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Mark's Empty Tomb and Other Translation Fables in Classical Antiquity

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Struggling under the weight of contemporary, socioreligious demands, prevailing scholarship regarding Mark's enigmatic ending may prove nothing short of delusional. Several factors, in my view, conspire, prohibiting a clear understanding of how such a text would have likely performed in the ancient Mediterranean world. First, scholars tend to subsume Mark under a Judaic literary domain, thus seeking its primary semiotic indices and cultural conventions within early Jewish literature. There appears, however, to be little basis for this appetence, except a rather non-scholarly insistence on a "pristine," "non-pagan" well from which the academy ought to draw nearly all cultural, literary, and ideological antecedents. Such aversion combines with what one may best describe as a fundamental misapprehension of the processes and principles governing Hellenistic literary production; that is, a given story, when juxtaposed with the array of analogous Mediterranean *fabulae*, must either match uniformly or the classification be summarily dismissed as nonapplicable. This not only comes as a false choice but betrays a gross misconception regarding the phenomena of syncretic adaptation in the Hellenistic Orient. Third, and perhaps most obstructive, the persistent sacred nature of the narrative, for many in a field overgrown with faith-based scholarship, has typically confused subject and object, yielding a paucity of effective historical, literary-critical treatments.[1]

With special attention to the second of these formidable obstacles, that is, pertaining to the composition of Levantine Greek literature in the Hellenistic and

[1] Indeed, the resurrection of Jesus, taken as a culturally possessed entity and as derived from the NT Gospels, arguably stands as the most sacred narrative of Western civilization.

Roman periods, some measure of reappraisal may be in order. Though variously reconstituted, Hellenic convention invariably governed the Greek literary domain from the Hellenistic period through the Second Sophistic and late antiquity, not merely in early Christian instances. One indeed errs to consider Hellenism in the ancient Greek East a matter of mere influence, as though passively achieved through indirection and diffusion. The writer of Greek literature in the Hellenistic and Roman periods creatively and consciously applied a variegated pastiche of Hellenic conventions and cultural codes, often drawn from the Greek classical canon.[2] Read as part of this broader cultural-literary domain, Mark applies indigenous cultural coloring, while artfully adapting his work, weaving it with Near Eastern motifs and nimble mimetic transvaluations; or, at other moments, Mark has with ingenuous superficiality assigned Palestinian nomenclature and cultural flourish (as though foreign decals placed upon a model).[3] Such Judeo-Oriental dress thinly

[2] The allusive, layered recombination of Hellenic conventions, patterns, and generic mixtures displayed the literary markers of *paideia* in Hellenistic and Romano-Greek prose and poetry. To write Greek literature meant to display Greekness via mimetic sophistication as set in relation to the classical literary tradition. For further reading regarding this observation, well established in current classical studies, see esp. Marco Fantuzzi and Richard Hunter, *Tradition and Innovation in Hellenistic Poetry* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004); Tim Whitmarsh, *Greek Literature and the Roman Empire: The Politics of Imitation* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001); Ellen Finkelpearl, "Pagan Traditions of Intertextuality in the Roman World," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity* (ed. Dennis R. MacDonald; SAC; Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 78–90. Regarding the related problematization of genre in the period, see Richard F. Thomas, "Genre through Intertextuality: Theocritus to Virgil and Propertius," in *Greek Literature*, vol. 8, *Greek Literature in the Roman Period and in Late Antiquity* (ed. Gregory Nagy; New York: Routledge, 2001), 73–92; and Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, "Ancient Literary Genres: A Mirage?" *Yearbook of General and Comparative Literature* 34 (1985): 74–84.

[3] As to Mark's mimetic use of the Greek classical canon, see esp. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000). One may likewise consider the Greekness of Jesus in Mark. Indeed, even the pronounced liberalism of Hillel appears to be in far more visible orbit with respect to early Jewish tradition generally and Torahism specifically (Jesus appears only to quote Torah with his own disciples in the Gospels to abstract and contrast his own practical philosophy, e.g., in Matthew 5). Mark renders his consummate magian, ascetic hero-king with the Hellenic appeal often granted to oriental sages and kings elsewhere in Greek literature. Consider the Hellenistic myth of Zoroaster. See Jenny Rose, *The Image of Zoroaster: The Persian Mage through European Eyes* (Persian Studies Series 21; New York: Bibliotheca Persica Press, 2000) or the Greco-Egyptian persona of Alexander (cf. Plutarch's *Vita Alexandri*). Similar to Flavius Philostratus's Apollonius of Tyana, Mark's Jesus carries the ambivalent qualities of both East and West. The Seleucid and Ptolemaic kings became masters of negotiating this bicultural hybridity, as each sought through propaganda to embody the royal legacies of both the Orient and Greece proper. Greek literature depicted even the most exotic kings with the artifice of the Ἕλληνες. Concerning this last point as visible in the Greek novel, see Susan Stephens, "Cultural Identity," in *The Cambridge Companion to the Greek and Roman Novel* (ed. Tim Whitmarsh; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 56–71. For an unassuming, gen-

draped over the marble body of another modulates the directing interpretive signals of the text, that is, a signification by abstraction and association.[4] Any item, then, from the array of Romano-Greek literary works (i.e., Greek literature composed during the Roman period), by means of generic reconstitution, conventional variation, and superficial regional attire necessarily varies from its Hellenic predecessors and disparate Hellenistic contemporaries, while wholly relying on and varying on the established Mediterranean cultural codes and semiotic conventional inventory, the then current semiotic grammar of Mediterranean cultural history.[5] One ought first to read the Gospel of Mark within this broader systemic literary context and not another. *Mutatis mutandis*, what likely process of signification would have directed the earliest readings of Mark's concluding episode?

Mark 16:1–8 foregrounds not an evincing, postmortem appearance of a risen Jesus but a cenotaph with a missing body. This ending has seemed so strangely unsatisfying and unresolved that many scholars have supposed a missing ending for the narrative, lost early in the process of textual transmission.[6] Given, however, the implications of the topos of the "missing body" in classical and late ancient Mediterranean literature, this supposition appears all too hasty. Plutarch's *Vita Romuli* describes at length the function of the "missing body" as a convention in Hellenistic and Roman narrative, citing Romulus, Aristeas of Proconnesus, the Olympic hero Kleomedes, and Alcmene as various examples. After describing Romulus's conflict with the Senate, Plutarch writes:

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eral treatment engaging the Greekness of Jesus in the NT Gospels, see Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus, Many Christs: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, But Many* (New York: HarperCollins, 1997).

[4] Even if freighted with sociocultural and religious criticism, Mark's thinly veiled Hellenistic core functions similarly to other Greek novels set in the Near East, such as *Ninos* and Iamblichus's *Babyloniaka*, as well as Philostratus's novelistic treatment of Apollonius's journey into the Orient (to India and back to Anatolia).

[5] "Romano-Greek" provides a helpful *terminus technicus* coined by Tim Whitmarsh and the Department of Classics and Ancient History at the University of Exeter, referring to Greek works composed during the Roman period. For further reading on semiotic theory, see Yuri M. Lotman, *Universe of the Mind: A Semiotic Theory of Culture* (trans. Ann Shukman; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990). See also Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation* (Advances in Semiotics; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); Umberto Eco et al., *Interpretation and Overinterpretation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992).

[6] See Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Hermeneia; Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 797–99. Collins sets forth a variety of commentators who have proposed numerous creative theories regarding a supposed lost ending to the narrative. From the more sophisticated end of the traditional-theological spectrum, see Beverly Roberts Gaventa and Patrick D. Miller, eds., *The Ending of Mark and the Ends of God: Essays in Memory of Donald Harrisville Juel* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2005). This collection of essays, a collaborative work from the faculty of Princeton Theological Seminary, addressed Mark 16:8, tacitly endeavoring to assuage a continued discomfort with Mark's seemingly abrupt (even truncated), irresolute ending.

Wherefore suspicion and calumny fell upon the body when he disappeared unaccountably a short time after. He disappeared on the Nones of July, as they now call the month, then Quintilis, leaving no certain account nor even any generally accepted tradition of his death, aside from the date of it, which I have just given. For on that day many ceremonies are still performed which bear a likeness to what then came to pass.

Nor need we wonder at this uncertainty, since although Scipio Africanus died at home after dinner, there is no convincing proof of the manner of his end, but some say that he passed away naturally, being of a sickly habit, some that he died of poison administered by his own hand, and some that his enemies broke into his house at night and smothered him. And yet Scipio's dead body lay exposed for all to see, all who beheld it formed therefrom some suspicion and conjecture of what had happened to it; whereas Romulus disappeared suddenly, and no portion of his body or fragment of his clothing remained to be seen. But some conjectured that senators, convened in the temple of Vulcan, fell upon him and slew him, and then cut his body in pieces, put each a portion into the folds of his robe, and so carried it away. Others think that it was neither in the temple of Vulcan nor when the senators alone were present that he disappeared, but that he was holding an assembly of the people outside of the city near the so-called Goat's Marsh, when suddenly strange and unaccountable disorders with incredible changes filled the air; the light of the sun failed, and night came down upon them, not with peace and quiet, but with awful peals of thunder and furious blasts driving rain from every quarter, during which the multitude dispersed and fled, but the nobles gathered closely together; and when the storm had ceased, and the sun shone out, and the multitude, now gathered together again in the same place as before, anxiously sought for their king, the nobles would not suffer them to inquire into his disappearance nor busy themselves about it, but exhorted them all to honour and revere Romulus, since he had been caught up into heaven, and was to be a benevolent god for them instead of a good king. The multitude, accordingly, believing this and rejoicing in it, went away to worship him with good hopes of his favour; but there were some, it is said, who tested the matter in a bitter and hostile spirit, and confounded the patricians with the accusation of imposing a silly tale upon the people, and of being themselves the murderers of the king.

At this pass, then, it is said that one of the patricians, a man of noblest birth, and of the most reputable character, a trusted and intimate friend also of Romulus himself, and one of the colonists from Alba, Julius Proculus by name, went into the forum and solemnly swore by the most sacred emblems before all the people that, as he was travelling on the road, he had seen Romulus coming to meet him, fair and stately to the eye as never before, and arrayed in bright and shining armour. He himself, then, affrighted at the sight, had said: "O King, what possessed thee, or what purpose hadst thou, that thou hast left us patricians a prey to unjust and wicked accusations, and the whole city sorrowing without end at the loss of its father?" Whereupon Romulus had replied: "It was the pleasure of the gods, O Proculus, from whom I came, that I should be with mankind only a short time, and that after founding a city destined to be the greatest on earth for

> empire and glory, I should dwell again in heaven. So, farewell, and tell the Romans that if they practice self-restraint, and add to it valour, they will reach the utmost heights of human power. And I will be your propitious deity, Quirinus." These things seemed to the Romans worthy of belief, from the character of the man who related them, and from the oath which he had taken; moreover, some influence from heaven also, akin to inspiration, laid hold upon their emotions, for no man contradicted Proculus, but all put aside suspicion and calumny and prayed to Quirinus, and honoured him as a god.
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> Now this is like the fables that the Greeks tell about Aristeas of Proconnesus and Kleomedes of Astypaleia. For they say that Aristeas died in the fuller's shop, and that when his friends came to fetch away his body, it had vanished out of sight; and presently certain travelers returning from abroad said that they had met Aristeas journeying towards Croton. Cleomedes also, who was of gigantic strength and stature, of uncontrolled temper, and like a mad man, is said to have done many deeds of violence, and finally, in a school for boys, he smote with his fists the pillar which supported the roof, broke it in two, and brought down the house. The boys were killed, and Cleomedes, being pursued, took refuge in a great chest, closed the lid down, and held it so fast that many men with their united strength could not pull it up; but when they broke the chest to pieces, the man was not to be found, alive or dead. In their dismay, then, they sent messengers to consult the Oracle at Delphi, and the Pythian priestess gave them this answer: "Cleomedes the Astypalaean is the latest of the heroes." It is said that Alcmene's body disappeared as they were carrying her forth for burial, and a stone was seen lying on the bier instead. In short, many such fables are told by writers who improbably ascribe divinity to the mortal features in human nature, as well as to the divine. (Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.3–28.6; trans. Perrin, LCL [with minor variation])

At first glance these stories appear to share but a thin commonality. Plutarch, however, goes on to indicate their bond: these are translation fables, each implicating the admission of the translated σῶμα into the divine heaven above.[7]

[7] As a Middle Plationist in the tradition of Ammonius, Plutarch derides such stories, insisting that physical, mundane bodies have no place in the ethereal realm above. As with Plato himself, the philosophy held as its fulcrum a pronounced body–soul dualism wherein the shedding of the physical σῶμα becomes the ultimate liberating moment upon death; only the true self, the soul, is to ascend unencumbered. Despite any Platonic philosophical criticism, as this study proceeds to demonstrate, the popularity of the translation fable sees no visible decline through the Roman periods. Plutarch's derision, therefore, arises solely out of his central philosophical commitments. Early Christian literature enters this standing philosophical debate, registering various philosophical responses represented in various generic forms, that is, mythopoeic narratives, sayings collections, and speculative disquisitions (here one has in view such texts as 1 Corinthians 15). Whereas the Gnostic literature tended to side with Plutarch in adopting a soul-journey salvific model (e.g., the Thomas tradition), many other early Christian texts posited a translated, "heavenly" σῶμα, such as presented in Paul and the NT Gospels. See Gregory J. Riley, *Resurrection Reconsidered: Thomas and John in Controversy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995). For a more detailed, nuanced treatment of Middle Platonism generally and Plutarch's eclectic variation specif-

As Plutarch states, many such accounts existed in ancient Greek and Latin literature. The late Harvard classicist Arthur Pease comments,

> We may . . . contrast theophany, in which the god temporarily assumes a visible and quasi-material form, with disappearance, in which man is imagined as putting on the divine. Each is, in a sense, characterized by that metamorphosis so dear to the thought world of the Hellenistic and following ages, which is exemplified in literary form by authors like Parthenius in Greek and Ovid and Apuleius in Latin. "He disappeared and was worshipped as a . . . god": this is the statement recurring again and again throughout antiquity.[8]

Hellenistic and Roman literature is replete with translation fables commonly indicated by the disappearance of the deified hero. Indeed, the metastasis of the body as evidenced by its disappearance signaled the graduation or acceptance of the individual into the divine rank. In short, the body must not see decay, lest the remains demonstrate in perpetuity the mortal status of the hero.

The ubiquity of this topos, as Pease did aver, persists, yielding a robust array of literary instances throughout the Hellenistic and Roman periods. Once Herakles had ascended his martyr's pyre, as Diodorus Siculus and Lucian attest, Zeus sent his mighty thunderbolt consuming Herakles, wood, and all in conflagration. The bystanders afterward, being unable to find Herakles' charred bone remains amid the ash, declare that he had been translated and had achieved the rank of the demigods (Diodorus Siculus 4.38.14; Lucian, *Cyn.* 13). Statius and Herodianus tell of the body of Homer's deceased Ganymedes having disappeared at Zeus's decree that he be deified so as to become his heavenly court cupbearer (Statius, *Silvae* 3.4.12–18; Herodianus Historicus 1.11.2). Pindar tells of Amphiarus having disappeared along with his horses and chariot within an opened fissure in the earth, having achieved heroic status (*Nem.* 10.14). Dionysius of Halicarnassus, likewise, records the disappearance of Aeneas, the epic hero of Virgil's *Aeneid,* while in battle near Lavanium; the Latins built a "hero shrine" to him there with the inscription "To the father and god of this place, who presides over the waters of the river Numicius." Because of his disappearance, they said that Aeneas had been "translated to the gods" (*Ant. rom.* 1.64.4–5). Strabo describes the vanishing of the great hero of the Trojan War Diomedes, while on an island in the Adriatic. The gods at once, moreover, transformed his companions into birds to inhabit what became known as the Islands of Diomedes. According to the post-Homeric folktale, Athena had granted Diomedes immortality; he was thus subsequently worshiped as a deity (*Geogr.* 6.3.9). Sophocles in his *Oedipus Coloneus* (1645–66) portrays the disappearance of Oedipus as signaling his divine translation. Like the aforementioned

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ically, see John M. Dillon, *The Middle Platonists: 80 B.C. to A.D. 220* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1977).

[8] Arthur S. Pease, "Some Aspects of Invisibility," *HSCP* 53 (1942): 13.

Kleomedes, Euthymus the Olympic boxer, according to Aelian (*Var. hist.* 3.18), achieved divinity, evidenced by his disappearance in the river Caecinus. Pausanius writes of Marathon, a rustic man who vanishes in battle to help the people at Marathon against the barbarians. The oracle tells the Athenians thus to honor him as the hero Echetlaeus (*Descr.* 1.32.5). Later, in book 6 (6.9.7–8), Pausanius elaborates on the vanished boxer Kleomedes, indicating that the Pythian priestess at Delphi offered the declaration, "Last of the heroes is Kleomedes of Astypalaea," adding, "Honour him with sacrifices as being no longer mortal." Eusebius, recounting the ancient work of Abydenus, makes mention of the legendary disappearance of Belus (*Praep. ev.* 9.41). Diodorus Siculus likewise provides the tale of Basileia of Uranus, who disappears in a storm of thunder and lightning and is thus declared a goddess and given worship (3.57.8). Isocrates indicates that Zeus's sons Castor and Pollux, the twin demigods of epic tradition, had vanished from the earth, as a final act evincing their immortality (*Archid.* 17–19). In Hellenistic Egypt, Queen Bernike, wife of Ptolemy Soter, dies and, according to the bucolic poet Theocritus, is rapt away before her exchange with the ferryman Charon; she is translated to become a Ptolemaic goddess for the people (*Id.* 17.34–52). From Roman tradition, Macrobius includes the translation fable of Saturnus who is said to have vanished (*Sat.* 1.7.24). Festus retells the story of Anna's disappearance in the river Numicius, and thus she was, according to Festus, "worshipped throughout all of Italy" (p. 194M). In his *Vitae,* Plutarch includes the disappearance of Larentia the second, near the grave of Larentia the first, and the Romans subsequently grant her divine honors (*Rom.* 5.4). Augustine recalls the ancient legend of King Aventinus, who vanishes in battle and consequently is hailed as a deity (*Civ.* 18.12). Suetonius gives the tale of Epidius of Nuceria, who leapt into the Sarnus River; having vanished, he later appeared on the horns of a bull, disappeared again, and was numbered among the gods (*Gramm.* 28). Antoninus Liberalis supplies numerous translation fables in his *Metamorphoses.* In one such tale (13), Aspalis hangs herself rather than have her virginity stolen by the tyrant Tartarus. Her body disappears with a statue left in its place standing next to the superior statue of Artemis, implying her veneration. Antoninus likewise describes the disappearance translation of Metioche and Minippe (25). In his fortieth fable, the demigoddess Britomartis disappears and receives the name Aphaea. In her place a statue appears in the temple of Artemis. The people thus worship her as a goddess.[9] Philostratus in like manner proposes the deification of Apollonius, citing his having no tomb or burial place as proof of his translation. He completes his hero depiction stating, "his shrine at Tyana is singled out and honored with royal officers: for neither have the Emperors denied to him

[9] Antoninus (*Metam.* 33) similarly contains the translation fable applied to Alcmene, mother of Herakles, as likewise given above in Plutarch's extended excerpt. Upon her death, as the community conducted her funeral procession, her body vanishes from her bier, having been miraculously replaced by a large statue, that is, a κολοσσός.

the honors of which they themselves were held worthy," namely, divine honors (*Vit. Apoll.* 8.31).

In a few peculiar instances, individuals sought to feign translation by deliberately dying in such a manner as to leave no bodily remains. Diogenes Laertius, for example, tells how the pre-Socratic shaman-philosopher Empedocles leapt into the volcano at Mount Etna to confirm his divinity. The account states that "he set out on his way to Etna; then, when he had reached it, he plunged into the fiery craters and disappeared, his intention being to confirm the report that he had become a god" (8.69). Alexander, at life's end, thought to throw himself into the Euphrates, according to Arrian (*Anab.* 7.27.3), "so as to disappear from among men" and thus sustain his mythologization as a demigod, son of Ammon-Zeus. In Lucian's *De Morte Peregrini* (40), Proteus stages his own pyric death as a stunt during the Olympic games of 165 C.E. Following the tradition of Empedocles and Herakles, Proteus intends to be utterly consumed by the great pyre, thus leaving no remains. The account states that "when the pyre was kindled and Proteus flung himself bodily in, a great earthquake first took place, accompanied by a bellowing of the ground, and then a vulture, flying up out of the midst of the flames, went off to Heaven, saying, in human speech, with a loud voice: 'I am through with the earth; to Olympus I fare.'" An old man of Athens subsequently steps forward as a witness to the raised Proteus, having met Proteus in his translated state "in white raiment walking cheerfully in the Portico of the Seven Voices, and wearing a garland of white olive." Lucian intimates that Proteus's disciples had conspired with him to stage his translation in order to ensure an exalted *Nachleben*. Others, however, such as Aulus Gellius, appear to have held Proteus in high esteem and presumably would have accepted such an account as a fitting embellishment for the man, tacitly assigning him the sublime honor of *exaltatio memoriae* (*Noct. att.* 12.11.1).

This collection of translation fables displays the persistence, generic adaptability, and elasticity of the convention in the cultural history of classical antiquity, though providing merely a fraction of the extensive list of individuals whose bodies were said to have vanished, thus having achieved immortal deification. Almost as often as not, the translation occurred postmortem, that is, signaled by a missing corpse. Some have rightly distinguished between the cultural customs of the hero cult and the "translation fable" tradition as described in this article.[10] While the former held sacred the remains of the one venerated and therefore required the

[10] See Peter G. Bolt, *The Cross from a Distance: Atonement in Mark's Gospel* (New Studies in Biblical Theology 18; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2004), 153–54. Though Bolt distinguishes the two, he sees neither the hero cult nor the translation/apotheosis tradition as applicable to the interpretation of the resurrection narratives of the Gospels. Although the present article altogether eschews Bolt's faith-based, apologetic approach, the book does in its historical analysis provide a few provocative lines of consideration.

interment of those remains, the latter deserves some further elucidation. Deborah Steiner analyzes the ancient tradition of the κολοσσοί, statues typically small in size created as effigies representing the missing body of the hero.[11] Often, for instance, when a king died in battle and the people were unable to recover the body, they would produce a κολοσσός for the sake of funerary consecration. As an alternative response to the same problem, the ancients devised the translation fable, according to which the heroification of the individual would extend to deification. In some of the examples provided in this article, these two traditions combine; in the act of translation, the gods replace the vanished body, leaving in its place a small statue. Such community folktales arose in explanation of the smaller, cult-shrine statuary dedicated to lionized individuals whose remains were never recovered. By this means, a hero would nonetheless obtain the principal Hellenic honor of κλέος ἄφθιτον.[12]

Turning back, then, to the concluding episode in the Gospel of Mark, the narration proposes Jesus' missing body and promise of postmortem appearance in Galilee as part of the Markan content that William Wrede identified as the "Markan secret," that is, the portions of Mark distinguished as the author's most flagrant embellishments.[13] "And they went and fled from the tomb; for trembling and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to any one, for they were afraid." The Markan gloss disclaims the precedence of a derived oral or literary tradition of Jesus' translation. Interpreting the episode in terms of a Judaic notion of resurrection, typically conceived either as an awaited, collective eschatological event or as the resuscitation of a single corpse, most scholars have failed to classify properly how Mark's "empty tomb" narrative would have registered in its Mediterranean milieu. Indeed, it would have been the body's absence, not its presence, that would have signaled the provocative moment for the ancient reader. Resurrection in early Jewish literature never functioned to distinguish or exalt the individual as a standalone event; instead, resurrection stood as a general collective eschatological moment at the end of the age, an anticipated feature of the final judgment of humankind. One finds no conventional trait of early Jewish eschatological resurrection, whether literary or conceptual, in Mark's concluding episode. The resuscitation of the mundane *corpus*, moreover, contrasts starkly with the somatic translation of one who had achieved immortal deification. While this article displays numerous examples of the latter, Pliny grants a distinct category to the for-

[11] Steiner, *Images in Mind: Statues in Archaic and Classical Greek Literature and Thought* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2001).

[12] "Undying fame" served as the supreme attainment throughout classical antiquity. The NT designation εὐαγγέλιον thus conveyed not a report good for the hearer, as modern self-interested devotees may infer, but an encomium exalting the *Nachleben* of the founder.

[13] Wrede, *The Messianic Secret* (trans. J. C. G. Grieg; Cambridge: J. Clarke, 1971; German orig., 1901).

mer in his *Naturalis Historia* (7.53). Indeed, the Gospel tradition appears to distinguish Jesus' theurgic acts of resuscitation (e.g., Lazarus, the son of the widow at Nain, and Jairus's daughter) from Jesus' own postmortem exaltation. The flight from the tomb in Mark's final sentence instead echoes the Roman cultural calendric reenactment of the affrighted flight of the people from *Campus Martius* at the translation of Romulus, known as the *Populifugia*, celebrated throughout the empire on the nones of Quintilis (July), thus by *aemulatio* invoking the quintessential translation fable of the Roman world (cf. Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.7).

The Markan fabulist thus has provided a tremendously vivid, apropos ending at Mark 16:8. One then may best explain the accretions, whether Mark's short and long endings or the postmortem accounts in Matthew and Luke, as opportunistic expansions at the end of the scroll, a quite common scribal phenomenon in the transmission histories of ancient literature, in these instances providing supermundane, epilogical content extending the Markan narrative.[14] As is particularly visible in the Romulean apotheosis traditions deployed in Roman imperial propaganda, post-translation appearances, speeches, ascensions, and eyewitness testimonies became optional appendages to the "translation fable" convention.[15] Thus, while the fabulist provides an evocative, even profound ending at Mark 16:8, albeit abrupt—indeed, such awkward, abrupt endings were all too common in classical literature—ancient readers would not have perceived an ending this rousing as the narrative's *ne plus ultra;* the invocation of the Romulean "translation fable" in the final sentence itself invited accretion.[16]

[14] This observation clearly holds to a lesser degree with the extra verse added to the proportionally insignificant Latin Codex Bobiensis, that is, the so-called shorter ending in MS *k*.

[15] Gerhard Lohfink, John E. Alsup, and subsequent scholars have, in my view, mistakenly seen one or the other of these appended features as constituting the core of the "translation" tradition. This misstep may have contributed to the false notion that Mark's ending either applies a different convention or truncates a narrative that must have included these "translation" subthemes. See Lohfink, *Die Himmelfahrt Jesu: Untersuchungen zu den Himmelfahrts- und Erhöhungstexten bei Lukas* (SANT 26; Munich: Kösel, 1971); Alsup, *The Post-Resurrection Appearance Stories of the Gospel-Tradition* (Calwer Theologische Monographien 5; Stuttgart: Calwer, 1975). Regarding the broader matter of "translation" in the NT corpus, see my own dissertation, "Translation Fables in Hellenistic and Roman Antiquity and the Resurrection of Jesus in the New Testament Gospels" (Ph.D. diss., Claremont Graduate University—School of Religion, expected 2011).

[16] Stephanie West has demonstrated the ubiquity of the awkward, abrupt ending in classical and late ancient literature ("Terminal Problems," in *Hesperos: Studies in Ancient Greek Poetry Presented to M. L. West on His Seventieth Birthday* [ed. P. F. Finglass, C. Collard, and N. J. Richardson; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007], 3–21). West also highlights the commonality of "terminal accretion," especially insofar as a text's ending invited further interpolation or embellishment. The end of the roll was particularly susceptible to such appendages. Whereas West, admittedly a nonspecialist in early Christian literature, has found the abruptness of Mark 16:8 to be severe even by ancient standards, presumably acceptance of the present thesis would assuage her residual discomfort.

Accepting this reading, the term ἀνάστασις thus must obtain a most peculiar ambivalence throughout Mark. On the one hand, "getting up" refers to miracles of mundane resuscitation and the collective Jewish hope of a blessed afterlife granted at the eschaton; on the other hand, "rising up" denotes the climactic translation of the narrative's hero, a demigod shown to be immortal through established protocol, namely, a vanished body. Jesus' appellation in Mark, υἱὸς θεοῦ, "a son of a god," posits the demigod rank of the protagonist, thus necessitating his translation at the conclusion of the aretology. This distinction exceeds that of translated Moses in Hellenistic Jewish lore as, for instance, preserved in Josephus, *Ant.* 4.315–31.[17] The transfiguration in Mark 9 undoubtedly invokes this tradition, along with that of the translated Elijah, prefiguring the translation of Mark's protagonist. Once the disciples suggest the erection of cult shrines (or cenotaphs [ποιήσωμεν τρεῖς σκηνάς; v. 5], an adaptation following the honorific protocol accorded to translated Hellenistic and Roman heroes), lest the reader suppose the same rank for the three, the narrator supplies the divine uranic voice distinguishing Jesus as a demigod, Οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ υἱός μου ἀγαπητός (v. 7).[18] This step dares to venture well beyond precedence, placing the Markan tradition at or beyond the outskirts of Hellenistic Judaism (here, perhaps better termed "Judaic Hellenism"). Later, in Mark 12, Jesus' altercation with the Sadducees over the nature of the resurrected state anticipates Mark's adaptation of the translation tradition, thus subsuming Judaic resurrection under the aforesaid Mediterranean convention. Mundane bodies are not raised but are translated into bodies similar to those of "the angels of heaven." Paul insists on the same point in 1 Corinthians 15: they are "sown a natural body, and raised a pneumatic body," as contrary to mundane resuscitation. Mark's ending, however, displays substantive points of incoherence with this theme. Jesus' translation is to be held as distinct from a collective day of resurrection. His body had not seen decay. The conventional signals of the account most fully comport with a distinctive translation and not with common eschatological hopes.[19]

[17] See Roger David Aus, *The Death, Burial, and Resurrection of Jesus, and the Death, Burial, and Translation of Moses in Judaic Tradition* (Studies in Judaism; Lanham, MD: University Press of America, 2008). This daring, though often tenuous, comparison argues for a genetic traditional pattern governing the NT "resurrection" narratives, directly taken from the death and translation of Moses in early and Tannaitic Judaism. While I do acknowledge Mark's awareness of and connection with the Hellenistic translation accounts of Moses, my thesis diverges from Aus by allowing the two traditions to exist as parallel narratives each independently adapting the broader Mediterranean "translation fable" topos.

[18] Cf. Romulus's cult shrine on the Quirinal in Rome, a tribute to his translation; Cicero, *Resp.* 2. 10.20b.

[19] The comprehensive monographs by Claudia Setzer, Casey D. Elledge, and George W. E. Nickelsburg have meticulously surveyed the "resurrection" traditions in early Jewish thought. Such studies reveal a genetic relationship between early Christian conceptions of a "day of resurrection" and similar eschatological traditions reflected in early Jewish literature. One may also observe the palpable contrasts between these traditions and the Mediterranean motifs of the ear-

Mark, moreover, as a hybridic literary work, most comfortably resides at and often beyond the conventional outskirts of early Judaism, a tumultuously Hellenistic text with a valence typically encompassing a broader Levantine domain, thus further favoring the stated reading. The philologist may query Mark as to the implied author/narrator and the implied reader of the composition. Glosses such as one finds at Mark 7:3–4 become determinative:

> For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, do not eat unless they cleanse their hands to the elbow, thus observing the tradition of the elders; and when they come from the agora, they do not eat unless they wash themselves; and there are many other traditions that they observe, [such as] the washing of cups, pots, and bronze vessels.

Adela Yarbro Collins has abridged the persuasive case that such practices of ritual purity were indeed normative throughout the Jewish Diaspora.[20] If, in such an economized narrative, the author took pains to describe so basic and common a Jewish practice, then the general narrative valence must accommodate a readership well outside of any Jewish community.[21] These comments in Mark, therefore, belie any effort to identify Mark's conventional domain as predominantly Jewish. Would not such a gloss seem altogether absurdly obvious in the context of the Jewish quarter of the Mediterranean metropolis, whether in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, or Rome, much less in any other Jewish context? While the implied author would have the reader trust the narrative's distillation of the narrated topics, the author speaks of the "Jews" only in the third person, thus implying an external,

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liest Christian resurrection narratives of Jesus as here described. Perhaps contrary to the theses of these studies and simply put, a thorough understanding of early Jewish notions of "resurrection" provides little or no aid in parsing the narrative conventional signals of Mark's concluding episode. In early Jewish thought, "resurrection" never functioned to exalt the individual, distinguishing an exemplar of heroic achievement (i.e., early Jewish or early Christian ἀρετή or ascetic *pietas*). Instead, Jewish "resurrection" resided within larger eschatological-mythic schemata as a function of an awaited collective "day of judgment" at the end of the age. The κένωσις of Philippians 2, therefore, relies on the Mediterranean "translation" tradition and not on any known convention of early Jewish thought. Such studies thus become most useful in discerning the "resurrection/judgment" themes seen in such texts as Q 11:31–32—the Ninevites and the Queen of the South "rising up in judgment." See Setzer, *Resurrection of the Body in Early Judaism and Early Christianity: Doctrine, Community, and Self-Definition* (Boston: Brill Academic, 2004); Elledge, *Life after Death in Early Judaism: The Evidence of Josephus* (WUNT 2/208; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2006); Nickelsburg, *Resurrection, Immortality, and Eternal Life in Intertestamental Judaism* (HTS 26; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1972).

[20] Yarbro Collins, *Mark*, 344–49.

[21] Cf. Mark's basic description of the Sadducees in 12:18, likewise aimed at a non-Jewish readership. These observations should not, however, diminish one's awareness of the Hellenistic Jewish conventions of Mark or the sporadic anomalous survival of traditions likely derived from an early Palestinian "Jesus" movement.

critical orientation. Though critically engaging Palestinian Judaisms, Mark's polemical depiction of the "Jews" appears crudely stereotypical, revealing a narrative composed and consumed by an external society, one vehemently opposed to the separatist traits and perceived "wrongheaded" tenacity of those sects. Presented in a sharply distancing Hellenistic Jewish portraiture, Mark's metanarrative articulates sociocultural unrest in the Greek East in the wake of a regional, provoked conflict with Rome, a conflict, according to Josephus, brought on by the very points of perceived Jewish obstinance derided and scorned throughout Mark's narration.[22] Though Mark's story is set in Palestine, one may better classify Mark as Mediterranean, Levantine literature aimed at the registration of sociocritical positions within a region of cultural-political upheaval, that is, ca. the 70 C.E. demolition of Jerusalem. Jesus thus becomes the literary vehicle and emblem of a charged sociopolitical-religious response to an obstinate, broken Jewish revolt against Rome; he serves as a literary-cultural *evocatio sacrorum,* an instrument functioning to delineate and extract the best of a (regionally perceived) failed religious civilization. Mark thus shares a more cosmopolitan, cultural hybridity as typical in such first-century Levantine cities as Antioch on the Orontes. The subsumption of resurrection language under the Mediterranean topos of translation typifies such hybridity in Mark's hero depiction, that is, a Hellenistic, Levantine adaptation set in Palestine and falling within a distinct constellation of translation narratives as exhibited in this article.[23]

[22] The thesis that Mark's metanarrative resides in close proximity to that of Josephus in his *Jewish War,* that is, to array an inculpatory case against the various modes of separatism that had subversively aggravated Roman governance in Palestine, exerted as tacit acts of sedition, provoking the First Jewish War, deserves a comprehensive treatment well beyond the confines of the present article. Books 2–6 detail what Josephus understood to be the chief underpinnings of the conflict. The polarized Judaizing response to Roman occupation often, according to Josephus, became manifest under the pretense of zealous fidelity to Jewish separatist tradition, in many ways echoing themes established in the Maccabean Revolt two centuries prior. Mark's temple incident, arguably the climax of the narrative, accordingly references Eleazar's "den of bandits" having usurped the temple precinct and their subsequently offensive policies regarding Roman offerings at the temple (including Ceasar's pacific bull offerings, a common Roman policy at the most prominent temples throughout the provinces!), an offense that became a primary provocation of Roman military action in the region. The term λησταί ("bandits") had become a trope applied to describe such Judaizers, who had, in the eyes of Jewish Hellenists and others, provoked an altogether unnecessary conflict with Rome, resulting in the decimation of Judaism's holy city and shame upon the religion. See Donald Juel, *Messiah and Temple: The Trial of Jesus in the Gospel of Mark* (SBLDS 31; Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1977).

[23] Mark's Gospel thus displays a myth of Jewish Palestine perhaps as inauthentic as the 1942 Universal Pictures film *Arabian Nights* displays of early medieval Baghdad and Arabia, what co-writer True Boardman described as "a western with camels." *Arabian Nights* thus becomes far more informative about Hollywood cinema culture in the 1940s than about late ancient Arabia or even the anthology of Arabian legends *One Thousand and One Nights.* In a similar manner, Mark departs from the Synoptic Sayings Source, a text that appears to have yet resided within the out-

Turning attention to Mark's reception, one observes the variations on the "missing body" convention found in Matthew, Luke, and John. The comparison becomes most compelling in the juxtaposition of the various renditions of the translation of Romulus and those of Jesus in the NT. The mimetic signals of Jesus' translation fables place the tradition squarely within that of Romulus, legendary founding king of Rome. Consider the following cluster of mimetic signals variously recurring.

Table 1
The Translations of Romulus and Jesus Compared

	Mimetic Signal	*References*
1	Missing body	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.3–5; Matt 28:11–14; Mark 16:6; Luke 24:3; John 20:2–10
2	Prodigies	Livy 1.16.1; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.816–17; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.6–7; Matt 27:51–54; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45
3	Darkness over the land	Ovid, *Metam.* 14.816–22; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.6–7; Matt 27:45; Mark 15:33; Luke 23:44
4	Mountaintop speech	Ovid, *Metam.* 14.820–24; Matt 28:18–20
5	Great commission	Livy 1.16.7; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.811, 815; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.63.4; Matt 28:18–20
6	Ascension	Livy 1.16.6; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.820–24; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.7; Luke 24:51; Acts 1:9
7	Son of god	Livy 1.16.3 Matt 27:54; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2; Mark 15:39; John 20:31

skirts of a Palestinian Jewish cultural sphere, and has composed a compelling narrative adapting Hellenistic Levantine convention, set within a stereotypic myth of early-first-century Palestine. The sprinkled Semitisms in Mark thus at little expense add cultural flourish, festooning the narrative in a manner scarcely approaching verisimilitude, though adequate for its economy and pace. The knowledge of Judaism assumed of Mark's reader often amounts to content well within the common Mediterranean public domain (Mark's use of Moses and Elijah in Mark 9, for instance, requires only a basic knowledge of their respective legendary ascensions, stories commonly known about these heroes of Jewish sacred history, perhaps not unlike a bare Western familiarity with Muhammad's legendary horseback ascension from Jerusalem).

TABLE 1 (*cont.*)

	Mimetic Signal	*References*
8	Meeting on the road	Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.63.3–4; Luke 24:13–35; Acts 9:3–19
9	Eyewitness testimony	Cicero, *Resp.* 2.10; Livy 1.16.1–8; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.63.3–4; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27–28; Luke 24:35; 1 Cor 15:3–11
10	Taken away in a cloud	Livy 1.16.1; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; Acts 1:9
11	Dubious alternative accounts	Livy 1.16.4–5; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.5–6, 8; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.2–6; 2.63.3; Matt 28:11–14
12	Immortal/heavenly body	Livy 1.16.8; Ovid, *Metam.* 14.818–28; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.6–8; 1 Cor 15:35–50; 1 Pet 3:18
13	Outside of the city	Livy 1.16.1; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.6; John 19:17
14	The people flee (*populifugia*)	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.5; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.7; Matt (26:56); 28:8; Mark (14:50); 16:8
15	Deification	Livy 1.16.3; Cicero, *Resp.* 2.10.20b; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.56.5–6; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.7; 28.3; Matt 27:54; Rom 1:4
16	Belief, homage, and rejoicing	Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Ant. rom.* 2.63.3–4; Plutarch, *Rom.* 27.8; Matt 28:9, 17; Luke 24:41, 52; John 20:27
17	Bright and shining appearance	Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.1–2; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29; Acts 9:3; Rev 1:16
18	Frightened subjects	Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Livy 1.16.2; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.2; Matt 28:5, 10; Mark 16:8; Luke 24:37–38
19	All in sorrow over loss	Livy 1.16.2; Ovid, *Fasti* 2.475–511; Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.2; Luke 24:18–24
20	Inspired message of translation	Plutarch, *Rom.* 28.3; Acts 1:4–8; 2:1–4

In the funerary consecration of the Roman emperors, the Ceasars receiving *exaltatio*, and not *damnatio*, often by standard protocol obtained the myth of apotheosis. As I have presented elsewhere, this tradition mimetically followed the archetypal figure Romulus, the premier ruler of Rome.[24] Following Romulus, the translated "appearance" tradition, though an optional component of the larger "translation fable" topos, became a prominent feature in Roman apotheosis accounts.[25] One, therefore, should not be at all surprised to find the early Christian "King of Kings" embellished in like manner, that is, emulating the Romulean translation fable. After all, how can the king of the nations afford a treatment at all secondary to the Caesars? Mark's narrative, however, exists prior in this developmental, mimetic trend and therefore places Jesus within the broader, generic "translation fable" convention. Exposing the later, specific *aemulatio Romuli* (or *rivalitas Romuli*, as the case may be) merely serves to identify the inchoate tradition along a literary, developmental trajectory. The present article thus varies from those of Elias Bickermann and Neill Q. Hamilton in placing the Markan translation narrative in conventional continuity with the later, so-called resurrection narratives of the NT Gospels.[26]

Justin Martyr, Origen, Celsus, Tertullian, Minucius Felix, and Arnobius admit that the early Christians patterned Jesus' resurrection tale after the Roman imperial and Greek heroic, mythographic tradition.[27] The earliest of these, Justin Martyr,

[24] Richard C. Miller, "Julius Proculus and the Politics of Paul's Resurrection Myth in 1 Corinthians 15" (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature. Boston, Massachusetts, November 23, 2008).

[25] The legends surrounding the peregrinic sightings of the translated Aristeas of Proconnesus provide one of several notable exceptions to this generalization. Translated "road" encounters became something of an optional leitmotif within the "translation fable" tradition. In the case of the translation of Claudius (ca. 54 C.E.), for instance, Seneca writes that Livius Geminus, the senator who likewise testified concerning the translation appearance of Gauis's sister Drusilla, claimed to be an eyewitness to the translation of Claudius, having met the postmortem emperor hobbling on the Via Appia (Seneca, *Apol.* 1).

[26] Bickermann, "Das leere Grab," *ZNW* 23 (1924): 281–92; Hamilton, "Resurrection Tradition and the Composition of Mark," *JBL* 84 (1965): 415–21. Mark does not fully innovate with his invocation of the "translation fable" tradition. 1 Corinthians 15 suggests prior community developments along these lines, mimetically following the Romulean eyewitness tradition, that is, that of Julius Proculus. Daniel A. Smith's tantalizing study contributes to this same discussion from current scholarship in Q (*The Post-Mortem Vindication of Jesus in the Sayings Gospel Q* [Library of New Testament Studies 338; New York: T&T Clark, 2006]). While Q 13:33–34 alone appears not to invoke directly an "apotheosis" or "translation" convention as applied in this study, the sayings collection does seem to refract a community tradition that may indeed cohere with the diachronic developments seen in a Markan trajectory, thus complementing 1 Corinthians 15.

[27] Justin, *1 Apol.* 21; Origen, *Cels.* 3.22–31; Tertullian, *Apol.* 21.20–23; Minucius Felix, *Oct.* 21.9–10; Arnobius, *Adv. Gentes* 6.1.41. Wendy Cotter has discussed some of these references,

a Samaritan born in the first century and writing in the mid-second century, confesses:

> And when we affirm that the Logos, who was God's first-born, was begotten without a sexual union, i.e. Jesus Christ, our teacher who, after he was crucified, died, and rose, ascended into the sky, we are conveying nothing new with respect to those whom you call the sons of Jupiter. Mercury, the interpreting word and teacher of all; Aesculapius, who, though he was a great physician, was struck by a thunderbolt, and so ascended to heaven; and Bacchus too, after he had been torn limb from limb; and Hercules, when he had committed himself to the flames to escape his toils; and the sons of Leda, and Dioscuri; and Perseus, son of Danae; and Bellerophon, who, though sprung from mortals, rose to heaven on the horse Pegasus. For what shall I say of Ariadne, and those who, like her, have been declared to be set among the stars? And what about the emperors who die among you, whom you deem worthy to be forever immortalized and for whom you bring forward someone who swears that he had seen Caesar, as he is being consumed by fire, ascend into heaven from the funeral pyre. (*1 Apol.* 21)

Justin places the greatest contours of the Gospel narrative within a mythopoeic modality of hero fabulation. Considering the plea's broader context, one may best abbreviate his argument in this manner: "We, O Romans, have produced myths and fables with our Jesus as you have done with your own heroes and emperors; so why are you killing us?" Proceeding from the earliest great apologist of the Christian tradition, this admission casts a profound light on the nature of early Christian narrative production.

With Mark presenting itself as raw and primitive in its inculpatory program, as compared, for instance, to Matthew or Luke, its mythography exhibits by degree a freer, more whimsical quality. Typically, when the ancient historian chose to include a Mediterranean translation fable in a history or biography, the writer distinguished the account with such formulae as "it is said" or "some write"; this was

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though without fleshing out their performance in early Christian countercultural history ("Greco-Roman Apotheosis Traditions and the Resurrection Appearances in Matthew," in *The Gospel of Matthew in Current Study: Studies in Memory of William G. Thompson, S.J.* [ed. David E. Aune; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001], 127–53). While Origen allows that the resurrection narratives fall under the stated convention, he wants to see the various Greek and Roman accounts as reflecting demonic activity, that is, as counterfeits. Origen also attempts to distinguish the NT accounts by claiming Jesus' effectual theological superiority. Since Jesus has impacted so many by his piety, his translation must be thereby proven legitimate. While Paul Fullmer's recent monograph (*Resurrection in Mark's Literary-Historical Perspective* [Library of New Testament Studies 360; London: T&T Clark, 2007]) has contributed to a more complete narrative analysis of Mark's "empty tomb" pericope, seeking to situate the text within the prose tradition of the Greek and Roman novel, he may perhaps strengthen the thesis by demonstrating some degree of receptional awareness. In the end, however, the two studies may prove complementary.

to signal for the reader a generic interlude. In the absence of such cues, the textualization of Jesus in Mark, as a whole, comes bracketed within a playful mode of fable, at the same time providing a charged, socioreligious message in the face of profound cultural displacement in later first-century Palestine.[28] Instead of reporting a *sui generis*, historic moment, Mark renders his hero-sage within the standing mythographic tradition of the "translation fable," thus by *interpretatio graeca et romana* elevating him to the rank of the classical Mediterranean demigod. Perhaps in the present century, this realignment in reading Mark's final episode will contribute to a more robust comprehension of the earliest cultural performance of this ancient, inceptive text.

[28] Cf. Charles Hedrick, "Realism in Western Narrative and the Gospel of Mark: A Prolegomenon," *JBL* 126 (2007): 345–59.