2.321]; trans. Noy 2005, 2:268–69 [adapted]).

Not all virgins' epitaphs lament their failure to marry, of course, and it was not unheard of for dead youths to be commemorated with evocations of the "non-attained wedding." Perhaps most notably, but not alone among the Athenian tragedies, the eponymous heroine of Sophocles's *Antigone* does not meet the only nuptial demise in the play. Instead, her fiancé, upon discovering her execution/suicide, remains determined to be united to her and so "weds" her with his own suicide on the spot ([1231–1242](#)). Euripides's *Trojan Women* is even more explicit in applying typical bridal language to a dead bridegroom. There, Hecuba laments as she dresses the body of her grandson Astyanax for burial: "I put upon you the glory of Phrygian robes, things that you should have worn at your marriage to some pre-eminent Asian princess" (1218–1220 [= [1219–1221](#) in Way 1912]; see Wyles 2011, 79). A few epitaphs use similar vocabulary akin to that found in these literary examples,[13] and a handful of epitaphs also liken youths to Persephone, just as many liken maidens. Perhaps the most striking example is a late first-century BCE inscription from Naucratis: "The bridal couch [νύμφας] was not scented with saffron for you; they did not bring you to it and to the bride's chamber [θάλαμον] fragrant with desire, Heracleides son of much-revered Chaeremon, but they took you as if in a [wedding] chariot to the abode of Lethe" (*IBM* 1084.1–4 [= [*Inscr.Métr.* 67](#)]; trans. Lattimore 1962, 193 [adapted]). Even as he is likened to Persephone, however, Heracleides's position in the masculine role of groom remains unchanged. He is seen as travelling to the underworld without any named companion rather than being abducted by a groom, as Persephone was.

But even expressions of grief such as these that kept dead young men in the position of grooms were the exception, not the rule. Overall, the "non-attained wedding" was common in literary and

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[13] A second-century CE inscription from Thasos, for example, commemorates a boy who "did not see the bridal chamber [νυμφικῶν] he was approaching, the wedding [γάμων] that begets desire" (*EG* 208b.12–13 [= [*IG* 12.8 441.12–13](#)]; trans. Lattimore 1962, 193 [adapted]. See also *CIJ* 1.148 (= [*JIWE* 2.253](#)); trans. Noy 2005, 2:221–23).

epigraphic commemorations for maidens and much rarer in those for youths. Revelation's presentation of its male martyrs being resurrected in a glorious wedding is thus not unprecedented, only unusual. What is almost unique is the fact that its martyred men are not the groom but rather the bride, for whom lamentations of this kind were much more to be expected.

IV. SACRIFICIAL BRIDES

If the reference to the 144,000 as παρθένοι in Rev 14:4 is strikingly feminizing, the description of them in the same verse as ἄμωμοί is more subtly so. One of the few other uses of this term in the New Testament occurs in Eph 5:25–27: "Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleaning her with the washing of water [ἵνα αὐτὴν ἁγιάσῃ καθαρίσας τῷ λουτρῷ τοῦ ὕδατος] in spirit, so as to present the church to himself in splendour . . . so that she may be holy and without blemish [ἁγία καὶ ἄμωμος]." Here, too, is more wedding imagery than necessarily meets the modern eye. An essential prenuptial observance in the eastern empire was the bath (λουτρόν) of the bride in water drawn from a specially designated source and with particular attendants and songs. For wealthier brides in the cultural sphere of classical Athens, this involved a new water jug that was appropriately decorated and later displayed in her marital home and often buried with her after her death. The unblemished state that washing achieved was equally associated with sacrificial victims, which is appropriate for the virgins who are "purchased from the human race as first fruits [ἀπαρχὴ]" (Rev 14:4). Paul uses ἀπαρχή literally,[14] and in Revelation its connection with ἄμωμος makes the connotation clear. This is the term that the LXX regularly uses to designate a physically perfect sacrificial animal, as repeatedly in Lev 4 and Num 29. While Revelation quotes Hebrew and not Greek texts, the association was widely accepted, also appearing in

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[14] Rom 11:16: "If part of the dough offered as ἀπαρχὴ is holy [ἁγία], then the whole batch is holy."

Colossians, Hebrews, and 1 Peter. [15] The terminology also strengthens the relationship between the virgins of Rev 14:1–5 and the martyrs of 6:9–11, whose spotlessness also links them to the Lamb, that is, the blood sacrifice that obviates all others. If they "follow the Lamb wherever he goes" prior to the eschaton's completion, their blood is at risk of being offered to Babylon, as David May (2009) illuminates in detail.

None of these would necessarily create nuptial associations on their own, but they are identifiable as a thread that Revelation unites in its nuptial eschaton. The likening of bridal and sacrificial figures is another rhetorical commonplace, as seen above, and not only because prenuptial offerings could include both vegetal and blood sacrifices. Because first-time brides were putting to death their maiden status and all it entailed, they could be likened to domestic animals killed in sacrifice or wild ones killed in hunting. The initiations of girls into the nubile state of maidenhood seem to have reflected this clearly, as Cole (1984, 238–43), Dowden (1989, passim), Spaeth (1996, 51–60), Faraone (2003), and Ferrari (2003) all observe of earlier ancient Greece.

Similarly, Judg 11:36–40 offers the story of Jephthah's daughter as an explanation of why "there arose an Israelite custom that for four days every year the daughters of Israel would go out to lament the daughter of Jephthah the Gileadite" (11:40). In the Greek cultural sphere, it was not unheard of for heroes, rather than heroines, to become recipients of maidens' prenuptial offerings. Euripides alludes to such a practice in the *Hippolytus*, wherein it is for the tragedy's eponymous hero that "girls before their weddings

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[15] Col 1:22: "[Christ] has now reconciled you in the body of his flesh, so as to present you holy and ἀμώμους and irreproachable before him;" Heb 9:13–14: "For if the blood of goats and bulls, with the sprinkling of a heifer's ashes, sanctifies those who have been defiled so that their flesh is made pure, how much more will the blood of Christ, who through the eternal spirit offered himself ἄμωμον to God"; 1 Pet 1:18–19: "you were purchased from the empty ways inherited from your ancestors not with perishable things like silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, like that of a lamb without defect and ἀμώμου."

[κόραι γὰρ ἄζυγες γάμων] will cut their hair, and you will harvest the deep mourning of their tears for the span of ages. The practiced skill of poetry sung by maidens [παρθένων] will forever make you its theme" (1425–1429).[16] If Pausanias is to be believed, this was actually the case in Corinth (*Descr.* 2.32.1). But as in the case of lamentations for dead youths' "non-attained weddings," these were the exceptions, not the rule. Even if the recipients of these offerings were youths, moreover, the donors were always brides-to-be. If future grooms ever participated, there is no hint of it in the evidence.

While marriage is a rare, although not nonexistent, context for the poeticization of youths' deaths, war is a common one. Claire Jamset (2004, 95) notes in her examination of the *Thebaid* and the *Aeneid* that many warrior-youths' deaths "could be read as a narrative of perverse defloration" and contain "such powerful elements of elegiac language that a strongly eroticized picture of these doomed youths emerges." She notes in particular the designation of such characters as boys or youths (*pueri*) rather than men (*viri*), sexually redolent descriptions of the penetration of their bodies by the weapons that cause their deaths, and the use of a complex of colour language and flower imagery that in epithalamia and nuptial elegies is characteristic of brides. The themes that she identifies in these early Roman imperial epics have ancient roots, at least in their basic form. Theseus is one of a gender-balanced group of young people offered as a tributary sacrifice, and some of the earliest Greek literature likens young men's deaths in combat to sacrifices that substitute for marriage. Steinrück (2008, 14–15), drawing on the work of Pierre Vernant, notes that

> the *Iliad* promotes the ideology of beautiful deaths [for youths]. Not only does the *Iliad*'s aesthetic admit the description of beauty only when something is destroyed, but

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[16] All translations of Euripides's *Hippolytus* are adapted from Kovacs 1995; the embedded hyperlinks direct to the same edition available at the Perseus site.

in addition, the death of a (typical) unmarried young man is also called "beautiful" . . . Tyrtaeus in Sparta and Callinus in Colophon [both 7th cen. BCE] adopt this pattern for elegies . . . young men, Tyrtaeus says, may be handsome in the eyes of married women and impressive in the eyes of married men, but become beautiful only in battle death. Both Callinus and Tyrtaeus point out that death is the means of obtaining from the city what young, superfluous men are most short of: glory and love.

The forms and social meanings that Steinrück argues this imagery carried in archaic literature obviously evolved, but what is significant here is that the positively appraised violent death of a youth had literary associations with a kind of substitute wedding from the outset of classical literature and proved enduring in form. Similar evocation may be present in biblical laments for young warriors such as Jonathan, whose life was so entangled with David's marital and martial adventures, and whose death David laments with the declaration that "your love was wonderful to me, surpassing the love of women" (2 Sam 1:26).[17] This is all the more significant for Revelation if we understand its 144,000 παρθένοι, as Eugene Boring (1989, 169) suggests, in light of biblical demands (e.g., Deut 20:1–9; 23:9–10; 1 Sam 21:5; 2 Sam 11:8–11) of celibacy for those in "God's army . . . during their time of service . . . [and] John pictures the church as the army of God—the very word 'thousands' conjures up military units" (see also Beale 1999, 738–39; Smalley 2005, 357–58; Boxall 2006, 203–04). Yet this masculine, martial identity is subsumed into the designation of παρθέναι and the overriding image of believers as the bride of the Lamb.

V. BLOOD WEDDINGS

The symbiosis of wedding and funeral in Revelation is not limited to the bridal identification of male martyrs. The placement of Babylon's spectacular destruction (spectacular in the literal sense of the term)

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[17] On the lament over Jonathan, vexed as its interpretation has proven, see Peleg 2005; Rowe 2009.

immediately before Jerusalem's spectacular wedding (spectacular in the figurative sense) is another dimension of it. Just as individuals' marriage and burial rites could share close associations, the public aspects of a wedding could lend themselves to wider-scale violence, at least in principle. Narratives of the abduction of brides and the resulting violence between men (e.g., Judg 21; the Sabine women; the *Iliad*) were well known. More relevant to Revelation is the theme of massacres of wedding guests, especially groomsmen. Such events were presumably infrequent in reality, but the paucity of scholarship on depictions of them can mask their prevalence in narrative literature and related visual art. The most famous example is Odysseus's slaughter of Penelope's suitors, the unsuccessful among whom would have been guests at the winner's wedding. This incident occupies six full books (17–22) of the *Odyssey*, and it was a perennially popular subject in Greek vase painting. It proved more of a precedent than an isolated instance in literature, where would-be grooms and their peers meet bloody deaths with a certain regularity. In her study of this theme in Matthew's Gospel, Blickenstaff (2005, 32–33) draws on texts including *Cyropaedia*, *Leucippe and Clitophon*, and the *Life of Apollonius of Tyana* to argue that

> the trope of the endangered bridegroom is common in ancient biographies, historical accounts, and novels, which lends support to my thesis [that it] is as closely associated with violence as with joy. That [the bridegroom in Matt 25] dies before his wedding feast, although he is expected to return to celebrate it, places him in good company with other tragic bridegrooms. In some accounts the entire wedding party is disrupted by violence and death . . . Given these literary examples, the bridegroom's violent death, or the appearance of violent death, is almost an expectation.

Blickenstaff numbers among the Hebrew Bible's "endangered bridegroom" figures Lot's would-be sons-in-law (Gen 19:1–29), Moses in Zipporah's "bridegroom of blood" incident (Exod 4:18–26), and the murder of Uriah (2 Sam 11–12). Nabal's demise (1 Sam 25)

and the seven grooms of Sarah the daughter of Raguel (Tob 3, 6–8) could be added to this census. She notes Samson's slaughter of thirty of his own wedding's guests (Judg 14), the bride price for Michal (1 Sam 18), and the violent intrigues of the book of Nehemiah as examples of wedding massacres. Revelation's distinctive contribution to this tradition is making the individual male brides, rather than young male suitors, the victims of this violence. Its resurrection of them into a corporate bride in the eschaton is equally remarkable.

While a wedding massacre might seem to be an unfortunate event, Revelation is one of several texts to present such violence as justified and appropriate. The *Odyssey*, for example, does not unambiguously condemn the killing of Penelope's suitors and follows the bloodshed with a long-desired marital reunion. Gen 34 presents Jacob's sons as having a legitimate grievance against Shechem, even if their taking of revenge on all his city is considered excessive. The first book of Maccabees presents a wedding massacre in wholly positive terms:

> It was reported to Jonathan [Maccabee] and his brother Simon, "The family of [your enemy] Jambri are having a great wedding [ποιοῦσιν γάμον μέγαν], and are conducting the bride [ἄγουσιν τὴν νύμφην], a daughter of one of the great nobles of Canaan, from Nadabath with a large escort." Remembering how their brother John had been killed, they went up and hid under cover of the mountain. They looked out and saw a tumultuous procession and much baggage; and the bridegroom [ὁ νυμφίος] came out with his friends and his brothers to meet them with many tambourines and musicians and many weapons. Then [Jonathan and Simon] rushed on them from the ambush and began killing them. Many were wounded and fell, and the rest fled to the mountain; and they took all their goods. So the wedding was turned into mourning [μετεστράφη ὁ γάμος εἰς πένθος] and the voice of their musicians into a funeral dirge. After they had fully avenged the blood of their brother, they returned to the marshes of the Jordan. (1 Macc 9:37–42)

Since the perpetrators of this event are the protagonists of the text, the violence is presented as a form of justice rather than as a calamity. Josephus takes the same view of this supposed event as 1 Maccabees, recounting it in greater detail and making explicit his moral evaluation (*Ant.* 13.1.20–21). The Gospel of Matthew has a more complicated attitude toward the nuptial violence that it presents. Here, as in the other Synoptic Gospels, the groom's being "taken away" (ἀπαρθῇ, Mark 9:15) is presented as unjust and lamentable. On the other hand, the response to this unjustified violence toward the groom is just violence in retribution, as in the parable of the Great Supper (Matt 22:1–12). Similar public misfortune occurs in the Matthean parable of the ten bridesmaids, where the five negligent ones are shut out of the wedding banquet (Matt 25:1–13), just as "the dogs, sorcerers, fornicators, murderers, idolaters, and everyone who loves and practices falsehood" (Rev 22:15) are shut out of it in Revelation.

VI. DOUBLE TRANSFORMATIONS

But if the transformation of a wedding into a funeral or worse is a recurrent theme in tragedy, romances often feature a double inversion in which a bride- or groom-elect becomes a corpse that later turns out only to appear to have been a corpse. First the voice of the bridegroom is turned to weeping and hymns into laments, and then the laments become hymns and the bridegroom rejoices still more. Marriage torches that were repurposed for pyre or entombment become marriage torches again. In *Leucippe and Clitophon*, a father laments a son who has died in a riding accident:

> When, my child, will your wedding be? When shall I arrange your wedding, horseman and bridegroom? Forever a fiancé [νυμφίε μὲν ἀτελές], horseman without fortune. Your bridal chamber, child, is the grave, your wedding a death, your nuptial song [ὑμέναιος] these wailings. I hoped to kindle a different fire from this, my child, but envious Fortune has extinguished it and you together, lighting instead for you torches of evil. Ah, what a cruel torch-bearing this is! Your marriage torches [ἡ νυμφική] have become a pyre. (1.13.4–5)

The youth lamented here actually is dead; the comedy is in the fact that the marriage his foolish father arranged for him was such a bad match that his death could only be considered fortunate. It is the eponymous lovers who appear to have died and then discover each other alive and marry later in the narrative, as also occurs in the *Ephesian Tale* and *Callirhoe*. Here the salient point is the way in which the torches, which were essential to nuptial processions in practice, visual art, and literature (e.g., Matt 25:1–13; the epitaphs above), carry dual meaning. So do the songs, which here as elsewhere transform between hymns in the classical sense and dirges.

Revelation unites the key elements of music and illumination in the segue from Babylon's demise to Jerusalem's arrival. The songs are not necessarily evident in translation but are metrically apparent in the Greek. If the 144,000 male virgins are to be associated with the wedding guests and/or bride, the musical quality is all the more apparent, that is, "the voice I heard was like the sound of harpists playing their harps, and they sing a new song . . . no one could learn that song except the 144,000" (Rev 14:2–3). It is with this in mind that we can not only approach Adela Yarbro Collins's (1980) question of whether Rev 18 is a "taunt-song or dirge," but also extend it to the beginning of the next chapter:

> "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power to our God, for his judgments are true and just; he has judged the great whore who corrupted the earth with her fornication, and he has avenged on her the blood of his slaves . . . Hallelujah! The smoke goes up from her forever and ever" . . . . Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the sound of many waters and like mighty claps of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready; to her it has been granted to be clothed with fine linen, bright and pure"—for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. (Rev 19:1b–3, 6–8)

The answer to Yarbro Collins's question would seem to be "both." The hymnal emphasizes that the smoke of Babylon's burning is heavenly incense. In Matthew, the foolish virgins forget their oil and the wicked would-be guests refuse the wedding invitation. Revelation, as Nwachukwu (2005, 231–38) implies, assumes that those invited to be the guests and/or bride in the eschatological wedding are coming, prepared, and wearing their wedding garments. Insofar as the text at this juncture is concerned with those who turned down the invitation or have not washed their garments in the Lamb's blood, or received robes from him—they are "outside, the dogs and sorcerers and murderers and idolaters, and everyone who loves and does falsehood" ([Rev 22:15](#)). Those inside the city and those outside it operate, like Babylon and Jerusalem themselves, as a contrasting pair: the fate of the one group throws the fate of the other into sharper relief. In Matthew, the lax virgins forget their oil. In Revelation, the heavenly city "has no need of sun or moon to shine on it, for the glory of God is its light, and its lamp is the Lamb" ([Rev 21:22](#)). But if external lighting is still desired, "the smoke goes up forever and ever" ([Rev 19:5](#)) from the burning of the self-deluded whore.

VII. Conclusion

Revelation's concluding wedding unifies its vision of eschatological rewards for faithful witnesses. In doing so, it deploys conventional imagery of weddings, especially tragic weddings, in at least two unconventional ways. First, the martyr figures who finally receive justice at the climax of the text are not restored, as might be expected, to the status of honourable masculinity. The text keeps these figures subordinate to Christ by making them the female partner(s) in a male-dominant marriage regime, feminizing them first by referring to them as παρθένοι and then, in their resurrection, attributing the production of bridal clothing to their works. Unlike the threatened bridegrooms of romance novels such as the *Ephesian Tale* and *Daphnis and Chloe*, they do not end up assuming the status of husbands, that is, free men with the figurative and literal

"upper hand" in the new, household-establishing marriage. Rather, they are resurrected to a threshold of becoming wives, wives who are likened collectively to a city that they do not rule.

Second, the celestial celebration of Babylon's prenuptial demise subverts expectations that such an event would provoke lamentation. The fact that only the partners in her wickedness lament it, while the heavenly community rejoices, magnifies the condemnation that Babylon receives and emphasizes the justness of her fate. The juxtaposition and mirroring of the two events—Babylon's destruction and Jerusalem's wedding—weaponizes the discourse of the tragic or violent wedding. While texts from the *Odyssey* to the Gospel of Matthew treat the events in violent wedding narratives as at least somewhat troubling, Revelation distinguishes itself by glorying in it. It is this weaponized deployment of the blood wedding trope, as well as the martyrs' own feminized virtue, that establishes their resurrection into the eschatological bride figure as fully just.

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SECTION IV

Coming Back to Life in Myth and Narrative

Hippolytus and Virbius:
Narratives of "Coming Back to Life" and Religious Discourses in Greco-Roman Literature[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION:
ON DEFINING BOUNDARIES BETWEEN LIFE AND DEATH

If one tries to find stories about human beings "coming back to life" in the polytheistic mythologies of the Greco-Roman world, one immediately starts to think about and doubt the categories "mortality" and "immortality," "hero," "human being," and "god." Does a hero such as Heracles "come back to life" when, as the story goes (since the seventh century BCE), he is received by the gods on Mount Olympus, a narrative which was retold in Roman imperial times as his apotheosis from the funeral pyre (Graf 1998a, 394ff.)? Or is he just transformed from a hero into a god? Obviously his story is different from the one told about pious Alcestis, who died voluntarily to save the life of her husband and was then brought back to life by none other than Heracles (Johnston 1999, 99–100).[2] Her story fits into a group of narratives which might be called "trickster" stories about death (Johnston 1999, 9 and 100). In these stories, figures like Theseus, Heracles, or Sisyphus succeed in

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[1] I thank the participants of the "Coming Back to Life" conference in May 2014 for discussing my paper, and the editors—especially Fred Tappenden and Brad Rice—for valuable suggestions to improve my English as well as my argument. A slightly altered German version of this paper, which is aimed at a more general readership, is also available as Waldner 2016.

[2] The story probably goes back to the sixth century BCE (Phrynichus). Besides Euripides's *Alcestis* (438 BCE), we find Alcestis sent back by Persephone because of her love and piety in Plato, *Symp.* 179b–180b.

outwitting or fighting down death, personified as Thanatos, Hades, or Persephone. One might also include narratives about Asclepius in this group; he is no "trickster," but rather an ingenious physician whose ability to bring ordinary human beings back to life forms part of his medical skills.[3]

One of the earliest examples of a Greek coming-back-to-life story, probably from the sixth century BCE, relates that Hippolytus was restored to life by Asclepius and thus resembles the "trickster" stories. Afterwards, Zeus killed Asclepius in punishment (*Naupaktia*, frags. 10 and 11 [Bernabé 1987–2007]).[4] At the same time, Hippolytus was certainly a hero who was honored at several cult sites in Greece (Hall 1999). This paper will concentrate on the plethora of stories about his gruesome end and his coming back to life. The stories begin with Euripides and move on to the versions told by Pausanias, Virgil, and Ovid. All of these tales will be read as different ways to think about the borders between life and death, as well as between gods, heroes, and mortals—and about politics, religion, and poetry. Euripides will be analyzed as an example of polis-related discourse in late fifth-century BCE Athens. We will explore afterwards how Hippolytus became attached to Italian mythology, probably already by Callimachus. Finally, the versions told by Virgil (*Aeneid*) and Ovid (*Fasti* and *Metamorphoses*) will be interpreted as sophisticated ways of dealing with the new phenomenon of apotheosis in Roman religion and its meaning for Augustan poetry.

But before I discuss the different ways of telling these stories about Hippolytus's return to life, it will be useful to formulate some general observations about the history and function of this kind of story, as well as about the figure of the *hero* in ancient Greek religion. In her monograph *Restless Dead* (1999), Sarah Iles

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[3] One might also add to this group the story about Orpheus, whose ability to face the realm of death is related to his skills as a poet and musician. The earliest mention is found in Euripides, *Alc.* 357–362.

[4] Hippolytus is the only example of this type of myth told about Asclepius (cf. the sources collected by Edelstein and Edelstein 1945, 1:37ff.).

Johnston carefully reconstructs the history of conceptions and rituals dealing with the dead from Homer to classical times. She states that stories like those mentioned above—that is, stories about Alcestis and Heracles, Sisyphus, Hippolytus and Asclepius, and also Orpheus and Eurydice—were rather rare and that there is no evidence for them before the sixth century BCE (Johnston 1999, 99ff.). One could add the Thracian Zalmoxis in Herodotus (*Hist.* 4.94–96) and the Pamphylian Er in Plato's *Republic.* But these two examples also clearly demonstrate a tendency to push such a transgressing of the boundaries between life and death to the barbarian fringes of Greek culture, whereas at least in the cases of Asclepius and Sisyphus, the transgression is severely punished by Zeus. In general, it can be observed that, on the level of ritual practices, the boundaries between the living and the dead became more permeable from the sixth century onwards (Johnston 1999, 36–123). Already in the seventh century, burial sites in mainland Greece were more strictly separated from the settlements, and a growing fear of pollution by corpses and of "ghosts" haunting the living developed at the same time (Johnston 1999, 96ff.; Sourvinou-Inwood 1983, 1995). Our stories thus form part of an ongoing discourse about the right way of ritual communication with the dead and about death in general, especially with regard to the polis, its political identity and social structures. This discourse is the result of a paradox clearly formulated by Johnston (1999, 97): "In sum, the less familiar the dead became and the more uncertain people became about their nature, the more people were likely to begin wondering about the ways in which they might affect the living." In general, these boundaries are not "naturally" given, but all cultures develop ritual practices and related discourses to draw them and preserve them in certain characteristic ways. At the same time, the discourse about this basic boundary may also be intertwined with discourses on other very basic categories (for example, gender or space; Robben 2004). Johnston (1999, 23–30) convincingly argues that Athenian tragedy was one of the most prominent voices in this discourse. Therefore, it is not by accident that this article starts with a short

analysis of these questions in the famous play *Hippolytus Stephanis* or *Stephanophoros* by Euripides, brought to stage in 428 BCE (Roth 2015, 5–7). I will read the representation of Hippolytus's fate in this tragedy as a discussion about different ways to conceptualize the relationship between life and death, and especially about the related function of poetry and hero cult. This raises the question of hero cult, which is seen in my contribution not only as part of the discourse on life and death, but also on literature and memory.

Today, the *communis opinio* holds that hero cults, as a very characteristic feature of ancient Greco-Roman religion, started somewhere and somehow in the late eighth century BCE and were, until their end in late antiquity, a quite heterogeneous phenomenon (Hägg 1999; Ekroth 2010; Graf 1998b). Nevertheless, it remains undisputed that heroes and hero cults have always, though not always in the same way, had something to do with death, tombs, and memory. This is shown clearly by two recent definitions, which cannot help but include the notion of death. Gunnel Ekroth (2010, 100) thus formulates: "A hero can be defined as a person who had lived and died, either in myth or in real life, this being the main distinction between a god and a hero." In a comparable way, Johnston (1999, 11) states, "a hero was essentially a dead person who had retained more of his 'vitality' after death." So one might summarize that the category of the hero helped to define and—by its variability—also to establish the boundaries between the living, the dead, and the immortal gods. On the level of sociopolitical structures, hero cults always mediated between concerns of individual families and broader groups such as the polis or even an empire (e.g., Johnston 1999, 97; Polignac 1995). Whereas in archaic and classical times hero cults were mainly bound to tombs and were in most cases run by the polis or its subgroups, in Hellenistic and Roman times one finds considerable new developments, which are enumerated by Dennis D. Hughes (1999, 167) as follows: "The founding of cults by private citizens for deceased family members, the designation of the dead as 'heroes' on tombstones, public heroization of prominent benefactors, and the revival of traditional

hero cult in the Roman period, in particular the cults of great figures from earlier Greek history." Throughout this history, there seems always to have been a relationship between hero cults, the figure of the hero, and the conceptualization of place and space.

As Fritz Graf (1998b) demonstrates in his article on hero cults in *Der Neue Pauly* (and here I summarize Graf), already in archaic and classical polis religion, there existed a few "heroes" who were situated somewhere between typical heroes and gods, namely Asclepius, the Dioskouroi, and Heracles; one might call them heroes, but they are like gods or they even become gods. Graf reminds us that all hero cults have a transregional, panhellenic character (Graf 1998b, 478). Hippolytus, whose hero cult already had a transregional character in archaic and classical times (Hall 1999), resembles these ambivalent figures, and it is not by accident that he was combined in myth and cult with Asclepius. In Hellenistic and Roman times his story becomes connected to the Latin deity Virbius, located in the famous sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis of Aricia, about eleven miles from Rome along the Via Appia: it was told that he was brought back to life by Asclepius and/or Diana and then hidden in the precinct of Diana Nemorensis, where he lived on as Virbius (Green 2007, 208–31). The Augustan poets Virgil and Ovid were especially fascinated by the story and told it several times in different versions, whereas Euripides insists on a tomb of Hippolytus at Trozen, though he might also have known the version of Hippolytus brought back to life by Asclepius.

The fact that Hippolytus's coming back to life was neglected by Euripides, but highly popular from Hellenistic times onwards does not come as a surprise. It fits into a growing general interest in highly unbelievable stories about ordinary people and/or heroes who were brought back to life by spiritual powers or by a god him/herself. Whereas these stories formed, on the one hand, part of a new kind of Jewish-Christian historiography, which starts with the narratives on the Maccabees and the bodily resurrection of the Maccabean martyrs (Nickelsburg 2006) and ends with the canonical Gospels, we also find an ever growing interest in the subject of

"coming back to life" in the realm of pagan literature. In his *Fiction as History: Nero to Julian*, Glen Bowersock (1994) not only reminds us of this remarkable fact but also calls our attention to the basic problem of "fiction and history," which in his eyes is immediately related to the spatial dimension of empires, especially the Roman Empire. He thus states:

> The ease of communication and transport in the Roman empire meant that local marvels were local no more. They soon merged into an international conglomerate of fantasy and the supernatural. History was being invented all over again; even the mythic past was being rewritten, and the present was awash in so many miracles and marvels that not even the credulous or the pious could swallow them all. (Bowersock 1994, 2)

Epics and historiography, the classical genres that tell more or less marvelous but always authoritative stories about the past, were now supplemented by novels, gospels, demonstratively alternative historiographies, biographies, letters, dialogues, and so on, most of which were typical for the cultural productions of the so-called Second Sophistic. If I understand him correctly, Bowersock supposes that it was especially this kind of "genre trouble" which made it possible to spread stories about bodily resurrection; moreover, he provokes with the thesis that the obvious fondness for stories about "Scheintod" and consequently "as-if-resurrections" in pagan novels was triggered by the first stories about the resurrection of Jesus and that the whole phenomenon was especially characteristic of the Neronian epoch (Bowersock 1994, 99–119).

   In what follows I would like to show exactly how the development from local mythologies to an "international conglomerate of fantasy and the supernatural" works in the case of the stories of Hippolytus coming back to life. It might not be caused only by "the ease of communication and transport in the Roman empire." In my opinion, the development of new kinds of stories about coming back to life in pagan as well as in Jewish-Christian

discourses during Hellenistic and imperial times is related to new and different functions and modes of religious storytelling, as well as to new ideas about the boundaries between the living and the dead—and especially between mortality and immortality—as they were expressed in the discourses and rituals of the Hellenistic and imperial ruler cult, especially in the apotheosis of the Roman emperor after death.

II. EURIPIDES'S *HIPPOLYTUS*:
THE EXCEPTIONAL DEATH OF A HERO AND
HIS CULTIC COMMEMORATION

In the fifth century BCE, when the Athenian poets Sophocles and Euripides were competing with each other in presenting three different versions of the tragedy of Hippolytus, the hero Hippolytus was the object of at least three cults: in Attica, he was worshipped at Trozen; also in Attica, on the southern slopes of the Athenian Acropolis; and in Sparta he had a *heroon* behind the *Metroon* (Hall 1999, 51). If the archaeological remains at Trozen are interpreted correctly, he might have been honored there from the end of the eighth century (Hall 1999, 51). Only Euripides's second Hippolytus tragedy (traditionally called *Hippolytos Stephanis* or *Stephanophoros*) is extant (Barrett 1964; Roth 2015). It was produced in 428 BCE and refers especially and explicitly to the cult at Trozen, where—as its plot goes—Theseus, his wife Phaedra, and her stepson Hippolytus were living. Hippolytus is presented by the author as a young man who despises sex and marriage and consequently neglects Aphrodite, whereas the virgin Artemis is his favorite companion. His stepmother Phaedra falls in love with him and hangs herself out of shame, though not without leaving a written message that falsely accuses Hippolytus of rape. Theseus curses his son and Poseidon kills him by a horrible accident with a horse chariot.

The very last scene of the play shows us the dying Hippolytus on stage. Artemis appears and reveals the truth to Theseus. The dialogue between Hippolytus and his favorite goddess makes clear

that the immortal gods are not able or willing to rescue human beings from death. After Hippolytus has realized that the goddess is present, he asks her: "Do you see me, lady, see my wretched state?" (Euripides, *Hipp.* 1395). And Artemis answers: "Yes, but the law forbids my shedding tears." The very last words of the goddess seem even more cruel: "Farewell: it is not lawful for me to look upon the dead or to defile my sight with the last breath of the dying. And I see that you are already near that misfortune" (1437–1439).[5] Nevertheless, the goddess promises Hippolytus a kind of reward: he will become the object of a religious practice, which will guarantee that he lives on—at least in and through the memory of the cult performers:

> To you, unhappy man, I shall grant, in recompense for these sorrows, supreme honors in the land of Trozen. Unmarried girls before their marriage will cut their hair for you, and over the length of ages you will harvest the deep mourning of their tears. The practice-skill of poetry [μουσοποιός] sung by maidens will forever make you its theme, and Phaedra's love for you shall not fall nameless and unsung. (1423–1430)

The "law" (νόμος), which hinders Artemis from shedding tears and staying with Hippolytus until he dies, is the same law that governs the traditional hero cult of Hippolytus at Trozen. Hippolytus will be there, lying dead in his grave or, as Artemis says, "in the gloom under the earth" (1416), but he will also live on through the honors of the cult, the rituals of the maiden, and the memory of their songs.

At first sight it seems that Euripides's play proves the existence and importance of a dichotomy that was often seen as typical for Greek religion: Olympian gods on the one side, chthonian heroes in their graves on the other side;[6] there is no idea of an individual afterlife, but the possibility of living on in the memories of the descendants. Nevertheless, Euripides could probably have told a very

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[5] Here and throughout, translations of Euripides's *Hippolytus* are drawn from Kovacs 1995 (see also Roth 2015 and Shaw 2007).

[6] For a basic critique of this dichotomy, see Ekroth 2002, 13–22.

different story about Hippolytus because—as I argued in the first paragraph—the boundaries between the living and the dead, as well as between heroes and gods, were disputed from the sixth century onwards. And also as mentioned above, our evidence shows that, as early as the sixth century, Asclepius's restoration to life of Hippolytus and subsequent punishment-by-death from Zeus was probably told in an epic poem.[7] In addition, we have evidence that Hippolytus was joined by Asclepius in the former's cults at Athens and at Trozen.[8] Nowhere in the play does Euripides allude to this version. Nevertheless, he lets us suppose that he is at least well aware of alternative ideas about living on after death. So he tells us that Phaedra saw Hippolytus for the first time when he came to Athens for the mysteries (25), and that Theseus brands Hippolytus as a follower of an Orphic group that only pretends to live a pure life with vegetarian diet and sexual restraint (952–955). The diet is described as ἀψύχου βορᾶς (952)—"food without soul"—and thus hints at the idea of metempsychosis (cf. Johnston 1999, 19).

Why did Euripides choose the very traditional version of Hippolytus becoming the object of a local hero cult? The following is a rather tentative answer that tries to read Euripides's tragedy as a voice in the religious discourse of late fifth-century Athens. In general, one can observe that during the Peloponnesian War, the Athenians tended to be more anxious about the rules of their polis religion and their identity as related to local cults (Furley 1996). Later, in the first half of the fourth century, Plato harshly criticizes religious practitioners who claimed to be able to communicate with the dead and to improve the afterlives of their clients with rituals and by referring to books by Orpheus and Musaios (Plato, *Resp.* 364e–365a). This perfectly fits Theseus's criticism of Hippolytus as someone who is proud of a vegetarian diet, is a follower of Orpheus, and who "honors the smoke of books" (952–954; see also Aristophanes, *Av.* 414). At the same time, one can find evidence for

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[7] See above, n. 4.

[8] Clear evidence exists only from the fourth century BCE onwards (Barrett 1964, 5).

several trials concerning religious issues at the end of the fifth and at the beginning of the fourth centuries, among them the famous case of Socrates, but also the cases of Ninos and Phryne, both of whom related somehow to private mystery cults of the Orphic type (Trampedach 2001; Eidinow 2010).

A critical attitude to Orphic practitioners and groups might explain why Euripides chooses the traditional aetiological story of a local hero cult with its tomb at Trozen, as well as why he insists on a clear-cut border between the living and the dead and on the function of hero cult in building collective identities; it fits in this pattern that he also mentions the cult of Aphrodite "in the (precinct) of Hippolytus" or "near Hippolytus" founded by Phaedra on the southern slope of the Acropolis (Euripides, *Hipp.* 30–32; cf. Pausanias, *Descr.* 1.22.1; see Barrett 1964, 5; Roth 2015, 71).[9] If one considers the observation by Fritz Graf (1998b, 478) that figures who oscillate between the status of god and hero always have a transregional or panhellenic character, it is clear that Euripides does not count Hippolytus among them, even if this might have been possible. He is on the side of down-to-earth local hero cult clearly referring to Athenian democratic identity; this position becomes even more decisive as he shows that he is well aware of other, more elitist religious perspectives (for example, the so-called "Orphics"; Hunter 2009; Bremmer 2010). This is not surprising when one thinks of the prominent function of Athenian tragedy in forming, but also reflecting, Athenian politics (Meier 1988). At the same time, Euripides is quite aware of a certain cruelty shown by these traditional gods and of the strict boundaries between life and death, as the last scene of the play clearly demonstrates. In others of his tragedies, the protagonists explicitly complain about these kinds of gods and even tend sometimes to a form of "agnosticism."[10]

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[9] There are two fragmentary inscriptions from the fifth century mentioning the sanctuary: *IG*[2] 324.69 and 310.280 (= *IG* I[3] 369 [line 66] and *IG* I[3] 383 [lines 233–234], respectively).

[10] One of the most famous examples is the prayer of Hecabe in Euripides, *Tro.* 884–888.

Certainly, "literature" forms part of the religious discourse (cf. Waldner 2014). In *Hippolytus*, Euripides draws the attention of his audience to the central role of poetry in the religious sphere. In the end, it is poetry, and not Asclepius or any Orphic initiations, that makes Hippolytus live on after his death. As reward and compensation, Artemis promises Hippolytus that his and Phaedra's story will be sung by the Trozenian maidens:

> Unmarried girls before their marriage will cut their hair for you, and over the length of ages you will harvest the deep mourning of their tears. The practice-skill of poetry [μουσοποιός] sung by maidens will forever make you its theme, and Phaedra's love for you shall not fall nameless and unsung. (1425–1430)

It is not just that the narrative of Hippolytus's and Phaedra's story, sung by the Trozenian maidens, makes Hippolytus live on after his death, but also that Euripides's tragedy itself forms an important part of the religious discourse. Thus Euripides is a strong, single voice in the ongoing debates about the boundaries between life and death in fifth-century Athens, and he opts for a tomb-bound local hero cult that ensures collective Athenian identity. At the same time, Euripides reflects the cruelty and fragility of this kind of order for individuals, and he utilizes the function of poetry in all this.

III. Transcending Local Narratives: Hippolytus-Virbius in Pausanias's *Description of Greece*

When we read the description of the sanctuary of Hippolytus and Aphrodite at Trozen by the second-century writer Pausanias, it is striking how well this description fits the picture we have gained from the much older tragedy by Euripides. According to Pausanias, there was a famous precinct for Hippolytus the son of Theseus, and "every maiden before marriage cuts off a lock for Hippolytus" (*Descr.* 2.32.1). But, whereas in Euripides it is said that the

gruesome story about Hippolytus's death is retold and mourned by the maidens, Pausanias sets forth a different account:

> They will not have it that he was dragged to death by his horses, and, though they know his grave, they do not show it. But they believe that what is called the Charioteer in the sky is the Hippolytus of the legend, such being the honor he enjoys from the gods. (*Descr.* 2.32.1)[11]

In a passage about inscriptions in the Asclepius sanctuary at Epidaurus, Pausanias shows that he knows yet another story about Hippolytus:

> Apart from the others is an old slab, which declares that Hippolytus dedicated twenty horses to the god. The Aricians tell a tale that agrees with the inscription on this slab, that when Hippolytus was killed, owing to the curses of Theseus, Asclepius raised him from the dead. On coming to life again he refused to forgive his father; rejecting his prayers, he went to the Aricians in Italy. There he became king and devoted a precinct to Artemis, where down to my time the prize for the victor in single combat was the priesthood of the goddess. The contest was open to no freeman, but only to slaves who had run away from their masters. (*Descr.* 2.27.4–5)

Does Pausanias care where Hippolytus *really* is? His agenda is obviously quite different from that of Euripides: he wants to represent to his imperial readers πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά ("all Greek things") in a cultural sense (Hutton 2005, 55–57). Greek mythology and ritual form part of his own and his contemporaries' classical education, the *paideia* (Hutton 2005, 35–53; cf. Pirenne-Delforge 2008). In the case of Hippolytus, Pausanias was challenged by a common phenomenon: Greek mythology was entangled with Roman stories. In Hippolytus's case this might even have started in Hellenistic times (Callimachus frag. 190 = 146 in Asper 2004), when

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[11] All translations of Pausanias are from Jones, Ormerod, and Wycherley 1918–1935.

someone asked the question: What happened to Hippolytus after he had been brought back to life by Asclepius? The answer was that he went to Italy and had something to do with the very famous sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis at Aricia (Green 2007). It was told that he founded the sanctuary (as we saw in the passage by Pausanias quoted above) or that he was identified with a hitherto unknown god called Virbius, living there with Diana in her precinct (Green 2007, 208–31). The whole story might have been triggered by the simple fact that horses—the animals who caused Hippolytus's early death—were forbidden in the sanctuary (Graf 1998c).

It is clear that the version of the Hippolytus story told by Euripides takes a different emphasis than the one told by Pausanias; the former binds the hero to his tomb at Trozen or Athens, while the latter stresses his coming back to life and ongoing activities in Italy. This fits Pausanias's aim to connect local mythological stories to an "international conglomerate"[12] of Greek religious *paideia*. In the case of Hippolytus, this was already done by Callimachus, who probably told the story about Hippolytus becoming Latin Virbius for the first time. In the same way, the myth of Hippolytus becoming a star might stem from a Hellenistic source.[13] But interestingly, Pausanias does not refer to one consistent antiquarian version of the story. Despite his globalizing perspective, he respects local traditions, which tell different transregional stories about Hippolytus and relate them to their given local contexts and monuments. If we believe Pausanias's account, the predilection for versions of Hippolytus's coming back to life was well established in the second century CE, even at a cult site like Trozen, which was traditionally concentrated

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[12] Bowersock 1994, 2; see above, Introduction.

[13] In Hellenistic times the so-called *katasterismoi* (stories about mythological figures becoming stars to explain constellations) became a literary genre, although the type of narrative was much older. A *katasterismos* was at the same time an apotheosis. It is disputed how these stories relate to the idea of human souls becoming stars after death, which we find for the first time in the fifth century BCE (Aristophanes, *Pax* 832ff.; Plato, *Tim.* 41d–42b; see Loehr 2002, 95ff.).

on the tomb of the hero. And there is one more important observation: though traditions about Hippolytus being transformed into the Latin god or hero Virbius are central to Augustan poetry (as we will see below), neither the Greek local traditions nor Pausanias or his local guides refer to such claims in detail. Pausanias does not tell us the name of Virbius, although Callimachus may have already known this story. If this is not by accident, it confirms again Pausanias's agenda to tell πάντα τὰ Ἑλληνικά in a globalizing but definitively "un-Roman" way, avoiding the name of the Latin god Virbius which was—as we will see in the next section—highly important for Augustan poetry.

IV. TRANSCENDING CATEGORIES IN AN EMPIRE: HIPPOLYTUS AND VIRBIUS IN AUGUSTAN POETRY AND RELIGION

As already mentioned, Hippolytus's coming back to life was combined with the famous sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis near Rome from the Hellenistic period onward. Hippolytus is not the only connection between this Latin cult and Greek mythology. There was also a myth that Orestes founded the sanctuary, coming there as a fugitive after he had murdered King Thoas and stolen Artemis's statue to bring it to Aricia.[14] With this myth, Orestes became the *aition* for the notorious ritual related to the *rex Nemorensis*, the priest of the sanctuary; he was replaced at the moment when a fugitive slave succeeded in killing him (Green 2007, 201–07, 147–84).[15] The sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis was related to Latin and Roman politics from the sixth century BCE onwards; the figure of Diana Aricia was not only honored in the sanctuary, but according to

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[14] The main evidence is Servius, *Ad Aen.* 2.116 and 6.136. Green (2007, 202) argues convincingly that the story might go back at least to the fourth century BCE.

[15] E.g., Strabo, *Geogr.* 5.3.12; Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.27.4. The ritual triggered the famous twelve-volume *The Golden Bough* by James George Frazer (cf. Green 2007, 147–49). It is disputed whether or not the ritual was still practiced in the imperial period.

Roman historiography (Livy, *Ab urbe condita* 1.45), Servius Tullius founded a cult of Diana on the Aventine, and both cults together formed a religious basis for Latin alliances (Green 2007, 13). The famous temple with the golden roof was built around 300 BCE, just at the time when the Aricians definitively surrendered to Rome. By the time of the republic, the sanctuary had become "formalized and Hellenized" (Green 2007, 25) and flourished with international clientele, especially as a center for healing (cf. Green 2007, 235–55). Green (2007, 23–33) argues that there was an intense politicization of the sanctuary at the end of the republic because of the title *rex*, which played an important role in the discourse of the civil war. It comes as no surprise that the political meaning of the sanctuary was prolonged into early imperial times. Nevertheless, in the details one finds a quite astonishing, contingent element: we know from Cicero's *Philippics* that Antony reproached Octavian for his *Aricina mater*, which implied low birth (*Phil.* 3.6.15–17; cf. Green 2007, 34ff.).[16] Later on, when Octavian as Augustus chose Apollo as his favorite god, Diana as sister of Apollo also became important to him (Green 2007, 40ff.) and it is highly probable that it was Augustus who transferred the alleged bones of Orestes from Aricia to Rome (Green 2007, 40–48). The passages by Virgil and Ovid that I will now discuss must be seen in this context.

When Virgil enumerates the Latin heroes ready to go out to fight the Trojans, he names among them Virbius (*Aen.* 7.761–764). Right at the beginning he surprises the reader, especially the one who knows Euripides well, by the paradoxical formulation "*Hippolyti proles . . . Virbius*" (7.761ff.). In his version, he states that a certain Virbius was the son of Hippolytus and that he was educated in the grove of Egeria (a Latin nymph and the wife of King Numa)—that is, in the sanctuary of Diana at Aricia—and was sent to fight by his *mater Aricia*. It is disputed whether *mater* in this sentence carries a local or personal meaning, but the obvious parallel to Augustus's mother as well as the adjacent *Hippolyti proles* "suggest a personal

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[16] See also Suetonius, *Aug.* 4.1.

sense" (Horsfall 2000, 479).[17] After this surprising introduction, Virgil goes on to tell the traditional aetiological story ([7.765–780](#)), starting with *ferunt fama* ("rumor goes") and ending with the remark that this story explains why horses are forbidden in the sanctuary of Diana at Aricia.[18] Virgil first sums up the content of the Euripidean tragedy in two verses and then recounts Hippolytus's coming back to life: he was called back to life (*revocatus*) by the herbs of Asclepius and the love of Diana (*amore Dianae*). Then Virgil tells how Asclepius was punished by death for this through Jupiter (*pater ominpotens*) and does not forget to stress the fact that Asclepius was the son of Apollo (*Phoebigena*). In the end, Diana brings Hippolytus to the remote shrine at Aricia, where he hides under his new name Virbius. When looking back at the beginning of the passage on Virbius, the reader is astonished by the fact that the Latin hero Virbius mentioned there with his *mater Aricia* is not the transformed Hippolytus, but the son (Virbius II) of Hippolytus (= Virbius I).

Why did Virgil spend so many verses on this rather obscure story? Why does he duplicate Hippolytus/Virbius by inventing a son of his, also called Virbius as a Latin hero with a *mater Aricia*? For Green (2007, 210) it is clear that Augustus must have been interested in the figure of Virbius "as a way to transform *Aricina mater* from Antony's vile insult to a courtier's compliment." But in fact we cannot know if Augustus really was interested in this detail of Arician mythology, even if it is very probable that he was highly interested in the famous Latin sanctuary in general (as discussed above). But what we can know is that it was Virgil who combined *mater Aricia*, which hints at Augustus, with an (invented?) figure Virbius II, who is said to be the son of Hippolytus/Virbius I. I would like to suggest that Virgil might have constructed, on the basis of

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[17] The Latin reads: *Ibat et Hippolyti proles pulcherrima bello, / Virbius, insignem quem mater Aricia.*

[18] The Latin text of Virgil is from Mynors 1969; translations are my own, though the reader may also wish to see Ahl 2007. The linked hypertext is to the older Loeb edition, Fairclough 1916–1918.

mater Aricia, a parallel between Augustus and Virbus II. This was not possible for Hippolytus/Virbius I, who was traditionally the son of Theseus and an Amazon (Hippolyte or Antiope). If one takes this suggestion, a new interpretive possibility opens: it might be that Virgil's story of Hippolytus/Virbius is a parallel to the transformation from human being to god which Julius Caesar underwent, and whose temple was dedicated in 29 BCE. Even if one denies such a direct relation, it is nevertheless possible to state with Denys Feeney (1998, 108–14) and Alessandro Barchiesi (1997, 112–19) that the Augustan poets were not only highly interested in the new categories coming into play when Roman politics started to practice very specific forms of ruler cult, but they also reflected on the forms and consequences of this new phenomenon in and for their poetry, and thus for religious discourse in general. So one could say that Virgil chooses the story of Hippolytus/Virbius as a model for understanding what happened to Julius Caesar and what probably would happen to his son Augustus after his death.

What must stay an educated guess in the case of Virgil becomes much more obvious in the case of Ovid, who treats the story of Hippolytus coming back to life as Virbius in two rather long passages of his extant oeuvre: in the *Fasti* (6.733–762)[19] and in the very last book of the *Metamorphoses* (15.497–546).

In the last part of the sixth book of the *Fasti*, our story forms part of a passage that is devoted to Asclepius from its beginning: on the 21st of June it comes to explain the constellation of the *Ophiuchus* or *Anguifer*, a boy holding two snakes who is identified by Ovid and others as Asclepius.[20] Ovid is thus more interested in the fate of this hero-god than in the transformation of Hippolytus to Virbius, which he mentions only very briefly (6.755ff.). Instead he narrates in detail the procedure of Hippolytus's revivification by Asclepius and draws a line to another story of coming back to life in which snakes play an important role—namely, the narrative about Glaucus, the son of Minos, brought back to life by the seer and healer Polyeidus. In that

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[19] He also mentions the story shortly at *Fasti* 3.265ff.

[20] For *katasterismoi* see above, n. 13.

story, Glaucus has fallen in a jar of honey and dies. King Minos shuts Polyeidus into his son's grave, where the seer observes how a dead snake is healed by another one; by using the same herb as that used by the snake, Polyeidus succeeds in reviving Glaucus.[21] Littlewood (2006, 215) rightly remarks in his commentary that Ovid interweaves "the theme of *anguis* and *anguifer* with a multiplicity of motifs of rebirth and apotheosis." In what follows, Ovid draws the attention of the reader to the problem that the gods punish such transgressions of the boundaries between life and death harshly: "Clymenus (i.e., Hades) and Clotho are resentful . . . Jupiter, fearing the precedent, aimed his thunderbolts down at the very man who had employed the power of too great an art [*qui nimiae noverat artis opem*]" (6.757–760).[22] This prepares the reader for the witty highlight at the end of the story: Jupiter consoles the angry Apollo by restoring Asclepius to the constellation of *Ophiuchus*, which means that Asclepius is not only revivified but becomes a god: "Phoebus, you were complaining. He's a god, be reconciled with your father. For your sake he himself does what he forbids to be done" (6.761ff.).

Ovid clearly wanted to tell his readers that transcending the boundary between life and death has to do not only with skills but also and more so with power and hierarchies: Asclepius is punished severely because he had done his job too well. Polyeidus is a seer who is punished by an arrogant king who does not accept the fact that his son has died. Jupiter claims the right to transgress any boundaries, even the most dangerous ones between life and death. Does this reflect Augustan politics? As already argued in discussing the passage on Virbius/Hippolytus by Virgil, there cannot be any doubt that Augustan writers were reflecting on the conceptual and

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[21] Only extant in Apollodorus, *Bibl.* 3.3.1. But it must have been known to Athenian dramatists since the time of Aeschylus (for example: Aeschylus, *Kressai*; Sophocles, *Manteis*; Euripides, *Polyidos*; Aristophanes, frag. 468–476 *PCG*).

[22] This and the following translations are from Wiseman and Wiseman 2011.

religious consequences of apotheosis at Rome. And compared to Virgil, Ovid is clearly more interested in exposing the dimension of political and cultural power in this domain. It is quite probable that he wanted at the end of the *Fasti* to compare himself—a poet sent into exile by the powerful Augustus—with Apollo's gifted son, the one who fell not into oblivion (like Hippolytus) but into "immortality, by Jupiter, whose supreme power has been threatened 'by excessive art'" (Littlewood 2006, 219ff.).[23]

This argument might also be supported by the fact that Asclepius is important for the discussion of apotheosis in the *Metamorphoses* as well, where the introduction of his cult at Rome is compared to the introduction of the cult of Julius Caesar. In the last book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid tells another quite elaborate version of the myth of Hippolytus becoming Latin Virbius (*Metam.* 15.485–546). As often, the poet surprises his readers with a yet unknown and humorous way to tell a traditional story. In *Metam.* 15, Virbius forms part of the wider narrative on King Numa and his wife, the nymph Egeria. After the king has died, Egeria is inconsolable to the point that, in the end, she will fade away by being transformed into a spring. But before this happens, she meets Virbius in the precinct of Diana Nemorensis and he tries to console her by telling her his own story. This leads to the remarkable fact that we read the myth about Hippolytus-Virbius as first-person narration in a rather long passage (15.500–546). After he has described the traumatic experience of the chariot accident in gruesome detail, he goes on to speak about his own death. To the reader's surprise, he goes to the underworld in his very body: "Also, I have seen the realms that lack light, / I have soothed my mangled body in Phlegethon's water" (15.531–532).[24] Different from the version in the *Fasti*, Jupiter's anger is only briefly mentioned; the medicine of "Apollo's offspring" gives him back his

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[23] Littlewood (2006) expands this argument; see also Newlands 1995, 175–208.

[24] The Latin reads as follows: "*vidi quoque luce carentia regna / et lacerum fovi Phlegethontide corpus in unda.*" Both text and English translations are from Hill 2000.

life (15.533–535). More important is the following agency of Diana, who first conceals and then transforms him: "Then, in case my presence might increase envy / of my gift, Cynthia cast thick clouds over me, / and, so that I might be safe and could be seen with impunity, / she added to my age and left me with a face / that could not be recognized" (15.536–540). The *aition* with the horses is only alluded. Diana changed his name to Virbius, because the name Hippolytus "could have been a reminder of horses" (15.542ff.). At the end of his story, Hippolytus/Virbius describes his existence in the grove of Diana Nemorensis: "Since then I have dwelt in this grove and, as one of the lesser gods, / I have hidden under the protection of my mistress and am enrolled in her retinue" (15.545ff.). As already mentioned, his story does not help Egeria— but as Virbius himself, in the end she is saved by Diana: "She [i.e., Egeria] dissolved into tears, until Phoebus's sister / was moved by the piety of her grieving and made a cool spring / from her body, and thinned her limbs into eternal waters" (15.549–551).

Compared to all other versions discussed until now, Ovid's is the only one to lay clear stress on individual experience. Because Hippolytus/Virbius tells his story in the first person, the reader automatically asks: How is it possible that there is an "I" which remains the same although it undergoes death, transformation, and renaming? What really comes as a surprise is the fact that this "I" is not a soul separated from the body, because Virbius tells that after his death he went to the underworld with his badly injured body. This almost reminds us of Jewish-Christian ideas that were developed roughly at the same time and insisted on bodily resurrection (Nickelsburg 2006). And it stands in a kind of opposition to the model that is presented *in extenso* by Ovid immediately before the story about Numa's death and Egeria's grief: Pythagorean metempsychosis (15.60–478). Pythagoras praises the peaceful life in the Golden Age when human beings did not even slaughter animals but instead opted for a vegetarian life; as in Ovid's poem, the basic principle in the world is continuous change (15.454ff.). He ends up with the concrete description of the

migration of souls as the ultimate cause for a vegetarian diet (15.456–478). Although Numa was taught all this by Pythagoras, he installs Roman religion with bloody sacrifices instructed by the same goddesses, the Camenae, who also inspire the poets. At least he succeeds in bringing his people, who are used to "ferocious war," to a more peaceful way of life (15.482–485). When he dies, nothing is said about the migration of his soul; instead of this, Ovid tells how his folk and especially the women were mourning; he then moves on to the story of Egeria's excessive mourning, her encounter with Hippolytus and his story, and further narrates how Diana also saved Egeria by transforming her into a spring. All this happens in a sanctuary where, at least according to the tradition, the main priest was installed after he had murdered a human being. We thus find a pattern that resembles Euripides's confrontation of an Orphic Hippolytus and his vegetarian diet with the fact of his own gruesome death, Theseus's mourning, and the hero tomb with its cult. At first sight, both poets seem to be on the side of a clear separation between life and death, and one is tempted to think that they deny alternative ideas such as Orphic and Pythagorean metempsychosis. But at least in the case of Ovid, things are more complicated. Certainly there is a relationship between the praise of a cosmic principle of change in Pythagoras's speech in *Metam.* 15.165 (*omnia mutantur, nihil interit*) and Ovid's own epic poem that consists of nothing but mythological stories about transformations. The combination of the Pythagorean model with the story about Egeria and Hippolytus can be read on a poetological level: it is the poet who is fully conscious of the eternal change, and yet by his storytelling he and his poem will never die. His ability forms part of the religious discourse. As Euripides insisted on the function of poetry in hero cult, so Ovid draws a parallel between the Pythagorean speech and his poem.[25] But does this mean that Ovid's sympathy is on the side of Pythagorean metempsychosis, whereas Euripides tends to the

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[25] Pythagoras presents himself as inspired by a god and speaks of "my own Delphi" (15.143ff.); Numa is inspired by the Latin Muses, the *Camenae*, when he installs Roman religion (15.482).

more conservative model of hero cult, which is related to Athenian identity and politics?

To conclude, I suggest that Ovid, like Euripides—but in a quite different way—connects his poetry and especially his stories about the boundaries between life, death, and (im)mortality with the political dimension of the religious discourse. When looking at the narrative structure of the whole of book 15 of the *Metamorphoses*, one recognizes that there is even more on these boundaries than the speech by Pythagoras and the story about Hippolytus/Virbius. In this book the *epos* comes, so to speak, down to the present time and place (Italy and Rome). The very last transformation story told by Ovid is the one of Julius Caesar, whose "soul" (*anima*) is saved by Venus and brought directly to the stars, notably with the permission of Jupiter:

> [Jupiter speaking:] Meanwhile, snatch up this soul from the slaughtered body / and make it into a star so that Divine Julius may always look out / from his dwelling-place on high at our Capitol and forum.' / Scarcely had he said these things when bounteous Venus stood / in the middle of the senate, unseen by anyone, and snatched / The fresh soul of her own Caesar from its body, not letting it / Be dissolved into the air, and she brought it to the heavenly stars. (15.840–846)

At this point, it is interesting to look back again at Pythagoras's speech, which describes the fate of the soul after death quite differently:

> O race stupefied by the dread of cold death, / why do you fear Styx, why the shades and empty words, / the stuff of bards and the dangers of a false world? / Your bodies, whether it is the pyre that removes them with its flame, or long time / with decay, you must not think of them as able to suffer any evils; / souls are free from death, and, when they have left their earlier abode, / they always live in new homes and dwell where they have been received. (15.153–159)

Clearly the story about Hippolytus/Virbius belongs to the "empty words, the stuff of bards" *(nomina vana . . . materiem vatum)*. For a modern reader it is astonishing that Ovid tells the story nevertheless. In his *Epistulae ex Ponto* (4.8.55–56) one reads: "Gods too were made by poetics, if it is permissible to say" (*Di quoque carminibus, si fas est dicere, fiunt*). Whereas Euripides only equates his storytelling with the cultural memory of local, cultic songs, Ovid goes further. With his poetry and especially the *Metamorphoses*, he does something new: on the one hand, he tells hundreds of traditional aetiological stories (Waldner 2007, 2014); on the other hand, he tells them in a demonstratively new way. This is necessary not only because of the new spatial dimension of the Roman Empire, but especially because of the challenge of the emperor cult to the traditional categories of hero, god, and human being. In the last book of the *Metamorphoses*, Ovid represents himself as a poet who is fully aware of the challenges of the empire as a cultural space, so aptly described by Glen Bowersock (1994). In combining three different stories about coming back to life—the Pythagorean model, the story told about Hippolytus/Virbius, and the one of Julius Caesar told by the inspired *vates* himself—Ovid tells his readers that he is in the powerful position of making sense of contemporary pagan religion by forming a continuing narrative based on traditional stories. He thus sees himself as not dependent on political or religious discourses, although he is well conscious that he has a voice within both. In the famous last lines of the *Metamorphoses* he triumphantly states that he will come back to life in his own way:

> And now I have completed a work which neither Jove's anger, nor fire, / Nor sword, nor devouring age will be able to destroy. / When it wishes, let that day, which has no power except / Over this body, finish the span of my uncertain lifetime; / but, with the better part of me, I shall be borne for ever / above the stars on high, and my name will be indelible; / and, where Roman power extends over subdued lands, / I shall be read by the nations, and, through all the ages, in fame, / (if there is any truth in the predictions of bards) I shall live. (15.871–879)

V. Conclusion

The foregoing suggests that the story about Hippolytus's coming back to life was good to think with. From quite early on, somewhere in the sixth century BCE, it was possible to tell at least two stories about Hippolytus. The first was linked to the figure and cult of Asclepius and held that Hippolytus was revivified by the excellent skills of the healer hero, whom Zeus consequently punished. On the other side, one finds a hero cult related to tombs in Attica and Sparta. This made Hippolytus a figure who, from the fifth century onwards, oscillated between hero and god, like Asclepius, Heracles, and the Dioskouroi. The religious discourse of archaic and classical Greece needed this type of figure to discuss the setting of boundaries between life and death, between mortality and immortality, between hero, human being, and god. In the first part of this chapter, I concentrated on the example of Euripides. In his extant tragedy *Hippolytus*, he formulates his contribution to the religious and political discourse of his time by telling one version of the Hippolytus story. He insists on the importance of a local, tomb-related hero cult highly relevant to Athenian political identity. At the same time, he lets the audience know that he is well aware of two facts: on the one hand, that alternative discourses exist, such as the one promoted by Orphic practitioners; and on the other, he recognizes the cruelty of the traditional gods and their power to set strict boundaries between life and death. As far as his poetry is concerned, he relates and maybe also equates its function to the traditional hero cult.

In Hellenistic and imperial times, the myths of Hippolytus were further developed. The authors (Callimachus, Virgil, Ovid, Pausanias) used them as a space where they could discuss boundaries and their transgression. The story that Asclepius brought Hippolytus back to life became more important in the Hellenistic and Roman eras than in the archaic and classical epoch. It was enriched by the concept of *katasterismos* and by the idea that Hippolytus not only transgressed the boundary between life and death, but also between Greece and Rome by being transported after

his revivification to the sanctuary of Diana Nemorensis at Aricia. On the Greek side, we find Pausanias, who provides evidence that these ideas were not only formulated in poetry, but also influenced or reflected developments at certain cult sites where the tomb of Hippolytus lost its importance/meaning. Finally, the most refined and complicated elaboration of the story is found in the Augustan poetry of Virgil and Ovid. Because of the high political significance of the sanctuary of Diana at Aricia—indeed, of Diana in general— and the symbolism of the archaic ritual of the *rex Nemorensis*, the *mater Aricina* of Augustus, they used the story of Hippolytus becoming Virbius to reflect upon both apotheosis and the new political, religious, and poetological consequences of Augustus's reign. Virgil plays with the idea of an oxymoron: there was a son engendered by chaste Hippolytus/Virbius (*Hippolyti proles*), also called Virbius. By giving him a *mater Aricia*, he draws a parallel not only between Augustus and Virbius II, but also between their fathers, Hippolytus/Virbius and Julius Caesar, who was transformed into a constellation and treated as a god in Rome. In the sixth book of the *Fasti*, Ovid draws the reader's attention to Jupiter acting out his power in a rather cruel and absurd way: he punishes Asclepius for his skills and afterwards, by transforming him into a star constellation, he himself does exactly the same thing for which he had punished Asclepius. I have suggested that Ovid thinks the emperor has punished him in an (unjust) way, much like Jupiter did to Asclepius. In the last book of the *Metamorphoses,* Ovid formulates the story of Hippolytus's revivification and transformation in a highly original way. Virbius tells it in the form of a first-person narrative to Egeria, the widow of king Numa. For the first time, a poet telling the Hippolytus story asks the question: what happens to a person's identity when a person comes back to life and is transformed into a god at the same time? Interestingly, this identity seems somehow connected to the body, which is described as going into and returning from the underworld. Ovid enlarges this discourse by combining the story with Pythagoras's speech on metempsychosis with the story about Caesar's apotheosis. Ovid thus

shows himself as a poet and *vates* who is able to see beyond all these religious, philosophical, and political ways of drawing and transgressing boundaries between life and death, between human beings, gods, and heroes. Through his poetry, he as a poet will never have to come back to life because he will never die, transcending all boundaries of time and space—in the same way as the political power of the Roman Empire.

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Disarming Death:
Theomachy and Resurrection in 1 Corinthians 15

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I. INTRODUCTION

Without First Corinthians 15, our understanding of the apostle Paul's views on the prospect of coming back to life would be radically impoverished. Nevertheless, 1 Cor 15.54–57 have yielded few riches in the forty or so years since Rodolphe Morissette (1972, 11) observed that they are very little studied. This is surprising because, to use Paul's own metaphor, these verses celebrate nothing less than the crowning gift of God: Christ's victory over Death, "the last enemy" (1 Cor 15:26):

1 Cor 15:54c–57

54c	Κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῖκος.
55a	ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νῖκος;
55b	ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;
56	τὸ δὲ κέντρον τοῦ θανάτου ἡ ἁμαρτία, ἡ δὲ δύναμις τῆς ἁμαρτίας ὁ νόμος·
57	τῷ δὲ θεῷ χάρις τῷ διδόντι ἡμῖν τὸ νῖκος διὰ τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ.

54c	Death has been swallowed up in victory.
55a	Where, Death, is your victory?
55b	Where, Death, is your κέντρον?
56	The κέντρον of Death is sin, and the power of sin is the law;
57	but thanks be to God who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!

Verses 54–55 have attracted special attention because Paul appears to quote variants of Isa 25:8 and Hos 13:14. The text of this combined quotation matches neither the Hebrew of the Masoretic Text nor the Greek of the Septuagint, although 1 Cor 15:54c may reflect a preexisting translation of Isa 25:8 that conformed more closely to the Hebrew than does the Septuagint (Wilk 2005, 146):

Isa 25:8 (MT and LXX)
בלע המות לנצח
He will swallow up death forever

κατέπιεν ὁ θάνατος ἰσχύσας
Death in his strength has devoured

1 Cor 15:54c
Κατεπόθη ὁ θάνατος εἰς νῖκος
Death has been swallowed up in victory

In the case of Hos 13:14, the key differences probably reflect Paul's own modifications to the passage (Fee 1987, 804). These modifications include Paul's use of "victory" in 1 Cor 15:55a rather than the Hebrew Bible's "plagues" or the Septuagint's "penalty," and his use of "Death" in 1 Cor 15:55b rather than the Septuagint's "Hades" (Stanley 1992, 212–13):

Hos 13:14a (MT and LXX)	**Hos 13:14b (MT and LXX)**
אהי דבריך מות	אהי קטבך שאול
Where are your plagues, Death?	Where is your destruction, Sheol?
ποῦ ἡ δίκη σου, θάνατε;	ποῦ τὸ κέντρον σου, ᾅδη;
Where is your penalty, Death?	Where is your κέντρον, Hades?
1 Cor 15:55a	**1 Cor 15:55b**
ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ νῖκος;	ποῦ σου, θάνατε, τὸ κέντρον;
Where, Death, is your victory?	Where, Death, is your κέντρον?[1]

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[1] The appearance of Hades instead of Death in the Byzantine text and a number of manuscripts reflects scribal assimilation of 1 Cor 15:55b to the Septuagint text of Hos 13:14b.

Clearly Paul has sewn together oracles from Isaiah and Hosea and woven them into their new context in the letter by means of *Stichwörter* like "death" and "victory." The secondary literature is so dominated by questions about his sources, methods, and backgrounds, however, that the interpretation of the quotation in its present form and its present context has received virtually no consideration. In this respect, scholarship has taken one step forward and two steps back from Morissette's (1972, 162) boldest claim:

> Les versets 50 à 58 ne proposent en rien une description de la résurrection ou de la fin des temps; ils s'appliquent au contraire à définir le contenu proprement théologique de l'événement et ils forment le complément naturel, nécessaire même, de l'anthropologie exposée en xv, 35 à 49. De celle-ci en effet, les versets 50 à 58 dégagent la signification théologique ainsi qu'ils expriment la dimension invisible ou cosmique de la résurrection des fidèles.

The present essay picks up where Morissette left off, with a revised version of his claim that 1 Cor 15:50–58 defines the invisible or cosmic dimension of the resurrection. I will argue more broadly that this passage defines the *mythological* significance of the resurrection. I use the term "mythology" in a twofold sense. First, it refers to popular representations of gods, *daimones,* heroes, and the regions they inhabit. In this sense, it does not exclude Morrisette's cosmic dimension. Second, it refers to Paul's strategic use of narrative to underwrite and authorize his beliefs about coming back to life. In this sense, mythology is "ideology in narrative form" (Lincoln 1999, xii). The fact that the particular narrative in question has perforce to do with gods, *daimones,* and heroes has more to do with the distinctive confluence of cultures in which Paul lived than with the putative essence of myth. Following Russell McCutcheon (2000, 200), then, I regard mythology in this second sense as "an ordinary rhetorical device in social construction and maintenance" and not as a literary genre with a fixed set of formal characteristics.

This puts me happily at odds with two opposing viewpoints. On the one hand, I disagree with Hans Conzelmann's (1975, 273–74; see also Carr 1981, 91) suggestion that Paul *reduces* the mythological element in his presentation by making Death, rather than Satan, the last enemy. On the other hand, I am skeptical of Martinus de Boer's (1988, 121) rejoinder that Paul *enhances* the mythological element by placing Death among the principalities and powers "already known to the Corinthians" (1 Cor 15:24–27). Paul had no need "to hypostatize death as a quasi-angelic, cosmological power," nor is this characterization likely to have been "a new idea for the Corinthians" (Boer 1988, 124 and 139). Its foundations had long since been laid by poets, playwrights, artisans, and theologians. This essay asks how their legacies may have helped the Corinthians not just to visualize Christ's victory over Death but also, and especially, to celebrate it.

The complexities of the task can be fruitfully organized around the interpretation of a single word, so I shall begin with a provocation. Κέντρον does not mean what we think it means, at least not in the context in which Paul has placed it. This has escaped the notice of commentators for two reasons. First, dedicated scholarship on this passage has focused on everything *but* its context in Paul's letter (Lüdemann 1980; Gillman 1988; Perriman 1989; Stanley 1992, 209–15; Healey 1999; Harrelson 2004; Wilk 2005, 145–47). Second, when careful attention is given to this context, the standard lexica are less helpful than one might hope. Lothar Schmid (1966, 3:667–68) conceded as much in his entry on κέντρον for the *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*:

> What does Paul mean when he speaks of the κέντρον θανάτου? Is he thinking of the goad, so that we have a personification of death with the goad in his hand to rule and torture man? Or is he thinking of the poisonous tip, so that death is a dangerous beast which gives man a mortal prick? Both metaphors may play some part, but it is difficult to carry either of them through with logical consistency.

Schmid duly pressed *both* metaphors into service—the goad *and* the poisonous tip—as if the problem of consistency could be solved simply by positing an excess of meaning (cf. Conzelmann 1975, 292–93). Other commentators wisely shun this hobgoblin only to embrace another, seemingly preferring whatever image finds support in more or less random comparanda. The poison-filled stingers of the scorpions in Rev 9:10 are popular, as are those of the bees in 4 Macc 14:19, and the sharp goads of an animal drover in Acts 26:14 (Robertson and Plummer 1911, 378; Conzelmann 1975, 292–93; Fee 1987, 804–05; Boer 1988, 132–38; Thiselton 2000, 1300; Schrage 2001, 380–81; Fitzmyer 2008, 607).

What we need here is neither a foolish consistency nor a foolish inconsistency. Theriomorphic representations of death as a weaponized animal may comprehend the high stakes of the contest, but they are inconsistent with Paul's personification of death all the same. As defined in a recent volume of essays on the subject: "personification is the *anthropomorphic* representation of any non-human thing" (Stafford and Herrin 2005, xix, my italics). When such representations have a definite theriomorphic quality, this quality is usually conveyed by more than one or two words, as in the depiction of the ravenous Canaanite god, Mot ("Death"), in Ugaritic literature, the Kēr of Greek mythology, "with teeth as cruel as those of a beast and fingernails bent like talons" (Pausanias, *Descr.* 5.19.6), and the Latin figure of Pale Death (Mors pallida), with greedy jaws spread wide to swallow the funereal crush of souls crossing the Stygian stream (Seneca, *Herc. fur.* 554–559; *Oed.* 164–169). To imagine the κέντρον as a poisonous stinger in the present case, by comparison, is to place more weight on one word than its context can bear.

Conversely, it is not immediately clear how an anthropomorphic representation of death as a goad-wielding animal drover fits into Paul's thematization of victory. The familiar saying about kicking against the goad(s) is not a true parallel because it usually refers to the *futility* of a mortal human being resisting the gods or their agents (Pindar, *Pyth.* 2.88–96; Aeschylus, *Ag.* 1617–1624; Euripides, *Bacch.* 794–795; Acts 26:14). If Paul's victory taunt celebrates the

powerful disruption of this hierarchy by Jesus, as arguably it does, then it implicitly casts Jesus in the role of a θεομάχος, or god-fighter. While this line of reasoning has prima facie support both in 1 Cor 15 and in the proverbial usage of κέντρον as a metaphor for oppressive forces in the purview of gods or *daimones,* it also brings a new set of problems in its train.

II. Trampling Down Death by Death

The myth of "the battle of the Gods" has an impressive pedigree both in the ancient Near East and in Greco-Roman culture (Litwa 2012, 172–76). Successful *human* god-fighters can be counted on one hand, however, even including ἡμίθεοι or demigods. This distinction between gods battling gods and humans/demigods battling gods is pertinent to our interpretation of 1 Cor 15 for two reasons. First, the point in question concerns Jesus's ability—as a mortal human being who died and rose from the dead—to rescue other human beings from the power of death. Second, framing the issue in this way narrows our search for parallels. It excludes, for example, the oft-cited but historically distant cycle of stories in which the Canaanite god Mot ("Death") swallows his fellow god Baal in his massive maw, with "jaws reaching the earth, lips to heaven, and a tongue to the stars" (*UT* 67 II:1–5, trans. Tromp 1969, 104; cf. Hays 2015, 122–24). This myth influences a number of Hebrew Bible texts depicting the underworld and its deities, including Isaiah's image of Yahweh swallowing up death (Isa 25:8 MT; Gulde 2009; Day 2000, 185–88); but only traces remain in Paul's quotation of this text in 1 Cor 15:54c. Neither Isaiah nor Paul (*pace* Healey 1999, 211) mention the sizeable jaws and voracious appetite of Death, and Paul comments instead on the power of Death's κέντρον (1 Cor 15:55b–56). Importantly, for Paul, Jesus has despoiled Death of this power over human beings by becoming human and by defeating Death on his own territory. How he accomplished this Herculean task is the question that Paul must answer in the face of a longstanding Greco-Roman tradition of *failed* theomachies.

Pramit Chaudhuri (2014) has recently surveyed the theomachy topos in Greco-Roman literature from its origins in Greek epic and tragedy through its deployment in Latin literature of the Flavian period. Chaudhuri observes that the success of the god-fighter in the Homeric epics is strictly constrained by the will of the gods and threatens the hero with doom regardless. Athena authorizes Diomedes to strike Aphrodite, for example, but prohibits him from engaging the other deathless gods in battle (*Il.* 5.129–132). Later, Dione comments disdainfully on his fate: "The son of Tydaeus is a fool and does not know in his mind | that whoever fights the deathless gods (ὃς ἀθανάτοισι μάχηται) is not long for this life" (*Il.* 5.406–407; Chaudhuri 2014, 18–20). The tragedians place θεομάχοι in even more dire circumstances. Isolated and lacking divine sponsors, "the tragic *theomachoi* act on their own initiative and 'fight,' alone and in vain, against their divine opponents" (Mikalson 1991, 176). Finally, in Roman culture the perdurance of this hierarchy is tested, but not broken, by the scientific theomachy of Epicurus in Lucretius's *De rerum natura,* by the political theomachies of Julius Caesar and others in Lucan's *Bellum civile,* and by the imperial cult with its prospect of divinization. These developments contribute to "tenser and grander" theomachies in Roman writings than in their Greek antecedents, yet the ultimate concession of the god-fighter to his fate retains its place in the topos (Chaudhuri 2014, 29).

This is especially true of Seneca's Hercules, whose stunning defeat of Dis (Hades) prompts Juno to worry about the security of the gods' supernal abode:

> It is heaven we must fear for, lest he seize the highest kingdoms, / who conquered the lowest; he will snatch his father's sceptre. . . . / He is seeking a path to the gods. (*Herc. fur.* 64–65, 74; trans. Chaudhuri 2014, 124)

In order to block this path, Juno devises a plan to turn Hercules's ambitions against him by unleashing a coterie of psychological terrors: Crime (*scelus*), Impiety (*impietas*), Error (*error*), and especially Frenzy (*furor*) (*Herc. fur.* 96–99). Indeed, Seneca boldly

highlights the connection between theomachy and madness by placing the hero's terraforming climb to heaven within the context of a hallucination:

> I shall carry rocks and forests / and seize ridges full of Centaurs in my right hand. / Now with twin mountains I will drive a path to the gods; / let Chiron see his Pelion under Ossa, / and, placed third, Olympus will reach heaven / or be hurled there. (*Herc. fur.* 968–973; trans. Chaudhuri 2014, 139–40)

When Hercules finally takes his place among the gods in the imagination of Greeks and Romans alike, he does so not by storming the gates of heaven but by immolation and apotheosis (see Litwa 2014, 158–63 for a synoptic account of Heracles's death and deification). Thereafter, coming back to life as he formerly was is not an option, even for the one individual to have defeated the god of the underworld in single combat.

This is not to say that Greeks and Romans denied the possibility of coming back to life tout court. On the contrary, Heracles, Theseus, and Orpheus are prime examples of heroes who faced death by travelling to the underworld and returning from it (although Heracles has to rescue Theseus in some versions of the myth; Bauckham 1992, 150; Graf and Brändle 2006). These heroes do not physically die and return to life in the course of their travels, but even belief in resurrection of this sort was not entirely beyond the pale. The Thessalian hero Protesilaos experienced two such resurrections, according to Philostratus (*Her.* 2.9–11 [= §§662–663 in older editions]; Maclean and Aitken 2001, liii–liv), and Asclepius reportedly performed multiple resurrections (Edelstein and Edelstein 1945, 1:66–86). The issue is not *whether* resurrection was conceivable (*pace* Wright 2003, 60), but *how* it was conceivable, under what conditions it might occur, and what manner of postmortem existence it entailed.

If the Corinthians misunderstood Paul's view of resurrection to involve the resuscitation of a corpse to the same kind of bodily life it had previously experienced (Litwa 2014, 150; Martin 1995, 108),

then it is a small wonder that only some of them were denying the resurrection of the dead (1 Cor 15:12). That Paul thought it necessary to address this contingent directly only underscores the question of precedents for his audacious declaration of victory over death. On the one hand, Paul's Jesus resembles a Homeric hero fighting under the aegis of a divine sponsor. After reigning "until he has put every enemy under his feet," this Jesus will hand over his kingdom to the one God and Father who "put all things in subjection under his feet" (1 Cor 15:25, 27). On the other hand, Paul's recombinant interpretation of passages from Ps 8:6 (= 8:7 LXX) and 110:1 resonates powerfully with Epicurus's superstition-shattering ascent to the outer reaches of heaven in Lucretius's *De rerum natura,* as described by Chaudhuri (2014, 58–59):

> Epicurus moves from looking up at *religio* in the sky (*tollere . . . oculos,* Lucr. 1.66–67) to standing above his enemy: *religio pedibus subiecta uicissim / obteritur* [*nos exaequat victoria caelo*] ("superstition was in turn cast underfoot and trampled [and victory exalts us to heaven]" Lucr. 1.78–79). Lucretius employs strikingly violent and martial language to describe Epicurus' success: *obsistere,* "to make a stand," 1.67; *effringere,* "to break open," 1.70; *uictor,* "victor," 1.75. This victory, however, consists in a mastery of scientific fact.[2]

Paul's answer to the question, "with what kind of bodies will they come?" (1 Cor 15:35) is of more than passing interest here. More a Stoic (or a Platonist) than an Epicurean, Paul nevertheless bases his distinction between the earthly σῶμα ψυχικόν and the heavenly σῶμα πνευματικόν on observation and hypothesis. He observes that different kinds of bodies are differently composed, and then he hypothesizes that psychic bodies will be changed into spiritual bodies at the resurrection (1 Cor 15:39–44). The goal of this strategy

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[2] The bracketed text and translation includes Lucretius's reference to human beings sharing in the reward of Epicurus's victory. This parallels the sharing of Jesus's followers in the reward for his victory over death (1 Cor 15:55–56).

is to counter the Corinthians' skeptical *denial* of bodily resurrection with a distinctive *theory* of bodily resurrection. Vigdis Songe-Møller (2009, 114) argues that Paul formulates this theory with traditional Greek mythology in view:

> The Greeks were familiar with the conception that eternal existence includes bodily existence. Or perhaps rather: that there are bodies which live forever and which are not a part of nature's cycle of birth, growth, decay and death, namely the bodies belonging to gods and to very special humans.

Others have detected philosophical influences in Paul's astral and pneumatic language (Litwa 2012, 129–51; Engberg-Pedersen 2010, 27–38; Martin 1995, 117–29). The specific nature of his theory is less important for our purposes, however, than the fact that he frames this theory in precisely the same way that Lucretius frames Epicurus's triumph over *religio;* that is, within the mythological context of a violent ascent to heaven in which a precipitously rising hero victoriously tramples the traditional gods and *daimones* underfoot.

These considerations help us to pinpoint 1 Cor 15 within the broader topos of theomachy and its evolution in the early principate. What unites Lucretius and Paul is their shared desire to undermine the culturally postulated gods of the day whilst elevating their respective heroes above the fray. Presenting these heroes as god-fighters is an ideal way to achieve this goal because it simultaneously entertains and provokes:

> Theomachy provides a congenial, effective, and, above all, sublime idiom with which to shock and inspire the audience, bringing before their eyes an ostentatiously philosophical vision of the world, and in the process turning an epic topos into a moment of extraordinary intellectual power (Chaudhuri 2014, 63).

Even the collapse into madness of Seneca's Hercules prompts reflection on alternative paths to deification, whether political, as in

the imperial cult, or philosophical, through the cultivation of wisdom (Chaudhuri 2014, 150–56). In 1 Corinthians, by comparison, Paul introduces the folly of the cross as a pretext to extol the wisdom and power of God in Christ to rescue human beings even from the grave (1 Cor 1:17).

Comparison of Heracles and Jesus is not new (Malherbe 1988, 574–75; Aune 1990; Hershbell 2004, 172–73), but it is apropos in this context, not least because the mutual threat they pose to the traditional pantheon catalyzes theological reflection. Within the wider context of ancient Greek culture, such reflection should take into account both the nature of heroes and of hero worship, commonly known as "hero cult." Gregory Nagy (2006, §69) defines the heroes of epic poetry as "mortals of the remote past, male or female, who are endowed with superhuman powers because they are descended from the immortal gods themselves." This definition ought to apply equally as well to Jesus as it does to Heracles, both of whom were believed to descend from a god and a mortal woman (Homer, *Il.* 14.323–324; Gal 4:4). Nevertheless, the suggestion that Paul represents Jesus as a demigod requires certain qualifications. Nagy (2006, §70) goes on to observe that "the literal meaning of the word *hēmitheos* as 'half-god' does not imply an exact half-and-half distribution of immortals and mortals in a hero's genealogy." It implies, rather, the balancing of mortality and immortality in the hero's self. The difficulty of this balancing act derives from the innate limitations that mortality imposes on the hero's otherwise limitless potential. Theomachy highlights this difficulty by displaying the shocking spectacle of a hero striving violently—and failing—to transcend these limitations. This antagonism which the hero displays toward a god or goddess in myth is often reversed in cult, where the immortalized hero receives worship together with this same god or goddess (Nagy 2006, §105). Heracles becomes reconciled with Hera through his death. Achilles becomes reconciled with Apollo through the death of Patroklos as a ritual substitute (Nagy 2006, §§108–09). No such reversal occurs in the case of Jesus, however, because he displays no such antagonism toward God.

What differentiates Jesus from Heracles and other such heroes is his acquiescence to the condition of mortality—the human condition—with all its limitations. Unlike Heracles madly storming the gates of heaven or Achilles rushing in "like a god" (δαίμονι ἶσος) to slay Hector against Apollo's will (Homer, *Il.* 20.447; Chaudhuri 2014, 26), Jesus refuses to regard "equality with God (τὸ εἶναι ἶσα θεῷ) as something that can be seized by force (ἁρπαγμόν)"; instead, he voluntarily submits himself to a humiliating death on a Roman cross (Phil 2:6–8). This absence of hubris in Jesus not only helps us to understand why Paul suggests that Jesus succeeded where others failed, it also encourages reflection on an alternative path to deification—the way of humility.

In addition to the fact that Jesus's defeat of death takes on truly heroic proportions in Paul's hands, several features of 1 Cor 15 stand out for their connections to the mythology of Heracles, especially as this mythology is presented in Euripides's *Alcestis.* Given the popularity of this tragedy well into the Roman period (Juvenal, *Sat.* 6.652–654; Lucian, *Salt.* 51–52; P.Oxy 4546, with Marshall 2004 and Slater 2013, 69–70), it is likely that at least some of the Corinthians will have noticed a few of these connections. Whether Paul himself anticipated this result is difficult to determine in the absence of more definitive evidence for his acquaintance with the tragedy. What can be argued with greater certainty is that his theology and exegesis show affinities with the hellenized Jewish tradition represented, *inter alia,* by the Wisdom of Solomon. This text overlaps with the *Alcestis* in its iconography of death, and so it may have served as a cross-cultural bridge linking Paul to his earliest readers.

III. Wrestling with Death

The *Alcestis* opens with Apollo explaining how he tricked the Fates into granting a reprieve to the king of Pherae, Admetus, on the condition that someone else willingly die in his place. The only person to volunteer is Admetus's wife, Alcestis, who awaits her impending death. Death himself appears on the scene as the black-robed lord of the dead who wields a sacred sword (ξίφος; ἔγχος ἱερός)

and drinks the blood of sacrifices at tombs (*Alc.* 74–75; 845). When he arrives to abduct Alcestis, she perceives him as a dark-browed, "winged Hades" (πτερωτός Ἅιδας, *Alc.* 262). Upon hearing of her abduction, Heracles descends to the underworld in order to rescue her from the clutches of Death and return her to Admetus to live out her natural life. For this reason, her story has long been cited as a Greek antecedent to the Christian doctrine of resurrection. My claim is different; namely, that her story offers insight into the ideological grounds on which a doctrine like bodily resurrection could be defended, even though her return to natural life does not constitute a direct antecedent to this doctrine. Mythology, in this sense, truly is ideology in narrative form. The following four features of 1 Cor 15 have parallels in the *Alcestis.*

First, Paul personifies Death as "the last enemy" (ἔσχατος ἐχθρὸς, 1 Cor 15:26). Biblical inspiration for this epithet could derive from any number of psalms (Tromp 1969, 114–19), but the most relevant text is Ps 8:6 (= 8:7 LXX), which concerns the trampling underfoot of "every enemy" (πάντας τοὺς ἐχθροὺς, 1 Cor 15:25). A statement by Philo of Alexandria suggests a related context but lacks a fully realized personification of death: "incorruption is akin to eternality, but death is hateful to it" (συγγενὲς μὲν ἀιδιότητος ἀφθαρσία, ἐχθρὸν δὲ θάνατος, *Abr.* 55–56). In the earliest use of the epithet in the Greek tradition, by comparison, Hesiod personifies the twin sons of Nyx as "fearsome gods" (δεινοὶ θεοί). One of these gods, Hypnos, is "gentle to human beings," while the other, Death, is "inimical even to the deathless gods" (ἐχθρὸς δὲ καὶ ἀθανάτοισι θεοῖσιν, Hesiod, *Theog.* 758–765). Euripides echoes Hesiod in the *Alcestis,* where Apollo describes the ways of Death as "inimical to mortals and detestable to gods" (ἐχθρούς γε θνητοῖς καὶ θεοῖς στυγουμένους, *Alc.* 62). Here, as in 1 Cor 15, death is personified as an adversary even to deathless gods. Heracles later fulfills Apollo's prediction that someone would rescue Alcestis from Death by force (*Alc.* 64–71, 843–857). Upon his return from the underworld, he likens his success to victory in athletic contests (ἀγῶνα), slyly presenting Alcestis to her grieving husband as though she were a trophy (νικητήρια) from a boxing match or a

wrestling match (*Alc.* 1025–1033). This dissimulation builds dramatic tension before the joyful moment of recognition whilst calling to mind Heracles's legendary reputation as a god-fighter. Euripides attenuates the hero's equally legendary impiety by giving him an altruistic motive, a detestable opponent, and Apollo's tacit approval.

Second, the adversarial relationship between God and Death in 1 Cor 15 echoes the tense exchange between Apollo and Death in the opening scene of the *Alcestis.* Like Heracles, Paul's Jesus is divinely favoured to defeat Death and to share with others the prize for his victory: namely, coming back to life. That Euripides and Paul differ widely in their understanding of the nature and scope of this prize is both self-evident and irrelevant to the larger set of relationships in view. These relationships show how Paul could justify and even celebrate what could otherwise be considered an act of impiety on the part of Jesus. As Diana Burton (2005, 52) observes: "it is precisely when death personified acts as his own agent that the normal order of things appears to be overturned. He is, paradoxically, an unsuccessful personification, who does not effectively embody the concept that is his *raison d'être.*"

Third, Paul introduces his taunting apostrophe to Death with sartorial imagery: "When what is perishable dons imperishability and what is mortal dons immortality, then the saying that is written will come to pass" (1 Cor 15:53–54). This imagery can be compared to the concept of the heavenly garment found elsewhere in early Jewish texts (Apoc. Ab. 13; Odes Sol. 15.8; Mart. Ascen. Isa. 4.17; 1 En. 62.15–16; 2 En. 22.8–10). What these texts lack, however, is an overt connection between the garment topos and the topos of theomachy. 1 Cor 15:53–57 is distinctive in this respect, but not sui generis. Greco-Roman writers and artists often depict Heracles cloaked in the hide of the Nemean lion, an invulnerable garment which he is said to have used as armor (Hesiod, *Theog.* 327ff.; Pindar, *Isthm.* 6.46ff.; Euripides, *Herc. fur.* 359–363; Theocritus, *Id.* 25.132ff.; Diodorus of Sicily, 4.11.3; Seneca, *Herc. fur.* 83ff.). A tradition that this lion is the offspring of the moon points to its

heavenly origin.[3] Although Euripides does not mention the lion's skin in the *Alcestis,* it may have been part of Heracles's costume in productions of the tragedy (Luschnig and Roisman 2003, 64). As a common feature of his iconography, regardless, it serves as a reminder both of his god-like power and of his near oneness with the beast (Papadopoulou 2005, 48). This duality is a trait that Heracles shares with Jesus, whose imperishable and immortal garment likewise covers his mortal body and protects him from the deadly κέντρον of Death.

Lastly, Paul substitutes Death for Hades in his quotation of Hos 13:14. C. K. Barrett (1968, 383) suggested that Paul drops the Septuagint's reference to Hades because the name evokes a pagan god, but this is equally true of Death in the tradition under consideration. The substitution is better explained as a means of integrating Isa 25:8 and Hos 13:14 into their shared context in the letter. If so, Paul then treats Hades and Death as rhetorical synonyms (Thiselton 2000, 1300). This treatment is consonant with the parallelism of Hos 13:14, but it is only truly *paralleled* in the *Alcestis*, where Euripides borrows from the iconography of Death as a winged *daimon* but blurs the distinction between the winged Death and the usually wingless Hades (*Alc.* 262).[4] To quote Burton (2005, 51) once more: "Alcestis' death here is not a precursor to her descent to Hades, but identical with it." This is so because, for all intents and purposes, Death *is* Hades.

IV. Taking the Sting out of Death

Death has a similar agency and a similar iconography in the Wisdom of Solomon. In its sapiential rewriting of the Exodus story, Wisdom of Solomon reorganizes disparate stories from the canonical

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[3] Aelian (*Nat. an.* 12.7.49–53) cites Epimenides as the source of this tradition, but it also appears contemporaneously with Paul's letters in Seneca (*Herc. fur.* 83ff.).

[4] Cf. *EG* 89.4 (= *IG* II² 8494.7, = *SEG* 37.167), cited by Burton (2005, 52). Hades wraps dark wings around the deceased in this grave epigram for Nikias of Eretria (ca. 300 BCE).

scriptures into a series of seven diptychs designed to contrast God's judgment of the Egyptians with God's mercy toward the Israelites (Wis 10:5–19:22; Linebaugh 2013, 69–78). The sixth diptych is especially relevant to 1 Cor 15 both for its overlapping deployment of the theomachy topos and the garment topos, and for its personification of death (Wis 18:5–25). This diptych contrasts the plague that strikes down Egypt's firstborn children with the death of 14,700 Israelites following the Korahite revolt (Exod 12:1–32; Num 16:41–50 [= 17:6–15 MT and older editions of the LXX]).

The first half of the diptych ascribes the horrific death of Egypt's firstborn to the omnipotent logos of God, a relentless warrior who wields the command of God as a sharp sword, walks on earth whilst touching heaven, and fills all things with death (ὁ παντοδύναμός σου λόγος . . . ἀπότομος πολεμιστὴς . . . ξίφος ὀξὺ τὴν ἀνυπόκριτον ἐπιταγήν σου φέρων καὶ στὰς ἐπλήρωσεν τὰ πάντα θανάτου καὶ οὐρανοῦ μὲν ἥπτετο, βεβήκει δ᾽ ἐπὶ γῆς, Wis 18:15–16). By design, this elaborate description associates the divine logos with the destroyer of Exod 12:23 (τὸν ὀλεθρεύοντα) and the destroying angel of 1 Chr 21:15–16 (τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τῷ ἐξολεθρεύοντι). The second half of the diptych introduces the disastrous aftermath of the Korahite revolt as a "test of death" (πεῖρα θανάτου, Wis 18:20). In isolation, the genitive use of θάνατος in this phrase leaves open the question of whether the emphasis is on the lethal nature of the test (objective genitive) or whether a personified Death is in view as the agent who carries out the test (subjective genitive). What follows, however, depicts an unmistakeably theomachic confrontation in the wilderness.

Wisdom of Solomon refers to the antagonist in this confrontation with various names that recall the same sword-wielding angel of death responsible for the tenth plague, including the punisher (ὁ κολάζων, Wis 18:22) and the destroyer (ὁ ὀλεθρεύων, Wis 18:25). The human opponent of this destroying angel is described as a blameless man who champions the Israelites by "bringing the weapon of his own liturgies" (προεμάχησεν τὸ τῆς ἰδίας λειτουργίας ὅπλον . . . κομίσας, Wis 18:21). This priest defeats the wrath (ἐνίκησεν δὲ τὸν κόλον) and subjugates the punisher (τὸν

κολάζοντα ὑπέταξεν)—not by bodily strength or by force of arms but by the logos (ἀλλὰ λόγῳ, Wis 18:22). Not only does the logos seem to be on his side, therefore, he also suffers no physical harm because his priestly vestments protect him:

> For on his full-length robe the whole cosmos was depicted and the glories of the fathers were engraved on the four rows of stones, and your majesty was represented on the diadem on his head. From these the Destroyer (ὁ ὀλεθρεύων) withdrew; these he feared . . . . (Wis 18:24–25 NETS, slightly modified)

This shockingly militarized account of intercessory combat strongly favours the subjective genitive reading of the phrase "test of death" (πεῖρα θανάτου, Wis 18:20). On this reading, Wisdom of Solomon personifies death in the angelomorphic guise of the destroyer and reassigns to it the task of testing the Israelites that is otherwise ascribed to the Lord God in Deut 8:14–16. In a clever reversal of the canonical text, the Lord now *defends* the Israelites through the richly adorned liturgical panoply of the blameless high priest. This transposition has the double advantage of attenuating what could be understood as divine capriciousness whilst recalling Wisdom of Solomon's earlier warning that it is the impious who by their actions summon death:

> Do not zealously seek death by the error of your life or bring on destruction (ὄλεθρον) by the works of your hands. For God did not create death, nor does he delight in the destruction (ἀπωλείᾳ) of the living. For he created all things that they might exist, and the lifegiving forces of the cosmos are healing. There is no destructive poison (φάρμακον ὀλέθρου) in them, nor is the kingdom of Hades on earth. For righteousness is immortal. But the impious summoned him [i.e., Death], and considering him a friend they wasted away; they made a covenant with him because they are fit to belong to his party. (Wis 1:12–16)

The phrase "destructive poison" likely alludes to the "biting snake and scorpion" which Deut 8:15 mentions, along with "thirst," as means of testing the Israelites in the wilderness. Twin warnings also frame this passage in Deuteronomy: "take heed for yourself, lest you forget the Lord your God," and, "remember the Lord your God" (Deut 8:11; 18). This is significant because Wisdom of Solomon later retells the episode of the serpent invasion from Num 21:5–9 in light of these admonishments:

> Not even the fangs of venomous serpents conquered your children, for your mercy defended them and healed them. They were stricken (ἐνεκεντρίζοντο) as a reminder (ὑπόμνησιν) of your oracles, and were quickly delivered, lest they fall into a deep forgetfulness (εἰς βαθεῖαν ἐμπεσόντες λήθην) and become distracted from your benefactions. For neither plant nor poultice healed them, but your logos, Lord (ἀλλὰ ὁ σός, κύριε, λόγος), the healer of all. (Wis 16:10–11)

Ignoring the canonical claim that "many children of Israel died" (Num 21:6), Wisdom of Solomon eclipses the punitive character of the serpent invasion by transforming it instead into a mnemonic event. The snakebites figuratively 'goad' the Israelites into remembering the Lord but fail to kill them because the logos intervenes through a "symbol of salvation" (σύμβολον . . . σωτηρίας); namely, the brazen serpent affixed to what the canonical account calls an ensign (σημεῖον, Num 21:9). Wisdom of Solomon insists, however, that it is not this symbol that heals the Israelites but the Lord himself (Wis 16:6–7).

In retelling these episodes, Wisdom of Solomon deftly exploits a peculiar feature of the Exodus story: "Exodus's subtle differentiation of the agency of 'the destroyer' and the person of the Lord" (Linebaugh 2013, 75, referring to Exod 12:23). This differentiation allows Wisdom of Solomon to identify the logos of God with the destroyer on missions involving judgment of the Egyptians but also to position the logos *against* the destroyer on missions involving the preservation of the Israelites in the wilderness. Just as the high priest's vestments visibly depict the cosmos-spanning righteousness

of the logos, therefore, so too does the brazen serpent represent the visible dimension of a cosmic and invisible battle.

Not coincidentally, this same combination of themes reappears in 1 Corinthians with similar distinctive language and in reference to the same events:

> Let us not test Christ (μηδὲ ἐκπειράζωμεν τὸν Χριστόν) as some of them did, and were destroyed by serpents (ὑπὸ τῶν ὄφεων ἀπώλλυντο). Do not complain as some of them did, and were destroyed by the destroyer (ἀπώλοντο ὑπὸ τοῦ ὀλοθρευτοῦ). These things happened to them to serve as an example (τυπικῶς), and they were written down to admonish us, on whom the ends of the ages have come. (1 Cor 10:9–10)

The figure of the destroyer appears both in Wisdom of Solomon and in 1 Corinthians, but not in Deuteronomy. This makes Wisdom of Solomon the most likely source of Paul's usage. The theory that Paul understands *Christ* as the destroyer, however, is quite mistaken. Although Paul mentions Christ and the destroyer in virtually the same breath, this does not mean that the two are one and the same in his mind. Advocates of this theory must ignore or attenuate the explicitly typological character and eschatological orientation of his exegesis in order to extract an alleged angelomorphic Christology from this passage (Gieschen 1998, 325–29).[5] Paul explicitly states, for example, that the rock which followed the Israelites in the wilderness was Christ (ἡ πέτρα δὲ ἦν ὁ Χριστός, 1 Cor 10:4). It would be absurd to suggest on the basis of this remark that Paul views Christ as a preexistent *petramorph,* but not that Paul views the rock as a visible manifestation of the invisible power of the logos to nourish, to heal, and to defend the Israelites. This interpretation accords better both with Wisdom of Solomon's theology of mercy and with Paul's manner of exegesis. Paul's innovations flow mainly from his perspective at what he perceives to be the ends of the ages and from his theology of the cross.

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[5] Gieschen's theory has recently been popularized by Bart Ehrman (2014, 252).

First, Paul twice states that Israel's travails in the wilderness have a protreptic character; they are "for us," where "us" now includes both himself and the Corinthians to whom he writes: "These things happened as examples *for us*" (τύποι ἡμῶν) and "to admonish *us*" (πρὸς νουθεσίαν ἡμῶν, 1 Cor 10:6, 11). Paul concedes that some of the Israelites were destroyed, but he frames their loss as an object lesson for those in Christ who would live at the ends of the ages. Elsewhere he expresses his conviction that "all Israel will be saved" (πᾶς Ἰσραὴλ σωθήσεται, Rom 11:26). Although the meaning of this remark is contested (e.g., Scott 2001), Paul may believe that even those Israelites who fell in the wilderness will ultimately be restored to life and counted among the blessed.

Second, Paul suggests that the logos who nourished, healed, and defended Israel in the wilderness is the logos of the cross:

> For the *logos* of the cross is foolishness to those who are being destroyed (ἀπολλυμένοις), but for those of us who are being saved it is the power of God. . . . for Jews ask for signs (σημεῖα) and Greeks seek wisdom, but we proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling-block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles, but to those who are called, both Jew and Greek, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. (1 Cor 1:18, 22–24)

Here, too, Paul's language echoes Wisdom of Solomon's distinctive praise for the powerful protection of the logos from the venemous bite of the invading serpents and the indiscriminate carnage of the destroyer. In this context, Paul's allegation that Jews ask for signs alludes to Wisdom of Solomon's claim that it is not the symbol of the serpent that heals the Israelites but the power behind the symbol—the logos of God. Because Paul believes that this same logos has been crucified in the last days, the cross punctuates his understanding of the wilderness tradition.

In fact, the only reading of 1 Cor 10 that is consistent both with Wisdom of Solomon's theology of mercy and with Paul's theology of the cross is one in which Christ is present with the Israelites *as the*

logos of the cross. As John M. G. Barclay argues in dialogue with David Horrell (2002, 167 n. 18): "the Christ event *gives* meaning to the temporal narrative in which Paul places it, as much, or more, than it gains meaning from it." From this perspective, it is the crucified Christ who waters the Israelites through the aquiferous rock; it is the crucified Christ who heals the Israelites through the sign of the brazen serpent; it is the crucified Christ whom the impious test by summoning Death himself in the guise of the destroying angel; and it is the crucified Christ who defends the remnant through the intercessory combat of the blameless high priest with his cosmic vestments and the weapon of his liturgies. This weapon, in turn, can be nothing other than the cross.

Together with Paul's deployment of the theomachy topos, these connections to Wisdom of Solomon and parallels to the *Alcestis* furnish the broader context for Paul's quotation from Hosea in [1 Cor 15:55](#). Indeed, [Hos 13:14](#) is itself open to interpretation as a theomachy (Healey 1999, 209; Tromp 1969, 107). This is especially clear in the Septuagint, where the first bicolon ([13:14a](#)) of the verse appears as a divine promise and not as a pair of rhetorical questions: "I shall rescue the children of Ephraim from the hand of Hades and redeem them from Death." The rendering of the Hebrew קטב as κέντρον in the next bicolon ([13:14b](#)) reveals the logic behind this interpretation: "Where is your penalty, Death? Where is your κέντρον, Hades?" Although קטב is traditionally translated as "sting" in this context, Judith Blair's (2009) recent survey of its usage here and elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible shows that there is no one-word equivalent in English. Blair (2009, 192) concludes, rather, that "the contexts suggest some kind of destructive force that comes from Yahweh as punishment." Much the same can be said of κέντρον. Although it is often translated as "goad," its proverbial use as a metaphor for the oppressive powers of gods or *daimones* makes it a near-perfect rendering of קטב, where it designates the power over the dead that Yahweh will ultimately strip from Hades. The translator's interpretation of this bicolon as a taunting apostrophe to Death and Hades further amplifies the overall theomachic character

of the passage.[6]

Paul continues this trend toward amplification by focalizing the topos around the victory of Christ and developing it further in the direction of a human-divine theomachy. He accomplishes this task in two ways. Explicitly, he thematizes humanity in scriptural terms by contrasting "the first human" (ὁ πρῶτος ἄνθρωπος)—Adam—to "the second human" (ὁ δεύτερος ἄνθρωπος)—Christ (1 Cor 15:47). Implicitly, he associates Christ with the blameless high priest of Wisdom of Solomon or with Heracles. While it is more likely that he is directly influenced by the priestly figure, I would argue that we need not choose between these traditions because the humanity of the god-fighter is equally important to both. This emphasis is both a critical component of Paul's rhetorical strategy and, in Chaudhuri's (2014, 5) analysis, a key feature of the topos: "the theomach speaks the language of humanity and is thus capable both of offering a richer context for his radical aspirations and of inviting the audience to adopt an alternative view on the theological status quo." The radical view that Paul invites the Corinthians to adopt is one in which "all things are possible" (1 Cor 10:23)—even bodily resurrection—because the old gods and *daimones* no longer hold sway over human life and death.

V. DISARMING DEATH

Given the evidence that both Paul and the Septuagint translator of Hosea exploit the theomachy topos, and that Paul, for his part, echoes Wisdom of Solomon's cosmos-spanning battle in the wilderness and the *descensus ad inferna* of Heracles, the intersection of these stories is a logical place to look for a solution to the problem of inconsistency in the interpretation of κέντρον. This presses us to go beyond a strictly philological approach to consider how the iconographies generated by these stories inflect Paul's usage. The question at this point is not whether Paul uses κέντρον in its proverbial sense (he does), but how he and the Corinthians are likely

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[6] Compare this emphasis to the nine different ways of interpreting the Hebrew text presented by Ehud Ben Zvi (2005, 274–75).

to have imagined this implement in the broader context of Christ's intercessory combat with Death.

The first point to note is that both Euripides and Wisdom of Solomon depict Death as a sword-wielding adversary of humanity. This is true of Wisdom of Solomon despite the fact that it is initially the omnipotent warrior-logos of God who seems to wield the sword. As I have argued above, Wisdom of Solomon's identification of the divine logos with the destroying angel occurs only in the context of God's judgment on the Egyptians through the final plague. When the destroyer targets Israel the logos appears on the side of the blameless high priest, who by standing between the remnant of Israel and the destroying angel meets with the deadly rapier-thrust that otherwise would have felled the remnant. This thrust ultimately fails to defeat him because he is clothed with righteousness—and "righteousness is immortal" (Wis 1:15; cf. 1 Cor 15:53–54). "These things happened as examples for us," Paul insists in 1 Cor 10:6, so that "we" who live in the last days may know the true meaning of the cross and act accordingly.

What Wisdom of Solomon poetically calls the sword of God's commandment is, for Paul, the cross (Wis 18:15). This is the implement that Death wields against Christ, just as Hades himself wields his staff against Heracles according to a scholion on Pindar's ninth Olympian (9.35):

> [Hades] uses the staff as though it were a kind of weapon (ὅπλῳ), not one enabled by any bodily strength, as a trident or a sword or a spear, but he exploits the capacity of the soul to be enthralled and weakened; indeed, it is said that he leads souls down with it. Against Heracles, however, Hades was able to accomplish nothing by the work of this staff because its power was blunted by Zeus. (*Schol. in Pind. Ol.* 9.50a)

Although this scholion does not refer to Hades's staff as a κέντρον, it does show that this staff could be imagined as a kind of weapon with oppressive, κέντρον-like power. The same can be said of the respective swords wielded by Death in the *Alcestis* and by the

Destroyer in Wisdom of Solomon. The form of the implement varies from staff to sword, but its function remains the same in each case: it symbolizes the power to send humans into the depths of the earth and there to hold them in thrall. This, too, is the power of the cross—the κέντρον of Death—and yet, for Paul, the resurrection of Christ shows that Death has been despoiled of this power.

Paul's representation of the cross as a weapon and the resurrection as a precipitous climb from the deepest recesses of the earth to the outer reaches of heaven are more obvious to the eyes of his early interpreters than to our own eyes. Among the greatest such interpreters is the fourth-century archbishop of Constantinople, John Chrysostom, whose comments on a variant text of [1 Cor 15:55](#) provide a fitting conclusion:

> The very things by which the Devil was victorious, by these things the Christ overcame him, and having despoiled him of his own weapons (ὅπλα), with these he prevailed against him. . . . The contest (ἄγων) was the Lord's, and the crown is ours. Since the victory is also ours, therefore, let us all raise the victory chant today, just as soldiers do: "Where, Death, is your victory? Where, Hades, is your κέντρον?" The cross has accomplished these things for us! The cross is the trophy of victory over demons! The cross is the dagger against sin (ἡ κατὰ τῆς ἁμαρτίας μάχαιρα)! The cross is the sword with which Christ pierced the serpent (τὸ ξίφος, ᾧ τὸν ὄφιν ἐκέντησεν ὁ Χριστός)! (*Coemet.* [[PG 49.396](#)])

However unsettling this image of a warrior-Christ wielding the cross as a blade may be in comparison to warmly-lit and softly-focused portraits of a gentle and loving Jesus, it is worth asking whether this warrior-Christ is not what Jesus himself had in mind when he warned his followers that he came not to cast peace but a dagger (οὐκ ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἀλλὰ μάχαιραν, [Matt 10:34](#); cf. [Matt 11:12](#)). Ironically, modern efforts to demythologize the Gospels leave him with nothing but flesh-and-blood opponents, and those who would follow him with few options but to take up arms against their own all-too-human oppressors. A revolutionary Jesus of this sort cannot

inspire love even for one's own family, much less for one's enemies ([Matt 5:44](); [10:35–38]()).[7]

What the mythology of the cross shows us, in contrast, is a revolutionary Jesus of the sort who gives up his own life in order to turn enemies into friends, and friends into sisters and brothers ([Rom 5:10]()). Without this mythology, it is difficult to sublimate real persecution and sometimes horrific violence into the message of hope that beats at the very heart of Christianity.[8] Without this mythology, the walls that divide us will continue to stand firm. Without this mythology, the gospel of peace can too easily yield to the fog of war. Paradoxically, then, the shocking language of theomachy and violence with which Paul celebrates Christ's defeat of Death invites those who would take up the cross and follow him to cultivate both strength and humility in the face of adversity, and fearlessly to love even their enemies, knowing that the last enemy has already suffered a crushing defeat.

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[7] For the most recent effort to revive the hypothesis that Jesus sought to provoke a revolution against the Roman occupiers of Judea and their clients, see Dale B. Martin (2014), along with the response by Gerald F. Downing (2015). Downing concedes that Matt 10:34 offers "marginal support for Martin" (327), but even marginal support requires a crassly literal interpretation of the μάχαιρα in question.

[8] The reverse is also true; namely, that in some circumstances this mythology can and does encourage a false perception of persecution fuelled by a binary view of the world. See esp. Candida Moss (2013, 199): "The problem is what happens when this vision of the world is translated into settings in which Christians are not the underdogs. In situations where Christians have the military, political, and financial power to take steps against their 'demonically inspired' enemies, this worldview can legitimize all kinds of violence." The solution, in my view, is not to abandon the mythology but to underscore the solidarity of *all* human beings in the face of death that it entails.

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Talitha Qum! An Exploration of the Image of Jesus as Healer-Physician-Savior in the Synoptic Gospels in Relation to the Asclepius Cult[1]

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the late nineteenth century, Adolf von Harnack (1892, 96) noticed so many similarities between the portrayal of Christ and the Divine Physician Asclepius that he concluded, "Christianity is a medical religion." Some early Church Fathers certainly viewed it this way, including Ignatius of Antioch, who spoke of "Jesus Christ, our Doctor" (*Eph.* 7.2). Since Harnack, several scholars have cited evidence from text, liturgy, and iconography in early Christianity to definitively establish that Christians from the second to fifth centuries remembered Jesus as a healer and physician in terms that elicited a comparison, if not a direct rivalry, with Asclepius. Since Asclepius had set the cultural standard for a Divine Physician for over five hundred years, they could not help but contend with the tradition, as in these words of Justin Martyr: "When we say that [Jesus] cured the lame, the paralytics, and those blind from birth, and raised the dead from life, we seem to attribute to him actions

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similar to those said to have been performed by Aesculapius" (*1 Apol.* 22.6).

While much excellent scholarly work has addressed the theme of Jesus as healer in late antiquity, far less attention has been paid to literary-critical investigations of the Synoptic Gospels in light of possible influences of the Asclepius cult. By employing social memory theory, I examine three pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels— Jesus raising Jairus's daughter from the dead (Mark 5:21–24, 35–43 // Matt 9:18–19, 23–26 // Luke 8:40–42, 49–56), Jesus healing the chronically bleeding woman (Mark 5:24–34 // Matt 9:20–22 // Luke 8:42–48), and Jesus raising from the dead the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:11–17)—to argue that already by the late-first or early second centuries the earliest Christian audiences of the Gospels would have heard these stories through the lens of a collective memory that enshrined Jesus as a healing deity who is superior to Asclepius. I further suggest that the "composers" of the Synoptic Gospels[2] have intentionally constructed the figure of Jesus as healer and divine doctor by contesting the reputation of Asclepius. The pericopes establish that, unlike Asclepius, only Jesus can routinely heal the sick and raise even the dead as if they were sleeping, without attachment to a physical place, without fees, and regardless of purity boundaries. Presumably, the Synoptics imply that these expectations apply also to the later followers of Jesus who act as healers, as in the example of the apostles in Acts. In this way, early Christian audiences, and perhaps the composers of the Synoptics, reframe the Greco-Roman divine-healer traditions in terms of an emerging Christian *kerygma* that places physical, psychological and social healing in the context of social inclusivity and egalitarianism. Thus, this paper seeks to explore by what date Christians drew the

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[2] By the term "composers" I mean to capture the complex oral, written, and redactive processes that ultimately resulted in the early written manuscripts of the Gospels. For the composite Greek text I use the NA[28], which is conveniently hyperlinked to the online edition hosted by the German Bible Society. For all primary other sources, the embedded hyperlinks offer easy reference to open-access (though often older) scholarly editions.

comparison between Jesus and Asclepius, concluding that it is at least as early as the dating of the written composition of the Synoptics themselves.

II. Major Influences on this Study

Since Harnack (1892), several scholars have convincingly shown that many early Church Fathers, including Athanasius, Irenaeus, Augustine, Hippolytus, and Justin Martyr, remember Jesus as a physician or healer in terms that evoke a comparison with the Asclepius cult (Honnecker 1985; Barrett-Lennard 1994; and Porterfield 2005).[3] However, these studies do not engage in a careful literary-critical exegesis of the Gospels. Honnecker (1985, 308) even maintains that "Ein Idealbild des christlichen Arztes ist zudem nicht neutestamentlich zu begründen." By contrast, Wolmarans (1996) plucks out parallels between various New Testament texts on healing and the Asclepius cult to conclude that the two worldviews were essentially the same. Yet by failing to examine the Gospel stories as coherent, whole narratives, he elides critical differences that exist between the Asclepius traditions and the Synoptic Gospels.[4] Rengstorf (1953) examines some themes in the Johannine corpus as a reaction to the Asclepius cult, but he only skims over the Synoptic Gospels.

The study of Christian and Greco-Roman art has been invaluable in establishing that early Christians understood Jesus to be a healer in the fashion of Asclepius. Jefferson (2014) and Dinkler (1979) have shown that beginning in the second century CE and peaking in the fourth century CE, the earlier portrayal of a young, beardless Jesus

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[3] There has been a little resistance to these studies, such as the theological/socio-historical thesis of Kee (1983), which basically argues that Christianity favors miracles over medicine, and Ferguson (1993, 212) who shows discomfort with a comparison between Jesus and Asclepius.

[4] While there are some contributions in Wolmarans's (1996) essay, the conclusion is too stark and includes curious errors, such as that differences between the two systems were caused by Christians' lack of access to sanctuaries, and that Christians, unlike pagans, saw good as associated with "above" and evil with "below" (124–25).

gave way to one in which Jesus takes on characteristic iconographic features of Asclepius that had been used since the fourth century BCE. These include: a dense head of curly or wavy hair that hung loosely down to his shoulders, variously parted, and framing his face; a bared forehead with no bangs; a full and curly beard revealing full lips, usually slightly parted; large eyes and a straight nose; a flowing, open robe or *pallium* without an underlying tunic, which showed off his bare and often muscular arm, chest and torso; and a hand holding a staff or a scroll (Jefferson 2014, 100–01; Dinkler 1979, 77–87; Kaltsas 2003, nos. 428, 432).[5] Thus, by the time that Christian iconography of the second century CE featured Jesus as a healer with these same features, it was drawing on iconography of Asclepius that had been standard throughout Mediterranean antiquity for at least five hundred years. As Jefferson (2014, 53) has recently concluded, "Christian authors recognized Asclepius's threat and . . . appropriated traits of the god to promote the peerless nature of Jesus . . . [which] can be witnessed in the visual art of Christ the Miracle Worker." A second century relief of a bearded, muscular, partially robed Jesus standing with outstretched hand healing the sick thus closely mirrors reliefs of Asclepius healing dream incubants, down to the features of his face (Dinkler 1978; Van Straten, 1981, fig. 41).[6]

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[5] For images of Asklepios holding a scroll, see Kerényi 1959, 66–67 (nos. 43–44, from 130 CE, probably a copy of an original from the early 4th cent. BCE). For online image databases of Asklepios, see the Warburg Institute Iconographic Database: Aesculapius (University of London) and also the Greek-Gods.info Picture Gallery of Asclepius.

[6] Compare, for example, a 4th cent. BCE votive relief of Asklepios and Hygieia (National Archaeological Museum, Greece, Piraeus, ΜΠ 405; higher resolution available at the Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων Δυτικής Αττικής, Πειραιώς και Νήσων blog) with a 3rd/4th century CE plaque depicting images of Jesus in various biblical scenes (Museo Nazionale Romano nos. 67606 [= Weitzmann 1979, 414 no. 372] and 67607 [= Weitzmann 1979, 415 no. 373]). The iconographic features of Asklepios and Jesus in the two reliefs are noticeably consistent. Both Asklepios and Jesus are seated on a rock (or for Asklepios, perhaps an ὀμφαλός), with wavy hair and beard, one hand raised, chest and

The work of Avalos (1999) deserves special mention in this review of scholarship for its perceptive contextualization of similarities between Asclepius and Jesus in an examination of the total health care system of early Christianity, which Avalos concludes formulated a response to inadequacies and inequities in the Greco-Roman and Jewish health care systems. Using methods drawn from medical anthropology and religious studies, he convincingly shows that the early Christian health care system promised healing without the costly investments of time, money, and travel necessitated by other health care systems, regardless of a person's social standing or purity or temporal restrictions (83–114). For Avalos, early Christianity's initial orientation was as a Jewish sect that sought to reform the Jewish and Greco-Roman health care systems, a strategy that contributed greatly to the successful spread of Christianity (117–19). Jefferson's (2014) recent study on material culture, which details Christian appropriation of Asclepius imagery in the Roman era, also nuances the portrait of the period as one of mutual cultural exchange. He points out that by the fourth century CE Christianity was so successful in caring for the poor that the "Apostate" Emperor Julian refashioned the god Asclepius to take on more of these aspects of the compassionate Christ (42, 45–53). Thus, the two figures merged in both directions.

The present study builds on these investigations, but especially on the insights of Avalos, to examine three pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels in light of the influence of earlier and contemporary Asclepius traditions. This reading in no way precludes the insights of those who have established Jewish and Israelite referents for the figure of Jesus as healer. Rather, it maintains that both Jewish and

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muscular arm bared, and clad only in the *pallium.* On the Christian plaques we see Jesus holding a scroll in one hand, as in early depictions of Asklepios, while he heals various afflicted persons. Regarding the votive relief, this is a superb example of Asklepios healing a dreaming patient. Jefferson (2014, 101) notes that Asklepios is not shown healing in sculptures and that reliefs of him healing are rare. However, the few reliefs that do depict Asklepios healing support the pervasive descriptions known from cultic testimonials.

Greco-Roman traditions informed the Gospel accounts. Archaeologists have shown that Jewish Galilee of Jesus's time included the highly Hellenized and urban Sepphoris, just four miles from Nazareth (Meyers, Netzer, and Meyers 1992). Likewise, scholars such as Richard Horsley (1997, 2002) have illuminated the clear influence of Roman institutions and culture on Paul and the Gospels. While the historical Jesus remains elusively out of reach, by employing social memory theory I hope to shed light on the profound influence of the Asclepius traditions on the motif of Jesus as Healer in some of the earliest Christian interpretations of the Gospels and perhaps in the compositional history of the stories themselves.

III. SOCIAL MEMORY THEORY: SOME KEY POINTS

The introduction of social memory theory to biblical studies is still relatively fresh and holds tremendous promise for the study of the Gospels, since the main tools of biblical scholarship are written texts from the past that present an even older past and that enjoy either claimed or ascribed authority.[7] Two insights from social memory theory are particularly relevant. First, the remembered past is not static, but rather socially constructed in terms of its impinging relevance to the present realities of the early Jewish/early Christian authors. This position requires that any interpretation of the Gospels attend to an historical critical reading of the context of oral/written/redacted composition. Second, through its "coherence-bestowing activities," collective memory continues to inform the dynamically unfolding present of these authors, so that "the present

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[7] The role of social memory in the composition of biblical texts becomes more complicated when we consider that the texts were not necessarily written as "scripture." In the case of the New Testament, it was not until the fourth century that the social memory inscribed in these texts aligned with the collective memory of those early Church leaders who enjoyed good relations with the Roman authorities, so as to produce the canon. This "Romanization" may well have favored a portrayal of Christ as an Asclepius-style healer in this century, particularly as a counter to Emperor Julian's elevation of pagan religion and Asclepius.

is always emerging from its own past" (Kirk and Thatcher 2005, 10 and 15 respectively; see pp. 7–15 generally).

Thus, a collective memory such as the portrayal of Jesus not only acts politically as a model *of* society, drawing on past traditions, but also acts as a model *for* society, so that memory itself is a social frame (Schwartz 1996, 908). When the Synoptic Gospel writers were fashioning the narratives that would remember the life of Jesus, they did so as models *of* society in the framework of the Jewish and Greco-Roman cultures of their day. Additionally, though, as models *for* society, the Synoptic authors also wrote the Gospels with *framing capacities* informed by political, affective, and value-laden goals (Schwartz 1996, 909).

Collective memory, as enshrined in commemorations such as the Gospels, is thus laden with programmatic meaning in ways that foster or limit certain futures, so that "Memory is a cultural program that orients our intentions, sets our moods, and enables us to act" (Schwartz 1996, 921). The Gospel narratives capture a dynamic cycle: the social frames of the present culture of the composers shape some collective memory of Jesus from the past, which is transmitted as oral/written/redacted text. This portrayal of Jesus in turn has "orientational power" for future readers of the text (Schwartz 1996, 909–10).

Since memory carries this social framing capacity, social memory is often strongly contested as a marker of self-identity and future power when existing social groups vary widely in power (Stoler 2009; Namer 1987). As people living in the Roman Empire under the vast shadow of Hellenism, the early audience of the Gospels and their composers drew on the five- to seven-hundred-year-old standard referents for who constituted a Divine Healer-Physician-Savior, namely, Asklepios/Asclepius. As adherents of a relatively imperiled new version of Judaism, they framed the social memory of Jesus in ways that programmatically contested the power of the Asclepius cult as Christianity moved forward.

IV. Mythic and Cultic Traditions of
Asklepios/Asclepius

Early Christian writers interested in shaping a collective memory of Jesus as healer would have been unavoidably familiar with the traditions associated with Asclepius, who was by far the most popular Hellenistic and Roman god of healing. His myth and cult are strongly tied to the practice of medicinal, surgical, and therapeutic healing by dream incubation through his associations with the Hippocratic school of medicine, his status as patron of physicians called *Asclepiads*, and his relationship with his daughter Hygieia, the goddess of Health, alongside whom he was often worshipped (Renberg 2014, 94; Edelstein and Edelstein 1945, 2:20).[8] Homer first mentions Asklepios as an outstanding human physician (*Il.* 2.728–733; 4.193–194; 4.218–219; 11.517–518).

Other writers portray his life as a physician as being bound up in violent deaths wrought by impulsive gods, followed by eventual apotheosis as a divine physician. In his well-known birth story his father Apollo killed his mother Koronis when she was still with child. He regretted it and took the child from her womb by C-section (Meier 1967, 24), entrusting him to the care of the centaur Cheiron, who trained the boy in medicine (e.g., Ovid, *Metam.* 2.542–648; Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.1–58; cf. Pausanias, *Descr.* 2.26.5). Later, Asklepios became such a skilled physician that he raised someone from the dead, but Zeus killed him with a lightning bolt in anger over the cure before relenting and resurrecting him as a healing deity (Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.1–58; Euripides, *Alc.* 3–4). As a result he became the star Serpentarius in the Ophiuchus constellation, and it was believed that some people born under that star became doctors (Aristides, *Hier. Log.* 4.5ff.; Meier 1967, 30–31). After his apotheosis, Asklepios could appear in an epiphany at will in his

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[8] I thank Gil Renberg for providing me, back in 2014, a pre-publication draft of his forthcoming *Where Dreams May Come: Incubation Sanctuaries in the Greco-Roman World*. All references and citations of Renberg 2014 refer to the pagination of that draft. The reader is encouraged to consult the final published version for up-to-date pagination.

various cults, in which the divine physician continued to heal the chronically ill.

While other healing cults existed, none rivaled the popularity of the *Asklepieia*, probably because of an association with actual physicians (Wickkiser 2008, 45). By the early 5th century BCE the cult of Asklepios had begun to practice therapeutic dream incubation for physical and sometimes mental ailments (Wickkiser 2008; Renberg 2014, 87). Practicing physicians probably operated at some sites, as evidenced by medical equipment excavated at the *Asklepieion* at Corinth. Some healing cults, such as the Egyptian cults of the architect-scribe-healing dream god Imhotep/Imouthes at Saqqâra and the many cults of the healing god Sarapis, were folded into the Asklepios phenomenon through syncretistic identification with the god (P.Oxy. 11.1381, lines 51–57; Renberg 2014, 79–80, 254, 264, 326–36; Meier 1967, 45–52). By the end of the Hellenistic period, hundreds of *Asklepieia* practicing therapeutic and medicinal dream incubation flourished throughout the Roman Empire, including in Athens and Rome, such that Asklepios enjoyed "a near monopoly on therapeutic incubation" and a "track record of widely heralded successes" (Renberg 2014, 87–94). By the time of the Gospels' composition in the Roman period, Asclepius had been the divine patron of Julius Caesar and Augustus and enjoyed enough status that the people of Corinth rededicated and revivified their Asklepieion as a new, major healing complex in the first century CE (Wickkiser 2010, 57).

In the Greek and Roman eras, Asklepios/Asclepius was commonly referred to as "The Physician" as well as "Soter," or Savior. The title Σωτήρ frequently appears in dedications to the god and in other inscriptions associated with his cult, especially at Pergamon, and in literary sources such as Aelius Aristides's *Sacred Tales* (Renberg 2014, 93 n. 225). It also appears in obscure texts, such as a pseudo-Menander papyrus (*P. Didot* 1.9–11) that describes a person feeling like he had just incubated a dream at the Asclepius cult and was "saved" (σωθείς) (Wickkiser 2008, 38).

For the chronically ill, participation in the Asclepius cult was complex, expensive, and time consuming, necessitating vast geographical travel with no guarantee of a cure (Avalos 1999, 91–119). At one of the hundreds of temple sites dedicated to the god, incubants conducted a series of potent preparatory rituals (washing, changing into pure clothing, sacrifice, and at some sites traversing a spiral θόλος maze housing snakes) after which they slept in a sacred ἱερόν or ἄβατον (Aristides, *Or.* 48.27; Edelstein and Edelstein 1945, 1:286–87; LiDonnici 1995, 11–12; Hamilton 1906, 11; Meier 1949, 69–83; Flannery-Dailey 2004, 99–108). At several sites, including the most famous at Epidauros, the incubant slept by a statue of the god in the hope of procuring a dream of the god or of his companion animals, the dog and the snake. The patients typically faced an incurable, chronic health problem (Wickkiser 2010, 56; LiDonnici 1995) although a few incubants sought help from the god in finding lost things (LiDonnici 1995, tales B4, C3, C22).

A dream was not guaranteed and could take many visits or a long stay to procure, but the fortunate appearance of the god and/or his representative was thought to result in healing that could occur either immediately or eventually. In the dream the patient would "see" the god, who would seem to be standing by the ill person (LiDonnici 1995; Flannery-Dailey 2004, 104); Asklepios then would typically either convey some instructions for healing or touch the patient with his curative hand (National Archaeological Museum, Greece, Piraeus, ΜΠ 405 [higher resolution available at the Εφορεία Αρχαιοτήτων Δυτικής Αττικής, Πειραιώς και Νήσων blog], also 3369; Lang 1977, 9). At this point the incubant was expected to give money, a thank offering, or a votive or other dedication to the cult, such as may be found among the extensive *iamata* testimonial plaques at Epidauros or the one hundred plus terracotta votive models of the affected body part, most of them life-sized, retrieved from Corinth (LiDonnici 1995, 42; Wickkiser 2010, 43, 45; Lang 1977, 15).

In sum, by the time of the composition of the Gospels, the traditions about Asclepius the Divine Physician were archetypal

throughout the Roman Empire. As Wickkiser (2010, 45; 2008) has noted, his outstanding popularity derived from his close association with human physicians, and his reputation and fame as a healer were unparalleled. This reputation would have reached even a new version of Judaism.

V. Social Memory Theory and Jesus as Healer-Physician-Savior

The field of Biblical Studies has paid far less attention to Jesus's role as physician/healer, ἰατρός, than it has to his role as savior, σωτήρ. However, in the Synoptic Gospels Jesus twice refers to himself as a physician or ἰατρός. In Luke (4:23), Jesus reads from the Torah scroll in the synagogue in Nazareth and states to the congregation, "Doubtless you will quote to me this proverb, 'Doctor, cure yourself (ἰατρέ, θεράπευσον σεαυτόν)!'" Immediately after saying this in the Nazareth synagogue, Jesus goes to Capernaum and begins exorcising demons and performing many healings, beginning with Simon's mother-in-law who had a fever (Luke 4:39) and proceeding on to raising the dead son of the widow of Nain in a funeral procession (Luke 7:11–14). In each Synoptic Gospel, Jesus also compares himself to a physician, retorting to his critics, "Those who are well have no need of a physician (ἰατροῦ), but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17; also Matt 9:12; Luke 5:31). The passage either presents the idea of a physician as a metaphor for one who calls sinners to repentance, or it presents as intertwined the roles of a physician and one who calls sinners to repentance.

Three healing pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels portray Jesus as a healer who brings to mind the famous Asclepius, but who also is distinctive in that he contravenes the codes of purity of both the Jerusalem Temple and the Asclepius cult, such that physical healing becomes a medium for demonstrating the role of belief and the forgiveness of sin.

Jesus Raises the Daughter of Jairus from Death to Life

In each version of this story, a leader of the synagogue, whom Mark and Luke call Jairus, begs Jesus to come to his house because his daughter is dying, or even has died (only in [Matt 9:18](#)). Jesus complies, but in each case when the physician-healer arrives at the house he is seemingly too late—the girl is already dead. The public audience in the story knows that the girl is dead and they have already commenced their mourning. Jesus contradicts them, saying:

> Why do you make a commotion and weep? *The child is not dead but sleeping* (τὸ παιδίον οὐκ ἀπέθανεν ἀλλὰ καθεύδει). ([Mark 5:39](#))

> Go away; for the girl is not dead but *sleeping* (καθεύδει). ([Matt 9:24](#))

> Do not weep; for she is not dead but *sleeping* (καθεύδει). ([Luke 8:52](#))

While it is true that many ancient accounts note that death resembles sleep (Flannery-Dailey 2004, 25–28, 37, 49–50, 65–67, 72–73, 76–77, 90–93, 238–49), sleep is not the opposite of death. We might have expected Jesus to say instead, "She is not dead, she is alive." The pronouncement that she is *sleeping* as a consistent structural feature in each Synoptic parallel suggests that we are in the locus of motifs from the Asclepius cult: an ill person lay asleep while the physician deity stands next to her/him to heal the patient. Since Jesus proceeds in each story to heal the girl who is "sleeping" (καθεύδει), the texts readily evoke the image of the god Asclepius, who stands by sleeping patients and heals them with an outstretched hand.

Without becoming mired in the complex relationships of the literary and oral dependence of the Synoptic traditions, several common story elements take on new significance if we consider them to be in conversation with the Asclepius healing tradition. Each story begins as the leader of the synagogue comes to Jesus to

say that his daughter is so sick that she is on the point of death (Mark 5:23; Luke 8:41–42) or has just died (Matt 9:18). Read in light of the fame of the foundational identity myth of Asclepius, we may recall that Zeus killed the physician for raising the dead, but relented and raised him again as a healing deity (e.g., Pindar, *Pyth.* 3.1–58; Euripides, *Alc.* 3–4). Some scholars have pointed out that Jesus similarly raises the dead, and, intriguingly, is also killed and raised from the dead in a new, deified state (Rengstorf 1953, 10). Jesus also heals the same kinds of illnesses as does Asclepius: both cure leprosy, blindness, deafness, and paralysis.[9]

The manner in which Jesus heals the little girl is also reminiscent of traditions about Asclepius. In Matthew and Mark the father begs Jesus, saying: "*come and lay your hands on her* (ἐλθὼν ἐπίθες τὴν χεῖρά σου ἐπ᾽ αὐτήν) and she will live" (Matt 9:18–19); "Come and lay your hands on her, so that she may be made well, and live" (Mark 8:23). While in some cures Asclepius prescribes a medicine or course of treatment, he was also known as *apocheir* ("from the hand") for his curative touch that he applied to sleeping incubants at his healing temples; hence, standard iconography depicts him reaching out to lay his hand(s) on sleeping patients.

Social memory theory would have us take seriously that the composers' framing of Jesus as a physician of the sleeping sick is an image that speaks to their relevant present context, namely, familiarity with the Asclepius traditions in which the Divine Physician heals his sleeping patients. Yet, there are crucial differences that show that the pericopes do not mean simply to compare, but rather to contest. First, the claim that Asclepius could raise the dead lay in the long ago past, not in the contemporary activity of his cult. The composers of the Gospels, however, are writing shortly after Jesus lived and claiming that Jesus actually did

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[9] See the *iamata* in LiDonnici 1995, in which Asklepios purportedly cured a far wider range of ailments, including muteness [A5], stones [A8, A14], tattoos [A6, 7], leeches [A13], baldness [A19], extra lengthy pregnancy [A1, A2], parasites [B3], malignant growths [B6], false pregnancy [B5], lice [B8], headache [B9], pus [B10], infertility [B11, 14, 19], and so forth.

raise the dead; Acts will claim that the apostles did as well (e.g., [Acts 9:40](); [20:9–12]()). Second, God does not kill Jesus as punishment for raising the dead, as Zeus killed Asclepius. Jesus raises the dead with at least implicit divine approval, which makes him a physician more favored by God/the gods. The Epidaurian *iamata* never mention Asclepius healing someone on the verge of death or raising the dead. Jesus is thus portrayed as a different kind of physician than Asclepius or the priests of the Jerusalem Temple who were in charge of overseeing healing, since he knowingly touches and heals the dead.

Third, the father's request is that Jesus "come" (ἐλθὼν) to the house of the girl. Pilgrims in the cult of Asclepius went to enormous expense to travel to the Asklepieia and remain there for the duration of their cure. Some even took up residence in the precincts, as did the prolific Aelius Aristides, who stayed for two years. As Patton (2004, 204) puts it,

> [T]he element of locality is not negotiable. If I want to be healed by Asclepius, I must bring my wounded body to him at his shrine, and after I have fasted and purified myself and made special offerings in the walled temple precinct, I must sleep in the *abaton*, together with other sufferers and under the watchful, scripted mediation of priests, with the shared goal of receiving a therapeutic dream from the god.

In Mark and Luke, the father asks Jesus to come to his home when the little girl is very ill, on the point of death; in Matthew she is already dead at the time of the request. In either case, there would have been no hope of cure for her by Asclepius, for she would never have been able to make the journey to an Asklepieion, the elaborate rituals of which were not conducive to dire emergency cases nor to resurrecting the dead. By contrast, the Gospel story implies, this girl is fortunate because her father relies on Jesus. The story is making the point that Jesus is a doctor who makes house calls!

Intriguingly, the father is the "leader of the synagogue" ([Mark 5:22]() // [Matt 9:18]() // [Luke 8:41]()), but in what city? In Luke, the

Nazareth synagogue is the location at which Jesus earlier referred to his reputation as a Physician ([Luke 4:23](#)). Both Matthew and Luke place the location of the raising of the girl from death to life in the city of Nazareth ([Matt 9:1](#); [Luke 8:19–21](#), [40](#)). Mark also places Jairus's house as Jesus's last stop before he "came to his hometown," suggesting proximity to Nazareth ([Mark 6:1](#)). While any claims about the historical Jesus must remain tenuous, the literary connections to the Nazareth synagogue offer intriguing support for some scholars studying the historical Jesus who claim his reputation was in part as a healer (Meier 1994; Crossan 1989, 75–101; Borg 2005).

A Chronically Bleeding Woman is Healed by Touching the Cloak of Jesus

Each Synoptic Gospel interweaves the story of the healing of Jairus's daughter with a tale of the healing of a chronically bleeding woman, sandwiching it in the middle between Jairus imploring Jesus to come to the house and the scene in which Jesus heals the dead girl. In each version of this middle section, a woman with a constant flow of blood (ἐν ῥύσει αἵματος) touches Jesus's cloak when he is in a crowd, after which Jesus tells her that her faith (ἡ πίστις) has healed her ([Mark 5:24–34](#); also [Matt 9:20–22](#); [Luke 8:42–48](#)). Mark ([5:25](#)) makes it clear that she has sought healing from many other physicians (ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν), and Luke ([8:43](#)) adds that "she spent all she had on physicians, no one could cure her" (ἥτις ἰατροῖς προσαναλώσασα ὅλον τὸν βίον οὐκ ἴσχυσεν ἀπ' οὐδενὸς θεραπευθῆναι). Given the reputation of Asclepius for extracting his fee, this may be read as a criticism at the kinds of human physicians for whom the god served as patron.

As a storehouse of latent memory, the Gospels draw on a plethora of intertextual and cultural Jewish and Greco-Roman referents. The sandwiched story cycle of Jairus's daughter/the chronically bleeding woman shows Jesus contravening not only Greco-Roman purity norms, but also Jewish levitical purity laws. While it is important not to overstress the taint of impurity in

Judaism, since it was a regular ritual state with which all Jews had to contend, the act of entering the house of the dead girl and touching her corpse would have made Jesus impure according to biblical law ([Lev 21:11](#)). If the woman had a *zôv* (זוב), an issue of blood lasting for more than a day, she would be impure by levitical standards ([Lev 15:19–27](#)). By contagion, her act of touching Jesus's robe (τῶν ἱματίων) should make him impure, yet the story's emphasis is not on her action affecting his ritual purity, but rather on his power flowing into her and curing her.

It is less clear if the story of the chronically bleeding woman also implies that Jesus overcomes Roman purity norms. To my knowledge, there is no clear evidence that either Roman religion or the Asclepius cult considered either normal or abnormal menstruation or vaginal bleeding to be polluting (Beck 2004, 209), although childbirth, which entailed vaginal bleeding, was certainly associated with the pollution of death. The *iamata* plaques that depict the god Asclepius aiding women in childbirth stress that the god induced childbirth as soon as—but only after—they left the boundary of the sacred sleeping area or ἄβατον: "she rushed out of the Abaton, and as soon as she was outside the sacred area, gave birth to a daughter" (LiDonnici 1995, 13, 87). However, in the story of Jairus's daughter, Jesus clearly ignores Roman purity concerns by entering the home with the dead child, since Romans considered a corpse *remaining* in a home to be highly polluting (Beck 2004, 509–11).

Overall, then, the story cycle of Jairus's daughter/the bleeding woman elicits both comparison and contrast with the Asclepius traditions. It begins by evoking memories of Asclepius incubation when a dead girl is explicitly said to be *sleeping* while a *healer*—and no less one who elsewhere compares himself to a physician—stands beside her and heals her of her illness through *laying his hands on her*. As the story cycle proceeds, however, it elicits a contrast with the Asclepius cult: Jesus's mobile presence heals people in unexpected places, including those patients who are normally

excluded from healing, as he overturns Roman and/or Jewish purity laws regarding death and discharges.

Perhaps the most vital contrast is the way in which the Synoptic Gospels, as opposed to the Asclepius traditions, tie divine healing to faith/belief (ἡ πὶστις). The emphasis on faith weaves together the stories of Jairus's daughter and the chronically bleeding woman in a way that relocates the sphere of physical, medical healing to the realm of psychological and spiritual healing in terms of the Christian *kerygma*. In the story of Jairus's daughter, faith is the key to physical healing and to "being saved." Before the father has returned home, he receives word that his daughter has died, to which Jesus immediately says, "Do not fear, only believe" (μὴ φοβοῦ μόνον πίστευε, Mark 5:36) and "Do not fear, only believe and she will be saved" (μὴ φοβοῦ μόνον πίστεθσον καὶ σωθήσεται, Luke 8:50). Similarly, after the bleeding woman touches Jesus's garment, he replies to her with a cause and effect explanation that her proactive belief has resulted in both peace and medical healing: "Daughter, *your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease*" (ἡ πίστις σου σέσωκέν σε ὕπαγε εἰς εἰρήνην καὶ ἴσθι ὑγιὴς ἀπὸ τῆς μάστιγός σου, Mark 5:34; cf. Matt 9:22; Luke 8:48). This is a story of "faith healing" that establishes a causal link between belief on the one hand, and psychological and physical healing on the other.

The Synoptics also maintain that healing is somehow interrelated with the forgiveness of sins. When friends bring a paralyzed man on a bed to Jesus, he says the unexpected: "Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven." He then cures him saying, "Stand up, take your bed and go to your home" (Mark 2:1–12 // Matt 9:2–8 // Luke 5:17–26). This story implies that the Gospels see sin and illness as intertwined, an idea implied in Jesus's statement: "Those who are well have no need of a physician (ἰατροῦ), but those who are sick; I have come to call not the righteous but sinners" (Mark 2:17; also Matt 9:12; Luke 5:31). This association between the sick and sinners is likewise evident in the Hebrew Bible. Certain sins resulted in physical ailments according to the Covenant (Deut 28:22, 27–28), and the Jewish Temple system also clearly associates chronic illness with

impurity (e.g., Lev 13–15, also 4QMMT, Temple Scroll, 1QS). Impurity and moral sins are not identical in Jewish law, since one can incur impurity simply through emitting normal physiological discharges (e.g., Lev 15:16–23). However, the concepts of "sin" and "impurity" overlap. What we might think of as "moral sins" as well as impurities resulting from touching things that are unclean required a sin offering (Lev 5:1–6), indicating a complex understanding of "sin." In fact, the Day of Atonement may have functioned to cleanse the Temple from impurity that clung to it on account of moral sins as well as ritual infractions (Lev 16:16; Milgrom 1998–2001; Levine 1989, 92).[10]

At any rate, the Asclepius cult does not appear to have associated sin with illness, nor did it view the healing of patients as being contingent on their belief. Rather, healing was contingent on the pious fulfillment of rituals and sometimes occurred in spite of a lack of faith. For instance, a cure posted at Epidauros states that a man with nine paralyzed fingers came as a suppliant, but "When he was looking at the plaques in the sanctuary, he didn't believe in the cures and was somewhat disparaging of the inscriptions." He carried out the rituals, however, and then saw a dream of Asclepius in which the god healed all his fingers. Next, "the god asked him if he would still not believe the inscriptions on the plaques around the sanctuary and he answered no." To this, the god replied in the dream, "Therefore, since you doubted them before, though they were not unbelievable, from now on," he said, "your name shall be 'Unbeliever.'" The new name was Ἄπιστος, literally, "no-faith" or "no-belief." Yet the plaque concludes, "When day came he left well" (LiDonnici 1995, 86–87).

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[10] The complex topic of exorcism in the Gospels and its relationship to healing also bears further study. Since the Synoptics repeatedly tie healing to salvation and belief, and illness to sin and unbelief, so, too, do they link demon possession to both illness and unbelief (e.g., Mark 9:24). The way in which the Gospels construct Jesus as a Divine Healer and as an exorcist is one way in which they differ from / transform the Greco-Roman Asclepius traditions, which do not attribute illness to demonic possession.

Some cure tales do imply that the earnest prayer of the patient plays a role in obtaining a cure (LiDonnici 1995, 94–95, 112–13, 120–21), but it is unclear if the act of praying included real belief or simply the pious fulfillment of a ritual. Other cure tales explain that a person could still be cured even with no belief in the cures, if only the promised fee was paid (i.e., if ritual obligations were fulfilled). Such was the case of a woman who ridiculed the posted cures but had a dream in which the god required her to dedicate "a silver pig in the sanctuary as a memorial of her ignorance." She was cured after awakening, despite her unbelief, as long as she paid afterwards (LiDonnici 1995, 88–89).

Hence, unlike Jesus, Asclepius did not typically take charity cases, but expected due payment as part of the fulfillment of vows. Socrates's last words to Crito at the end of *Phaedo* (118), "We owe a cock to Asklepios," have immortalized the importance of fulfilling this obligation. Plato appears to critique Asklepios by saying that he picked his patients by determining their ability to pay him or society: "But if a man was incapable of living in the established round and order of life, he did not think it worthwhile to treat him, since such a fellow is of no use either to himself or the state" (*Plato, Resp.* 3.407E). Several cure plaques displayed at Epidauros warn suppliants that if they fail to pay, the cure reverts. Such was the fate of Hermon of Thasos, cured of blindness through a dream, however: "when he didn't bring the offering, the god made him blind again" (LiDonnici 1995, 100–01). Similarly, another plaque relates that Amphimnastos swore to give a tenth of the profit of a catch of fish to Asclepius, "but he didn't do it, as he should," whereupon the fish were struck by lighting and their bodies were burning up, along with the man's profit. After the man confessed to a surrounding crowd and then prayed to the god, the catch of fish "appears to live again," whereupon Amphimnastos dedicated the promised 10% to the god (LiDonnici 1995, 120–21). This votive tale is the closest cure we get

to Asclepius raising the dead, and its prominent display makes the clear point that patients had better pay up.[11]

In light of the reputation for acquisitiveness affixed to Asclepius and his client physicians, the lack of mention of monetary payment for Jesus's healings is thus not simply an incidental omission. Rather, the remark that the bleeding woman had spent all that she had on physicians takes on sharp significance, as does the claim that belief can result in both peace and physical healing.

Jesus Raises the Son of the Widow of Nain from Death to Life

This final pericope, which occurs only in Luke (7:11–17), also suggests a contested social memory between the Jesus and Asclepius traditions. In this story Jesus passes a funeral procession in Nain in which a widow's only son is being carried on a funeral bier. This pericope breaks down into three parts. In part one, Jesus sees the dead child, has compassion for the parent, and touches an object made impure with death—in this case the funeral bier (Luke 7:11–14). The Greek resembles the earlier Aramaic exclamation of "Talitha qum": "young man (νεανίσκε), I say to you, rise (ἐγέρθητι)!" (Luke 7:14). This raises the son back to life, and possibly gestures back to the story of Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus.

In part two of the pericope the disciples of John the Baptist arrive to ask, "Are you the one who is to come or are we to wait for another?" (Luke 7:19). Jesus's answer focuses on his ability to cure disease:

> Jesus had just then cured many people of their diseases, plagues, and evil spirits, and had given sight to many who were blind. And he answered them, "Go and tell John what you have seen and heard: The blind receive their sight, the

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[11] I should note that this is the only place in which I disagree with the conclusions of Jefferson's (2014) excellent study, since he stresses Asklepios's compassion for the poor. For example, Jefferson reads a compliment about Asklepios in a satire straightforwardly (41), whereas I see the opposite meaning intended.

lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them." (Luke 7:21–22)

This list fulfills the descriptions of "the one who is to come," drawing on the passage in Isa 29:18–20, but expands those healed to include lepers, the lame, and the dead. When read through the lens of social memory theory, this stress on Jesus as Healer is in conversation with the traditions of the most famous healer, Asclepius, who cured the blind, lame, lepers, deaf, and the dead.

However, Zeus killed Asclepius for raising the dead, whereas Jesus heals the dead with divine approval when he raises the widow's son and Jairus's daughter. The sharpest contrast comes with Jesus's statement that "the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22). Greek plays preserve a sharp criticism often leveled at the vast network of medical dream cults of Asklepios, with their hundreds of expensive votive offerings: it was too successful as a money making enterprise. A character in Aristophanes's *Ploutos* (407–408) whines that physicians are only available when there is adequate payment, but Ploutos himself, the god of wealth, is wealthy enough to go to a temple of Asklepios to have his blindness cured (633–747; also Theophrastus, *Char.* 21.10; Wickkiser 2008, 38). Cultic remains, including the *iamata* at Epidauros, may explain the social reality behind the critique. On one plaque Asklepios famously requires a poor boy to pay with ten dice, the only valuable item he owned, after asking, "What will you give me if I make you well?" (LiDonnici 1995, 92–93; cf. Jefferson 2014, 41).

Thus, given Asclepius's reputation for avarice, Jesus's whole list of proofs that he is "the one" easily reads as a pointed critique of the most famous Divine Physician and/or the human physicians for whom Asclepius served as patron: "The blind receive their sight, the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, the poor have good news brought to them" (Luke 7:22). Jesus's retort might fairly be paraphrased as: *I can do every cure that he can do, as well as raise the dead without God killing me for it, and I am not exploiting the poor—instead I bring them good news.*

If this reading is sound, what follows in part three of the story may well be another barb aimed at the Asclepius cult's financial gain. After concluding his speech to John's messengers about his credentials as "the one," Jesus then addresses the crowd, saying, "What did you go out into the wilderness to look at? A reed shaken in the wind? What then did you go out to see? Someone dressed in soft robes? Look, those who put on fine clothing and live in luxury are in royal palaces" ([Luke 7:24](#)). Traditions about Asclepius may also shed new light on these images. Jesus was a roughly clad traveling healer, whereas the hundreds of ornate Asklepieia temples scattered about the Roman Empire preeminently featured a statue or relief of the god dressed in only a robe with no underlying shirt, his signature iconographic style. Asclepius also sometimes appears in reliefs in his Temples as sitting on a throne in sumptuous palatial surroundings (Athens, National Archaeological Museum 1381). This foil may also help explain the image of the reed shaken in the wind as a writing implement.[12] In Greek and Roman Egypt, Asclepius was identified with the architect-scribe Imhotep-Imouthes, whose tomb was called "the Asklepieion" in Greek sources and who was worshipped at Saqqâra, Deir el-Bahri, Memphis and elsewhere as both Divine Physician and Divine Scribe, which accounts for the frequent depictions of him holding a scroll (Renberg 2014, 326–36). Jesus might have said, *You expected maybe to see a scribe out here in the wilderness, or someone outside dressed in soft robes? You'll find that healer in an Asklepieion!*

Hence, in light of social memory theory, all three parts of this Lukan pericope may read as a strong criticism leveled at those who make financial gains from healing, whether that be the god Asclepius, his priest-physicians the *Asclepiads*, or the Hippocratic school of medicine for which he served as patron. Luke shows Jesus raising the dead to life, then claiming to be "the one" on account of his ability to cure diseases, raise the dead, and care for the poor, before finally retorting that while the people expected a scribe clad

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[12] The trees shaking in the wind from [Isa 7:2](#) and the images of a bruised reed in [Isa 42:3](#) (etc.) are not contextually logical or helpful here.

in a soft robe in a palace, they instead have John the Baptist and himself dressed simply and out in the wilderness.

VI. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

When read in light of social memory theory, the three healing pericopes examined here function as stories that contest the authority of the famous Divine Physician-Savior Asclepius by presenting Jesus as the best Ἰατρός and Σωτήρ, Physician and Savior. This is not just the composers' interpretation of the past, but also a way to make a programmatic claim for the future that positions Christianity over a competing cult. Unlike Asclepius, the Gospels stress, Jesus heals the dead with divine approval. Unlike in the dream cult, the sick can be healed without travel to a Temple if only they have faith, regardless of their socio-economic and purity standings.

These Gospel portraits testify that Christian comparisons between Jesus and Asclepius adhered already in the first century, establishing a social framing for the memory of Jesus that intensified over the next several centuries. As Jefferson (2014, 141–43) notes, from the second to fourth centuries Christian appropriation of imagery from the Asclepius cult enabled Christianity to compete so successfully that the Emperor Julian in turn sought to bolster the image of Asclepius by appropriating aspects of Christ. As Avalos (1999, 117–19) shows, the success of the Christ as Healer motif owed above all to the distinctions that it made over and against the cult of Asclepius: Jesus was a Healer-Physician who overcomes the constraints of geography, money, time, and ritual that restricted suppliants of the pagan dream cult.

To these insights must be added another factor in Christianity's transformation of the motif of Jesus as Healer and subsequent spread throughout the empire, namely, that the Gospels spiritualized the healing stories in terms of the early *kerygma*. The pericopes of Jesus raising the daughter of Jairus and the son of the widow of Nain are interwoven with claims that it is faith that facilitates healing and that raises the dead. Since, theoretically,

anyone can have faith, this message suggests that the scope of healing activity extends beyond the borders of the narrative encounter to the audience: anyone can attain *eternal life after death* if only they have faith. The pericopes we have examined of Jesus healing the sick and the dead then function partly as proof of this *kerygma*, which is accessible to all.

However positive the association between belief and healing may seem, it rests on an assumption that deserves to be brought into the harsh light of the twenty-first century. As a modern reader of the Synoptic Gospels, I find the equation of sin with illness and of belief with physical healing to be highly problematic, in that it stigmatizes those suffering from physical maladies as being somehow blameworthy.

Without attempting to rescue the text for modern sensibilities, I can, however, still appreciate the transformations that Jesus's actions effect in those who are suffering. When he tells the troubled to "go in peace" on account of their faith, which also simultaneously heals them of their diseases, Jesus is acting as a doctor as well as practicing ψυχή ἰατρεία—doctoring of the spirit—from which we derive our term "psychiatry." Although the Synoptic Gospels distance Jesus's healing activity from the practice of dreaming, which is known to serve a therapeutic function, I find that the portrait of Jesus as Divine Physician retains and significantly develops the important recognition that the healing process entails not only physical changes, but also emotional, psychological, and social transformations as well.

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Equal to God:
Jesus's Crucifixion as *Scheintod*

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I. INTRODUCTION

In [John 19:30](), Jesus dies. Eight verses later, he is buried. In [John 20](), Mary Magdalene finds that Jesus's tomb is empty and that the body is gone; in [20:13–17](), Jesus shows himself to Mary, no longer dead, but alive. As the present collection of essays demonstrates, the Gospel of John is far from the only ancient Mediterranean text to be concerned with coming back to life after death. The Hellenistic romance novels, popular around the same time as John's composition,[1] consistently rely on the trope of *Scheintod*, or apparent death. In the novels, the protagonists are repeatedly killed, and yet remain alive. Reading Jesus's survival of his crucifixion within the literary framework of *Scheintod* presents Jesus's divinity—and John's Christology—as participating in the idea world of the ancient Mediterranean, an approach which illuminates the function of Jesus's death in John. As such, and acknowledging that John was likely written before some of the novels discussed here, I do not argue for a direct relationship among these texts, but rather I suggest that John and the novels preserve certain expectations about what it means to return from death, or to appear to do so. Like the Greek romance novels, John's Gospel is preoccupied with the

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[1] John likely dates from between 90–125 CE; the earliest of the four romance novels treated here, Chariton's *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, dates from the early first century CE (Reardon 2008, 17). *An Ephesian Tale* is dated to the second century CE, while the others are later—estimates for Heliodorus's work are as late as the fourth century CE (Morgan 2003, 417).

identity of its protagonist, and in particular, with emphasizing the simultaneously divine and mortal attributes of Jesus. John accomplishes this articulation of Jesus's divine nature through the use of physical signs that point to Jesus's mortal body as, at the same time, divine. Likewise, the physical nature of the apparent-death experiences of the heroines of the romance novels collides with the visual descriptions of the heroines as goddesses—their bodies shine forth with divine light. In the context of the *Scheintoten* experienced by the heroines, John's narration of Jesus's survival of his death on the cross is readable as an event that at the same time concretizes his association with his patron deity. In this paper, I will first trace the trope of *Scheintod* in the Greek romances in order to illustrate how the episodes are constructed to the effect that the protagonists exist in a dual state of being alive and being dead. Next, I demonstrate how the novels suggest the divinity of the heroines, especially through the trope of coming back to life. In light of these analyses, I turn to John's preoccupation with Jesus's divinity and examine how his coming back to life after crucifixion participates in *Scheintod* as a means of expressing John's unique Christology.

II. *SCHEINTOD* IN THE NOVELS

In the Greek romance novels of the first few centuries CE, *Scheintod* is widely used as an element of suspense in order to confuse the identities of the female protagonists and, in so doing, develop the plot.[2] Apparent deaths occur in *Chaereas and Callirhoe* ([1.4.12ff.](#)), *An Ethiopian Story* (2.3.3), *Leucippe and Clitophon* ([3.15.5](#); [5.7.4](#); [7.3.8](#)), and *An Ephesian Tale* ([3.6.5](#)). In *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, Callirhoe is "killed" by her husband, who reacts in anger to the malicious rumour of her infidelity. She is buried in a stately tomb, in her bridal clothes, surrounded by "a royal profusion of funeral offerings: first, the gold and silver from the dowry; beautiful clothing and jewellery—Hermocrates added to it a lot of the booty he had taken; and gifts from relatives and friends. Last of all

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[2] Erwin Rohde (1914, 287) was the first to point out how popular this theme is in the ancient romances (cf. Wehrli 1965, 142–48).

followed Chaereas's wealth" ([1.6.4](#)). [3] Upon waking, Callirhoe laments her fate, but it is not long before tomb robbers come upon her and decide to steal her away to sell her as a slave in a foreign city. Later on, in book three, Chaereas, the would-be uxoricide, arrives at the tomb intent on ending his own life and joining Callirhoe in death, only to find the tomb empty. Hoping to retrieve her corpse (he still believes that she is dead), he sets out after the pirates, commencing the travel narrative so typical of the romances. While the readership knows that Callirhoe is not "really" dead, Chaereas does not—this dual state that Callirhoe is in creates a narrative reality in which Callirhoe both is and is not dead at the same time.

Chariklea is first thought dead in *An Ethiopian Story* in 2.3.3, when her lover assumes she could not have survived a bloody battle, only to be told that she had been secreted away in a cave for safekeeping (1.28–29). When told of her safety, Theagenes is overjoyed and goes to retrieve her, only to find a corpse lying in the mouth of the cave, burnt. Again, Theagenes assumes the woman is Chariklea, dead, and begins to mourn without turning over the body to check the face (2.3–4). Even though a page later, a distinctly not-dead Chariklea calls out from the back of the cave, Theagenes's mourning demonstrates that for his character, Chariklea's *Scheintod* is not apparent, but real. Her reemergence as a living, breathing woman is no less miraculous than had she been indeed killed.

Anthia's attempted suicide in *[An Ephesian Tale](#)* 3.6.5 results in her own apparent death scene. Thinking Habrocomes, her husband, dead, Anthia convinces a travelling doctor to give her a poison. The doctor instead gives Anthia a sleeping potion, which she takes, expecting to die. She instead falls into a deep sleep, only to be found by Perilaus, her would-be suitor. Perilaus mourns for his bride in a great show of grief and lays Anthia out in a tomb, dressed in fine clothes, surrounded by treasures and wealth. No sooner is Anthia

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[3] Unless otherwise indicated, English translations of the romances are from Reardon 2008. For all primary sources, the embedded hyperlinks offer easy reference to free (though often older) scholarly editions.

placed in the tomb than she wakes up and realises that she is not, in fact, dead. Intent on joining Habrocomes in death, she resolves to starve herself to death by remaining in the tomb, only to be "rescued" by some pirate grave-robbers. Habrocomes, alive, vows to join his wife in death when he hears of her death, and thus continues the complicated false-death/life cycle which dominates the novel. The intricacy of the characters' status as living or dead, as in the other novels, allows for an overlapping of narrative reality in which characters are simultaneously living and dead, depending on which character's perspective dominates the tale.

The most explicit example of this duality is found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*. In 3.15 Clitophon has the misfortune to witness the sacrifice of his beloved, Leucippe. Our heroine is captured by brigands and brought to an altar in a stereotypically "foreign" rite, described by Achilles Tatius as Egyptian. The brigands pour a libation over Leucippe's head while poor Clitophon watches, helpless. Leucippe is rendered immobile while one of the attendants

> raised a sword and plunged it into her heart and then sawed all the way down to her abdomen. Her viscera leaped out. The attendants pulled out her entrails and carried them in their hands over to the altar. When it was well done they carved the whole lot up, and all the bandits shared the meal. (3.15.4–5)

Clitophon, the narrator of the tale, prepares to kill himself with his sword—from his perspective, Leucippe has been viciously disembowelled in a horrific sacrifice as he watched from afar. Just as he is about to join her in her death, he is stopped by friends who know the truth about Leucippe's mock sacrifice. In the moments between Leucippe's death and Clitophon's attempted suicide, two narrative realities exist—Leucippe both lives and is dead in her coffin. Then the pair, Menelaos and Satyros, tells Clitophon how they orchestrated a charade using theatre techniques so that Leucippe would only *appear* to be sacrificed. Later, Leucippe is "decapitated" before Clitophon's very eyes and again suffers a bout of *Scheintod* (5.7.4). Again, Clitophon laments her death as real

before he comes to know that Leucippe has miraculously escaped harm, as her letter, read a few chapters later, dramatically reveals.

Scheintod in the Context of Assumed Divinity

The trope of the apparent death, or *Scheintod,* is therefore clearly a stock prop in the ancient novels used to create tension and suspense. However, in the romances, *Scheintod* also has another function, which I propose is to point to the possible divinity of those seemingly brought back to life. Tracing the history of resurrection in Greek and Latin literature, Bowersock (1994, 103) notes that for the ancients, the concept of a resurrected human was foreign; necromancy was a popular feature of ancient magic, but resurrection was not a common concept in non-Jewish literature until after the Jesus people started talking about it. Bowersock indirectly suggests that the heroines' false deaths and lively reappearances are suggestive of their association with the divine: "Gods might die and be reborn, but not mortals of flesh and blood" (102). The context of this statement is that in the ancient world, very few people returned from the dead and all of them were heroes, a category of being that straddles the fence between mortal and immortal. Antonius Diogenes's *The Wonders Beyond Thule* includes the character of Zamolxis who had been resurrected from death and was thence regarded as a divinity (Bowersock 1994, 100; Photius, *Bibl.* 110a [166], 143–144, lines 22–37 [Henry and Schamp 1959–1991]; cf. Herodotus, *Hist.* 4.94–96); heroes, for example Protesilaus (Philostratus, *Her.* 11.7 [=§675 in Kayser 1870–1871]), returning from Hades participates in this understanding. In other words, whether it is only those with a divine spark who are able to return from death or whether returning from death grants an individual divinity, there is a clear association in the ancient Mediterranean between those who come back to life and the divine realm. For the romantic heroines, who are already channelling multiple characteristics of the epic heroes,[4] a return from death in the form of

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[4] See Warren (2015, 77–114) for a discussion of the various ways in which the heroines in particular are described in terms borrowed directly from the

Scheintod contributes not only to their depiction in the tradition of heroes, but also works with other tropes of divinity to establish their identities as goddesses.

In the novels, the association between divinity and coming back from the grave is solidified by the constant identifications of heroines with various divinities. In *An Ephesian Tale*, we are introduced to Anthia with a comparison to Artemis.[5] The novel opens with a festival procession in which Anthia is taking part:

> Anthia's beauty was an object of wonder . . . she wore a purple tunic down to the knee, fastened with a girdle and falling loose over her arms, with a fawnskin over it, a quiver attached, and arrows for weapons; she carried javelins and was followed by dogs. Often as they saw here in the sacred enclosure the Ephesians would worship her as Artemis. And so on this occasion too the crowd gave a cheer when they saw her, and there was a whole clamor of exclamations from the spectators: some were amazed and said it was the goddess in person; some that it was someone else made by the goddess in her own image. But they all prayed and prostrated themselves and congratulated her parents. (1.2.2ff.)

The crowd views Anthia, dressed as Artemis with her dogs and her fawn skin, as the goddess, either a direct epiphany or a manifestation of the goddess on earth; in either case, it makes no difference as they bow down to worship her.[6]

Likewise, in *Leucippe and Clitophon*, our protagonist is described in terms that hint at her divinity. When Clitophon first

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epics.

[5] A further clear example where Anthia is worshipped as a goddess can be found in *An Ephesian Tale* 1.12.1–2.

[6] W. R. Connor (1987, 44) distinguishes between Anthia as goddess and Anthia's role in depicting the goddess, but more recent scholarship articulates the problem with distinguishing in a phenomenological sense a mortal woman dressed as a goddess from the goddess herself. In other words, from the point of view of those watching the procession, Anthia's humanity makes no difference—she is the goddess (Platt 2011, 17; cf. Plutarch, *Arat.* 32.1–2).

catches sight of Leucippe in 1.4, he is astonished by her sudden appearance (ἐκφαίνεταί) and blinded by her dazzling, lightning-like beauty. He notes her tall form, too. These descriptive terms, while they might seem ordinary to the casual reader, are in actuality consistently used throughout ancient literature to describe the epiphanic appearances of deities. Leucippe, then, appears to Clitophon as a goddess.[7]

An Ethiopian Story also participates in the characterization of its heroine, Chariklea, as a goddess. Several times throughout the narrative, she is depicted in the posture or costume of a divinity, and, like Leucippe, is described using imagery of light and brightness. When we first meet her, in 1.2.1–2, Chariklea is outfitted like Artemis with bow and quiver, but sits cradling her wounded lover like Isis; those who view the scene cannot decide whether she is a goddess or the manifestation of the goddess as her priestess (1.2.6). Most significant for the present analysis is Chariklea's depiction as radiantly divine at the very moment of what would have been her human sacrifice in 10.9 (emphasis added):

> Then, before the people supervising the test [of her virginity by standing on the gridiron] could tell her what to do, she produced, from a little pouch that she was carrying, her Delphic robe, woven with gold thread and embroidered with rays, and put it on. She let her hair fall free, ran forward like one possessed, and sprang onto the gridiron, where she stood for some time without taking any hurt, her beauty blazing with a new and dazzling radiance (τῷ τε κάλλει τότε πλέον ἐκλάμποντι καταστράπτουσα) as she stood conspicuous on her lofty pedestal; in her magnificent robe she seemed more like an image of a goddess (ἀγάλματι θεοῦ πλέον ἢ θνητῇ γυναικὶ) than a mortal woman. A thrill of wonder ran through the crowd.[8]

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[7] For more discussion of the specific tropes throughout the novels that imply divinity, see Warren 2015, 93–105.

[8] Greek text from Rattenbury, Lumb, and Maillon 1935.

Again, the vocabulary used in this passage, and elsewhere, associates Chariklea with goddesses described elsewhere with similar terminology. I would also point out that in this passage, it is precisely at the moment when Chariklea should have died that her divinity becomes apparent.

The association between *Scheintod* and divinity is also visible in Callirhoe's depiction as a goddess. In *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, our heroine is constantly assumed to be divine, more so than in any of the other novels. I count at least nine distinct instances where Callirhoe is described as a shining beauty, is worshipped as a goddess, or is otherwise assumed to be an epiphanic manifestation of a goddess.[9] For instance, after she is sold as a slave, her new master sees her for the first time and begins to bow down to her in worship, believing her to be Aphrodite (2.3.6). Like Chariklea, however, Callirhoe is early on associated with divinity because of her miraculous escape from death. After being entombed with many precious items, Callirhoe is kidnapped by pirates. When her supposed widower Chaereas comes to make an offering, he finds the tomb open and his beloved gone. Immediately he assumes that he "had a goddess for a wife without knowing it" and that Callirhoe has returned to the divine realm (3.3.5). Chaereas comes to this conclusion in light of the relationship between the mortal and divine realms and the assumed means of identifying divine beings on earth: those who escape death are likely to be gods themselves, or at least to embody divinity in part, as heroes do.[10]

In other words, intersecting with the seemingly constant attacks on the lives of the romantic heroines is the continued concern with the true, divine identity of these women. The reader knows that their identity as members of elite society is at stake, but certain tropes in the novels function to depict the heroines as divine, too.

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[9] *Chaereas and Callirhoe* 1.1; 1.1.15–16; 1.14.1; 2.1.5; 2.2.2; 2.3.6; 3.2.14; 3.9.1; 5.3.9. This is not an exhaustive catalogue of epiphanic allusions.

[10] The only humans to return alive from Hades are the heroes Heracles, Theseus, and Orpheus; ordinary mortals, such as Alcestis and Euridice, do not return to life.

The romance novels' depiction of the heroines as goddesses reflects the Hellenistic understanding of the very porous boundaries between hero and god. The romantic representation of this relationship between the divine and mortal realms emerges from the similar relationship found in the Homeric epics; there, heroes and gods become associated with one another through the death of the hero in a way that blurs the categories between human and divine (Nagy 1981). The religious aspects contained in the novels not only represent what are probably the ordinary worldview of the society in which the novels were composed—the very same world in which John was written—but in a related fashion also reflect the projection of the expectations around the relationship between human beings and the divine in the ancient world. As Versnel (1987, 46) puts it, "the result was that ancient man [*sic*] could never be sure whether the person he was talking with was not actually a god in disguise." That is, the close similarities between the descriptions of the heroes and the gods in the romances are intentionally crafted to blur the line between human and god in ways understandable to their audience.

In Greek hero cults the death of the hero is required to establish the cult to the hero; it is also the moment of death that in literature establishes the identification of the hero with the god or goddess (Nagy 1981, 286). According to Gregory Nagy (1981, 142; see also 33, 113), even though Achilles's death is postponed until after the *Iliad*, the text uses Patroclus as his surrogate and thus the death of the hero still takes place. Thus, the deferral of the hero's death does not mean that the death does not occur in the narrative; as Nagy shows, a hero can in some ways be both alive and dead at the same time in the literary world. This deferral of death is also what happens in the romances for Leucippe, Anthia, and Chariklea; the paradoxical nature of their deaths, lives, and their dual identities is firmly bound up in their *Scheintoten*. As with the identification of the hero and the deity in the epics, in the novels the death and divinity collide to create the divine-hero association.

III. Jesus's Crucifixion as *Scheintod*

While the most obvious commonality between Jesus's crucifixion and the trope of *Scheintod* is that Jesus comes back to life after his death, I propose that several other features in John's Gospel provide the framework within which to view Jesus's survival of his crucifixion as an apparent death. Viewing the event of Jesus's crucifixion as *Scheintod* illuminates features of John's Christology and in doing so cements the association between apparent death and divinity. The tension throughout the Gospel of John between the divinity and humanity of Jesus is of paramount importance for the interpretation of John's version of the crucifixion. As such, I argue that the groundwork for a christological interpretation of John 19:28–37 is put in place throughout the Gospel, especially in the prologue, through the emphasis on the relationship between Jesus's divine and human characteristics. John's primary concern throughout the Gospel is in demonstrating this relationship between Jesus and the divine (Brown 1965, 556 n. 52), and the author's insistence that Jesus is *both* fleshly (1:14) and divine (1:1) indicates the author's concern with Jesus's identity as *both simultaneously*. Indeed, throughout the Gospel, John takes care to emphasize that people experience both Jesus's corporeal and divine attributes in their encounters with him. In John 3:13–16, the author reiterates that Jesus is unique in his simultaneous earthly and heavenly natures: he is the one who has come down from heaven and whose body will be lifted up on the cross. In this early example, John's Jesus highlights that his identification with God depends on the lifting up on the cross of his physical body, implying that his glorification is implicated in his physical being; this concept is solidified in John 8:28 when Jesus again claims that "When you have lifted up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am he."

John's emphasis of Jesus's physical body through both Jesus's statements and, in particular, his signs, *causes belief* in the glory of God-as-Jesus. Embedded in a healing narrative and nestled among verses which speak of Jesus as the light in the world, John 9:5–7a highlights Jesus's physical body by featuring his saliva: "'As long as I

am in the world I am the light of the world.' Having said this, he spat on the ground, made a paste with the spittle, put this over the eyes of the blind man, and said to him, 'Go and wash in the Pool of Siloam.'" Likewise, 10:33 concretizes the relationship between Jesus's divinity and his physical acts of healing when Jesus is accused of claiming to be divine—the accusation is directly linked to Jesus's healing works in verse 32:

> οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι fetched stones to stone him, so Jesus said to them, 'I have shown you many good works from my Father; for which of these are you stoning me?' οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι answered him, "We are stoning you, not for doing a good work, but for blasphemy; though you are only a man, you claim to be God." (10:31–33)

Here, οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι[11] react to Jesus's physical works in the physical world and conclude that through them, Jesus is indicating his identification as God. Thus, as in the romances, divinity is apparent through the physicality of the protagonist.

The very corporeal actions that Jesus does, his signs, whether healing the wounded with mud made from his own spit, or the presence of his own body lifted up, concretize the dialectical relationship between the Word and the flesh. The incarnation of the Word in the flesh of humanity means that the divine aspects of God and the corporeal ones of Jesus are in fact inseparable; through Jesus's physical acts his divinity is recognized. As many scholars have already pointed out (e.g., Anderson 1996, 24; Bultmann 1971, 62ff.; 1951–1955, 2:3–14; Käsemann 1969, 154–55; O'Grady 1984, 63–66; Neyrey 1986, 152–71), this dialectical relationship between the Word and the flesh is most obvious in the prologue, where the

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[11] I have opted to leave this term in Greek to avoid the complicated issue of how to translate it since it can either be Judeans or Jews in almost all instances in the New Testament (see Cohen 1999). Recently the translation of this term has been much discussed in the *Marginalia Review of Books*, Jew and Judean: A Forum on Politics and Historiogrpahy in the Translation of Ancient Texts.

purpose and message of the Gospel is set forth—namely, to identify Jesus with God—but it is also exhibited throughout the Gospel. That the Word and God are equivalent and that the Word then became a real human being with flesh and blood are implicated so early in John's text that they indicate the paramount importance of a fleshly *and* divine Jesus for John's Christology. Jesus's crucifixion, an intensely physical means of death, participates in how John articulates Jesus's divinity precisely because Jesus survives it.[12]

Approaching Jesus's crucifixion from the perspective of the narrative allows us to compare it with the *Scheintoten* of the romances in a way that clarifies certain common elements. At the narrative level, as I have argued above, the novels make use of a series of tropes that point to the divinity of the heroines at the literary level, for no cult has been found for any of the romantic heroines. Thus, the narrative of the romances is preoccupied with the ontology of the women who drive their plots. This preoccupation provides a forum in which to read other aspects of the romances, and so to analyse these elements as either contributing to the question of the heroines' divinity or contradicting it. Given the nature of the finality of death in the Hellenistic world (i.e., death is permanent and inescapable), it also makes sense to examine their apparent deaths in light of the question of their divinity: it seems to me that in this context, *Scheintod* confirms the heroines' divinity.

In applying this approach to John, whose narrative is preoccupied with Jesus's divine identity, the crucifixion scene is now readable as a narrative that also makes claims about Jesus's divinity. Jesus, like the heroines of the novels, only appears to die—his death is not permanent. Also like the heroines of the romances, I suggest, his *Scheintod* confirms his divinity—a divinity that the Gospel of John has been promoting throughout its narrative. This feature of the Gospel is highlighted when viewed in light of the role of *Scheintod* in the novels, where it likewise functions to confirm the

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[12] John's Jesus persists in being fleshly and divine after his death; he offers his very real wounds for Thomas to prod with his fingers in 20:27, for example.

divinity of the protagonists: coming back from death is a talent reserved for the divine or semi-divine. Three scenes in John's telling of Jesus's death support my interpretation of his death as *Scheintod*. First, the moment of Jesus's death is described in such a way that promotes the idea that it both took place and was avoided. Second, John 19:34 refers to Jesus's bodily fluids in a way that ancient readers connected with divine *ichor*. And third, the discovery of the empty tomb likewise participates in a similar trope used in the Hellenistic romances to bring about the question of divine identity.

In order to understand Jesus's moment of death as a marker of *Scheintod*, it is important to examine in brief another attempt at understanding *Scheintod* in the Christian context. Judith Perkins's (2006, 401) work on fictitious *Scheintod* and power in the imperial world understands the violence and death in both early Christian martyrdom texts and in the novels to be responses to the violence inherent in the agency and lack thereof experienced by bodies in the ancient world. And while the martyrs in Perkins's analysis are depicted with gruesome detail at the moment of their physical demise, John, while he takes care to delineate the physical clues to Jesus's divinity, is less than graphic in describing the moment of his death. I propose that the avoidance of the details in John does not reflect squeamishness, but rather represents an intentionally created space in which Jesus's death both does and does not occur—a space likewise articulated in the romance novels.

The silence in John at the moment of crucifixion is deafening.[13] John's Gospel offers few details about the experience of his death—in contrast, say, to the theatrical approach found in *Leucippe and Clitophon*—and instead leaves the moment of death unarticulated, stating simply that "with that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (19:30). In avoiding the precise moment of death, John's Gospel participates in creating an unreal space in which Jesus's death both occurs and does not narratively take place. Unlike the later Christian martyrdom texts, which, as Perkins observes, focus

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[13] The moment of death is likewise not graphically described in the Synoptic accounts, although suffering is mentioned.

on the bodily experience of those killed, here we find no description of what Jesus's death feels like, nor what it looks like. In fact, the whole of the time from when Jesus is crucified to his death is covered in only thirteen verses, as opposed to the chapter and a half devoted to his trial and sentencing. Jesus's crucifixion, when mentioned, is often a dependent clause supporting a main clause about something else—the division of his clothes, in one case (19:23), or describing the location of his cross, in another (19:20). Jesus dies in a single verse: "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, 'It is finished.' With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit" (19:30). The absence of description of Jesus's agony provides distance from the observers. Just as Clitophon watches at a distance when Leucippe is sacrificed, and thus does not fully comprehend what he sees, so too the readers of John's crucifixion scene are not treated to all the gory details. Perkins (2006, 401) likewise observes the unreality of death in the ancient novels: "What the motif in these narratives connotes," she writes, "is not resurrection, but the illusory nature of the death, its misinterpretation *as* death." At arm's length, Jesus's death takes on a component of unreality, just as with the theatrical sacrifice of Leucippe.

After Jesus's death in John, two further incidents signal his survival of the execution, making his death only apparent and implying his divinity. The verses immediately after Jesus's death describe Jesus in a way that aligns with Greco-Roman expectations around immortal wounds. In John 19:34 we read that a soldier pierces Jesus's side. "One of the soldiers pierced Jesus's side with a spear, bringing a sudden flow of blood and water." Verses 36 and 37 suggest that this was done in order to fulfill certain scriptures (Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Ps 34:20; Zech 12:10), but at least one ancient reader viewed the action in a different light. We know from Origen that Celsus read John 19:34 in light of *Il.* 5.335–340:

> Celsus next says: "What is the nature of the *ichor* in the body
> of the crucified Jesus? Is it such as flows in the bodies of the
> immortal gods?" He [Celsus] puts this question in a spirit of
> mockery; but we shall show from the serious narratives of the

> Gospels, although Celsus may not like it, that it was no mythic and Homeric ichor which flowed from the body of Jesus, but that, after His death, "one of the soldiers with a spear pierced His side, and there came thereout blood and water." (Origen, *Cels.* 2.36; Chadwick 1953)

Celsus's interpretation of John 19:34 suggests that this image functioned on multiple levels for ancient readers. Celsus makes the connection between the Homeric use of *ichor* and the blood and water from Jesus's side in order to mock Christians' belief in Jesus's divinity, and Origen in his rebuttal takes pains to distance John's verse from what he considers the myths of Homer, as opposed to the "true" signs of divinity elsewhere in the Gospels. While Celsus views Jesus's divinity as an impossibility, and therefore scathingly interprets the blood and water from Jesus's side as *ichor*, Origen defends Jesus's divinity in spite of Homer. Three characteristics of John's Gospel support my interpretation that the blood and water in John 19:34 may work within John's Christology to promote the idea of Jesus's divinity: John's overall concern with Jesus's divinity; John's noted affinities with other Hellenistic literary types; and the function of *Scheintod* in the romance novels, which I propose that John also shares. This connection between the blood and water in Jesus's wounded body and the divine fluid also makes sense in the context of John's use of physical signs to point to this ontology: after all, the body lifted up on the cross is the mechanism by which Jesus is identified as God.

After Jesus is taken down from the cross and entombed, Mary Magdalene approaches his burial site and sees that "the stone had been removed from the entrance" (20:1). Andy Reimer (2005, 297–316) notes the affinities that the empty tomb motif in the Gospels shares with the Hellenistic romances. Chariton writes of Chaereas, "When he reached the tomb, he found that the stones had been moved and the entrance was open. He was astonished at the sight and overcome with fearful perplexity at what had happened" (3.3.1–2). It is obvious even from a cursory reading that certain tropes are found in the descriptions of the discovery of the empty tomb both in

John and in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*: both Mary Magdalene and Chaereas approach the tomb around dawn (*Callirhoe*: περίορθρος; John: πρωΐ σκοτίας ἔτι οὔσης) only to find that the stone (λίθος) has been removed (*Callirhoe*: κεκινημένους; John: ἠρμένον) and the tomb is empty. In both cases, the curious absence of a body must be confirmed by a third party—Peter and "the other disciple" in the case of John and an anonymous man in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*. In highlighting the similar structure of the tropes across these texts, Reimer's work allows me to draw out further conclusions regarding the use of the trope of the empty tomb in both John and the novels. While Reimer (2005, 300) postulates that the Gospel accounts of the empty tomb influenced those found in the romances, in particular *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, I make no comment on the origins of this motif.[14] For the purpose of this analysis, what matters is not literary influence but shared use for common ends; that is, it seems to me that the function of the empty tomb is that it solidifies the significance of survival of death, which I argue is divinity. In providing the reader with an empty tomb, the narrative points out the unreality of the death experienced by the protagonist.[15] In the case of *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, as I noted above, the empty tomb prompts Chaereas to declare that she must be a goddess; likewise, in John Jesus's disappearance from his final resting place points to his divinity.

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[14] For reference, Reardon (1991, 17; 2003, 312–25) dates *Chaereas and Callirhoe* to around the middle of the first century CE. The manuscript 𝔓[52] is dated to the middle of the second century, making it possible that John first circulated around the end of the first century, but Reimer (2005, 300) postulates a pre-canonical-Gospel version of Jesus's empty tomb circulating orally around the time of Nero.

[15] Of course, graves and tombs, including empty tombs, are also closely associated with hero cult in Greco-Roman religion. See Betz 2004, 25–47; 1990, 245–47; Yarbro Collins 1995, 88–100; and Lüdemann 1994, 32–33, 43, 67–69, 141–53, 156–57, 216–22.

IV. Conclusion

John's Gospel depicts Jesus as simultaneously fleshly and divine. Nowhere is this clearer than in the moment of his crucifixion ([John 19:30](#)). I argue that Jesus's crucifixion—and notably, his survival—establishes firmly his divinity. As the other signs in John's Gospel depict Jesus's divinity through his physicality, so too does his crucifixion ultimately identify him with God, contributing to John's portrayal of a dialectical relationship between Word and Flesh. One way that this is most visible is in examining Jesus's death in light of other heroic *Scheintoten* in contemporaneous literature, namely the Hellenistic novels. The romances share with John a concern for correct identity, and indeed, devote many pages to describing the divine identities of the heroines. The heroines look like goddesses, are worshipped as goddesses by strangers, and even are assumed to be goddesses by their partners. In particular, I have argued that the apparent deaths of these heroines are part of that divine identification. This association between survival of death and divinity is most clear in *Chaereas and Callirhoe*, where Chaereas, finding the empty tomb, concludes that his wife must have been a goddess all along. *Scheintod* is part of the literary toolbox of ancient writers depicting their characters as gods. Comparing Jesus's sacrificial death on the cross to the *Scheintoten* of the Greek romances illuminates a possible reading of [John 19](#). I propose that Jesus's death and his escape from it work within the Gospel to confirm his divinity. While some of the novels create a sense of unreality of death either by using over-the-top descriptions of brutal apparent murders, or simply by creating distance between the heroine and other protagonists, John facilitates the unreality of Jesus's crucifixion with silence. Jesus's body hoisted on the cross points, like his other physical signs, to his identity as the Son of God. His survival confirms this identification. Further, both the flow of blood and water from Jesus's side in [19:34](#) and the empty tomb episode later on participate in culturally accepted means of suggesting divinity. Indeed, Jesus's divinity is made even more real by the fact that, for the author of John's Gospel, Jesus has truly died

and truly been raised up, as opposed to the romantic heroines, whose deaths are merely apparent. By examining John as a text produced in the literary milieu of the ancient Mediterranean, John's unique Christology is more clearly viewed.

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SECTION V

Supplement

Select Bibliography of Embedded Online Works

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I. INTRODUCTION

Electronic editions of ancient texts—both recent and past scholarly publications—are a rapidly growing body of online literature. This work is largely being conducted within the context of academic libraries, which view the digitisation process as a way of increasing access to their scholarly holdings while also ensuring the preservation—albeit a different form of preservation—of those same holdings. As noted in the preface, the editors of this volume have sought to harness this growing body of literature by embedding hyperlinks within each paper to relevant pieces of ancient literature and/or material culture.

The following bibliography comprises all of the online, open-access works that are linked in the preceding 17 essays. The list is designated "select" because it does not include links to secondary literature, including online scholarly publications, popular websites, online novel/movie profiles, and the like. Instead, this bibliography is oriented primarily toward online editions of ancient writings and inscriptions, as well as toward material culture as preserved in images/image databases and archaeological websites. In some instances, the links below connect to the most recent scholarly editions, when these have been made openly available by their publishers. In most instances, however, the links connect to older scholarly editions that are now in the public domain.

This bibliography is also designated "select" because it contains only those sources that are linked within the pages of the *Coming Back to Life* essays. This means that in cases where a scholarly edition comprises multiple volumes, but only one or more of those volumes are utilised in the *Coming Back to Life* essays, the remaining volume(s) have not been included. For example, consider the following entry:

Gummere, Richard M., trans. 1918–1925. *Seneca: Ad Lucilium Epistulae Morales*. 3 vols. LCL. London: Heinemann.
Vol. 1: archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu01seneuoft.
Vol. 3: archive.org/stream/adluciliumepistu03seneuoft.

In this case, the collective essays of the *Coming Back to Life* volume make reference to the contents of volumes 1 and 3 of Seneca's *Moral Letters to Lucilius*, though not to the contents of volume 2. Sometimes the missing volume(s) can easily be deduced. This is the case in the example here, where the URLs follow a pattern, and the user can simply substitute "02" in place of either "01" or "03." In other instances, however, the missing volumes are not as easily discerned.

We provide this select bibliography in the hope of creating better, easier access to the growing body of digital scholarly resources available online.

II. EMBEDDED ONLINE WORKS: MATERIAL CULTURE

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