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Mark's Young Man and Homer's Elpenor

Mark 14:51-52, 16:1-8 and Odyssey 10-12

by

Sungchan Moon

Claremont Graduate University

2018

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APPROVAL OF THE DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

This dissertation has been duly read, reviewed, and critiqued by the Committee listed below, which hereby approves the manuscript of Sungchan Moon as fulfilling the scope and quality requirements for meriting the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Abstract

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Sungchan Moon

Claremont Graduate University: 2018

Mark obviously says that all of the disciples of Jesus desert him and flee (Mark 14:50). Mark, however, introduces a young man as a new character who was following Jesus like other disciples and fled naked before Jesus's suffering. This young man is the most enigmatic character in Mark. In particular, the young man never appears in other Gospels. For this reason, the young man's identity and his conduct has been a topic of longstanding dispute among scholars.

Some regard him as historical figures, one of Jesus' own disciples like John the son of Zebedee, James the Lord's brother, or John Mark. They consider him as witness of Jesus. Others take the young man to be symbolic figures like an angel, Jesus himself, Christian initiate, and a representative of disciples' reality. In this work, I suggest that the young man is Mark' literary creation by imitating Homeric model of Elpenor. Mark relies on a specific genetic model, not on historical reports of witness or symbolic interpretation.

Mark's literary intention by using Homer's Elpenor is to substitute his own value for Homer's. The idea of the afterlife in Homeric epics is replaced to Christianized the concept of the afterlife that is resurrection. In addition, the identity of the young man is Mark's creation as a

stand-in to substitute for Jesus and exculpate him from responsibility for not warning his disciples before the Jewish Temple destruction. According to Mark's Gospel, Jesus himself told his disciples in advance. Moreover, the young man in Jesus's empty tomb provides the three women with the message of Jesus to escape from the tragic incident. Therefore, nobody would blame Jesus for the suffering of the Jerusalem Church in Jewish war. The women's failure to transmit the message doomed Jesus' followers to the carnage of the war.

The identity of the young man in Mark's Gospel can be detected by considering Mark's literary model and his mimetic achievement. As a creative and skillful author, Mark imitates well-known model in Greco-Roman literary world. Mark, however, does not just copy of the model; Mark emulates and transforms it to replace the concept of the afterlife. In addition, Mark's mimetic achievement in the episode of the young man is to convey the supremacy of Jesus by exculpating him from responsibility not saving his followers from the catastrophe. Mark's Gospel is the response for the issue. In sum, Mark's dependence on Homer explains the most enigmatic character and scene in Mark.

For My Lovely Children

Gaeun and Gahyun

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Χάριτι δέ Θεοῦ Εἰμι ὃ Εἰμι

Summer 2018

Sungchan Moon

ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible
AC	*Acta Classica*
AN	*Ancient Narrative*
BBR	*Bulletin for Biblical Research*
Bib	*Biblica*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CP	*Classic Biblical Quarterly*
CQ	*The Classical Quarterly*
EGLBS	*Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society*
ExpTim	*Expository Times*
HTS	*Hervormde Theological Studies* (*Theological Studies*)
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JHC	*Journal of Higher Criticism*
JHS	*The Journal of Hellenic Studies*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
NT	*Novum Testamentum*
PRSt	*Perspective Religious Studies*
SBL	*Society of Biblical Literature*
SC	*Second Century*
SP	*Studies in Philology*
STI	*Swedish Theological Institute*
TJT	*Toronto Journal of Theology*
WS	*Wiener Studien*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION -- 1

Discussion of the Problem -- 2

Discussion of the Thesis -- 3

Methodology -- 6

CHAPTER ONE:
THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF MARK 14:51-52 ---------------------------- 9

Who do Scholars Say the Young Man Is? --- 9

The Young Man as a Historical Figure -- 10

The Young Man as a Symbolic Figure ---15

The Literary Connection Between Mark 14:51-52 and 16:1-8 --------------------------- 22

Similarities in Content -- 23

Mark's Literary Technique -- 24

The Young Man as Mark's Imitation of Elpenor in Homer's *Odyssey* ----------------- 27

CHAPTER TWO:
HOMER IN THE GRECO-ROMAN LITERARY WORLD ------------------------------ 31

Why Homer? -- 31

Homer in Greek Education --- 32

Homeric Epics as Literary Models -- 35

Mark and Homer -- 38

CHAPTER THREE:
MIMESIS CRITICISM ON MARK 14:51-52 AND 16:1-8 -------------------------------- 40

Criterion 1: Accessibility or Availability -- 42

Some Controversies -- 43

Criterion 2: Analogy --- 48

Plato's Myth of Er -- 48

Plutarchus's Thespesius -- 53

Virgil's Palinurus and Misenus --- 56

Lucan's Civil War -- 61

Apuleius's Alcimus --- 64

Silius Italicus's *Punica* -- 67

Eutychus in the Acts of the Apostles -- 70

Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* --- 76

Patroclus in the *Acts of Paul* -- 77

The *Testament of Abraham* -- 79

Karinus and Leucius in the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* -------------------- 83

Criterion 3 (Density) and Criterion 4 (Order) -- 87

Investigation of the Young Man in Mark 14:51-52 and 16:1-8 --------------------- 88

Mark's Young Man and Homer's Elpenor -- 91

Criterion 5 (Distinctive Trait) and Criterion 6 (Interpretability) -------------------------- 95

A Distinctive Trait -- 95

Interpretability -- 98

Why did Mark Compete with the Homeric Epics? --------------------------------- 101

CHAPTER FOUR:
THE JEWISH TEMPLE DESTRUCTION AND MARK'S LITERARY MOVEMENT --- 106

CONCLUSION --- 112

BIBLIOGRAPHY -- 116

INTRODUCTION

The Bible is hard to understand. The main reason for the difficulty is the gap in time and space between then and now and there and here. We need a bridge to connect them. We are standing on the bridge and repeatedly going back to understand the Bible. Mark is composed of sixteen chapters. Normally, two hours is enough time to finish reading the book. However, one's whole life is too short to entirely understand Mark's Gospel. There are stories wrapped in mystery in Mark.

The disciples who slept while Jesus was praying in the garden of Gethsemane end up running away when Jesus is arrested. This is dishonorable conduct for a disciple. But there is a curious scene described as soon as all of Jesus's disciples desert him and flee. A young man who was following Jesus runs away naked, leaving his garment behind, when he is about to be seized (Mark 14:51–52 NRSV). Mark clearly says that everyone deserts Jesus and flees, so who is this young man? Actually, the young man is the most enigmatic character in Mark's Gospel. The young man's identity and his conduct in Mark have created much interest among scholars.[1] Scholarly works on the young man can generally be divided into two categories: the young man is a historical figure, or he symbolizes a type of person, like a baptismal initiate or the runaway disciples. However, in this work I suggest that the enigmatic young man is Mark's literary creation by means of Mark's imitation of the Homeric model of Elpenor. He is Mark's specific

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[1] Raymond E. Brown, "The Relation of 'The Secret Gospel of Mark' to the Fourth Gospel," *CBQ* 36 (1974): 466-85; M. R. Cosby, "Mark 14:51-52 and the Problem of the Gospel Narrative," *Perspective in Religious Studies* 11 (1984): 219-31; Harry T. Fleddermann, "The Flight of a Naked Young Man (Mark 14:51-52)," *CBQ* 41 (1979): 412-18; R. H. Gundry, *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1993), 603-23; Helmut Koester, "History and Development of Mark's Gospel (From Mark to *Secret Mark* and 'Canonical Mark')," in *Colloquy on New Testament Studies*, ed. B. Corley (Macon, GA: Mercer, 1983), 35-57; Marvin W. Meyer, "The Youth in the Secret Gospel of Mark," *Semeia* 49 (1990): 129-53; Robin Scroggs and Kent I. Groff, "Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ," *JBL* 92 (1973): 531-48; Herman C. Waetjen, "The Ending of Mark and the Gospel's Shift in Eschatology," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 (1965): 114-31; John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 417.

genetic model.[2] Mark depends on a model, not on the historical reports of witnesses or on symbolic interpretations.

Discussion of the Problem

Mimesis is reproduction of a supposed model in art. Quintilian discusses the importance of mimesis in art, saying, "It is expedient to imitate whatever has been invented with success."[3] Across the globe, "Imitation is the mother of creation," is a well-known saying. Northrop Frye says, "A writer's desire to write can only have come from previous experience of literature, and he'll start by imitating whatever he's read."[4] Likewise, ancient students learned the skills of writing through mimesis.[5] Writing a better work by using a good model is a literary goal and strategy. The preeminent models were the Homeric epics. One of Luke's contemporaries spoke of Homer's popularity as follows:

> From the earliest age, children beginning their studies are nursed on Homer's teaching. One might say that while we were still in swathing bands we sucked from his epics as from fresh milk. He assists the beginner and later the adult in his prime. In no stage of life, from boyhood to old age, do we ever cease to drink from him.[6]

I suggest that Mark was deeply involved in mimesis. Furthermore, Mark usefully imitates the Homeric epics as the best literary models. Nevertheless, this method has been neglected in

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[2] In mimesis criticism, genetic connections are emphasized more than generic influence. Dennis R. MacDonald proposes the genetic concept that Gospel authors directly imitated Homer. Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer: Imitations of Greek Epic in Mark and Luke-Acts: The New Testament and Greek Literature*, Vol. 1 (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 5-6. Thomas G. Rosenmeyer's model criticism rightly notes that, "Instead of genre criticism, the ancients practiced model criticism. Their allegiances and affiliations connect, not with a mode or a kind, but with a father . . . not a fatherless text or a textual segment or a generic idea . . . Where genre thinking is scientific, inferred from a sufficient sampling of texts and their properties, model thinking is, as it were, moral, and triggered by predecessors. Quintilian's history of literature recites, not genres, but practices, and above all, proper names [of earlier authors]." Thomas G. Rosenmeyer, "Ancient Literary Genres: A Mirage?," in *Oxford Readings in Ancient Literary Criticism, ed. Andrew Laird* (ORCS; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 121.

[3] Quintilian, *The Institutio Oratoria of Quintilian*, trans. Harold Edgeworth Butler (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1921), 10.2.1.

[4] Northrop Fyre, *The Educated Imagination* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964), 40.

[5] Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 5. For a more detailed explanation, see note 9, p. 204.

[6] Ps.-Heraclitus, *Quaestiones Homericae* 1.5-6. Quote from Dennis R. MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 9.

New Testament studies. Therefore, my suggestion of Mark's imitation emphasizes three things. First, biblical study needs to see the artfulness and creativity of Mark's work. Mark intentionally imitated and transformed the literary model of Homer. Mark was no slave to his model.[7] Second, Mark's literary field should place more emphasis on Hellenistic literature than on Judaic works.[8] Most of all, Mark's composition is not rooted in historical facts or eyewitness reports; it is a literary creation according to Mark's imitation of Homer.[9] The unsolved mystery of the young man's identity in Mark should be dealt with in light of these points.

Discussion of the Thesis

The enigmatic young man in Mark 14:51–52 is neither a historical character nor a symbolic figure. The young man is Mark's variation of Homer's character Elpenor. Therefore, the meaning of the episode with the young man can be discovered by looking at how Mark deals with the Homeric model in his Gospel. Mark's desire in writing the Gospel is not to copy the original model but to imitate and emulate it. In doing so, Mark depicts Jesus as superior to Homer's Odysseus. Mark substitutes his own values for Homer's.

The role of the young man in Mark is similar to that of the character of Elpenor in the *Odyssey*. They are both young men and anti-heroic figures, even unto their deaths. Elpenor accidently falls to his death from Circe's roof. He has forgotten where he slept the previous night

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[7] MacDonald says, "Most modern treatments of the Gospels and Acts view their authors as redactors, or editors, of preexisting traditions and written sources. These practitioners of form criticism divide texts into constituent units and categorize them by genre, such as parables, proverbs, prayers, prophecies, or legends of various types, like miracle stories and epiphanies. They then seek to reconstruct the geographical, linguistic, or theological environments that created and transmitted them before their articulation in the text. Many scholars would go so far as to ascribe nearly all narratives in the Gospels and Acts to historical memory or at least to tradition. Others would grant more originality to these works, but few consider literary imitation as a dominating compositional activity." MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?,* 10.

[8] This does not mean that I intend to slight the influence of the Bible. What I acknowledge is that the pervasive influence of the Jewish Bible on the Gospel of Mark does not exclude other literary influences. MacDonald provides one example that Hellenistic Jewish authors imitated ancient epics in "Tobit and the Odyssey," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, edited by Dennis R. MacDonald, *SAC* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 11-40.

[9] MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, 7.

because he had gotten drunk. His neck is broken and his spirit leaves him and goes to Hades. In comparison, the young man in Mark runs away from Jesus naked, leaving his garment behind. Based on ancient clichés, I suggest that the body and garment metaphor in Mark 14:51–52 signify the flight of the soul from body.[10]

Compared to their heroic leaders, Odysseus and Jesus, who courageously accept their fate in the face of death, the two young men are anti-heroic figures. However, they play important roles as foils for their leaders, since both leaders keep the promises they have given before. Odysseus holds a heroic funeral for Elpenor, in accordance with his request, after he comes back from Hades. Jesus carries out his resurrection, which he has mentioned three times during his public life. In addition, he goes to Galilee to reunite his disciples as he has said he would do.

All these promises that Jesus makes are conveyed through the young man who appears at Jesus's empty tomb. Just as Elpenor appears twice in Homer's *Odyssey*, once in this world and once in Hades (*Od.* 10, 11), Mark's young man also appears twice (Mark 14:51–52; 16:1–8), but both times in this world. The difference between the two stories is the implication that, for Homer, death is a definite ending whereby one must reside in the underworld without exception, while for Mark, Jesus's resurrection offers a round-trip ticket. His resurrection transforms the anti-heroic figure of the young man into a resurrected identity. He who used to be the same as Elpenor becomes a different character, like the "glorified dead," through Mark's literary intention.[11] Although Mark takes the worst character in Homer's *Odyssey*, Elpenor, as his literary model, Mark makes the story better. Now we see Mark's literary intention to describe Jesus's supremacy by using the Homeric model Elpenor.

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[10] MacDonald, *Homeric Epics*, 129. For a more detailed explanation, see note 22, p. 234.
[11] Ibid., 167.

There is another important aspect of Mark's literary intention through imitating Elpenor as a model, and that is in relation to the Jewish Temple's destruction. This catastrophe was a tragedy for both Jews and the Jerusalem church. Church members had to confront theological conflicts; in particular, they found it unacceptable that innocent church members were suffering. If Jesus is the Son of God, why did he not protect and save the church from disaster?[12] It is quite natural that when people are in difficult moments, they have hard feelings toward their leader.

Mark penned his Gospel at this critical moment to defend Jesus's validity as the Son of God. Mark had two solutions. First, Jesus is the suffering hero. He is the crucified one. Jesus has compassion for those who are suffering and in agony. Throughout the Gospel, Jesus shows compassion to people who are in need. This is the reason Jesus wants his disciples to follow him with endurance and by carrying their own cross (Mark 8:34). Second, Jesus informs his disciples about the coming tragedy and promises to meet them in Galilee. The problem is Jesus's disciples, because they are still "cowardly," "uncomprehending," and "generally unreliable."[13] The young man at Jesus's empty tomb tells the women about Jesus's resurrection and his whereabouts so that his disciples will meet together in Galilee. However, the women say nothing to anyone because they are afraid. Jesus's disciples have several chances to run away from Jerusalem before and after Jesus's resurrection. However, they miss out on the opportunities to escape from the catastrophe.

What if Jesus had appeared to his disciples and the three women instead of the young man? Mark's answer is clear: Jesus never appears to them after his death. He goes before them to Galilee. If this is the case, the blame for not preparing for the impending catastrophe should be

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[12] Ibid., 15-16.
[13] Ibid., 164.

imputed to Jesus's disciples and the three women, not to Jesus.[14] Mark needs a stand-in to substitute for Jesus. Here is Mark's mimetic achievement. Mark hints at his literary model of Elpenor by materializing a similar character, a young man, as an anti-heroic figure just like Elpenor. Elpenor falls to his death and his soul goes to Hades. Elpenor must perpetually reside in Hades. Mark's young man, however, dies once and is transformed into a glorious form through Jesus's resurrection. Homer's idea of the afterlife is replaced to Christianize the concept of the afterlife as resurrection.

Methodology

Since the twentieth century began, biblical studies have seen a striking development through the dramatic expansion of methods used to interpret texts.[15] Mimesis criticism, which Dennis R. MacDonald made a strenuous effort to develop, is a latecomer; nevertheless, this method sheds new light on how to interpret the New Testament, especially the Gospel of Mark. However, since its development, mimesis criticism has been the most neglected critical method. First of all, the author of Mark has not been given the recognition he deserves. Mimesis criticism considers the author seriously as a creative and artful writer. However, modern treatments view the author as a redactor or editor of preexisting traditions and written sources.[16] In addition, at the hands of scholars who read the Gospel as historically reliable, the literary imagination behind the texts has been excluded. Most of all, the large impact of form criticism has meant that the Gospel has been considered the historical memories of Jesus or at least traditions passed down

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[14] Ibid., 165.

[15] Adam Winn, *Mark and the Elijah-Elisha Narrative: Considering the Practice of Greco-Roman Imitation in the Search for Markan Source Material* (Eugene, OR: Pickwick Publications, 2010), 1.

[16] MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?,* 10.

about Jesus. In this sense, Mark's Gospel is a combination of various memories transmitted through genres such as parables, proverbs, prayers, prophecies, miracle stories, and epiphanies.[17]

Mimesis criticism helps scholars interpret Mark's Gospel by looking at models in ancient Greek literature. Mimesis criticism dialogues with the Greco-Roman literary world, which has been neglected in New Testament studies, unlike the Hebrew scriptures. As a skillful author, Mark created Jesus's stories in emulation of pagan literary models, in particular, the Homeric epics. This project will show how Mark imitated the Homeric model of Elpenor, a character in the *Odyssey*. But we will also see how Mark creatively transformed the model to fit his literary intentions.

Mimesis criticism provides seven criteria to verify Mark's literary imitation. Although biblical interpretation is not a science but an art, MacDonald created these criteria scientifically and rationally. On the basis of these criteria, my work proceeds. The criteria are as follows:

1. Accessibility: This criterion pertains to the likelihood that the author of the later text had access to the putative model.
2. Analogy: This criterion pertains to the popularity of the target. It seeks to know if other authors imitated the same proposed mimetic model.
3. Density: Simply stated, the more parallels one can posit between two texts, the stronger the case that there is a literary connection between them.
4. Order: This criterion examines the relative sequencing of similarities in the two works. If parallels appear in the same order, the case is strengthened for a genetic connection.
5. Distinctive trait: This is anything unusual in both the targeted antetext and the proposed borrower that links the two in a special relationship.
6. Interpretability: This criterion considers what, if anything, might be gained by

[17] Ibid.

viewing one text as a debtor to another. As often as not, ancient authors emulated their antecedents to rival them, whether in style, philosophical adequacy, persuasiveness, or religious perspective.

7. Ancient and Byzantine recognitions: Often, Greek readers prior to 1000 CE seemed to have been aware of affinities between New Testament narratives and their putative classical Greek models.[18]

Apart from criterion 7, I will deal with the young man in Mark 14:51–52 and 16:1–8 according to these criteria. As MacDonald states, "Mimesis criticism attempts to assess texts for evidence that they are direct, extensive, advertised, and hermeneutically freighted imitations of earlier writings."[19] Thus, my work as a test case attempts to verify that mimesis criticism is a methodologically valid and powerful method. The reader may be surprised at Mark's imitation of pagan literature. And the reader may be astonished by Mark's creative work on the basis of the Homeric model of Elpenor.

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[18] MacDonald, *Gospels and Homer*, 6; *Homeric Epics*, 8-14.
[19] Ibid.

CHAPTER 1
THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF MARK 14:51–52

Who Do Scholars Say the Young Man Is?

According to Mark, after Jesus's Last Supper with his disciples, he prays at a place called Gethsemane. He is struggling with his fate of dying. Jesus sincerely prays three times to his Father to keep him from the cup of death. Unfortunately, his Father does not accept Jesus's request. Meanwhile, Jesus's disciples fall asleep at this critical moment. In addition, one of Jesus's disciples, Judas, leads a crowd armed with swords and clubs, sent from the chief priests, the teachers of the law, and the elders. Jesus stands his ground, but every disciple deserts him and flees. Whoever reads or hears of this tragic event will anticipate what Jesus will encounter in the next scene.

Mark, however, introduces an enigmatic new character onto the scene as soon as the disciples run away from Jesus. This is a young man never mentioned previously in the Gospel. Considering Mark's expression, "συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ," the young man had been following Jesus for quite some time, even though the reason for his followership is not given. The young man, however, flees naked, leaving his garment (σινδών) when his persecutors seize him. In fact, this young man could be overlooked if one carelessly reads his story. In addition, the young man could be ignored because Mark's Gospel can be read easily without him. Most of all, his story is just two verses out of the 678 verses of Mark. Nevertheless, the young man's abrupt appearance and enigmatic action sparks interest in scholarly work, partly because the three other Gospels do not mention him. Therefore, the young man's identity is suspicious enough to investigate it. Controversy about the young man in scholarly circles continues today, and the episode with him has

still not found a satisfactory explanation. Scholars have typically taken one of two positions on the identity of the young man: He is a historical or a symbolic figure.

The Young Man as a Historical Figure

A study of the young man's identity dates back to the early church fathers. They regarded the young man as one of Jesus's disciples or the author of Mark himself. Epiphanius, Jerome, and Eusebius thought the young man was James, the Lord's brother.[20] According to Epiphanius, James did not own a change of clothing and wore only a threadbare linen garment, as it says in the Gospel, "The young man fled, and left the cloth wherewith he was clad."[21] Eusebius writes, "To this man alone was it permitted to enter the sanctuary, for he did not wear wool, but linen."[22] The medieval commentator Theophylactus (c. 1100) also asserts that the naked runaway was James.[23] Meanwhile, Ambrose recognized the young man as John, the disciple who followed Jesus with Peter and entered into the high priest's courtyard after Jesus had been arrested (John 18:15–16). According to Lamar Williamson, Ambrose pointed out that the young man was the last follower of Jesus in Mark, and he was present at the time of Jesus's passion.[24] John Chrysostom also made clear that the young man should be identified as John the beloved disciple.[25] Likewise, Peter Chrysologus and Gregory the Great identify the young man as

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[20] Henry B. Swete, *The Gospel according to St. Mark* (London: Macmillan, 1920), 354.

[21] Epiphanius Saint, Bishop of Constantia in Cypress, *The Panarion of Epiphanius of Salamis* (vol. 2: Books II and III [Sects 47-80, De Fide]; ed. F. Williams; Leiden: Brill 2013), 626.

[22] Eusebius Pamphili, *Ecclesiastical History: Books 1-5*. Trans. By Roy J. Deferrari (Washington, D. C.: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 126.

[23] Theophylactus of Ochrida, *The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark* (House Springs, MO.: Chrysostom Press, 1997).

[24] Lamar Williamson, Jr, Mark: *Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching* (IBCTP; Atlanta: John Knox, 1983), 262.

[25] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2007), 688.

John.[26] Chrysologus observes that John ran away naked, but Peter became morally naked in his denial of Jesus.[27]

More recently, several scholars have argued that the young man is Mark, the author.[28] They think it is likely that Mark painted himself into a corner of the canvas to reveal his historical authorship.[29] Henri B. Swete notes:

> Probably this young man was Mark. Only he tells the incident, which has no bearing on the course of events, and was of no importance but to the person concerned. He has put himself unnamed in a corner of his picture, as monkish painters used to do, content to associate himself even thus with his Lord.[30]

Meanwhile, Rupert Allen has discovered a revealing Arabic footnote in a thirteenth-century Coptic manuscript that identifies the young man both as James the son of Joseph and as Mark the Evangelist.[31]

Another possible identity of the young man is John Mark, whose mother Mary had a house in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12).[32] If this is the case, according to Brown, "Mark was following with him" (Mark 14:51), meaning he follows Jesus from the place of the Last Supper that was his house, likely the place his father or mother owned. For this reason, he was wearing a light garb when he attended the feast and did not change before

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[26] Peter Chrysologus, Saint Archbishop of Ravenna, St Peter Chrysologus: Selected Sermon. Vol. 3 (Washington, D. C.: Catholic University of America Press, 2005), 32. Gregory the Great, *Morals on the Book of Job* (3 vols.: Oxford: John Henry Parker, 1845) 2:153-54.

[27] There is an objection to this argument that the naked young man was John. If this is so, how did he reappear at Jesus's cross? Rather, John's faithful image should be placed in contrast to the naked young man in Mark. Raymond E. Brown, *The Death of the Messiah: From Gethsemane to the Grave; A Commentary on the Passion Narratives in the Four Gospels*, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1994), 299.

[28] Vincent Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark* (2nd ed.; London: Macmillan, 1966), 561; William Barclay, *The Gospel of St. Mark* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1956), 185; Ben Witherington, *The Gospel of Mark: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 382.

[29] Abraham Kuruvilla, "The Naked Runaway and the Enrobed Reporter of Mark 14 and 16: What is the Author Doing with What He is Saying?" *JETS* 54. 3 (September 2011): 527-45; Taylor, *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, 561.

[30] Swete, *The Gospel of St. Mark*, 185.

[31] Rupert Allen, "Mark 14,51-52 and Coptic Hagiography," *Bib* 89 (2008): 267-68.

[32] Brown, *The Death of Messiah*, 299.

going to Gethsemane.[33] In addition, Mark's failure in escaping the situation anticipates his later failure related to the mission with Paul and Barnabas in Acts 13:13.[34] Whether or not John Mark is the author of Mark is hard to answer. But, all these suggestions are just good guesses, or, in Brown's words, "nothing other than imaginative flights of fancy."[35] Reading the Gospel with an excessive imagination can provide no objective validity. Considering the composition of Mark's stories as historically reliable does an injustice to Mark's intent in wanting to portray Jesus as a more compassionate ethical hero than other rival heroes in the ancient world. Mark was not writing a historical biography.[36]

There are also some imaginative arguments from Gerd Theissen and Richard Bauckham. According to Theissen, Mark intentionally introduces the young man as an anonymous person, giving him "protective anonymity" because he had run afoul of the police for his resistance against them. Since he was in danger, it would be inopportune to mention his name or even to admit that he was a member of the Christian community.[37] Theissen writes:

> It seems to me that the narrative motive for this anonymity is not hard to guess: both of them [the bystander who cut off the ear of the high priest's slave and the young man who ran away from the scene naked] run afoul of the 'police.' . . . Their anonymity is for their protection, and the obscurity of their positive relationship with Jesus is a strategy of caution. Both the teller and the hearers know more about these two people.[38]

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[33] Ibid.
[34] Ibid.
[35] Ibid.
[36] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics,* 7.
[37] Gerd Theissen, Linda M. Maloney, *The Gospels in Context: Social and Political History in the Synoptic Tradition* (London; New York: T & T Clark International, 2004), 185-86.
[38] Ibid.

Recently, Richard Bauckham published a book titled *Jesus and the Eyewitness*. In this book, he challenges the prevailing assumption that the accounts of Jesus circulated as "anonymous community tradition," and he asserts that they were transmitted in the names of the original eyewitnesses.[39] Therefore, the four Gospels are closely based on eyewitness testimonies of those who personally knew Jesus. Regarding the young man's identity, Bauckham agrees with Theissen's opinion that he is not named in order to protect him. By leaving him anonymous, Mark intentionally decided to protect him from the Jews or the Romans.[40]

According to Bauckham, the story of the naked young man could only come from the young man's own telling about his involvement in the event. He is not only the witness to his own story, but also a witness to Jesus's Gethsemane prayer. As it were, the young man was a witness who had followed Jesus until he escaped.[41] In Bauckham's words, the young man was "initially an exception to this general dispersion of the disciples. He tried to continue to follow Jesus as the temple police led him away, but he too took flight when an attempt was made to arrest him."[42] Bauckham argues that the young man should not be regarded in symbolic terms because "Mark reports a historical incident for the purpose of drawing attention to the presence of this particular young man in Gethsemane."[43] Bauckham would not deny the possibility that the young man is John Mark's anonymous presentation of himself.[44]

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[39] Richard Bauckham, *Jesus and the Eyewitness: The Gospels as Eyewitness Testimony* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2007), cf. V. Taylor, *The Gospel according to St. Mark*, 2nd ed. (London: Macmillan, 1966), 562.

[40] Bauckham, 197-98.

[41] Ibid.

[42] Ibid.

[43] Ibid.

[44] Ibid.

Meanwhile, Bauckham also explains the reason for the young man's running in the nude by quoting Howard Jackson's point:

> Ancient cloaks and mantles of the sort our youth's *sindon* is likely to have been, . . . were merely . . . simple (i.e. sleeveless) rectangles of cloth, and they were regularly wrapped or draped around the body without any belt or fasteners of any kind to hold them on; even in the best of circumstances, consequently, they were likely to slip off with the normal movements of the body. With any sudden violent action, particularly any involving the arms or legs, the garment was practically assured of being thrown off.[45]

Bauckham's argument seems to lend credibility to the eyewitness testimony hypothesis. But this hypothesis is not true. One of the biggest critiques of Bauckham's argument is that, when the original voice reached the hands of Mark, the accuracy of the voice would have deteriorated. The voice of an eyewitness grows dim and loses detail as it is handed down to others over weeks, months, years, or decades. In this sense, Ehrman's account of the telephone game rings true:

> You are probably familiar with the old birthday party game "telephone." A group of kids sits in a circle, the first tells a brief story to the one sitting next to her, who tells it to the next, and to the next, and so on, until it comes back full circle to the one who started it. Invariably, the story has changed so much in the process of retelling that everyone gets a good laugh. Imagine this same activity taking place, not in a solitary living room with ten kids on one afternoon, but over the expanse of the Roman Empire (some 2,500 miles across), with thousands of participants—from different backgrounds, with different concerns, and in different contexts—some of whom have to translate the stories into different languages.[46]

He continues:

> It does not appear that the authors of the early Gospels were eyewitnesses to the events that they narrate. But they must have gotten their stories from somewhere. Indeed, one of them acknowledges that he has heard stories about Jesus and read earlier accounts (Luke 1:1–4). In the opinion of most New Testament scholars, it is possible that in addition to preserving genuine historical recollections about

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[45] Howard. M. Jackson, "Why the Youth Shed His Cloak and Fled Naked: The Meaning and Purpose of Mark 14:51-52," *JBL* 116 (1997): 280.

[46] Bart D. Ehrman, *The New Testament: A Historical Introduction to the Early Christian Writings*, 5th edition (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012), 73-74.

> what Jesus actually said and did, these authors also narrated stories that had been modified, or even invented, in the process of retelling.[47]

Ehrman points out the limitations of finding the historicity of Jesus's tradition. Actually, this should not be the main concern in Biblical interpretation. What is more important work is seeking out where the authors obtained their sources, how the authors dealt with them, and how the authors used them in the Gospels. Ehrman seems to still be standing in the line of oral tradition, although he emphasizes authors' possible creativity with the tradition. Yet, his approach helps in making progress in studying the Gospel of Mark.

The Young Man as a Symbolic Figure

A number of scholars have come to the conclusion that the role of the young man is that of a symbolic figure. The meaning of the symbol is diverse according to scholars' positions. There are several views of the symbol: First, the young man represents Jesus and his fate.[48] Second, the young man is a symbol of the Christian initiate.[49] Lastly, the young man is a representative of the disciples' reality.[50]

According to John Knox, the young man is related to Jesus and to the other young man in the empty tomb in Mark 16:1–8. He says, "Just as the young man was seized, Jesus was arrested. Just like the young man sets free from the enemy by leaving the linen cloth, Jesus was destined to escape the hands of his enemies, leaving only the linen cloth

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[47] Ibid., 75.

[48] John Knox, "A Note on Mark 14:51–52," in Sherman E. Johnson, ed., *The Joy of Study: Papers on New Testament and Related Subjects Presented to Honor Frederick Clifton Grant* (New York: Macmillan, 1951), 27-30; Albert Vanhoye, "La Fuite du jeune homme nu (Mc 14,51-52)," *Bib* 52 (1971): 401-6.

[49] Scroggs and Groff, "Baptism in Mark" 531-48.

[50] Fleddermann, "The Flight of a Naked Young Man," 412-18; Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 417.

in which he was wrapped."[51] Knox notices that Jesus and the young man wear the same linen cloth (σινδών); he also recognizes that each young man (14:51–52 / 16:108) wears a different cloth, but that Mark refers to them with the same words: "νεανίσκος … περιβεβλημένος" ("young man . . . clothed").[52] Knox gives us a hint that both young men's transformation has something to do with Jesus's death and resurrection.

Albert Vanhoye also thinks the young man represents the destiny of Jesus. He focuses on Mark's unusual use of the verb συνακολουθεῖν ("to accompany" or "to follow along with") and links the young man closely to Jesus.[53] He is also interested in the same usage of περιβάλλειν ("to put on") found only in Mark 14:51 and 16:5. Like John Knox, Vanhoye recognizes that the naked young man in Mark 14:51–52 is related to Jesus and to the young man in Jesus's empty tomb in Mark 16:1–8.

Meanwhile, Robin Scroggs and Kent Groff interpret the young man as a symbol of the Christian initiate. They state:

> Our thesis is that, when seen against the backdrop of Christian baptismal practices, the appearance of the young man in both instances can best be explained as a symbolic pointer to the Christian initiate. The nakedness and flight in 14:51–52 symbolize dying with Christ; the reappearance of the young man in a new garment in 16:5 symbolizes rising with Christ.[54]

They recognize that the repetition of the word νεανίσκος and the clothing of the figure (περιβεβλημένος) are parallel. They designate the young man who was following Jesus in Mark 14:51–52 as an initiate. Although he was facing death, Jesus takes up the young man's fate as he wears the σινδών that the young man left behind as he ran away. Jesus dies for him. The white robe in which the young man is clothed in Mark 16:5 symbolizes

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[51] Knox, "A Note on Mark 14:51-52," 29.
[52] Ibid., 29-30.
[53] Vanhoye, "La Fuite du jeune homme nu," 404.
[54] Scroggs and Groff, "Baptism in Mark," 540.

the new existence of the young man. It corresponds with the believer who comes out of the water and wears a new garment. Jesus's death and resurrection change both young men's status as he is located in the middle between them. In short, "The nakedness and flight in 14:51–52 symbolize dying with Christ; the reappearance of the young man in a new garment in 16:5 symbolizes rising with Christ."[55]

There are scholars who identify the young man as a symbolic representation of Jesus's disciples. Commonly, they say that the disciples run away from dangerous situations, whereas Jesus confronts his ordeal. According to Robert C. Tannehill, "The flight of the naked young man probably dramatizes the shamefulness of the disciple's flight and satirizes the pretensions of Christians who claim to be ready for martyrdom."[56] He argues:

> This interpretation may be supported by the reference to the fine linen (σινδών) worn by the young man. Elsewhere in the New Testament the word is used only of the cloth in which Jesus was buried (see 15:46). If this detail is significant, it suggests that this man is so sure of his loyalty that he comes all dressed for death, but suddenly changes his mind when death is a real prospect. His nakedness emphasizes the shamefulness of his flight.[57]

Harry T. Fleddermann enthusiastically investigates the young man more than any other scholar. He indicates that all of the solutions provided by earlier scholarship have

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[55] On this point, I think that one needs to take a close look at Mark's text to see if Mark explicitly mentions the rite of Christian baptism. Although Mark contains Jesus's baptism in 1:9–11 as a model for the early Christian rite, and John's saying in 1:8 alludes to Christian baptism, the notion of dying and rising does not occur in either place. Another passage, Mark 10:38–39, speaks of baptism, but it is symbolically referring to Jesus's death, not the ritual of baptism. This reference is far from the symbol of Christian baptism. In particular, the idea of the disciple dying and rising with Jesus is not explicitly present. Thus, the dying and rising motif is not one of the known Markan concerns. It is also in doubt whether there is earlier evidence of baptism by immersion involving the stripping off of one's tunic and dressing in a white garment afterwards. Robin and Kent question how early this practice can be dated. They conclude that "we just have no way of demonstrating that the praxis was in effect in the first century . . . but . . . one should hold as completely open the possibility that the practice dates back to the early decades of the church's existence." Robin and Kent, "Baptism in Mark," 538. Their guess comes from the knowledge that, in some of the Hellenistic cults and in Jewish proselytes' baptisms, the candidate was nude.

[56] Robert C. Tannehill, "Disciples in Mark: The Function of a Narrative Role," *JR* 57, no. 4 (Oct. 1977): 403.

[57] Ibid, 403, no. 38.

failed to take sufficient note of the context in Mark. So, he suggests finding a clue in the larger context of the Gospel of Mark.[58] He examines the words κρατοῦσιν and ἔφυγεν and how Mark uses them in the narrative. In particular, he pays attention to how the word ἔφυγεν appears in Mark 14:50 and 14:52. Then he argues, "The pericope of the flight of a naked young man is a commentary on 14:50; it is a dramatization of the universal flight of the disciples."[59] In particular, the flight of the disciples (14:50) signifies a falling into unbelief, just as Jesus predicted earlier in Mark 14:27. Fleddermann notes that the episode of the young man is located among the stories of the unfaithful disciples in Mark 14.[60] Thus, he asserts:

> As a commentary on 14:50 the pericope of the flight of a naked young man fits into this theme of the failure of the disciples to understand and accept the passion and their consequent falling into unbelief. The fleeing young man is in contrast to Jesus who accepts the passion as God's will (14:36).[61]

Fleddermann rejects Knox's and Vanhoye's interpretation of the young man as a prefigurement of the risen Jesus, because the young man is not to be compared to Jesus; rather, he is in contrast to Jesus; he is a concretization of the fleeing disciples, and he is opposed to Jesus's act of acceptance.[62] Fleddermann also does not accept the theory proposed by Scroggs and Groff that the young man symbolizes a Christian baptismal initiate. In his judgment, the flight motif in Mark represents an act of unbelief; it is not at all like a baptism. The young man is a symbol of those who oppose God's will in the

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[58] Fleddermann, "Flight of a Naked Young Man," 415.

[59] Ibid.

[60] One of the disciples betrays Jesus (14:10-11, 18-21, 43-50); Peter denies Jesus (14:29-31; 66-72); the three disciples sleep in Gethsemane (14:32-42); and at the arrest all flee (14:50). Fleddermann, "Flight of a Naked Young Man," 416.

[61] Fleddermann, "Flight of a Naked Young Man, 416.

[62] Ibid.

passion. He is a fleeing disciple.[63]

Fleddermann does not accept any connection between the two young men in Mark 14:51–52 and 16:5. His argument is that, although Mark uses two similar words, νεανίσκος and περιβεβλημένος, in these texts, it is not sufficient to establish a connection between the texts because of the absence of any clear sign of a Markan thematic link between the two figures.[64] Fleddermann concludes that the contrast between the disciples and Jesus with regard to the passion is a Markan theme that dominates the second half of the gospel. The appearance of the young man and his role in Mark is crucial and signature.[65]

John R. Donahue and Daniel J. Harrington identify the young man as a representative of the group of disciples whose flight was described in 14:50.[66] As Fleddermann argues, both scholars reject the young man as a Christian baptismal figure and as a prefiguration of Jesus. The young man stands for those who desert Jesus in a time of trouble.[67] By fleeing while naked, the young man entered into a shameful experience. Ultimately, he chose "shame over fidelity to Jesus."[68]

Beyond these theories, there are arguments that the episode of the young man reflects a text like Amos 2:16[69] or the case of Joseph in Genesis 39:12[70] or that he is a

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[63] Ibid., 417. Meanwhile, John Dart regards the young man as a boldness not displayed by the Twelve who all forsook Jesus (14:50), and a female equivalent to this young man is the unnamed anointing woman (14:3-9), John Dart, *Decoding Mark* (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2003), 94.

[64] Fleddermann, "Flight of a Naked Young Man, 418.

[65] Ibid.

[66] Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 417.

[67] Ibid.

[68] Ibid.

[69] "The author wished to enrich the account of the flight of all those around Jesus in v. 50 with a prophetic motif based on the Greek version of Amos 2:16." Klostermann, 153. See also C. Montefiore, *The Synoptic Gospels* (London: Macmillan, 1927), 1.350; and Joel Marcus, *Mark 8-16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 1000.

[70] There is a statement attributed to Jerome that says, "This is the case of Joseph, who leaving behind his tunic, fled in the nude. . . Whoever wants to escape from the hands of wicked people, let them

fictional character taken from other literature, just like a male character in James Joyce's *Ulysses*.[71] Lastly, some scholars have claimed that the young man originally came from a pre-Markan source used by Mark. Morton Smith published a putative letter by Clement of Alexandria. This work includes two variant readings of the Gospel of Mark. The first one has the resuscitation of a "young man (νεανίσκος)," who came to Jesus at night "wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness." The latter part is identical to the content of Mark 14:51.[72] The other text says, "After six days, Jesus told him what to do and in the evening the youth comes to him, wearing a linen cloth over his naked body. And he remained with him that night, for Jesus taught him the mystery of the kingdom of God."[73] Helmut Koester argues that the story of the naked young man in Mark 14:51–52 was added by the editor or revisionist who transformed "Proto-Mark" into "the Secret Gospel of Mark" early in the second century. The canonical Mark did not eliminate these verses,

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mentally abandon the things of the world, and flee after Jesus." Michael Cahill, *The First Commentary on Mark: An Annotated Translation* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 109-10. Herman Waetjen likewise sees a Joseph typology in the incident in Mark: Joseph fled from Potiphar's wife, but he was exalted in the end. The young man fled in Mark 14:51–52 but was transformed in Mark 16:5. Waetjen also makes much of a supposed allusion in the Markan account to Amos 2:16: "Even the bravest among the warriors will flee naked in that day, declares the LORD." Waetjen, however, points out that there is no σινδών in the prophecy. Moreover, Amos's text has "warriors," not "young man," and διώκω (LXX) instead of the φεύγω found in Mark 14. Thus, the allusion is, at best, tenuous. Herman Waetjen, "The Ending of Mark and the Gospel's Shift in Eschatology," *Annual of the Swedish Theological Institute* 4 (1965), 119-20. William L. Lane holds to this theory as well. *The Gospel of Mark*, NICNT (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1974), 527.

[71] Kermode's assertion is far from the scholars who identify the young man as Jesus's disciple or as one of his eyewitnesses, and it is different from the scholars who regard the young man as a symbolic figure. Rather, Kermode identifies the young man with a characteristic of modern literature, such as a man in James Joyce's *Ulysses*. Just as a man in Joyce's narrative suddenly appears without having significant meaning in the novel, the young man in Mark suddenly appears as an enigmatic character in the Gospel. The young man in Mark is an unexpected character and seemingly not an important figure. Mark seems not to have created the character; rather, he borrows the character from somewhere else, just like Joyce did.

[72] Morton Smith, *Clement of Alexandria and the Secret Gospel of Mark* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1973), 447, 452.

[73] Ibid.

although Mark's redactor omitted the first passage about the young man, which followed 10:34.[74]

Hans-Martin Schenke describes the young man as a "prototype and symbol of those who are to be initiated into the higher discipleship of Jesus and a symbol for the soul's successful escape from malevolent archons."[75] Based on this idea, Scroggs and Groff argue that the event of the young man is related to baptism.[76]

According to Marvin W. Meyer, the young man is "a paradigm for discipleship in canonical and Secret Mark."[77] In this case, however, the young man escapes naked from soldiers, which is a forsaking of his baptismal loyalty.[78] As noted above, many scholars have argued that the identity of the young man comes from the putative letter by Clement of Alexandria. The major problem with this, however, is what can be detected from Mark's way of introducing the man in Mark 14:51: "And a certain [τις] young man was following him." If there were a young man who appeared in the original fragment following chapter 10, the evangelist would have written, "the young man whom Jesus had raised," instead of inserting a new character who had not earlier been introduced.[79]

As we have seen, the identity of the young man lies somewhere between historical person and symbolic figure according to scholars. It seems to be a closed case with no alternative answer. However, Dennis MacDonald sheds light on the mysterious young man's identity with a new perspective on that issue. He leads us not into the historical or symbolical background of the identity of the young man, but delivers to us a new solution

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[74] Koester, "History and Development of Mark's Gospel," 41, 54-57
[75] Hans-Martin Schenke, "The Mystery of the Gospel of Mark," *Second Century* 4 (1984), 65-82.
[76] Scroggs and Groff, "Baptism in Mark," 547-48.
[77] Meyer, "The Youth in the Secret Gospel of Mark," 132.
[78] Ibid.
[79] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 128; Gundry, *Mark*, 603-23.

in which the young man is nothing but Mark's imitation of Elpenor in Homer's *Odyssey*. My dissertation starts with McDonald's suggestion and ends with confidence that this is the correct solution.

The Literary Connection Between Mark 14:51–52 and 16:1–8

As discussed above, scholars have investigated the identity of the cryptic young man in Mark 14:51–52 as a historical or symbolic figure. But, when one reads this Gospel as Mark's coherent literary and creative work, another young man in Mark 16:1–8 attracts one's attention. He is also a young man (νεανίσκος), and he is wearing a white robe (περιβάλλιν) and sitting on the right side of Jesus's empty tomb. He proclaims Jesus's resurrection and tells the women Jesus's whereabouts so the disciples can be there with Jesus away from Jerusalem. Unfortunately, the mission is not accomplished because the women do not tell the disciples the news. The other Gospels deal differently with Mark's uncompleted task. In addition, they take the young man out of the scene and replace him with new figures in the situation. Finally, the other Gospels do not use any of the same characters as Mark. They remove the young man found in Mark 14:51–52, and they substitute different characters for the young man in the empty tomb.

We are not sure why the other gospels have done that, but we can make some guesses. First, the other Gospel writers might not have understood the identity of the two young men in Mark. Second, the other Gospel writers would not have taken the young man as their literary model because he is a shameful figure as a disciple. In addition, if the young man in Jesus's empty tomb is the same character as the young man in Gethsemane, it is hard to explain how they are the same person. Third, the Gospel writers might have known that Mark uses the same character twice, but they simply thought they

would omit one and replace the other with some divine figure, like angels. Nonetheless, Mark intended to use the same character in two scenes. Mark's literary intention is to be found in the use of this character. Therefore, we need to regard both young men as the same character.

The literary connection between the two young men is just as controversial as the identity of the naked young man. Some scholars do not link the two young men as the same character. Adela Yarbro Collins argues that the two passages are not similar enough in that "they are linked only to the extent that the one in 14:51–52 contrasts with Jesus, whereas the one in 16:5 is comparable to Jesus."[80] However, it is possible to read the two stories together in light of the different concept that the transformation of the young man is due to Jesus's death and resurrection.[81] This appears to be a more legitimate interpretation of the issue. Mark intentionally brings the two young men into different locations. When one reads the young man as a historical eyewitness or symbolic figure, his identity will not be resolved. Therefore, I suggest that the two different stories should be read together because the two young men are the same character. The literary connection of the two passages can be determined by their content and Mark's literary technique.

Similarities in Content

One of the key elements that testifies to the literary connection between the two young men is the reference to the character as a young man. Mark uses the word νεανίσκος for both young men, and interestingly, these are the only times Mark uses this

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[80] Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007), 695 and 695 n. 223. Fleddermann also argues that the two young man characters do not have any connection. See Fleddermann, "The Flight of a Naked Young Man," 418.

[81] Dennis R. MacDonald, *Mythologizing Jesus: From Jewish Teacher to Epic Hero* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 7.

word. Mark seems to regard the two men as the same character. Meanwhile, other Gospels omit the character of the young man. In addition, they replace the young man in the empty tomb with other figures.[82] As one considers that the disciples in the other three Gospels are more faithful in their discipleship than Jesus's disciples in Mark's description, it makes sense that the Gospel writers would not want to choose the text with the young man in Gethsemane. Regarding the young man in Mark 16:5–8, the three Gospel writers would likely have been perplexed by how the same νεανίσκος, if they saw the two young men as the same figure, could be a messenger of Jesus's resurrection.[83] Therefore, each Gospel replaces him with other figures.

Nonetheless, Raymond Brown argues that there is no connection between the two young men. Rather, Brown argues that the young man in Jesus's empty tomb is an angelic figure and that this use of a young man to represent an angel was popular in the ancient world.[84] Mark, however, knew about the existence of angels and had already used angelic figures in his Gospel (see Mark 1:13; 12:25; and 13:32). If it had been necessary to use an angel instead of a young man, Mark would have used an angel. This signifies that Mark had a literary intention in composing the two episodes with the young man and placing him in two different locations.

Mark's Literary Technique

Another link to connect the two young men is the motif of clothing. The clothing

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[82] Each Gospel presents a different figure in the resurrection scene: "an angel" (Matt. 28:5), "two men" (Luke 24:4), and "two angels" (John 20:12).

[83] Luke surely recognizes the two men as the same character, because he imitates the same model in Acts 20:6–12 as Mark did. I will discuss this later.

[84] Brown, *The Death of the Messiah*, 300-302.

motif connects the two episodes into a coherent whole.[85] Mark often mentions clothing with symbolic overtones to emphasize significant meanings. For instance, the clothes of John the Baptist in Mark 1:6 identify him as a prophet. He appears at the beginning of the Gospel as a forerunner to prepare the way for Jesus. The clothing of Jesus in the episode of the transfiguration becomes a dazzling white. Mark says his clothes were "whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them" (Mark 9:3). Jesus's transfiguration is a prefiguration of Jesus's resurrection. In Mark 14:60–63, the High Priest tears his clothes after Jesus's pronouncement about the Son of Man being seated at the right hand of God and coming with the clouds.

Clothing plays a significant role in all of these scenes. The significance of the clothing motif is found in that important revelations are given after each clothing reference. In the episode of John the Baptist in Mark 1:7, Jesus is introduced as the coming one. In the episode of the transfiguration in chapter 9, a voice comes from the clouds saying, "This is my Son, whom I love. Listen to him" (9:7). Jesus is none other than the heavenly Son. The action of the High Priest leads into Jesus going to trial as a suffering messiah. In all of these cases, the significance of Jesus is highlighted through the narrative detail of clothing.[86]

Therefore, the young man, both in Mark 14:51–52 and in 16:5, should be read in this regard. Mark intentionally focuses on the description of the clothing of the young man in Gethsemane, with him fleeing naked and leaving behind his garment. The young man is eager to follow Jesus even when Jesus's disciples fail to do so. The young man,

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[85] I am grateful to Pieter G. R. de Villiers for the inspiration for this idea. See Pieter G. R. de Villiers, "The Powerful Transformation of the Young Man in Mark 14:51-52 and 16:5," *HTS Theological Study*, 66, no. 1 (2010): 1-7.

[86] Ibid., 3.

however, also fails to follow Jesus. Finally, he chooses shame over fidelity to Jesus.[87] In this sense, the young man is an anti-heroic figure.

Meanwhile, taking off an article of clothing symbolized the body and the soul's separation in the ancient Greek world. This is an ancient cliché.[88] Garments usually symbolize a human being's body. In this sense, the garment the young man left behind may symbolize the flight of the naked soul from the body.[89] Many ancient authors explain this symbolism. Plato said, "Next they must be stripped bare of all those things before they are tried; for they must stand their trial dead. Their judge also must be naked, dead, beholding with very soul the very soul of each immediately upon his death, bereft of all his kin and having left [them] behind on earth" (*Gorgias* 523e).[90] According to Plotinus, "So we must ascend again to the good, which every soul desires . . . and the attainment of it is for those who go up to the higher world and are converted and strip off what we put on in our descent . . . and stripping off of the clothes they wore before, and going up naked" (*Ennead* I. 6. 7).[91] In addition, Jewish theologian Philo said, "The soul that loves God, having disrobed itself of the body and the objects dear to the body and fled abroad far away from these, gains a fixed and assured settlement in the perfect ordinances of virtue" (*Allegorical Interpretation* 2.55).[92]

If Mark understood these concepts, the meaning of the naked young man should be read in this way. The naked young man symbolizes death. But, one cannot say that his death does not share in a heroic ending. The young man comes back to Jesus's empty

[87] Donahue and Harrington, *Mark*, 417.
[88] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 129.
[89] Ibid.
[90] Plato, *Gorgias*, trans. by W. R. M. Lamb (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1967).
[91] Plotinus, *Ennead*, trans. by A. H. Armstrong, LCL (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969).
[92] Philo, *On the Creation: Allegorical Interpretation of Genesis 2 and 3*, trans. F. C. Colson and G. H. Whitaker, LCL (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1929).

tomb dressed in a white robe and sitting on the right side. If the two men are the same character, the naked young man has been powerfully transformed. The young man who proclaims Jesus's resurrection at his tomb plays the role of a totally transformed character after Jesus's death. Jesus made it possible to die a tragic death and to be revived gloriously. Jesus's death and resurrection have transformational power. The young man who was naked and fled from Jesus was transformed in a special manner through Jesus's resurrection.[93]

The naked young man is a symbol of an anti-heroic figure just like Jesus's disciples, but Mark's literary goal in using him in the passion narrative is to provide a foil for Jesus's heroic death and to announce that glorious resurrection comes from Jesus's suffering and death. As one can observe, Jesus wore the same σινδών when he died that the young man threw away to flee. Mark uses the word σινδών four times in his Gospel, twice for the young man and twice for Jesus. Mark presents a fictionalized account of Jesus's suffering through the anti-heroic figure. It seems that the young man plays the role of a herald, messenger, or alter ego to deliver Jesus's message. The character of the young man is used instead of Jesus to proclaim Jesus's heroic death and resurrection through his words and actions. Thus, I think investigating the young man's identity as to whether he is a historical person or a symbolic figure is going down the wrong track. Mark's main literary strategy is to utilize the young man as a foil for Jesus's death and resurrection. Mark is a creative literary author.

The Young Man as Mark's Imitation of Elpenor in Homer's *Odyssey*

Much Biblical interpretation is author-centric. It is an effort to seek the author's intention and to analyze his method or skill in composing the work. As long as the author

[93] Villiers, "The Powerful Transformation," 3.

of Mark is a creative literary composer, his Gospel stimulates the interpreter's curiosity and imagination. It is suspect that one can possibly catch up to the author's creativity and imagination. If the identity of the young man is still vague and questionable, we are not reaching Mark's literary level yet. The lack of development in the Biblical interpretation of Mark's Gospel is not far from neglect of the author of Mark and the creativity of the Gospel. Mark has been regarded as an inferior writer, but Mark is beyond our traditional perception. Mark is not just a passive transcriber, but an artful literary writer. In addition, his Gospel is not a product of the oral tradition's memory of Jesus; rather, Mark transforms and recreates either Christian literature or Greco-Roman literature, especially Homeric epics. The Gospel of Mark is a representative of early Christian writing that ranks with and vies with the Greco-Roman world's brilliant writers and their literary works. Mark's Jesus stands among other gods and heroes to be advertised in that time. Regarding the young man, his identity is Mark's rewriting of Homer's character Elpenor in the *Odyssey*. The flight of the young man in Mark 14:51–52 is Mark's answer to Homer's Elpenor. In addition, the young man at Jesus's empty tomb is Mark's imitation of Elpenor, but Mark makes a much better story. Thus, the two young men and their episodes should be read together on the basis of Mark's imitation of Homer's Elpenor.

Elpenor is one of Odysseus's companions. He is described as a very young man who is not brave or smart. Elpenor is a negative reflection of Odysseus in many ways.[94] Elpenor suddenly appears on the scene in the *Odyssey*. Homer's readers do not notice his existence until his inglorious death. He must be an insignificant and antiheroic figure in that he is introduced with the indefinite pronoun 'τις'' ("a certain").[95] Moreover, he falls

[94] Stamatia Dova, *Greek Heroes in and out of Hades* (Lanham, MD: Lexington Books, 2012), 14.
[95] Ibid.

to his death in the middle of the night. Elpenor does not share a hero's fate. Unfortunately, no one, not even Odysseus, notices his fatality. Here is the story:

> There was a man, Elpenor, the youngest in our ranks, none too brave in battle, none too sound in mind. He'd strayed from his mates in Circe's magic halls and keen for the cool night air, sodden with wine, he'd bedded down on the roofs. But roused by the shouts and tread of marching men, he leapt up with a start at dawn but still so dazed he forgot to climb back down again by the long ladder—headfirst from the roof he plunged, his neck snapped from the backbone, his soul flew down to the house of Hades (*Od*. 10.552–60).[96]

In Hades, Odysseus was planning to meet the soul of Tiresias, but the first ghost he meets is Elpenor. Odysseus is surprised to hear what happened to his comrade before he came to Hades. Elpenor explains all about his accident and begs Odysseus to burn his corpse in full armor and to bury his ashes with due rites. Odysseus promises to do so. It is interesting that Elpenor and Achilles are the first and last souls Odysseus converses with in Hades. Stamatia Dova argues, "The experience of *katabasis* injects Odysseus with new strength and determination not only through the information provided by Tiresias but also thanks to the favorable comparison with his former fellow journeyers."[97] In the scene in which Elpenor asks for his funeral, he states:

> Don't sail off and desert me, left behind unwept, unburied, don't, or my curse may draw god's fury on your head. No, burn me in full armor, all my harness, heap my mound by the churning gray surf—a man whose luck ran out—so even men to come will learn my story. Perform my rites, and plant on my tomb that oar I swung with mates when I rowed among the living (*Od*. 11.72–78).[98]

After successfully traveling to Hades, Odysseus comes back to Aegea. He orders his comrades to find Elpenor and to bury him:

> As soon as Dawn with her rosy-fingers shone again I dispatched some men to Circe's halls to bring the dead Elpenor's body. We cut logs in haste and out on the island's sharpest jutting headland held his funeral rites in sorrow, streaming tears.

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[96] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by Robert Fagles (New York: Viking, 1996), 608-17.
[97] Dova, *Greek Heroes in and out of Hades,* 14.
[98] Homer, *The Odyssey,* 79-87.

> Once we'd burned the dead man and the dead man's armor, heaping his grave-mound, hauling a stone that covered it well, we planted his balanced oar aloft to crown his tomb (*Od.* 12.8–15).[99]

On the surface, one may have difficulty recognizing the literary contact between Elpenor and the young man. However, Elpenor and the young man have some literary connections. They are young men who abruptly appear on the scene, especially when the texts' two heroes, Jesus and Odysseus, are just about to go to their deaths (Jesus's crucifixion and Odysseus's entering Hades). Elpenor dies by falling to his death ingloriously, and the young man symbolically dies as he takes off his clothing, which is not a heroic death. Moreover, the two young men are not valiant, but anti-heroic figures. However, whereas Elpenor is buried through Odysseus's efforts, the young man is revived through Jesus's resurrection. In conclusion, mimesis criticism will unlock the keys needed to reveal more clearly the identity of the young man.

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[99] Homer, *The Odyssey,* 8-15.

CHAPTER 2
HOMER IN THE GRECO-ROMAN LITERARY WORLD

Why Homer?

Homer wrote two works, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. The former is about the Trojan War, which occurred over the course of ten years, and the latter is about the Trojan hero Odysseus's journey home from the war. It is said that the Homeric epics are the most enduring legends known to the Western world, rivaled only by the stories of the Bible. What has made Homer so attention-getting over such a long period of time?

Myths are full of stories considered fantastic from today's perspective. Protagonists in myths fly to the sky, walk on water, and descend to the netherworld alive. These are amazing stories that display characters with superhuman powers whom people want to be. However, nowadays, people do not take myths seriously. Myths influenced people's lives in relation to the religions, arts, and literatures of the ancient world. In particular, when reading literature, myths help people persevere in spite of their difficult situations, just as the heroes also confront struggles in the stories.

The Homeric epics were used in the Greco-Roman world as textbooks to teach young learners how to read and write from the beginnings of the Greek language. The Homeric influence, especially either in writing or in speaking, has been prevalent and its place in the Western cultural imagination is unrivaled. Homer's status in Greco-Roman literature is unique. How have the Homeric epics had an enduring attraction? James I. Porter answers by writing, "This is lesser their quality as great works of literature than their role as cultural icons, as signifiers of value, and as landmarks in the evolving

relationship between literature and culture."[100] As Plato says, "Homer educated Greeks" (*Resp*. 606 E); Homer represents a foundational crux within the disciplined study of the classics.[101] There is no bigger catastrophe than the fall of Troy. The orator Lycurgus warned the Athenians in 331 BCE that their fate would be similar to Troy's, involving callous betrayal, destruction, and desolation: "Who has not heard of Troy? Who does not know that Troy—once the greatest city of its age, and the queen of Asia—has remained for all time uninhabited, since once for all it was razed by Greeks?"[102] Homer's *Iliad* ends with the tragic story of Troy, the destruction of the palace and most of the royal family. However, the story continues in the *Odyssey* and then the *Aeneid* and many more works.[103] It seems that literary authors start their writing with the relation of the fall of a memorable place. Among them, Homer is the first as he writes about the hero's journey home in the *Odyssey*. Porter says, "In between stretched a long tradition of literary and pictorial allusions to the destruction of Troy, but it was Homer, not other poets, whose name was soldered to the catastrophic memory of Troy."[104]

Homer in Greek Education

At this point, it is necessary to deal with Greek education to see what role Homer played in it and how his works influenced literary education. From the time of Classical Greece, when literary analysis was first being developed, Homeric epics were one of the

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[100] James I. Porter, "Nietzsche, Homer, and the Classical Tradition," in *Nietzsche and Antiquity: His Reaction and Response to the Classical Tradition*, ed. Paul Bishop (Rochester, NY: Camden House, 2004), 7.

[101] Ibid. 8.

[102] *Against Leovrates*, 63, cited in James I. Porter, "Nietzsche, Homer, and the Classical Tradition," 10.

[103] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 198-200.

[104] Porter, "Nietzche, Homer, and the Classical Tradition," 10.

most prominent literary works.[105] Gregory J. Riley says, "From before the time of Socrates (d. 399 B.C.E.) to long after the reign of Constantine (d. 337 C.E.), education in Greece was based on Homer and the tragic poets."[106] Even Gospel writers received the same education as others in that culture.[107] According to MacDonald, "Younger students learned the alphabet by identifying Homeric names, and only after demonstrating facility with the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* were they promoted to other books."[108] Homer educated the Greeks; he was the educational Bible of the Greeks.[109] There is more evidence of Homeric influence in education. According to Stanley F. Bonner, "Whether their master taught both languages or only Greek, the poet whom boys began to study first and foremost was Homer. . . Petronius, Quintilian and Pliny are all unequivocal about Homer's priority."[110] Teresa Jean Morgan says, "Literacy was low, perhaps no more than 15 percent. But reading Homer was, among other things, a statement of Greek identity not only for the ethnic Greek aristocracy in Egypt but also for non-Greeks."[111] The papyri of Egypt give evidence that Homeric epics were without rival in the struggle for literary survival. A total of 1,596 Homeric books survive in scrap and fragment form. Out of them, nearly one-half were copies of the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* or were commentaries on

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[105] Robert S. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew: Background and Rhetoric* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016), 150.

[106] Gregory J. Riley, *One Jesus: How Jesus Inspired Not One True Christianity, But Many: The Truth About Christian Origin* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 69.

[107] Ibid.

[108] Dennis R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (New York; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 17-22.

[109] William Barclay, *Train Up a Child: Educational Ideals in the Ancient World* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1959), 109.

[110] Stanley F. Bonner, *Education in Ancient Rome: From the Elder Cato to the Younger Pliny* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1977), 212-13.

[111] Teresa Jean Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds*, Cambridge Classic Studies (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 74-89 and 109-110.

them.[112] Homer was like the air people breathed.

It is commonly suggested that literary education in the Hellenistic territories was tripartite: the primary stage, the secondary school, and higher education.[113] In the primary curriculum, students encountered Homer.[114] They learned to read properly from a written model or from syllables that included Homeric names. The role of Homeric names in Greek education had significant meaning, according to Hock:

> At the primary stage of education students get a familiarity with an appreciation of Homer. Students would learn the names of a number of heroes, deities, and other proper names that appear in the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*, and they might also have copied and memorized a few lines from the early books of the *Iliad* and perhaps have already come to view Homer with something akin to awe.[115]

In the secondary curriculum, students proceed to the critical reading of literature and an apprehension of grammar under a γραμματικός. Since students were required to study literature, certain texts were given. Homor was a primary writer used.[116] Hock explains in detail:

> Students began to classify the names and shapes of the letters and to distinguish consonants from vowels. In addition, students began to classify words grammatically. Finally, they started to read and interpret lengthy literary works, always Homer and principally the *Iliad*, but also other poets, most likely Euripides and perhaps Menander.[117]

After the secondary curriculum, students moved to the tertiary stage of education, usually rhetoric or philosophy. Students learned the rules and studied the models for

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[112] Moses I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York: New York Review Books, 2002), 11-12. According to Finley, "The next most popular author was the orator Demosthenes, with 83 papyri (including commentaries), followed by Euripides with 77, and Hesiod with 72, Plato is represented by but 43 papyri, Aristotle by 8. These are figures of book copying among the Greeks in Egypt after Alexander.

[113] H. I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity* (New York: Seed and Ward, 1956), 150-216.

[114] Ronald F. Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," in *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Dennis R. MacDonald (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 59.

[115] Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," 63.

[116] Robert S. Kinney, *Hellenistic Dimensions of the Gospel of Matthew: Background and Rhetoric* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2016).

[117] Hock, "Homer in Greco-Roman Education," 64.

composing and delivering different types of public speeches: the judicial speech (δικανικος), the advisory speech (συμβουλευτικος), and the celebratory speech (επιδεικτικος).[118] At this stage, Homer was used greatly for illustrations, models, and subject matter.[119] As mentioned above, Homer deserved to be taken up as an instructor in the ancient Greek educational curriculum. Hock concludes:

> The Homeric epics were part of the curriculum in all three stages of Greco-Roman education. Indeed, Homer's role in education was varied, continuous, and profound: names from Homer were some of the first words students ever learned, lines from Homer were some of the first sentences they ever read, lengthy passages from Homer were the first they ever memorized and interpreted events and themes from Homer were the ones they often treated in compositional exercises, and lines and metaphors from Homer were often used to adorn their speeches and to express their self-presentation. Indeed, for the rest of their lives, those who had been educated were expected to have Homer on their lips for capturing and articulating the essence of a moment or the character of a person, even when half asleep.[120]

The Homeric epics are, indeed, the most attested educational texts for students in Greco-Roman schools. Homer was prevalent in the ancient world, and his writings were works of great power in the Greco-Roman world. This is the reason Homer has been a model many literary authors have attempted to imitate.

Homeric Epics as Literary Models

It is said that as a literary model the preeminence of Homer in education and literature in the Greco-Roman world is unparalleled. Homer is schoolbook. Homeric names and characters are a good source to develop students' reading, writing, and speaking. Not only do students achieve their learning ability through Homer, but they also imitate his ways of living and survival. The great Roman rhetorician Quintilian stated, "It is even more important that they should study what is morally excellent. It is

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[118] Ibid., 69.
[119] Ibid., 71. For a more detailed explanation of this matter, see p. 71.
[120] Ibid., 77.

therefore an admirable practice which now prevails, to begin by reading Homer and Vergil." (*Instit. Orat*. 1. 8. 4-5).[121] When students are ready to write, they learn to do it through imitation of recognized models.[122] This is a literary device used in creating artful works by emulating distinguished models. MacDonald says, "Students in ancient schools learned to write largely through mimesis (*imitatio* is the Latin equivalent)."[123] Imitation was a prime means of moving a pupil forward in his education. It occurred at every stage of *enkyklios paideia*[124] and served as one of its most important methods for learning how to communicate.[125] In particular, imitation helped a child learn to speak, to write, and to practice literary criticism, and it is the means by which he practiced what he was taught in rhetoric, culminating in the time when he no longer required teaching. Quintilian writes, "There can be no doubt that in art no small portion of our task lies in imitation, since, although invention came first and is all important, it is expedient to follow whatever has been invented with success" (*Instit. Orat*. 10. 2. 1).[126] Seneca, a Roman philosopher, describes the mimetic tasks as "absorption" and "digestion" of various models that lead to a new synthesis (*Epistles* 84. 4-9).[127] Thus, imitation was a subtle art through which a writer internalized and transformed models so they spoke to a new situation.

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[121] Quintilian, *The Instituto Oratoria of Quintilian* (Butler, LCL), 149.

[122] Dennis R. MacDonald, *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity: Studies in Antiquity and Christianity* (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2001), 1.

[123] Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics,* 4. In broad terms, *mimesis* (Grk), or *imitation* (Lat.), was regarded in antiquity as an art involving special techniques, specific philosophies, and various trends or fashions, from drama and novels to history, from songs and musical interpretation to painting, sculpture, and architecture.

[124] Quintilian defines *enkyklios paideia* as learning reading and writing, grammar, literature, geometry, astronomy, and the principle of music and logic (*Instit*. *Orat*. 1. 10. 1). Pliny the Elder recommends, "What the Greeks call *enkyklios paideia*" as a preface to any other activity in life (*Hist. nat*. I pr. 14.)

[125] Morgan*, Literate Education*, 251.

[126] Butler, *The Instituto Oratoria* 10. 2. 1.

[127] Lucius Anneaeus Seneca, *Epistles*, trans. by Richard M. Gummere, LCL (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2001).

In order to make better work of the models in antecedent works, authors must be familiar with them. Then, selection of the best models is crucial work to any authors. According to Henri I. Marrou, “Homer supplied the whole foundation of classical education not only in the literature, but also in ethics and morality via lessons from his masterpieces.”[128] Rhetorical mimesis and imitation of the best models of the Homeric epics tended to overshadow everything else. Homer was the *par excellence* like the source of every stream and river. Homer has given us a model of eloquence and an inspiration in every department. According to A. A. Long:

> Homer was the poet for the Greeks. Children learned large parts of the Iliad and Odyssey by heart as part of their primary education. All Greek literature and art, and just about all Greek philosophy, resonate against the background of Homer. Throughout classical antiquity and well into the Roman Empire, Homer held a position in Mediterranean culture that can only be compared with the position the Bible would later occupy. The comparison is important if we are to understand why, from early as 500 B.C., the status and meaning of Homer were central questions for philosophers. Like the Bible for Jews, Homer offered the Greeks the foundation of their cultural identity.[129]

As mentioned above, Homer is an absolute work and model in Greco-Roman literary world. Literary models can be one or a multitude depending on the authors’ literary skill. Students usually imitated a single work, but the experienced authors borrowed from many.[130] Seneca compared those veteran literary authors with bees, which took the best nectar from many blossoms to produce textual honey. He says, “Authors should blend

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[128] Henri I. Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 13. For discussion of mimesis see, George Converse Fiske, *Lucilius and Horace: A Study in the Classical Theory of Imitation* (Madison: University of Wisconsin, 1920); Richard McKeon, “Literary Criticism and the Concept of Imitation in Antiquity,” in *Critics and Criticism*, ed. Ronald Salmon Crane (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1952), 147-75; Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry*, Roman Literature and Its Contexts (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998); Thomas Louis Brodie, “Greco-Roman Imitation of Texts as a Partial Guide to Luke’s Use of Source,” in *Luke-Acts: New Perspectives from the Society of Biblical Literature Seminar*, ed. Charles H. Talbert (New York: Crossroad, 1984), 17-26.

[129] A. A. Long, “Stoic Reading of Homer,” in Oxford Readings in Ancient Literary Criticism (ORCS), ed. Andrew Laird (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 211-37, here, 214.

[130] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 5.

those several flavours into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came."[131] No matter how many models authors borrowed, imitation is not the bare interpretation of the original. Its duty is to rival and vie with the original in the expression of the same thought. In order to achieve this task, it is important to find and choose the best models. And then, authors must seek to improve their models by means of "invention," "power," and "competence."[132] Homer sparked a fire in the heart of all Greeks with a variety of heroic stories. Heroes were the models of the literary world. Their stories and lives formed the virtues of ancient life in Greek. Again just like Marrou observes, "Homer supplied the whole foundation of classical education."[133] I suggest that the composition of the Gospel of Mark is closely related to the ancient literary practice. Mark takes models in Homeric epics and imitates it and recreates it.

Mark and Homer

There is no doubt that Mark received a Greco-Roman education. Marrou says, "From the very early times a connection was established between classicism and Christianity and the connection has been very enduring."[134] Besides, "Christianity was born in Hellenistic Palestine and developed in the midst of Greco-Roman civilization. . . the Gospel was first written in Greek."[135] Greek became widespread throughout the area of Alexander's conquests, including Palestine.[136] Greco-Roman literature also directly or indirectly influenced Judaism, which could easily account for any similarities between

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[131] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 6.
[132] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 4
[133] Marrou, *A History of Education in Antiquity*, 13.
[134] Ibid., 318.
[135] Ibid.
[136] Martin Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in Their Encounter in Palestine During the Early Hellenistic Period* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1974), 56-57, 60-61, 104.

two ancient texts.[137] Nevertheless, there has been an unwillingness to embrace Greco-Roman literary influence as a part of the foundation of the early Christian literary movement. In particular, in spite of literary influence on the composition of early Christian writings, the relationship has often been dismissed as inconsequential. Biblical interpretation has been generous to the Judaic and the Jewish scriptures, but Hellenic sources have been neglected. In doing so, Biblical study has ignored half of the influence on early Christianity. R. M. Grant argues, "The Church had roots in Judaism, though sometimes modern scholars are tempted to exaggerate the depth of the roots; it came to its flowering in the Greco-Roman world. Perhaps we could say, borrowing Paul's metaphor, that Palestine planted, Hellas watered, but God gave the growth."[138] Riley says the reason that Greco-Roman literature has been neglected is because people are not familiar with it as they are with the Jewish Bible.[139] In particular, it is not easy to compare the holy Bible to pagan literature. Justin Martyr, though, adduced similarities between Christian teaching and Greco-Roman mythology. MacDonald says, "Justin provides invaluable evidence that early Christians recognized affinities between the Gospels and the writings of Greek poets and philosophers."[140] The relationship between Mark and Homer should be rediscovered, not to shake the foundation of Christianity, but to awaken passion for Biblical study.

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[137] Christopher D. Stanley, "Paul and Homer: Greco-Roman Citation Practice in the First Century CE." *NT,* Vol. 32 (1990), 48-78, here, 49.

[138] R. M. Grant, "Hellenistic Elements in 1 Corinthians', in A. Wikgren (ed.), Early Christian Origin (Chicago: Quadrangle Books, 1961), 65.

[139] Gregory J. Riley, "Mimesis of Classical Ideals in the Second Christian Century," *Mimesis and Intertextuality in Antiquity and Christianity*, ed. Dennis R. MacDonald (Harrisburg: Trinity Press International, 2001), 91-103.

[140] Ibid.

CHAPTER 3
MIMESIS CRITICISM ON MARK 14:51–52 AND 16:1–8

MacDonald is disappointed that detection of literary imitation is one of the most neglected topics in discussions of early Christian narrative composition. There are two reasons for this neglect. The first comes from ignoring Mark's author. Traditionally, Mark has been regarded as a passive transcriber of tradition. Form critics especially are not much concerned about the author, but about the traditions that came to the collector. For this reason, form critics consider Mark just a collector, although Dibelius more freely emphasizes the author's work in the Gospel.[141] Therefore, form critics focus on the tradition that lay before the collector, and they reconstruct a narrative in its original, isolated condition.

However, Mark is more than a collector; he is a creative author. The Gospel of Mark contains the author's literary intention, and Mark's story is a logical and coherent work. Therefore, the author of Mark is a skillful writer, and Mark's Gospel is a creative and artful literary work. The author's creativity, as I understand it, is not related to invention or the originality of the author's work. What I mean is that the author of Mark creatively assembled what he had. Mark gathered literary sources, such as Homeric texts, and combined them with his religious values and texts derived from Jewish Scriptures, Q, and maybe Paul. Then, Mark created a new story from them to propagandize new religious moral virtues and an aesthetic life in Jesus Christ. An author's new idea and moral vision contrasts with the previous model and replaces it. This is like a religious game to compete with one another. Among the models, Mark's most formidable

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[141] Martin Dibelius, *From Tradition to Gospel*, trans. Bertram Lee Woolf (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935).

contender is Homer. Whether Mark likes Homer or not, Mark's literary goal is to win the game in the Greco-Roman literary world. The composition of Mark's Gospel is not just fun, but a struggle with other religions and literatures that support and defend each religion's value and virtue. Mark is participating in this game. Homer was the most valuable writer in many ways. Students learned how to read and write with Homer. The Homeric epics, especially its heroic stories, became favorite models for later works.[142] Homer is the most valuable and influential work others are willing to imitate.

In ancient writing, the most sophisticated form of literary mimesis was rivalry, or *aemulatio*, in which literary works were exploited in subtle ways by authors who wished to "speak better" than the sources they imitated. Mark's desire in writing the Gospel was to provide a "new and improved" role model that was superior to the pagan gods and heroes. This is called "transvaluation" in mimesis criticism.[143] Similar to this concept, Gerard Genette, a French literary theorist, advocates "hypertextuality" as an interpretive lens. According to Genette, "Hypertextuality is the relation between a text, hypertext, and a preceding text, hypotext. A hypertext relies somehow on a written antecedent, hypotext, and a hypertext transforms, modifies, elaborates on, or extends its targeted hypotext."[144] Furthermore, Genette says, "The hypertext always wins."[145]

As a new interpretive lens, mimesis criticism should be applied to investigating the meaning of the Gospel of Mark, particularly some of the most enigmatic and disputed

[142] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and The Gospel of Mark*, 4.

[143] A text becomes transvaluative "when it not only articulates values different from those of its targeted text but also substitutes its values for those in its antecedent." MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 6.

[144] Gerard Genette, *Palimpsestes: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. by Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln, NE: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 209.

[145] Ibid., 451.

aspects of the Gospel. The mysterious reference to the unnamed young man who fled naked during Jesus's arrest must be resolved.

Hereafter, I will introduce each criterion that is used in mimesis criticism. Some criteria verify how Homer was popular in the Greco-Roman literary world. Some other criteria show that Mark intentionally and strategically imitated Homeric epics. In particular, some criteria provide the clues necessary to interpret the enigmatic young man in Mark 14:51–52.

Criterion 1: Accessibility or Availability

The criterion of accessibility or availability in mimesis criticism is related to understanding Homer's social status and value in the literature. According to MacDonald, "the criterion accessibility, or availability, assesses the likelihood that the author had access to the hypotext. The more widespread the proposed target of imitation, the stronger the case for imitation."[146] Homer stood high in the ancient Greek world. Plato evaluates the writer in this way: "This poet (Homer) has educated Greece . . . and [one ought] to live the whole of one's life organized in accordance with what this poet says" (*Resp*. 10.606e–607a).[147] Homer's body of work was a sort of Bible and a great treatise in philosophy.[148] In addition, Homer was favorably received in the Roman era. Virgil was fond of Homer more than anyone. Virgil not only imitated Homer, he also transformed the epics to make them the base of his own poem.[149] As noted above, Homeric models

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[146] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 8. A hypotext is an earlier text that serves as a literary source for subsequent literature. A hypertext is a text that alludes to, derives from, or is related to an earlier text. Gerard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1997).

[147] Plato, *Republic*, trans. by C. J. Emlyn-Jones and William. Preddy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 437.

[148] Moses I. Finley, *The World of Odysseus* (New York: Bernard Knox, 2002), 5.

[149] G. N. Knauer, *Vergil's Aeneid and Homer: Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*. Ed. S. J. Harrison (New York: Oxford UP, 1990), 402.

inspired people in every department of eloquence. The models tended to overshadow everything else. It was considered that Homer was the writer par excellence, like the source of every stream and river.[150] Moses I. Finley explains the reputation of Homeric epics in literary history as follows:

> No other poet, no other literary figure in all history for that matter, occupied a place in the life of his people such as Homer's. He was their pre-eminent symbol of nationhood, the unimpeachable authority on their pantheon, as well as their most beloved and most widely quoted poet.[151]

Truly, the Homeric epics were great enough to be a model throughout the literary world, and the stories of their heroes' lives formed the virtues of ancient Greek people and even non-Greeks.

Some Controversies

It is an undeniable fact that Homer had much influence on the Greco-Roman literary world. However, Homer has been controversial in relation to his literary influence on the Gospel of Mark. Margaret M. Mitchell and Karl Olav Sandnes are the most prolific critics of Homeric imitation in Mark.[152]

Both Mitchell and Sandnes appreciate the epics' influence on ancient Greek literature. However, they are not willing to apply Homer to the Gospel of Mark; at best, they will consider a "small unit" or "isolatable units."[153] They propose several reasons for their objection to Homeric influence in the Gospel of Mark. Both scholars reject Mark's

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[150] Richard Thomas Eldridge, *The Oxford Handbook of Philosophy and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 22.

[151] Finley, *The World of Odysseus,* 5.

[152] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer,* 8-16. MacDonald discusses the critiques of critics of mimesis criticism.

[153] MacDonald says that, although Mitchell affirms the importance of the epics in ancient Greco-Roman culture and its own contribution to ancient Christian literature, she regards the influence to be merely at the level of smaller or isolatable units. She favors traditional form criticism informed by classical Greek poetry, that is, Homer light. Dennis R. MacDonald, *My Turn*: *A Critique of Critics of "Mimesis Criticism"* (Claremont, CA: Institute for Antiquity and Christianity, 2009), 23.

imitation of Homeric epics because they think the author of Mark and his intended readers were not so clever.[154] Sandnes says, "Ancient education was designed for the upper strata of the population."[155] He assumes that Mark could not have been educated in an upper-class curriculum such as the Homeric epics.

Scholars, in particular form critics, have emphasized that the pre-Markan Jesus tradition was transmitted heavily in the oral medium.[156] There was the first step of Jesus's movement in oral form and then the second written in the Greco-Roman literary milieu. These scholars divide the oral and the written into two separate spheres, but the question is, how can one distinguish between the two? L. W. Hurtado points out the following regarding this matter:

> The Hellenistic age introduced a period of apparently widespread literacy and popular education previously unknown. The literary environment of early Christianity was particularly rich and varied. And the mass of surviving letters from antiquity shows an impressively wide distribution of popular literacy. All this suggests that the cultural background of early Christianity does not seem like a good example of a culture of "primary orality" or one where textuality is struggling to obtain cultural influence.[157]

Scholars' identification of the author of Mark varies depending on what they consider the literary tradition Mark stands on.

Mitchell and Sandnes regard Mark as an inferior and a marginalized writer,

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[154] Margaret M. Mitchell, "Homer in the New Testament?" *JR* 83 (2003), 21; Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 249.

[155] Karl Olav Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer: School, Pagan Poets and Early Christianity* (London; New York: T & T Clark, 2009), 249.

[156] L. W. Hurtado, "Greco-Roman Textuality and the Gospel of Mark: A Critical Assessment of Werner Kelber's The Oral and the Written Gospel" *BBR* 7 (1997) 94.

[157] Ibid., 95. Hurtado cites three authors' works in this paragraph: W. W. Tarn, *Hellenistic Civilisation*, rev. ed. (Cleveland: World, 1952), 268-94; D. E. Aune, *The New Testament in Its Literary Environment* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1987); S. K. Stowers, *Letter Writing in Greco-Roman Antiquity* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1986).

regardless of Mark's literary sophistication.[158] Mark's literary sources are not limited to oral sources, as form critics may want to argue; in front of Mark's hands were written sources that he had read. Mark was a sophisticated writer on a level with other competent writers in the Greco-Roman literary world.[159]

The second critical issue is whether Mark's imitation of Homer was not Mark's conscious intention, but a result of general cultural influence because the Homeric epics were foundational to ancient Greek culture. To address this critique, I would like to apply the following theory. Robert A. Derrenbacker Jr. has studied how memory may have influenced the literary compositions of ancient authors.[160] He introduces C. B. R. Pelling as one of the few scholars who has attempted to ascertain the role that memory of written texts may have played in ancient literary compositions. Reflecting on his study of Plutarch, Pelling states:

> An author would generally choose just one work to have before his eyes when he composed, and this work would provide the basis of his narrative. Items from earlier reading would more widely be combined with the principal source, but a writer would not normally refer back to that reading to verify individual references, and would instead rely on his memory, or on the briefest of notes. Alternatively, it may be that an author, immediately before narrating an episode, would reread one account, and compose with that version fresh in mind. . . Stray facts and additions would be recalled from the preliminary reading, but it would be a very different matter to recall the detail of an episode's presentation, and combine versions independently and evenly.[161]

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[158] See David Rhoads and Donald Michie, *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982).

[159] MacDonald says, "Mark was no slave to his model; rather, he thoroughly, cleverly, and strategically emulated these stories to depict Jesus as more compassionate, powerful, noble, and inured to suffering than Odysseus. Though Jesus' death resembled Hector's, he returned from the dead leaving an empty tomb. Nearly every episode with parallels in the epics displays such theological rivalry." MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 6. Also see Thomas L. Brodie, *The Quest for the Origin of John's Gospel: A Source-Oriented Approach* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 42-47.

[160] Derrenbacker uses the term "memory" as distinct from "oral tradition." "Memory" refers to the memory of a written text. "Oral tradition" refers to "any body of material handed down from generation to generation by word of mouth." R. A. Derrenbacker, *Ancient Compositional Practices and the Synoptic Problem* (Dudley, MA: Peeters, 2005).

[161] C. B. R. Pelling, "Plutarch's Method of Work in the Roman Lives," *JHS* 99 (1979): 92.

Mark's imitation might have relied on the author's earlier reading and memory. Some similarities are Mark's intentional imitation, but at times some are general cultural influences derived from limited earlier memory. However, remember the first sentence of Pelling's statement above: "An author would generally choose just one work to have before his eyes when he composed, and this work would provide the basis of his narrative." Moreover, mimesis criticism offers criteria to test if the similarity between two texts is general cultural influence or a targeted imitation of a model.[162] This dissertation is a trial using Mark 14:51–52 to establish mimesis as a dominating strategy for Mark, not merely general cultural influences.

The third objection is that the Homeric model is inappropriate to the composition of Mark. In short, the Homeric models have many faults that ought not to be imitated in holy scriptures. For this matter, I want to directly quote MacDonald's words:

> All superheroes are creations of human imaginations, but not all superheroes are created equal. Some are dangerous monsters, some are saviors of the helpless, some are clever, and some possess special gadgets. Early Christians elevated Jesus of Nazareth into a superhero with powers beyond those of mortals, but they never forgot that he also was a Jewish teacher who taught people to be honest, just, kind, and compassionate. The few times when the Evangelists depict him using violence, he is helping others: to free a madman infested by demons or to put out of business those who exploited the poor. In this respect, Jesus was different from Greek gods, who infamously engaged in warfare against mortals, destroyed people out of jealousy, and abused them to satisfy their passions and whims.[163]

Mimesis criticism calls this improvement over the source "transvaluation" (which considers how Mark emulated and surpassed Homer in style, philosophical adequacy,

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[162] Four of the seven criteria attempt to do this: density (the number or volume of parallels between two texts), order (recognizable affinities in the sequence of the parallels), distinctive traits (characteristics found in two texts not widely found elsewhere), and interpretability (why the author imitated the target, which may include emulation or transvaluation).

[163] MacDonald, *Mythologize Jesus*, 11.

persuasiveness, or religious perspective).[164] Mimetic reading opens the gate to invite us to see how Mark's literary world was wide and universal. One would not deny that Mark spared no effort to secure Jesus's validation as a more virtuous and powerful hero in the Greco-Roman world.

The last critical issue, and Sandes's primary objection, has to do with Mark's failure to alert his reader that he was imitating the epics.[165] In fact, there are no Homeric names or characters that Mark's intended readers can recognize. Without this recognition, Mark's readers would not detect Mark's transvaluation, Sandes argues. In writing, substance is hidden behind the text, while extrinsic things are to be found easily. Through this hiddenness, the meaning of the text goes straight to the reader's heart. In addition, readers are entertained by the search for hidden meaning in the text. There is a time to conceal the true meaning of a text, especially when authors and readers are in crisis. Mark's literary creativity does not come from making direct statements about Jesus's heroism, but from providing clues to help readers detect how Mark's hero is superior to Hector, Odysseus, and many others. Stephen Hinds argues, "Allusions in classical literature run the gamut on a continuum from advertised emulation to nearly undetectable echoes."[166] He suggests that the reader of ancient literature avoid imposing "a rigidly polar choice . . . between that of clearly defined allusions on the one hand, and the mere accidental confluence on the other. The paradoxical goal, then, is a more exact account of the allusive inexactitude."[167]

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[164] MacDonald, *The Gospel and Homer*, 6.

[165] Karl Olav Sandes, "Imitatio Homeri? An Appraisal of Dennis R. MacDonald's 'Mimesis Criticism.'" *JBL* 124 (2005), 718.

[166] Stephen Hinds, *Allusion and Intertext: Dynamics of Appropriation in Roman Poetry* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 17-51.

[167] Ibid., 25.

Criterion 2: Analogy

According to MacDonald, "Analogy pertains to the popularity of the target. It seeks to know if other authors imitated the same proposed mimetic model. If many authors use a common model, the model has high value."[168] At times, an author uses a model more than once. This means that the model is crucial and that the author is the expert. What ancient writers loved and used as a model was no doubt Homer. According to Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ehorn,

> Homer is by far the most cited Greek author in antiquity. His epics, which were foundational for Greek culture and the core of school curriculum, were repeatedly invoked in Greek and Latin literature and used, among other reasons, to settle arguments and add cultural gravitas.[169]

The story of a young man was often told in Greco-Roman mythology to portray death and the afterlife. Homer's Elpenor was a model for diverse ancient authors, such as Plato, Plutarchus, and Virgil. They used Elpenor as a literary model, but they replaced Homer's version and created a new story and discourse. We will see how Elpenor's literary legacy was carried on and transformed by skillful authors' imitation.

Plato's Myth of Er

Death is inevitably humans' fate, whether they are afraid of death or not. Definitely, death is feared to the ordinary. However, at times death makes people humble. In the face of death, people think of their past and how they have lived. Death educates people about humans' weaknesses and limitations. When people realize this and accept death without hesitation, they become true philosophers. Plato's Socrates says, "The true philosophers practice dying, and death is less terrible to them than to any other men"

[168] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 8.

[169] Sean A. Adams and Seth M. Ehorn, eds., *Composite Citations in Antiquity*, vol. 1, *Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and Early Christian Uses*, 17.

(*Phaedo* 67e).[170] If a philosopher fears death, he is not a lover of wisdom but a lover of the body. Socrates's optimistic view of death derives from his unshakable faith in the benefits of death:

> I will try to make a more convincing defence than I did before the judges. For if I did not believe, said he, that I was going to other wise and good gods, and, moreover, to men who have died, better men than those here, I should be wrong in not grieving at death. But as it is, you may rest assured that I expect to go to good men (*Phaedo* 63b).[171]

> I wish now to explain to you, my judges, the reason why I think a man who has really spent his life in philosophy is naturally of good courage when he is to die, and has strong hopes that when he is dead he will attain the greatest blessings in that other land (*Phaedo* 63e-64a).[172]

In sum, death is not the end but a new beginning for humans. They move from this world to the pure abode where great humans exist just as released in jail. The pure abode where people exist is not the land of this world, but the netherworld namely heavenly earth. People who love wisdom have duly purified themselves by philosophy and lived pure abode without bodies. Thus, death is not the end of a one-time life, but a disembodiment of soul.

The myth of Er shows that death is not the end but a rite of passage to another, new land by describing a young man's experience in the netherworld. In addition, the story teaches that spirits that return to the underworld are born again to repeat life in this world. Thus, the myth of Er is a metaphor for Plato's understanding of the afterlife: reincarnation.[173] As Quintilian says, "It is expedient to follow whatever has been invented

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[170] *Plato: In Twelve Volumes*, trans. by Harold North Fowler, W. R. M. Lamb, Paul Shorey and Robert Gregg Bury (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 219.
[171] Ibid., 219.
[172] Ibid., 221-222.
[173] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 12.

with success."[174] Plato successfully develops the Homeric concept of the afterlife by imitating Elpenor in the myth of Er. Plato's *Republic*, chapter 10, tells about the warrior Er. Er, the son of Armenius, was a brave (ἀλκίνου) warrior (*Resp*. 10.614b).

> He once upon a time was killed in battle, and when the bodies of those who had already decayed were collected up ten days later, his was found to be sound, and when he'd been taken home for burial, on the twelfth day, as he lay upon the pyre, he came to. Having done so, he described what he had seen on the other side. He said that his soul left him and made its way with many others and they came to a sacred spot (*Resp*. 10.614b–c).[175]

> However, where and how he returned to his body, he did not know, but suddenly he looked up and saw it was not dawn and that he was lying on the pyre" (*Resp*. 10.621b).[176]

To begin with, Plato's understanding of the afterlife is a much different view than Homer's. The afterlife in Homer's *Odyssey* is described as "horrible," "noisome," and "dank."[177] This is verified by Achilles's complaint, "I should choose, so I might live on earth, to serve as the hireling of another, some landless man with hardly enough to live on, rather than to be lord over all the dead that have" (*Od*. 11.488–91).[178] There are a couple of key features in Homer's Hades. No rewards for the righteous are provided in the Homeric epics, unlike Plato's idea of the afterlife. In addition, the netherworld is believed to be a continuation of earthly life: A ruler on earth will also rule in the netherworld and a slave in this world will also be a slave in the next.[179] This idea must

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[174] *Inst. Orat.* 10.2.1.

[175] Plato, *Republic,* trans. by C. J. Emlyn-Jones and William Preddy (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 463-464.

[176] Ibid., 487.

[177] Dennis R. MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus and Homer's Elpenor: Acts 20:7-12 and Odyssey 10-12," *JHC* 1 (Fall 1994), 7.

[178] Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. by A. T. Maurray and George E. Dimock Jr. (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 435.

[179] Klaas Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Verlag, 1986), 234.

have bothered Plato. He complained that Homer’s description of the afterlife makes it a state of terror and ignorance. Plato asserts:

> Whatever wrongs they had committed, and however many people they had individually wronged, they had paid for them all in turn, ten times over for each one, that is each one a hundred years on the grounds that such was the life span of a human being, so that they might pay a tenfold penalty for their wrongdoing. For example, if any of them had been responsible for the deaths of many people, or they had betrayed cities, or armies, or thrown people into slavery, or had been responsible for any other maltreatment, they would bring upon themselves ten-fold pain for every one of these, and again if they had performed some good services and become just and devout, by the same token they would gain a worthy reward (*Resp*. 10.615b).[180]

Plato teaches that all life is continuously reborn and that present actions affect people’s future lives, even in the underworld. In this regard, the best way of life, according to Plato, is to love wisdom and to practice true virtue.

The second and more important aspect of Plato’s myth of Er is a character who serves as an alternative to Homer’s Elpenor. Similar to Homer’s character, a young man in Plato’s myth was cast to deal with the afterlife. However, Plato recast the tragic role of Elpenor into that of a brave warrior called Er. Er is a young soldier like Elpenor, but he bravely dies in battle, unlike Elpenor. Although Er dies in battle, he comes back to life after having been given a tour of the netherworld. Plato imitated the Homeric model. In doing so, Plato provided his own interpretation of the netherworld in order to replace Homer’s version of life after death with one that not only punished the wicked but also rewarded the righteous.[181]

Plato leads people to the moral life by offering a metaphor of the afterlife that includes punishment by the divine. This metaphorical instruction has a great influence on humans in this life and in the afterlife. The Myth of Er provides people with a moral

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[180] Plato, *Republic*, 467.
[181] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 12.

lesson about how to live in this world by showing them wicked men being punished according to their actions. Plato ends the story with the following advice:

> But if we follow what I say and consider that the soul is immortal and capable of enduring everything evil and everything good, we shall always keep to the upward path and we shall practice justice with intelligence in every way in order to be dear to ourselves and to the gods, both while we remain here below, and when we reap its prizes like victors in the games collecting their rewards, both here and on our thousand-year journey which we have discussed, we shall do well (*Resp*. 10.621c-d).[182]

See the following chart for how Plato's myth of Er imitates Homer's Elpenor as a targeted model and recreates it.[183]

Elpenor	Er
A young soldier	A young soldier
Not valiant	Valiant
Died in an accident	Died in battle
Not buried	Not buried for twelve days
Soul went to netherworld	Soul went to netherworld
Tells things that happened to him and asks to be burned and buried	Almost was burned and buried
Odysseus burned and buried the body at dawn.	As the body was about to be burned and buried at dawn,
Elpenor's soul found rest.	Er revived and told what he had seen.

[182] Plato, *Republic*, 488-489.
[183] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus, 11.

Plato recast the tragic role of Elpenor into that of Er, who returns from the dead at dawn to give a more satisfactory account of the afterlife than Homer's *Odyssey*.[184] Plato corrected the Odyssean *nekyia* by not scaring to death men about to go to war. Er himself is a metaphor for Plato's understanding of the afterlife as reincarnation. The story of Elpenor was transformed at the hands of Plato.

Plutarchus's Thespesius

Plato's idea of the afterlife broadly influenced the Greco-Roman literary world. In particular, the separation of the soul from the body, the soul's wandering after death, its judgment by judges, and the different fates of the virtuous and the wicked are well known Platonic traditions among the authors of the Greco-Roman time period. Plato changed the Homeric concept of the afterlife and his new idea flowed throughout the Greco-Roman world. Plutarchus is one author who was influenced by the Platonic tradition. Although he lived during the Roman imperial period, his ideas and thinking were inherited from the Greek tradition, especially Plato. As a Platonist, Plutarchus wrote about the fate of the soul after death in three pieces, *De Sera numinis vindicta*, *De genio Socratis*, and *De facie quae in orbe lunae apparet.*[185] These works share the basic belief in the soul's immortality and the different fate of each soul after death. In the *De Sera numinis vindicta*, Plutarchus tells a story about a young man's journey in the afterlife.

The young man in the story lived a life of villainy. He indulged himself in every type of sensual and mortal passion that he could. The young man, however, changed the manner of his life after he came back from the dead. This happened on the third day

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[184] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 10.

[185] Outi Lehtipuu, *The Afterlife Imagery in Luke's Story of the Rich Man and Lazarus* (Leiden, Boston: Brill, 2007), 92.

during his funeral. From this time a startling transformation in his moral conduct and character took place. This is the story:

> He had fallen from a height and struck his neck, and although there had been no wound, but only a concussion, he died away. On the third day, at the very time of his funeral, he revived. Soon recovering his strength and senses, he instituted a change in his way of life that could hardly be believed; for the Cilicians know of no one in those times more honest in his engagements, more pious toward heaven, or more grievous to his enemies and faithful to his friends; so that all who met him longed to hear the reason for the difference, supposing nothing ordinary could have caused so great a reformation in character. Such indeed was the case, as appears from the story as told by himself to Protogenes and other worthy friends. He said that when his intelligence was driven from his body, the change made him feel as a pilot might at first on being flung into the depths of the sea (*De Sera numinis vindicta* 563d–e).[186]

This young man reminds one of Homer's Elpenor and Plato's mythical hero Er. Plutarchus seems to have combined the two previous literary works. Just like Homer's Elpenor, the young man has a fatal fall with a neck injury. His soul goes to the netherworld without a funeral, as Elpenor's does. The young man, however, is different from Homer's Elpenor in that his soul returns to his corpse as it is about to be buried, and he then revives, unlike Elpenor. In this case, Plutarchus's young man is more like Plato's Er. The journey of the young man's soul to the netherworld and the idea of the fates of righteous and wicked souls (565a–b) derives from Plato's Myth of Er. According to Plutarchus, punishments after death accord with the severity of the person's deeds and their potential earthly consequences. Thus, the immortality of the soul is an answer to any injustices of the gods in delaying the punishments of the wicked on earth (560a–b). In addition, Plutarchus changes the young man's name from Aridaeus to Thespesius. In Plutarchus's story, the young man Aridaeus approaches someone whom he thinks is an old relative. This soul seems to recognize Aridaeus, but the relative calls him instead by

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[186] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 8. Trans. by Dennis R. MacDonald.

the name Thespesius. This is the reason the young man's name is changed to Thespesius. The name Aridaeus probably has a Platonic origin. In Plato's *Republic* 10.615e, one of the souls undergoing punishment is called Aridaeus. According to Frederick E. Brenk, the name often appears in the form *Aridaeus* in later quotations.[187] In Plutarchus's story, an incredibly wicked young man suddenly becomes an incredibly good one. The newly named Thespesius tells his acquaintances about his experience in the netherworld as an answer to how his transformation has occurred. The following chart shows how the character Thespesius combines the two previous models.

Elpenor	Er	Thespesius
A young soldier	A young soldier	A young man
Not valiant	Valiant	Villain
Fatal fall	Died in battle	Fatal fall
Corpse unburied	Corpse unburied for twelve days	Corpse unburied
Soul went to netherworld	Soul went to netherworld	Soul went to netherworld
Odysseus burned and buried the body at dawn	As the body was about to be burned and buried at dawn,	He was about to be buried,
	the soul returned to the corpse.	but his soul returned to the corpse.

[187] Frederick, E. Brenk, *In Mist Apparelled: Religious Themes in Plutarch's Moralia and Lives* (Lugduni Batavorum: Brill, 1977), 137.

One can observe that Thespesius plays the role of Elpenor insofar as he falls from a high place, dies, and is not buried for three days. Meanwhile, Thespesius is similar to Er in that he returns from the dead before his burial. Thespesius visits the netherworld similarly envisioned by Plato, and he returns to life to tell his tale of reincarnation. After Thespesius comes back to life, he changes his way of life and starts living a virtuous life. This kind of life change was Plato's goal in presenting Er's journey to the netherworld. Plutarchus stands in the mimetic tradition. Plutarchus must have been an experienced author, since he borrowed the models from both works to compose a single work. As MacDonald says, "Although students usually imitated a single work, the experienced author borrowed from many."[188]

Virgil's Palinurus and Misenus

Virgil's *Aeneid* was written in the second half of the first century BCE. Virgil was fond of Homeric epics. Many characters in Virgil's *Aeneid* imitate characters in the two epics, the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Often, Virgil took more than one Homeric character and combined the characters into a single one in the *Aeneid* or took one Homeric character and drew more than one of his own characters from it. As an eclectic author, Virgil took the best nectar from many blossoms to produce his textual honey, just as Seneca said about him (*Epistles* 84). Virgil, a creative author, has done some obvious weaving; for example, one can find Odysseus, Achilles, and Telemachus within the character of Aeneas. One can see Lavinia as a combination of Penelope and Helen. Importantly, Virgil has done this work in reverse fashion by dividing Homer's Elpenor into two

[188] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 5.

characters in the *nekyia* of the *Aeneid* (Book 6): Palinurus and Misenus.[189] These two young warriors are veterans of the Trojan War. Both sail with Aeneas for Italy. Unfortunately, both perish on the journey at sea and go unburied because Aeneas is not aware of their catastrophes. Virgil deals with Palinurus's drowning at the beginning of chapter 5, and Misenus's tale is part of Palinurus's episode.

Virgil singles out Palinurus to serve in the second rank at the helm of Aeneas's ship, leading the fleet toward Italy. As the middle of the night approaches, the god of sleep looks for Palinurus and drops a subtle temptation into his guileless ears: "Palinurus, son of Iasus, the seas of themselves bear on the fleet; the breezes breathe steadily; the hour is given to rest. Lay down your head and steal your weary eyes from toil. I myself for a space will take your duty in your stead" (*Aeneid* 5.839–842).[190] The god overpowers Palinurus, and he falls overboard into the sea with the steering oar still in his hand. His fall goes undetected by anyone because there is no one to hear him. When Aeneas awakens, he finds Palinurus is missing. He takes over the steering himself, and through the night he weeps for the loss of his friend. He cries, "Palinurus? How could you think there was no danger in a peaceful sea and a cloudless sky? Now you lie far away on some deserted strip of sand, naked and alone" (*Aeneid* 5.870). Aeneas meets Palinurus again in the underworld before he crosses the Cocytus, which is a river in the underworld in Greek mythology. When Aeneas enters the netherworld and comes to the banks of the river Styx to take a ship to meet his father, the ferryman Charon refuses to

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[189] Manfred Lossau, "Elpenor und Palinurus," *Weiner Studien*, Vol. 93 (1980): 102-24. Meanwhile, Georg Nicolaus Knauer argues that Elpenor's story also inspired the burial of the nurse Caieta in *Aeneid* 7.1–7. "Vergil's Aeneid and Homer," *Oxford Readings in Vergil's Aeneid*, ed. S. J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1990), 394-95.

[190] Vergil, *Aeneid*, trans. by H. Rushton Fairclough and G. P. Goold (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1999), 529.

transport him to the other side where the unburied spirits are. Those who have not been buried must wait a hundred years on the Styx's banks. Aeneas catches sight of his lost pilot, Palinurus. Aeneas hears about how Palinurus died, and then Palinurus asks Aeneas to bury him. The Sibyl who has guided Aeneas into the underworld tells Palinurus that some other locals are going to build a tomb, bury him, perform the rites, and place his name on that place. Palinurus is satisfied with this response.

Although Palinurus is a brave young warrior, his character seems to play a very minor role in the *Aeneid*.[191] He appears before Aeneas's journey to the underworld and disappears at night, unseen by his comrades, including Aeneas, until Aeneas senses the ship is drifting.[192] In *Aeneid* 6, Palinurus appears again, and he gives an account of his own death to Aeneas. It seems that Palinurus's death is unjustified because he is innocent. W. S. M. Nicoll, however, gives an interesting argument that the reason for Palinurus's death is following Fortuna too much.[193] Nicoll says:

> Palinurus is by profession a follower of *Fortuna*. . . For him the following of *Fortuna* takes the form of running before the wind. He therefore places a degree of reliance on what is essentially untrustworthy. . . he summons the Trojans to sail from Acroceraunia because he sees that the constellations and stars remain constant in a clear sky. . . It could be said, therefore, that one reason why Palinurus must die is because he is the embodiment of a way of life—following *Fortuna*—which may be adequate, perhaps inevitable, for the pilot at sea.[194]

Aeneas must know before he descends to the underworld that his "further progress must be made on the basis of a knowledge of *fata* to be given him by his father (*Aeneid* 6.759), a surer guide than Fortuna."[195] This is the reason Palinurus has to disappear just before

[191] W. S. M. Nicoll, "The Sacrifice of Palinurus," *The Classical Quarterly* 38, no. 2 (1988), 459.
[192] Ibid.
[193] Ibid., 459-472, especially 464.
[194] Ibid., 465.
[195] Ibid.

Aeneas descends to the underworld.[196] Nicoll concludes, "It is *pietas*, not Fortuna, which is responsible for Aeneas' safe landfall."[197] This reminds one of the *Odyssey*, especially Odysseus and Elpenor. Whereas Odysseus follows the divine's direction by learning of his fate, Elpenor follows his bodily instinct. In the end, unfortunately, Elpenor falls to his death. Aeneas's pious attitude leads him to have a safe journey, but Palinurus dies because he has followed Fortuna. Palinurus is a courageous warrior, but Fortuna leads him finally to his death.

Virgil imitates Homeric models and writes his own. Misenus, another unburied comrade of Aeneas's, also is drawn to the sea because of his hubris. He is famous for his courage and for his skill with a bugle:

> . . . Misenus, son of Aeolus, surpassed by none in stirring men with his bugle's blare, and in kindling with his clang the god of war. He had been great Hector's comrade, at Hector's side he braved the fray, glorious for clarion and spear alike; but when Achilles, victorious, stripped his chief of life, the valiant hero came into the fellowship of Dardan Aeneas, following no meaner standard. Yet on that day, while by chance he made the seas ring with his hollow shell—madman—and with his blare calls the gods to contest, jealous Triton, if the tale can win belief, caught and plunged him in the foaming waves amid the rocks (*Aeneid* 6.163–172).[198]

Aeneas is not aware of Misenus's death until much later, when the Sibyl tells him to bury a lost friend, build a tomb for him, and make a sacrifice to expiate the guilt of his neglect. Aeneas and his comrades return to the beach, and they find the body of Misenus, who has apparently died a sudden and painful death. The Trojans gather around his body with cries of horror. Then, in tears, they go to find wood for an altar and a tomb. Aeneas is also moved by Misenus's death because he works hard with his companions and

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[196] Ibid.
[197] Ibid., 472.
[198] Vergil, *Aeneid*, 545.

encourages them by his example. They have a funeral rite for Misenus that is like a hero's ceremony:

> No less meanwhile on the beach the Teucrians were weeping for Misenus and paying the last dues to the thankless dust. And first they raise a huge pyre, rich with pitchy pine and oaken logs. Its sides they entwine with somber foliage, set in front funereal cypresses, and adorn it above with gleaming arms. Some heat water, setting cauldrons bubbling on the flames, and wash and anoint the cold body. Loud is the wailing; then, their weeping done, they lay his limbs upon the couch, and over them cast purple robes, the familiar dress. Some shouldered the heavy bier—sad ministry—and in ancestral fashion, with averted eyes, held the torch below. The gifts are piled up in the blaze—frankincense, viands, and bowls of flowing oil. After the ashes fell in and the flame died away, they washed with wine the remnant of thirsty dust, and Corynaeus, gathering the bones, hid them in a brazen urn. He, too, with pure water thrice encircled his comrades and cleansed them, sprinkling light dew from a fruitful olive bough, and spoke the words of farewell. But loyal Aeneas heaps over him a massive tomb, with the soldier's own arms, his oar and trumpet, beneath a lofty hill, which now from him is called Misenus, and keeps from age to age an ever living name (*Aeneid* 6.215–35).[199]

One can observe (see chart below) how much Virgil was fond of Homer and how Virgil dealt with the mimetic model Elpenor in his work.[200]

Elpenor	Palinurus	Misenus
Soldier at night	Soldier at night	Soldier
Fell from roof	Fell from stern of ship	Drawn into the sea
Not valiant	Valiant	Valiant
Died in an unfortunate accident	Died pursuing Fortuna	Died from hubris
Soul meets hero in Hades	Soul meets hero in Hades	

[199] Vergil, *Aeneid*, 548-549.
[200] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 13.

Asks to be buried like heroes	Asks for corpse to be buried	Must be burned
Corpse and oar burned on mound		Corpse and oar burned on mound, buried like a hero

Lucan's Civil War

The *Pharsalia* is an epic poem in ten books by the Roman poet Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (abt. November 3, 39 CE–April 30, 65 CE), better known in English as Lucan. Although this work was left unfinished, it is considered the greatest epic poem in Latin literature. The title *Pharsalia* is a reference to the story of the civil war between Julius Caesar and Pompey that occurred in 48 BCE.

C. M. C. Green works to compare characters in Greek literature with those in Latin literature.[201] According to him, "The key to understanding Homer's influence on Lucan is to recognize the connection that links Caesar to Achilles, and Pompey to Agamemnon, with Cato as Odysseus."[202] However, he also suggests that the literary connection should be found "in the poem as a whole, in its structure, its content, and its realization, not just in individual scenes."[203] In this chapter, I suggest another Homeric influence on Lucan's *Pharsalia*. So far, I have discussed how, in the mimetic tradition, a targeted model is imbedded in a later text and how the hypertext deals with the model depending on the author's literary intention. In particular, I have been looking at the Homeric model Elpenor's influence on various hypertexts. So, now I suggest that Lacan also imitated Elpenor in book 6 of the *Pharsalia*.

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[201] C. M. C. Green, "Stimulos Dedit Aemula Virtus": Lucan and Homer Reconsider, Phoenix, Vol. 45, No. 3 (Autumn, 1991): 232.
[202] Ibid.
[203] Ibid.

When Pompey's troops force Caesar's armies back, Sextus, Pompey's youngest, unworthy, and cowardly son, is afraid ahead of time of what fate will arrive at the end (6:420). He goes to see Erichtho, a legendary and powerful Thessalian witch, to consult about the future in relation to the imminent battle of Pharssalus. Sextus is impatient with the delay of the battle and sick at heart about all to come. Erichtho is noted for her horrifying appearance and her impious ways. So, Sextus should consult with other oracles, such as Delos's tripods, the Pythian caves, Dodona (the nurse of humankind), or the bronze of Jupiter (425-30). Instead, Sextus pursues superstitions and the mysteries of savage magicians. Lucan notes, "It was clear to the unfortunate that the gods above know too little." (432). At Sextus's request, Erichtho selects a dead soldier from among the unburied corpses at night (638) and brings it back to life in a terrifying ceremony (667-718). Then the ghost of an unburied corpse is standing before her (720). She calls the ghost an unlucky soul when she says, "Tisiphone and Megaera, untroubled by my voice, do you not drive with your cruel lashes this unlucky soul through Erebus' void?" (731-32). Erichtho promises the ghost that if he speaks the truth, she will give him a funeral rite as a reward (763-776). The ghost predicts thata Pompey and Caesar and everyone else will die (777-819). The story ends as follows:

> When he had ended thus his prophecy, he stood still in silence and sorrow, demanding to die once more. Spells and drugs were needed before the corpse could die; and death, having exerted all its power already, could not claim the life again. Then the witch built up a great pyre of wood; the dead man walked to the fire; and Erictho left him stretched upon the lighted pile, and suffered him at last to die. Together with Sextus she went to his father's camp. The sky was now taking on the hue of dawn; but, at her bidding, night held back day and gave them thick darkness until they should set foot in safety within the encampment (*Pharsalia* 6.820–830).[204]

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[204] Marcus Annaeus Lucanus, *The Civil War,* trans. by J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1988), 365.

This episode is equivalent to Lucan's *nekyia*, and just like Homer's Odyssey 11 and Virgil's *Aeneid* 6. But this scene is also like the Elpenor episode. To begin with, compared to Odysseus's *nekyia*, there is literary imitation. In the *Odyssey*, the hero consults with Circe, a goddess of magic or a witch, on how to return home, and he descends to the underworld to meet the dead wise man Tiresias on his own. Lucan's Sextus likewise consults with Erichtho, a legendary Thessalian witch, to ask about his future, but unlike the story in the *Odyssey*, the witch summons a dead soldier and the witch, not Sextus, asks the soldier for the truth. The scene involving Elpenor is also imbedded in Lucan's *nekyia*. Elpenor and the dead man are both soldiers. They are young men who die, one by accident and one in battle. Both warriors are not buried, but later they are given a funeral rite. Elpenor is the first ghost to meet Odysseus during his necromancy, just as a dead soldier is the first to be conjured by Erichtho. Both soldiers are buried early in the morning. The anonymous dead soldier plays the role of Tiresias by telling the truth to the client. Sextus seems to imitate Elpenor's character in that both are young men who are not valiant. They are unfortunate characters. Several models can be detected in Lucan's work. This means that Lucan is an expert author and that his work imitates Homer's *Odyssey*, particularly the character of Elpenor. See the following chart.

Elpenor	A Dead Soldier
Not valiant	Valiant
Young soldier	Young soldier
Dies in accident	Dies in battle
Not buried	Not buried

First ghost among the dead	First ghost among the dead
Buried at dawn	Buried at dawn

Apuleius's Alcimus

It might be unfortunate if someone took all the good models before later authors could use them. Seneca disagrees, however; he asserts, "He who writes last has the best of the bargain" (*Epistles* 79.7).[205] According to Ellen Finkelpearl, Latin authors improved their works deliberately through literary indebtedness to others.[206] This was either a great advantage or a disadvantage, depending on one's perspective: "Latin writers did not see their position as a burden, though they did apparently feel the need to emulate and improve on their models."[207]

Apuleius was deeply indebted to the existence of a prior literary tradition, and it was a powerful support for his work. He focused on Greek sources such as Lucian's *Onos*, Homer's *Odyssey*, and Euripides's *Hippolytus*.[208] Finkelpearl asserts, "Apuleius was deliberate in his allusions, and he was a creative artist to some extent."[209] In her article, she explains how Apuleius was indebted to Virgil's *Aeneid* when writing about a descent to the underworld. As a Platonic philosopher and a skilled rhetorician, Apuleius wrote the *Golden Ass* (also known as *Metamorphoses*) about 170–180 CE. It is written in

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[205] Lucius Annaeus Seneca, *Epistles*, trans. by Richard M. Gummere (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001), 205.

[206] Ellen Finkelpearl, "Psache, Aeneas, and an Ass: Apuleius, Metamorphoses 6.10–6.21," in *Oxford Readings in The Roman Novel*, ed. S. J. Harrison (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 290-306.

[207] Ibid., 290. no. 2.

[208] Ibid. no. 3. Also see Stephen J. Harrison, "Some Odyssean Scenes in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (Materiali e discussioni per l'analisi dei testi classici, No. 25, Studi sul romanzo, 1990), 193-201. In this article, Harrison says that Apuleius imitated some Odyssean scenes.

[209] Ibid., 291. Finkelpearl would like to use the term *allusion* rather than others, like *echo*, *memory*, *quotation*, *intertextuality*, *parallel*, *reference*, *imitation*, *borrowing*, or *reminiscence*. *Allusion* suggests more of an interplay or dialogue between model and imitator than *reference*, which sounds, superficially, like a simpler process, she says.

Latin, but the author purports this work to be "a Grecian tale."[210] This work begins with the narrator's transformation into a donkey after he experiments with witchcraft. He wanders through Greece as a donkey, and he witnesses and engages in all manner of violent and sexual exploits. These stories provide philosophical allegories, especially the tale of Cupid and Psyche in book 4, which is Apuleius's most famous work and one that many authors imitate.[211] Apuleius wrote a short tale about a hapless youth in this book. The name of the young man is Alcimus, which means "valiant," and he is a thief. Although he is brave, he foolishly dies from a fall from a tall house at night. He is supposed to be buried properly, but instead his corpse is thrown into the sea wrapped in a linen cloth. The following is the story of how he met his tragic death:

> Alcimus, despite his cautious plans, could not attract the approving nod of Fortune. He had broken into the cottage of an old woman who was asleep, and had gone to the bedroom upstairs. Although he should have squeezed her throat and strangled her to death at once, he chose first to toss her possessions out through a fairly wide window, item by item for us to pick up, of course. He had already diligently heaved out everything else, but he was unwilling to pass up even the bed on which the poor old lady was sleeping; so he rolled her off the cot and pulled out the bedclothes, evidently planning to throw them out the window too. But the wicked woman groveled at his knees and pleaded with him. "Please, my son," she said, "why are you giving a miserable old lady's poor shabby junk to her rich neighbours, whose house is outside that window?" That clever speech cunningly deceived Alcimus, who believed that she was telling the truth. He was doubtless afraid that what he had already thrown out and what he was going to throw out later would be gift to someone else's household and not his comrades, since he was now convinced of his mistake. Therefore he leaned out of the window in order to take a careful survey of the situation, and especially to estimate the fortunes of that house next door which she had mentioned. As he was making this energetic and not very prudent attempt, that old sinner gave him a shove; although it was weak, it caught him suddenly and unexpectedly, while he hung balanced there and was preoccupied with his spying. She sent him head over heels. Not to mention the considerable altitude, he fell on a huge rock lying beside the house, shattering and scattering his ribcage. Vomiting streams of blood from

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[210] "I would like to tie together different sorts of tales for you in that Milesian style of yours" (*Metamorphoses* 1:1). Milesian style is a genre of fictional story prominent in ancient Greek and Roman literature.

[211] Benjamin Todd Lee, *Apuleius' Florida: A Commentary* (Berlin; Boston: De Gruyter, 2012), 8.

> deep within, he told us what had happened and then departed from life without much suffering. We buried him as we had our other comrade, and so gave Lamachus a worthy squire (*Metamorphoses* 4.12).[212]

According to Werner Riess, the author uses robbers to serve the roles of "increasing suspense," "bringing about peripeties," "changing fortune," and "serving as a transition to the next chain of actions."[213] These roles are all fulfilled in Apuleius's *Metamorphoses*.

In reading the text, it is not easy to discern whether the author intentionally borrowed from a model or whether the similarities were a general cultural confluence. If the author did not intentionally indicate the model he borrowed from, readers might have difficulty discerning what it was. For this reason, MacDonald suggests, "Significant personal and names of the place are magnificent mimetic markers."[214] According to MacDonald, the author's use of significant names evokes antecedent works and models.[215] Apuleius wrote about a comrade who fell to his death. His name is Alcimus, which means "valiant." He dies from a fall from a tall house at night and is not properly buried. His corpse is thrown into the sea wrapped with a linen cloth. He was brave, but he dies a sudden death. His death is unlucky. Apuleius also says, "Alcimus could not attract the approving nod of Fortune." If one has read the *Odyssey*, one significant name comes to mind. Elpenor is a comrade of Odysseus's, but he is not valiant like Alcimus. Both die from a fall from above, and the corpses are not properly buried. Alcimus has no burial at all; rather, his corpse is wrapped in a linen cloth and thrown into the sea. Elpenor, however, is buried near the sea much later. See the chart below for Apuleius's literary contacts with Elpenor.

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[212] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 10. Trans. by Dennis R. MacDonald.

[213] Werner Riess, "Between Fiction and Reality: Robbers in Apuleius' Golden Ass," 271.

[214] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 10. See this book for more details about significant names in Mark 11–13.

[215] Ibid.

Elpenor	Alcimus
Soldier at night	Thief at night
Not valiant and not foolish	Valiant but foolish
Circe’s home	Old woman’s home
Falls from roof and dies	Falls out of window and dies
Unfortunate	Could not attract the approving nod of Fortune
Body not buried initially, but later buried near the sea	Body not buried, wrapped and thrown into the sea

The distinctive trait (criterion 5) in Apuleius’s work is his expression, “the nod of fortune,” which was derived from “unfortunate Elpenor.” Therefore, Apuleius imitated Homer’s Elpenor.[216]

Silius Italicus’s *Punica*

Silius Italicus was a Latin epic poet (c. 26–c. 101 CE). The *Punica* is his only surviving, and his longest, Latin poem. The poem is divided into seventeen books, and it contains upwards of 12,000 verses. It tells the story of the Second Punic War, the war of Hannibal against the Romans. This is the most critical period in the history of the Republic. Both Hannibal and Scipio appear as true heroes in the story. Silius would have been well aware of Hellenistic sources. In particular, Silius owes much more to Virgil’s

[216] MacDonald, “Luke’s Eutychus,” 14.

Aeneid than to any other source.[217] He is fond of Virgil. Albrecht argues, “The poem takes Virgil as its primary stylistic and dramatic inspiration throughout.”[218] However, Silius also takes the Homeric epic as an important model.[219] It is said that Silius follows in the footsteps of Homer via Virgil, but he surely draws on the work of both poets. Meanwhile, Lucan is an important model for writing a “historical epic” and a “geographical excursus” in a “Stoic tone.”[220] At this moment, it is good to see the Homeric influence in Silius’s work. In particular, one can notice Silius’s possible imitation of the Homeric model Elpenor.

In book 13 of the *Punica*, Hannibal is driven from Rome and returns to the land of the Bruttii (1–93). The capture of Rome is done, but the Romans take Capua. The nobles of Capua are put to death. When the Romans start to execute the Capuan leaders, Taurea reappears. He delivers a short speech of defiance and then kills himself. Taurea symbolizes the whole city. His suicide is connected to the fate of the city. Taurea’s challenge and death mirror Capua’s challenge of Rome and its subsequent fall. It reminds one of the fall of Troy due to Hector’s death. Meanwhile, Scipio’s father and uncle are put to death in Spain. Young Scipio feels inconsolable grief, “Day followed day, and was spent by him in lamenting. The faces of his lost kinsmen were ever present before his eyes” (*Punica* 392–94). Suffering from endless mourning, Scipio decides to go to the underworld. He visits the priestess of Cumae, Autonoe. Autonoe, who rules Cumae, gives him directions for how to find his kindred. Following her advice, and with her promise to

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[217] Phillip Mitsis and Loannis Ziogas, *Wordplay and Powerplay in Latin Poetry* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016), 417.
[218] Michael von Albrecht, *A History of Roman Literature: From Livius Andronicus to Boethius: With Special Regard to Its Influence on World Literature* (Leiden, New York: Brill, 1997), 962.
[219] R. Joy Littlewood, *A Commentary on Silius Italicus’ Punica 7* (Oxford, New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), xxviii.
[220] Albrecht, *A History of Roman Literature,* 984.

aid him, young Scipio goes to the stormy entrance of the gate to Tartarus (*Punica* 420-21). Autonoe, faithful to her word, is sitting there and she aids him in sacrificing the animals that she named. A black bull, an unmated heifer, and a chosen sheep are sacrificed for the Invisible King, the goddess of Henna, and in honor of Alecto and of Megaera, the Fury who never smiles. As soon as Scipio has completed these processes, he sees the shapes of ghosts approaching to him. Autonoe orders Scipio to hew them into pieces if any of the ghostly spirits press forward to drink of the blood before the form of the chaste Sibyl advances (*Punica* 439–43). Nevertheless, there is an unburied ghost who comes quickly and desires to speak with Scipio (*Punica* 444–46). The story continues:

> Until the funeral fire has consumed his body, he is permitted to speak as he was wont, without tasting of the blood. Scipio looked at him, and was appalled by the sudden sight: Great leader, he said, what mishap has robbed your suffering country of your aid, at a time when cruel war calls for such men as you? (*Punica*, 13.449–452).[221]

The unburied ghost who appears to Scipio is Appius Claudius Pulcher. As a general of the army, he was valiant and crafty. He was unfortunately wounded at Capua and eventually died. However, his body has not been buried: "The piety of my friends is slow to act, and seeks to observe the meaningless rites and customs of the people" (*Punica* 462–64). So, he entreats Scipio to have his corpse burned and buried right away. Scipio, however, refuses his request because he has heavy tasks to perform and his relatives' funeral should be taking precedence (*Punica* 470–476). This scene reminds us of Elpenor. See the following comparison.

Elpenor	Appius Claudius Pulcher

[221] Silius Italicus, *Punica*, trans. by J. D. Duff (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 237-239.

A soldier	A general
Not valiant	Valiant
Died in an accident	Died in battle
Soul went to the underworld	Soul went to the underworld
First soul the hero meets in underworld is unexpected	First soul the hero meets in underworld is unexpected
Soul explains what caused him to die	Soul tells about his death
Soul asks to be burned and buried	Soul asks to be burned and buried
Elpenor is burned and buried	Appius is not burned and buried

Edward L. Bassett argues that the literary prototype for this scene is Elpenor in *Odyssey* 11.[222] The author of *Punica* is another writer who imitated Homer's Elpenor.

Eutychus in the Acts of the Apostles

So far, I have examined how the Homeric model of Elpenor influenced several ancient literary works. Each author imitated the same model but created a different version of the model according to the author's literary intention. In particular, on the basis of the six criteria of mimesis criticism, I have observed how Mark imitated the Homeric model and created Jesus's resurrection story through the inclusion of the mysterious young man based on Homer's Elpenor. Unlike Mark, the three other canonical Gospel writers omit the young man mentioned in Mark 14:51–52 and substitute different figures for the young man found in Mark 16:1–8. This means that these three

[222] Edward L. Bassett, "Scipio and the Ghost of Appius," *Classical Philology*, Vol. LVIII (No. 2, April 1963), 73.

Gospel writers were perplexed with the enigmatic young man characters in Mark. However, this does not mean that none of the Gospel writers understood Mark's literary intention. Luke surely saw Mark's imitation of the Homeric model Elpenor because Luke also imitates him in the Acts of the Apostles, instead of using the model in the Gospel of Luke. Although there is no appearance of the young man in Luke's Gospel, a similar character appears in Acts 20:6–12. He is a young man whose name is Eutychus. He falls from a third-story window due to falling into a deep sleep. He dies but is revived again through the power of God. I suggest that the character of Eutychus is a Christianizing of the model of Homer's Elpenor. Luke is a more faithful imitator than Mark. The story of Eutychus is much more similar to Elpenor's episode than the tale of the young man in Mark. In other words, Luke's readers would have more easily recognized his imitation of Homer than Mark's readers. According to scholars, Luke was more exposed to Greco-Roman culture in many ways than any other Gospel writer.[223] I will not mention the reputation of Homer again here, but Luke must have been influenced by his epics.[224] The relationship between Homer and Luke is undeniable.

Truly, there is an influence of Judaism on Luke's works. In particular, there are examples of the influence of Jewish scriptures in Luke–Acts. However, this does not mean that the author was only influenced by Judaism, because Luke's works are closer to Hellenism than to Judaism. The story of Eutychus that I will deal with in this chapter supports this claim. Commonly, scholars compare Eutychus's incident with the miracles

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[223] John Kloppenborg, "Exitus Clari Viri: The Death of Jesus in Luke," *TJT*, vol. 8 (Mar. 1992): 106-20, here, 106.

[224] See MacDonald's work, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer? Four Cases from the Acts of the Apostles* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003).

performed by Elijah (1 Kings 17:19–24) or Elisha (2 Kings 4:18–37).[225] To begin with, compare the stories in Acts and 1 Kings.

> On the first day of the week, when we met to break bread, Paul was holding a discussion with them; since he intended to leave the next day, he continued speaking until midnight. There were many lamps in the room upstairs where we were meeting. A young man named Eutychus, who was sitting in the window, began to sink off into a deep sleep while Paul talked still longer. Overcome by sleep, he fell to the ground three floors below and was picked up dead. But Paul went down, and bending over him took him in his arms, and said, "Do not be alarmed, for his life is in him." Then Paul went upstairs, and after he had broken bread and eaten, he continued to converse with them until dawn; then he left. Meanwhile they had taken the boy away alive and were not a little comforted (Acts 20:7–12).

> After this the son of the woman, the mistress of the house, became ill; his illness was so severe that there was no breath left in him. She then said to Elijah, "What have you against me, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my sin to remembrance, and to cause the death of my son!" But he said to her, "Give me your son." He took him from her bosom, carried him up into the upper chamber where he was lodging, and laid him on his own bed. He cried out to the Lord, "O LORD my God, have you brought calamity even upon the widow with whom I am staying, by killing her son?" Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried out to the LORD, "O LORD my God, let this child's life come into him again." The LORD listened to the voice of Elijah; the life of the child came into him again, and he revived. Elijah took the child, brought him down from the upper chamber into the house, and gave him to his mother; then Elijah said, "See, your son is alive." So the woman said to Elijah, "Now I know that you are a man of God, and that the word of the LORD in your mouth is truth" (1 Kings 17:17–24).

There are several similarities between these two episodes. Both young men die, but their souls return to them with the power of God through Elijah and Paul. Richard Pervo affirms these relationships: "The motifs of the upper room, the man of God lying on the corpse, and the reference to the lad's soul point to Luke's imitation of Elijah and Elisha

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[225] M. Eugene Boring, *An Introduction to the New Testament: History, Literature, Theology* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2012), 577. Boring argues that Luke sees the story of Jesus and the church as a continuation of the story of Israel.

reviving dead young men in 1 Kgs 17:19–24 and 2 Kgs 4:18–37."[226] These literary contacts imply that Luke imitated the model in Jewish scripture. However, there are still many peculiar, unexplained things that one cannot explain only by referring to the Jewish Bible, such as "the lamps," "the fatal fall," and "the delay in Eutychus's revival until the following morning."[227] Where did Luke get these elements? I agree that the Jewish texts influenced Luke's composition of Eutychus's story. However, as long as Luke was not a witness to this incident who knew the full account of the event, he may have created the story with the help of other literary models. I argue that the story is closer to the Homeric model than the Jewish model. I suggest that discovering Eutychus in the model of Homer's Elpenor sheds light on the mysterious incident in Acts. In sum, the story about Eutychus in Acts 20:7–12 is Luke's variation on the death of Elpenor. The two stories begin as follows:

Od. 10.552	Acts 20:9a
There was a man, Elpenor, the youngest [νεώτατος], who slept on Circe's roof.	A certain young man [νεανίας] named Eutychus was seated at the window.

First of all, each author introduces the young man in the third person (the youngest / a young man). This is a change in point of view from the first person (I / we) in the previous scene, and then the text goes back to the first person at the beginning of the following story.[228] Switching point of view is a common procedure in ancient texts.[229] The two texts give the names of the young men: Elpenor and Eutychus. Both young men are located in a high place and they are sleeping. Homer states that

[226] Richard I. Pervo, *Dating Acts: Between the Evangelists and the Apologists* (Santa Rosa, CA: Polebridge Press, 2006), 31.
[227] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 6.
[228] See the comparison between *Od.* 10–12 and Acts 20:7–12 in the last chart in this chapter.
[229] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 13.

Odysseus's crew gave way to sweet sleep, and Luke's Eutychus falls into a deep sleep.[230] Both young men fall to their deaths due to having such a good sleep. Whereas Elpenor's soul goes to Hades, Eutychus's soul stays in him.

As I discussed earlier, Elpenor was a popular model for imitation by several authors in Greco-Roman literature. Mark also took Elpenor as a model in the creation of the young man. If Luke's Eutychus is none other than Luke's variation of Homer's Elpenor, one can trace how the mimetic tradition flows from Homer through Mark's Gospel to Luke's Acts. Luke also influenced the author of the Acts of Paul, which I will deal with later in this chapter.

Mimesis criticism provides several criteria to verify that later texts imitate former ones. Luke retains distinctive features of Homer's story by changing the point of view of the narrator upon entering into his version of the story. Thus, Luke gives a hint that Eutychus's incident is related to ancient literature.[231] This satisfies criterion 1. Criterion 2 has been satisfied, as we noted before how the model of Elpenor was popular with other literary authors. Luke is standing on the mimetic tradition through imitation of Homer's Elpenor. Meanwhile, the literary connections between the two texts satisfy criterions 3 (density) and 4 (order). See the following chart.[232]

Od. 10–12	Acts 20:7–12
Odysseus and crew leave Troy and sail back to Achaea.	Paul and crew stop at Troas, having left Achaea to sail back to Jerusalem.
Narration in first-person plural	Narration in first-person plural

[230] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 227.
[231] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 14.
[232] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 13.

After a sojourn, the crew and Odysseus eat a meal.	After a sojourn, the believers and Paul eat a meal.
Disaster comes at night.	Disaster comes at midnight.
The crew sleeps in Circe's "darkened halls."	"There were plenty of lamps in the upper room."
Elpenor falls into a "sweet sleep."	Eutychus falls into a "deep sleep."
The narrator switches to third person: "There was one, Elpenor, the youngest."	The narrator switches to third person: "a certain young man named Eutychus."
Elpenor falls from the roof.	Eutychus falls from the third story.
Elpenor's soul goes to Hades.	Eutychus's soul remains in him.
Associates fetch the body, dead.	Associates take up the body, alive.
Elpenor is not buried until dawn.	Eutychus is not raised alive until dawn.

This chart demonstrates that the texts show density and similar orders. This means that the author of Acts intentionally followed Homer's work. But, one realizes that Luke does not merely copy Homer. Mimesis criticism resolves some of the riddles in the text. The fall of Eutychus draws the attention of the readers of Acts to the model of Elpenor. The many lamps in Acts imply the opposite situation of the darkness of Circe's palace. The many lights of the lamps anticipate a positive result. The events surrounding Eutychus's death are also linked to Elpenor in that Elpenor's burial occurs at dawn, after some time has passed since he died. Eutychus's revival needs to take time just as Elpenor's burial takes time, but the important thing is that Eutychus is not buried. He is revived. These two elements satisfy criterions five (distinctive trait) and six (interpretability). The most

fascinating and important hypertextual clue is the name Eutychus. Whereas Elpenor represents bad luck or being unfortunate, Eutychus is a lucky man. Note that *Eutychus* means "lucky."[233] Luke transvalued Elpenor in Eutychus, whose revival symbolizes resurrection.[234] One sees that writing has power depending on how it is written.

Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*

Heliodorus's *Aethiopica* is indebted to Homeric epics. Scholars argue that Heliodorus's indebtedness to Homer is conspicuous at many points.[235] One example is the incantation scene in *Aethiopica* 6, in which an old woman engages in a number of bizarre actions to bring her dead son, who has been killed in a skirmish with the Persians, back to life.[236] She wants to obtain a prophecy from him to learn the fate of her other son, who has gone to fight the Persians. However, the dead son condemns her because of the ungodly ritual practices she has done. Scholars say that what one calls "religion" is at the center of Heliodorus's *Aethiopica*.[237] In particular, recently, Svetla Slaveva-Griffin has explored the possibility of Heliodorus's knowledge of Christianity.[238] From this perspective, the dead son's condemnation of his mother's ritual is a commentary on what constitutes right religion and what constitutes wrong religion. Tim Whitmarsh argues that

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[233] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 14.

[234] Ibid.

[235] R. W. Garson, "Notes on Some Homeric Echoes in Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*," *Acta Classica* 18 (1975), 137.

[236] For example, she digs a pit, lights a fire beside it, and positions her dead son's corpse next to the fire [or how she positions it]. Then, taking an earthenware bowl from her nearby tripod, she pours a libation of honey into the pit, then milk from another bowl, and wine from a third. . . She takes a sword and invokes the moon by a series of grotesque and outlandish names before drawing the blade across her arm. . . She wipes blood from the wound onto a sprig and flicks it into the fire. . . She kneels over her dead son and whispers certain incantations into his ear. Her dead son wakes and stands. Tim Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity in the ancient Greek Novel: Returning Romance* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 108-35.

[237] Meriel Jones, "Heavenly and Pandemic Names in Heliodorus' Aethiopica," *The Classical Quarterly*, Vol. 56, No. 2 (Dec., 2006), pp. 548-562.

[238] Svetla Slaveva-Griffin, "From Within the Ivory Tower: Religious Experts and the 99%," presented at the *Society of Biblical Literature Annual Meeting*, San Diego, CA, November 23, 2014.

Aethiopica represents new norms, like pious libations and festivals, devout prayer, and sincere devotion to the gods, while condemning oddities such as magic and human sacrifice.[239]

Clinton Walker Keyes calls this scene Heliodorus's νέκυια by connecting the scene with Odysseus.[240] In addition to this, I suggest that the model of Elpenor is also imbedded in this work. Both the dead son in *Aethiopica* and Elpenor are young soldiers. One dies in battle and the other dies in an accident. Both appear after necromantic actions and tell about future events. Elpenor asks Odysseus for burial and gives him a warning if he does not hold the funeral. The dead son admonishes and condemns his mother for ungodly ritual practices. She soon dies an unfortunate death in front of a chance witness. Heliodorus uses Elpenor as a literary model to provide an account of lived religion with its many norms of what is right religion. Homer provides the model for reaching that aim. Keyes argues, "Undoubtedly *Aethiopica* recalls the *Odyssey* story to Heliodorus' readers, and was obviously intended to do so."[241]

Patroclus in the *Acts of Paul*

As one of the successors of the canonical books, the *Acts of Paul* contains a similar story to that of Eutychus in Acts 20:7–12. Patroclus, an imperial cupbearer, comes to hear Paul's teachings. He is in a window but falls to his death because of the Devil. Here is the story:

> Patroclus, an imperial cupbearer, came late to the barn and, since he could not get close to Paul because of the crowd, perched in a high window and listened to him as he taught God's word. Because the Devil, that wicked creature, was aroused to

[239] Whitmarsh, *Narrative and Identity,*108-35.

[240] Clinton Walker Keyes, "The Structure of Heliodorus' *Aethiopica*," Studies in Philology, Vol. 19, No. 1 (Jan., 1922), 46.

[241] Keyes, "The Structure of Heliodorus' Aethiopica," 46.

> jealousy by the believers' love for one another, Patroclus fell from the window and died. News of this quickly reached Nero (APl 14:1).[242]

Paul realizes that Patroclus has fallen and reaches out to him. Fortunately, he is not dead, but he is close to dying. Paul prays to Jesus, and then Patroclus is revived:

> When Paul learned of this through the Spirit, he said, "My fellow believers, the evil one has contrived an opportunity to test you. Go outside to find a boy fallen from a height. He is about to expire. Pick him up and bring him to me here." They went and did as he said. The sight of the body wrenched the attendant crowds. Paul said, "Brothers and sisters, show your faith. Come, let us implore our Lord Jesus Christ with tears that he may live and we remain unmolested." After all had uttered profound sighs, the boy began to breathe again. They put him upon an animal and sent him home alive with the other members of the imperial staff. (14:1)[243]

This story seems to be certainly dependent upon Acts. Pervo argues that the major source of APl 14:1 is the story of Eutychus in Acts 20:7–12.[244] The stories do have some similarities between them. Both Eutychus and Patroclus are called a child, even though they are young men. They both are sitting on a windowsill, listening to Paul's preaching, when they fall and die.[245] Literary contact between the two texts is dense and satisfies the criterion of order. In particular, by looking at the *Acts of Paul*, some perplexing issues are solved. The mysterious lamps are not mentioned in the *Acts of Paul*. They might have been Luke's intentional insertion in the Acts of the Apostles. The reason for sitting on the windowsill and for falling is much clearer in the *Acts of Paul*. Patroclus does not fall asleep in the window, rather, he goes to the window because of the crowd, and he falls because the evil Devil plans it. The canonical Acts does not say how Paul knows Eutychus has fallen. Paul in the *Acts of Paul*, however, perceives the incident through the

[242] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 307.
[243] Ibid.
[244] Ibid., 309.
[245] MacDonald, "Luke's Eutychus," 4.

Spirit. Also, there is no awkward delay in Patroclus's revival like there is with Eutychus.[246]

One can conclude two things from the above analysis. First, the author of Acts intentionally inserted some curious issues that seem to lead sensible readers to recognize the purpose of the work. Luke's use of Homer's Elpenor to create Eutychus's episode is clear by looking at the model of Patroclus in the Acts of Paul. Second, the author of the *Acts of Paul* improves over its model.[247] Eutychus does not appear again in Luke's narrative. Patroclus, however, is sent back alive to Caesar's house to proclaim Jesus Christ. This missionary endeavor eventually leads to Paul's execution. From Elpenor through Eutychus to Patroclus, one can see how authors used literary models to compose Christian narratives. Although the author of the *Acts of Paul* uses the literary model of Eutychus in the Acts of the Apostles, knowledgeable readers would recognize the Homeric model of Elpenor when reading it.

The *Testament of Abraham*

The *Testament of Abraham* dates to around 100 CE. This work imaginatively narrates the "dramatic and humorous circumstances of Abraham's death."[248] In the narrative, Abraham attempts to avoid death. So, Abraham travels to two places, one for this world that God created with the assistance of Michael, and the other is the place of judgment, where he witnesses the post-mortem weighing of souls. Abraham learns about God's compassion for sinners in the place of judgment.[249] Nevertheless, Abraham does not give up his soul. God commissions Death, and Death draws forth Abraham's soul

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[246] Ibid.
[247] Pervo, *Dating Acts*, 310.
[248] Dale C. Allison Jr., *Testament of Abraham* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2003), 3.
[249] Ibid.

with a trick. Finally, Abraham's soul passes to Michael, who is wrapped in a divinely woven linen shroud, and goes to paradise. Meanwhile, his body is buried on the third day after his death in the promised land, by the Oak of Mamre.

The *Testament of Abraham* survives in two Greek recensions, conventionally called A, which is the longer version of the two, and B. The recounting of Abraham's death given above is found in recension A. According to MacDonald, the *Testament of Abraham*, especially recension A, contains a sustained imitation of Plato's famous Myth of Er in terms of the separation of the just and the unjust.[250] See the following chart.[251]

Resp. 614c-615a	*T. Ab.* 11 (rec. A)
[Er said that he traveled among the souls of many others of the dead to] a certain preternatural place in which there were two chasms [δύ . . . χάσματα] on the ground opposite each other and two others in heaven opposite them above.	And Michael turned the chariot and brought Abraham to the east at the first gate of heaven. And Abraham saw two ways [δύο ὁδούς]. One way was narrow and difficult, and the other was wide and broad. He also saw there two gates [δύο πύλας], one wide gate at the narrow way.
Judges were sitting [καθῆσθαι] between these. Whenever they rendered their judgment, they commanded the righteous to go to the right and up through the sky, . . . and the unjust to the left and down.	There outside the two gates they saw a man sitting [καθήμενον] on a gilded throne. And he saw many souls being driven by angels through the wide gate, and they saw a few other souls carried by angels through the narrow gate.
[Er then said that he also saw souls emerging from the other two chasms and gathering in a meadow where they spoke about what they had experienced.]	And when the amazing one who sat [καθήμενος] on the throne of gold saw the few souls passing through the narrow gate and the many passing through the wide gate, immediately that amazing man ripped hair from his head and the beard on his

[250] Dennis R. MacDonald, "Teaching Mimesis as a Criterion for Textual Criticism: Cases from the Testament of Abraham and the Gospel of Nicodemus," *Reading and Teaching Ancient Fiction: Jewish Christian and Greco-Roman Narratives,* ed. Sara R. Johnson, Rubén R. Dupertuis, and Christine Shea, (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2018), 241-50; *The Gospels and Homer*, 362-64.

[251] MacDonald, "Teaching Mimesis," 243-44.

"Some lamenting and weeping [ὀδυρομένας τε καί κλαιούσας]"	cheek, threw himself from his throne to the ground weeping and lamenting [κλίων καί ὀδυρόμενος].
[when they recalled their sufferings. The others narrated] "their delights and extraordinary visions of the beautiful."	And whenever he observed many souls entering through the narrow gate, he then rose from the ground, sat on his throne with great delight, rejoicing and exulting.
He [Er] said that there stood wild men, fiery to behold [διάπυροι ἰδεῖν] . . . [They] grabbed them and took them away.	Behold, two angels with fiery appearance [πύρινοι τῇ ὄψει], merciless mind, and severe visage drove then thousands of souls, beating them mercilessly with fiery whips.
But Ardiaeus and others they bound hand, feet, and head, threw them down, . . . dragged them along outside along the road, . . . and let them to drop into Tartarus.	And the angel seized one soul. And they brought all the souls into the wide gate of destruction.

Plato's account of the afterlife in the Myth of Er was well known to Greek authors. In particular, this work was widely accessible, and many authors imitated it to recreate their own concept of the afterlife, such as Plutarchus, the author of the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*, and the author of the *Acts of Andrew* (criteria 1 and 2). The two paths of the dead in the *Testament of Abraham* are similar to the two chasms in Plato's myth (criteria 3 and 4). The expression κλίων καί ὀδυρόμενος ("weeping and lamenting") in the *Testament of Abraham* resembles Plato's ὀδυρομένας τε καί κλαιούσας ("some lamenting and weeping"). In addition, the expression "great delight, rejoicing and exulting" in the *Testament of Abraham* is similar to the phrase "their delights and extraordinary visions of the beautiful" in Plato's myth. Each author narrates different pathways for the just and unjust (criterion 5). Interestingly, the souls' weeping

and rejoicing before the judge of the dead are caused by Adam in the *Testament of Abraham* (*T. Ab.* 8, 11). Although the author of the *Testament of Abraham* imitates Plato's Myth of Er, his story comes to a different conclusion. Whereas Plato created his story to justify reincarnation, the *Testament of Abraham* asserts that the final judgments and rewards are perfect, eternal, and immutable: "Righteous Abraham, this is a perfect judgment and reward [of the dead], eternal and inalterable; one that no one is able to question" (13).[252] This difference in intent satisfies criterion 6, interpretability. The author of the *Testament of Abraham* encourages people to live righteous lives.[253]

At the same time, Homeric motifs can be detected in the *Testament of Abraham*. George W. E. Nickelsburg argues that the author of the *Testament of Abraham* is a "well-read" author and has drawn on motifs from Homer's *Odyssey*, among others.[254] The most prominent scene imitated in the *Testament of Abraham* is Homer's account of Eurycleia's recognition of Odysseus in the *Odyssey* 19.[255] In the *Odyssey* 19, Odysseus encounters a faithful woman slave, Eurycleia. She recognizes Odysseus while she washes his feet. In the *Testament of Abraham* 2–3, Sarah recognizes the visiting stranger as one of the couple's previous divine visitors. Abraham washes his feet, not recognizing him because he is disguised as a soldier. The parallels between the two texts are significant, including sharing an emotional outpouring of tears, the upsetting of the bowl of water for washing, and the secrecy at the conclusion.[256]

The *Testament of Abraham*, a Jewish document written in relatively easy-to-read

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[252] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 364.

[253] J. Edward, *The Early History of Heaven* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 155.

[254] George W. E. Nickelsburg, *Jewish Literature between the Bible and the Mishnah: A Historical and Literary Introduction* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1981), 326.

[255] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 377-78.

[256] For more detail, MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 377-78.

Greek in the late first or early second century, possibly in Egypt, imitates Homer's and Plato's works. This means that even Jewish literary authors knew the classical Greek literature. In addition, the author of the *Testament of Abraham* demonstrates mimetic skill in the creation of the narrative. Borrowing from one text written by another person usually has a specific purpose. In this case, the author of the *Testament of Abraham* aims to affirm an eternal and inalterable life after death, unlike Plato's reincarnation. Whoever lives a righteous life will go to heaven; it does not matter to the author of the *Testament of Abraham* whether the person is a Jew or a Gentile.

Karinus and Leucius in the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*

The work called the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*, which is a late recension of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*, was supposedly written by a Jew named Aeneas, a Roman toparch, and it consists of two parts: the *Passion* (*Gospel of Nicodemus* M) and the *Resurrection* (*Gospel of Nicodemus* M 12:3–16:3, including the *Descent of Christ into Hades*). These two parts announce the death and resurrection of Jesus, respectively. According to MacDonald, the *Descent of Christ* originally was an alternative ending to the *Gospel of Nicodemus* in recension A.[257] An interesting issue in this work is that the *Resurrection*, which includes the *Descent of Christ into Hades*, transforms Odysseus's nekyia and Plato's Myth of Er.[258]

There is a story about Symeon's twin sons, Karinus and Leucius, in the *Descent of Christ into Hades*. They have recently died and been buried. After Jesus's resurrection, however, their tombs are seen to be opened and empty, and the boys are living and spending time in Arimathea (*PRA* 17:1). Questioned about their mysterious raising from

[257] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 367. The *Gospel of Nicodemus* A is known as the original document in the recensional history of the *Gospel of Nicodemus*.

[258] Ibid.

the dead, each of the sons independently writes about what they have seen—that Christ liberates the dead from Hades.[259] One might notice that the story of someone's death and return from the dead and an account of the visit to the afterlife is a commonly used motif in ancient literatures. In the *Descent of Christ into Hades*, Karinus and Leucius, Symeon's twin sons, come back to life soon after their death and narrate what they have seen in Hades, as Er does in Plato's work.[260] The following chart provides a comparison of the two stories.[261]

Plato's Myth of Er	*Pass. Res. Aen.* 17:1–27:3
Er, the son of Armenius, died in battle and on the twelfth day, after his corpse had been taken home for burial, he came back to life. "Once revived, he told what he had seen there" in the world beyond (*Resp*. 614B–C).	Karinus and Leucius, sons of Symeon, died and not long afterward came back to life. Their tombs were found to be empty; the risen twins had gone to Arimathea but spoke to no one. When pressed by Jewish chief priests to explain how they returned to life, they requested two books of papyrus, one for each (17:1–3).
Er said that he arrived at the realm of the dead with many others and saw throngs of souls being judged and then departing for a millennium of punishment or reward (614D).	The lads wrote that they were in Hades "with all who ever had fallen asleep from the beginning of time." Christ emptied Hades of all the dead and brought them to paradise (18:1).
"At dusk they set up tents by the River Ameleta." Everyone but Er drank from the river and forgot everything that had happened to them in the world below (621A).	"We who had risen from the dead were permitted for only three days to celebrate the Lord's Passover in Jerusalem with our living relatives as a witness of the resurrection of Christ the Lord; we were baptized in the holy Jordan River, and each

[259] The motivation for this narrative can be owed to 1 Peter 3:19 ("He went and made a proclamation to the spirits in prison"). One may find this notion also in *Gos. Pet.* 10:40–41 and at an early date in the Apostles' Creed: "He descended into hell."

[260] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 368-371. See the chart on pp. 368-369.

[261] Ibid., 368-369.

	one received a white robe" (27:1).
The souls about to go the land of the living fell asleep, and at midnight, amid thunder and earthquake, "they suddenly were transported upward here and there into birth, like shooting stars" (621B). Socrates provided a moralizing conclusion: "The story just might save us, if we are convinced of it . . . and do not pollute our souls. . . . We will always hold to the upward way and in every way attend to righteousness with wisdom" (621C).	"And after three days of the Lord's Pascal celebration, all who had been resurrected with us were led across the Jordan, were caught up in the clouds, and were no longer seen by anyone" (27:1). "Give him praise and confession; perform penance, so that he may have mercy on you. Peace to you from the Lord Jesus Christ himself and savior of all of you. Amen" (27:2).

Plato's works were well known to Greek authors. In particular, Plato's Myth of Er was widely accessible and many authors imitated this work, like Plutarchus and the authors of the *Testament Abraham*[262] and the *Acts of Andrew*[263] (criteria 1 and 2). As one can see in the above chart, the Myth of Er and the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus* show density and sequence (criteria 3 and 4). In Plato's Myth of Er, when souls go to the land of the living (reincarnation), they drink from the river Ameleta and forget everything they have experienced in the afterlife. Er, however, does not drink at all because he needs to tell about the afterlife in order to encourage readers or listeners to live virtuous lives.[264] This action corresponds to the baptism in the Jordan River in the *Resurrection*. Also, in Plato's Myth of Er, souls are suddenly "transported upward here and there into birth, like shooting stars." This unusual scenario is similarly expressed in the *Resurrection*: The two sons "were caught up in the clouds, and were no longer seen by

[262] Ibid., 363-364. Especially, see the charts.

[263] For the literary relation of this work, see Dennis R. MacDonald, *Christianizing Homer: The Odyssey, Plato, and the Acts of Andrew* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994).

[264] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 370.

anyone." Thus, these two works have an unusual reference, and it links them in a special relationship (criterion 5).[265] Whereas the dead in Plato return to earth for reincarnation, those in the *Resurrection* go to paradise (criterion 6).[266]

There is another striking story in the *Resurrection* that imitates Homer's Elpenor. When Symeon's two sons arrived in Hades, they see the dead, like their father Symeon, John the Baptist, Adam and Seth, Abraham, other patriarchs, David, Isaiah, and all the prophets and saints. This scene reminds one of the parade of the dead that Odysseus experiences in Hades.[267] However, the difference is that Odysseus does nothing for them, whereas Jesus brings the dead from the kingdom of Hades to paradise, where two men, Enoch and Elijah, await them.[268] In the meantime, a third man comes from Hades to meet the throng in paradise.

> As they were saying these things, another modest person came, who was carrying on his shoulders a cross. The holy fathers said to him, "Who are you, you who looks like a bandit, and why are you carrying a cross on your shoulders?" He answered, "Just as you say, I was a bandit and a thief in the world, and thus the Jews arrested me and handed me over for death on a cross, together with our Lord Jesus Christ. While he was hanging on the cross, I saw the things that were happening as signs; I believed in him, begged him, and said, "Lord, when you reign as king, do not forget me." (*Pass. Res. Aen.* 26:1)

This character resembles Homer's Elpenor in several ways. Just as Elpenor goes to Hades before Odysseus arrives, the bandit gets into Hades earlier than Jesus because Jesus is raised from the dead three days later. In addition, just as Elpenor narrates for Odysseus how he died, the thief narrates how he was crucified.[269] However, whereas Odysseus only promises Elpenor to bury him properly, Jesus raises the thief from the dead and

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[265] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 370.
[266] Ibid.
[267] Ibid., 371.
[268] Ibid. The reason for these two men being there is because they went to paradise without dying.
[269] Ibid.

sends him to paradise. After hearing the thief's story, all who are in paradise praise Jesus: "When the saints heard these things, they all shouted with a loud voice, 'Our Lord is great! His power is great!'" (26:2). Mimesis continues through Pseudo-Aeneas's *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*. In addition, mimesis serves to Christianize Homer and Plato.

So far, I have traced the Homeric influence on later authors and their works. In particular, I have found how the story of Elpenor in the *Odyssey* was imitated and how its ideas were replaced with different ideas and concepts according to subsequent authors' literary intentions. I also examine some examples of Plato's influence on later works in terms of the concept of the afterlife. Plato's re-creation of the Homeric theme of the afterlife widely influenced later authors.

The second criterion in mimesis criticism, analogy, allows one to recognize that Homeric influence was prevalent throughout the Greco-Roman world. In addition, targeted models, like Elpenor, were imitated generation after generation. Thus, the most popular models in antiquity that ancient authors were willing to imitate were derived from Homeric epics. The examination in this satisfies the second criterion, analogy. Then, what about Mark? How did the author of Mark imitate Homer's Elpenor? We will consider this question next.

Criterion 3 (Density) and Criterion 4 (Order)

According to MacDonald, density pertains to the volume of contacts between two texts, and order is concerned with the sequence of the parallels. In the previous section, I examined several authors and their works, finding Homeric parallels that show a tradition of imitation of the same model, Elpenor. In this section, I will compare the texts in Mark and the *Odyssey* that include a similar young man. I propose that Mark is also within a

mimetic tradition, as the Gospel imitates a Homeric model. The mysterious young man in Mark 14:51–52 is an imitation of Homer's Elpenor.

Investigation of the Young Man in Mark 14:51–52 and 16:1–8

The story of the enigmatic young man in Mark is the only instance of this episode in the Gospels. After Jesus prays in Gethsemane, he stands his ground against an armed cohort that intends to take him to his impending suffering and death, but his disciples flee, including an unnamed young man who appears in the narrative here for the first time. Mark wrote, "All of them deserted him and fled. A certain young man [νεανίσκος] was following him, wearing [περιβεβλημένος] nothing but a linen cloth. They caught hold of him, but he left the linen cloth [σινδών] and ran off naked" (Mark 14:50–52). The identity of this young man is debatable. Other Gospel writers recast him out of the episode. Interestingly, the Greek word for "young man" (νεανίσκος) appears twice in Mark. First, here for the naked young man, and second, in the last episode of the Gospel, in Mark 16, the person who announces Jesus's resurrection is also a young man (unlike in Matthew and Luke, where the young man has been transformed into an angel and into two men). By comparing the two characters, one can recognize that they are connected to each other. The two stories seem to frame Jesus's passion at the beginning and at the end. The first image of the young man is negative in that he cowardly flees naked. He looks like he is playing a minor role in the narrative as an anti-heroic figure. In chapter 16, however, the young man proclaims Jesus's resurrection. Jesus's passion and death work to transform one figure into the other. In other words, an anti-heroic young man has been transformed into a resurrected figure after Jesus's resurrection.

Mark 14:51–52	Mark 16:5
The disciples fled, including a “young man [νεανίσκος] . . . wearing [περιβεβλημένος] a linen cloth” over his nakedness.	The women came to the tomb and saw a “young man [νεανίσκον] wearing (περιβεβλημένον] a white robe,”
They seized him, but he abandoned his linen cloth and fled away naked.”	sitting in the tomb, on the right.

Although some scholars argue that the differences in the two young men’s clothing signify their different identities, the motif of the clothing emphasizes that the two episodes form a coherent whole by means of Jesus’s resurrection. Mark often mentions clothing with strong symbolic overtones, so it has special significance for him. The clothes of John the Baptist in Mark 1:6 identify him as a prophet. Jesus’s dazzling white clothes in his transfiguration in Mark 9:3 are a preview and an anticipation of the glorified body of Christ following his resurrection. The young man in Gethsemane is wearing a linen cloth (σινδών). The young man, however, flees naked, leaving behind his clothing. This situation seems to indicate the significance of the event. Nakedness was regarded as a shameful state, so it would symbolize an undesirable condition.[270] Mark is implying that the young man, eager to follow Jesus after others have failed him, also falls into shame. Mark introduces the young man as follows: “a certain [τις] young man was following him” (14:51). In this sentence, by inserting τις, Mark introduces a new

[270] See Ezek 16:7, 22; 16:39; 23:29; or Isa 20:2–4. According to Luis Iván Martínez Toledo, the LXX sometimes uses αἰσχύνη, “shame” (e.g., 1 Sam 20:3; Isa 20:4) or ἀσχημοσύνη, “shameless deed,” (e.g., Lam 1:8; Ezek 16:8) as a translation of the Hebrew ʿerwāh, which literally means “nakedness.” Iván Martínez Toledo, *The Naked State of Human Being: The Meaning of Gymnos in 2 Corinthians 5:3 and Its Theological Implications* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock Publishers, 2016), especially no. 379.

character, one who has not appeared earlier in the Gospel.[271] This description also emphasizes the young man's minor significance and his anti-heroic profile. Nevertheless, Mark says this young man was following Jesus: συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ. The root ἀκολουθειν is the customary Markan verb for "being a disciple."[272] It also suggests that the young man was closely related to Jesus in the past.

The other young man in Mark 16:5 sits on the right side of Jesus's tomb. Mark uses the same word, περιβάλλω (wearing), as he did for the young man in Mark 14:51–52. The young man in the empty tomb, however, is wearing a white robe instead of linen cloth. The white robe reminds one of Jesus's appearance in the transfiguration scene. The two young men are the same character, but later in the Gospel, the young man has been radically transformed in a special way. There is intensification in the narrative. The young man who was wearing a linen cloth, which he loses, contrasts with the young man in the empty tomb who is dressed in a more special manner.

The young man's naked running away is a shameful action, just like the fleeing of Jesus's disciples. But, when one understands the nakedness as death, the garment the youth leaves behind symbolizes the flight of the naked soul from the body.[273] In this sense, the young man in the empty tomb is in a different state after Jesus's resurrection. In addition, being seated at the right side of the tomb and proclaiming Jesus's resurrection confirms the young man's special role in contrast to the fleeing young man in the garden. The young man in the tomb has another significant meaning in the narrative. He is the first character to give witness to Jesus's resurrection. He is well

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[271] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 128.

[272] Donahue and Harrington, *The Gospel of Mark*, 416.

[273] Plato at his death said that souls leave their bodies and ascend to judgment naked so that nothing will be hidden from the judges (*Gorgias* 523e). Paul also uses the body/garment metaphor (1 Cor 15:53–54 and 2 Cor 5:1–4).

informed about the whereabout of Jesus and reveals the coming appearance of Jesus to his disciples. The young man is an important figure as a messenger who explains the significance of the empty tomb to the women. Moreover, he sends a message to the disciples that Jesus has gone to Galilee. He is like a herald who proclaims the important message that the women should deliver to Jesus's disciples. G. R. de Villiers provides the following interpretation: "The effect of Mark's location of the young man's character is to create an *inclusio*. The last one who has been with him and who then abandons Jesus, is also the first one to announce his resurrection."[274] The two episodes with the young man are located as an outer framework to the trial and the death of Jesus. Mark intentionally locates the same character at two different places. The first young man symbolizes the death of Jesus, and the second one tells about Jesus's resurrection. In other words, Jesus's death and resurrection are accounted for by two different episodes with the same young man.

Mark's Young Man and Homer's Elpenor

Mark's imitation of Homer's Elpenor in the form of the young man begins with the scenes of the two heroes' passions. Two protagonists are at a critical stage because they must die.[275] Odysseus must go to Hades to consult with Tiresias, and Jesus must drink the cup of death to accomplish his Father's will.

Before Odysseus's journey to Hades, Circe prepares a generous feast. Odysseus and his comrades enjoy the meal and wine until sunset and then fall asleep. Similarly, Jesus and his twelve disciples eat the Last Supper, and the disciples fall asleep. The two protagonists cannot sleep because after this night, they must go on their last journey. But,

[274] Villiers, "The Powerful Transformation of the Young Man in Mark 14:51–52 and 16:5."
[275] In the case of Odysseus, he must go to Hades. This symbolizes his death.

the rest of their company sleep well. Elpenor is sodden with wine when Odysseus seriously asks Circe to send him on his way. While Jesus prays to his Father that his cup might be removed, the disciples sleep. When Odysseus begins to depart with his comrades, Elpenor, one of the comrades, falls to his death from the height of the rooftops. Jesus is arrested and led to trial, but his disciples desert him and flee. A young man who has been with Jesus also flees, naked, at the critical moment. These two stories, with a similar sequence of events, show literary contact with one another.

Now I will dig more into the two specific characters under consideration: Elpenor and the naked young man. Elpenor has been Odysseus's longtime servant. He joins the Trojan War but is not a serious warrior. He is not mentioned in any descriptions of the war. All of a sudden, Elpenor appears in the story before Odysseus is about to descend to Hades. Similarly, the young man in Mark has followed Jesus. Mark, however, does not mention him until Jesus is arrested for his trial and death. Another point is that both abruptly disappear. Elpenor falls to his death, and the young man flees without any clothing. Elpenor appears in two different scenes. One is Circe's place, where he dies (*Od*. 10), and the other is Hades, when he meets Odysseus (*Od*. 12). Mark's young man also appears twice before Jesus's death: first in Mark 14:51–52 and second, after Jesus's resurrection in Mark 16:1–8. It is worth noting that Odysseus's visiting Hades and Jesus's death appear between the two young men's scenes. Elpenor and the young man bracket the two protagonist's passions. As one considers the overall structures, the two stories share density and sequence.

Homer depicts Hades as a gloomy and cheerless place where the sun never shines (*Od*. 11.14–19). Odysseus himself would not stay long there because the place is too

horrible. In contrast, Mark does not depict the afterlife, even though Jesus dies and is resurrected. The Gospel writer's concern seems not to be the state of the afterlife. Mark does not use Elpenor to explain Hades. Mark seems only to be concerned with what happens after Jesus's death and resurrection. When Odysseus meets Elpenor in Hades, he is asked to bury him. Odysseus did not notice Elpenor's death, so a proper burial had not been conducted. At the urging of Elpenor, Odysseus provides him with a burial service just like a hero's funeral service. The funeral takes place at dawn. Mark's young man reappears at Jesus's empty tomb to proclaim his resurrection. Three women come to the tomb at dawn and receive the good news from the young man, but they do not tell anyone because they are afraid. A major difference in Mark's Gospel compared to the *Odyssey* is that Jesus comes back from a real death, unlike Odysseus. Jesus breaks the gate of death and makes his tomb empty. One cannot deny Mark's literary contact with Homer's *Odyssey* in terms of heavy density and order.

In short, Homer's Elpenor was Mark's targeted model to create a story about a young man. Mark does not just copy Elpenor. Mimesis should not be restricted to a copy of an original model. Mimesis often rivals and vies with the model to express an author's ideal or the ethos of the author's community. Mark adapts Elpenor for this work. The following chart shows how much Mark depended on Homer and also transformed his models.[276]

[276] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 130.

Odysseus and Elpenor (*Od*. 10.476–560 and 12.1–15)	Jesus and the Young Man (Mark 14:17–52 and 16:5–8)
Circe provides Odysseus and his crew with a bountiful meal, including wine.	Jesus and his disciples observe the Passover, including drinking wine.
After the meal, while his crew sleeps, Odysseus spends the night with Circe and asks her to send him on his way.	After the meal, while his disciples sleep, Jesus spends time in the evening in prayer, asking for the “cup” (his death) to be removed from him.
Odysseus learns that he has to go to Hades; he weeps and despairs for his life. Even so, he resigns himself to his fate.	Jesus knows that he has to die and is distressed “unto death.” Even so, he resigns himself to his fate.
During their conversation, Circe gives Odysseus whatever encouragement she can, promising, for instance, that he will return from the dead.	During their conversation, Jesus’s Father is silent.
Odysseus goes to his sleeping crew and wakes them: “Now stop sleeping, though sunk in sweet sleep; let’s go!”	Jesus goes to his sleeping disciples and wakes them: “Are you going to sleep from now on and take your rest? Enough! . . . Arise; let’s go!”
There was a certain Elpenor, the youngest in the crew, none too brave in battle. He falls to his death, and his soul flees to Hades.	A certain young man is following Jesus wearing a linen cloth over his nakedness. He runs away when the authorities arrest Jesus and attempt to arrest him. He flees naked, leaving his garment behind.
Odysseus descends to Hades to consult with the dead Tiresias, but he meets Elpenor first. Elpenor asks him for a funeral after he returns.	Jesus leaves for his trial and execution.
Odysseus returns to Circe’s island and buries Elpenor at dawn, amid bitter weeping.	At dawn, the young man appears in Jesus’s tomb and gives witness to the resurrection.

As one can see in the above chart, density and order are significant evidence of literary contact between the two texts. In particular, the criteria are not met without the author's conscious intention. Scholars who are suspicious of mimesis criticism have argued that the literary contact between Homer and Mark is merely an accidental confluence due to Homer's popularity. However, the meeting of Macdonald's third and fourth criteria (density and order) shows that Mark took a targeted literary model from Homer to compose his young man episodes.

Criterion 5 (Distinctive Trait) and Criterion 6 (Interpretability)

Sean A. Adams says, "The ability of an author to be so steeped in writings of one of the great ancients so as to re-create their sublime writing is the pinnacle of literary achievement."[277] Former interpreters have regarded the author of Mark as a collector, an editor, and a transmitter of traditions. Mark has been seen as faithful to tradition, but not as a creative author. Mimesis criticism, however, considers Mark's Gospel the author's creative and sophisticated literary art. Moreover, if Mark used models from Homer and composed his Gospel by utilizing these models, Mark was keeping pace with other high-level literary authors.

In this section, I will deal with two more criteria that verify Mark's creativity. This is an important subject in that these criteria verify that Mark imitated the targeted models and transformed them. Mark's literary intention is revealed through the use of these models. This is called Mark's transvaluation.

A Distinctive Trait

Criterion 5 is defined as follows:

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[277] Sean A. Adams, *Composite Citations in Antiquity: Jewish, Graeco-Roman, and Early Christian Uses* (London; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), 28.

> A distinctive trait is anything unusual in both the targeted and the proposed borrower that links the two into a special relationship. . . Occasionally two texts contain distinguishing characteristics, such as peculiar characterizations, or a sudden, unexpected change of venue, or an unusual word or phrase.[278]

According to Stephen Hinds, this criterion is met when "a rare word or expression in one passage picks up a corresponding rarity in a predecessor passage, serving thus as an unequivocal marker of allusion."[279] Many philologians favor this criterion above all others, and frequently these rarities are flags for readers to compare the imitating texts with their models.[280] Satisfying this rule, a comparison of Mark's and Homer's texts results in several peculiar similarities.

On the one hand, Homer introduces Elpenor as though introducing a new character by inserting τις in *Od*. 10.552–53. The use of the indefinite pronoun τις emphasizes Elpenor's minor significance and announces his anti-hero profile, as I mentioned earlier.[281] In fact, Elpenor dies in an un-heroic manner. Homer uses the pronoun τις when one character has not earlier been introduced. Elpenor did not come onto the stage before Odysseus's descent to Hades. As soon as Elpenor appears on the scene, he encounters a terrible death by falling from the top of Circe's sacred house and descending to the depths of the underworld. On the other hand, Mark introduces "a certain young man." Mark also uses "τις" to refer to a new character. The young man "was following" Jesus. This implies that the young man was closely related to Jesus in the past, just as Elpenor had been with Odysseus for many years.[282] One may assume that Elpenor was close to Odysseus even during the battle of Troy. Nevertheless, Elpenor and

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[278] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 6; *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 8-9.
[279] Stephen Hinds, *Allusion*, 23.
[280] Jeffrey Wills, *Repetition in Latin Poetry: Figures of Allusion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996), 15-41.
[281] Dova, *Greek Heroes in and out of Hades*, 3.
[282] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 129.

the young man in Mark are referred to using τις. The sudden appearance of the two young men is peculiar.

Homer expresses that Elpenor falls headlong from the roof, and his neck is broken (*Od*. 10.560). It is curious why only Elpenor has to die. Since Odysseus and his crew have arrived in Aegaea, they have suffered during critical moments, such as the temporary porcine metamorphosis of some crewmembers in Circe's land, the perilous journey, and the encounters with ghosts. But only Elpenor dies, and he dies instantly of a broken neck.[283] Homer describes Elpenor as not over valiant in war nor sound of understanding. Elpenor's death is the same as an unheroic figure. Homer seems to attribute the fault of an unheroic death to Elpenor from beginning to end. But is everything his fault? One may not notice Odysseus's responsibility because Elpenor is too foolish. However, Odysseus is also more or less responsible for his tragic death. It is undeniable that Elpenor makes a big mistake: he drinks too much during the night, and he does not pay attention to where he has slept. He should be cautious in his own actions. But, he does not know when Odysseus will descend to Hades. In addition, Odysseus does not have a plan for the journey of returning home until his crew reminds him of the goal. Although he spends the whole night with Circe to ask her for a way home, his action seems to be impetuous. Thus, the same kind of carelessness Odysseus exercises is what leads to Elpenor's death.[284] To make matters worse, Odysseus shamefully does not realize Elpenor has died until he meets him in Hades. Frederick expresses the situation in

[283] Frederick A. Hanna Roisman, *The Odyssey Re-formed*, 123.
[284] Ibid.

this way: "Both are setting out for the world of the dead, one deliberately (if impetuously), the other unwittingly and carelessly."[285]

Compared to the Gospel of Mark, this situation is much different from Jesus's. In the Gospel of Mark, Jesus predicts three times his passion, death, and resurrection. Jesus does his best to teach his disciples, but they act contrary to his expectations. Jesus's decision to go to his death is not made abruptly. He already knows that he is going to die. Jesus wants his disciples to know it and to follow him.

Interpretability

In short, interpretability assesses what might be gained by viewing one text as a debtor to another, whether in "style," "philosophical adequacy," "persuasiveness," or "religious perspective."[286] I think that, to rightly assess a work, one needs to compare it with its previous work or model. Text is texture. Julia Kristeva says, "Any text is constructed as a mosaic of quotations; any text is the absorption and transformation of another."[287] Mark Roncace argues, "Two or more texts that have common themes, motifs, images, or vocabulary or parallel structures or characters will be interpreted in depth and richness when compared with one another."[288] Gerard Genette advocates hypertextuality as an interpretive lens. Hypertextuality is the relationship between a text and a preceding "hypotext." Genette explains that "a hypertext is any text that relies somehow on a written antecedent, or hypotext, and a hypertext transforms, modifies, elaborates on, or

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[285] Ibid.

[286] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 6.

[287] Julia Kristeva, *Semeiotike*, *Recherches pour une Semanalyse* (Paris: Seuil, 1969), 146, 255. Mary Orr, however, argues that it was Roland Barthes, not the popularly accepted Kristeva, who first defined intertextuality. Mary Orr, *Intertextuality: Debates and Contexts* (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2003), 20.

[288] Mark Roncace, *Jerusalem, Zedekiah, and the Fall of Jerusalem* (New York: T&T Clark, 2005), 18.

extends its targeted hypotext."[289] Then he asserts, "The hypertext always wins."[290] According to MacDonald, "Interpretability is the capacity of the proposed hypotext to make sense of the hypertext. This may include the solution to a peculiar problem that has eluded other explanation. It also may include emulation, or transvaluation."[291] Interpretability asks whether Mark's intended readers understood why the author used a particular model, which is also called an antetext, and how the author transformed it to serve the author's own end.[292]

On first impression, the recounting of Jesus's arrest seems fine without the young man's episode. Mark, however, gets him to the stage, and as soon as he appears, he runs away naked. This mysterious young man has inspired endless scholarly work. I have discussed the identity of the young man and the two main positions on his identity: he is a historical character or a symbolic figure. Now, it is time to understand the meaning of the young man through mimesis criticism and what this character implies to us.

First, Mark provides a fascinating contrast to the *Odyssey* through two young men. If one accepts that the young man in Mark 14:51–52 and the one in 16:5–8 is the same character, one can conclude that he shows a dramatic transformation. In the *Odyssey*, Elpenor dies, and unluckily, his corpse is not buried. Only after he encounters Odysseus and asks him for a proper burial is he able to have one. Although his burial takes on the form of a heroic funeral, he is dead and will never come back. In contrast, the young man in Mark dies, but he comes back to life and appears in Jesus's empty tomb. Just like Jesus has risen, he has also risen; he has been resurrected.

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[289] Genette, *Palimpsestes*, 209.
[290] Ibid., 451.
[291] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark*, 9.
[292] Ibid.

Second, Mark was composed after the Jewish temple's destruction. This event was a tragedy to both Judaism and the Christian community. The problem is, why was an innocent church and its members destroyed?[293] I think Mark's creation of the naked young man and the young man at Jesus's empty tomb are answers to this question.

Jesus tries to help his followers avoid the catastrophe when, by way of prediction, he says in chapter 13, "When you see the abomination that causes desolation standing where it does not belong then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountain" (Mark 13:14). Even the young man who speaks about Jesus's resurrection to the three women who come to Jesus's empty tomb gives them a message to go to Galilee. Nevertheless, the message does not reach Jesus's disciples because the women fail to deliver it. Mark's Gospel ends like an unfinished work. However, there is Mark's literary intention. One has to explain why the people did not avoid suffering. Both the Jewish War and the temple's destruction were traumatic incidents that the Jerusalem church's members confronted. As the Son of God and the leader of the church, Jesus should have warned them before the catastrophe occurred. Mark's Jesus provided them with two answers to their questions. First, Jesus does not escape from suffering. He accepts the cup of death for them so they can learn how to live in compliance with God's will in the face of death. Jesus's prayer in Gethsemane shows that. Jesus is a suffering hero whom people follow. The second answer is that Jesus has already told them to flee from the impending tragedy. Jesus transmits this message to the three women through the young man in the empty tomb. Sadly, they do not tell Jesus's disciples this important message. One cannot blame Jesus for the suffering of the Jerusalem church during the war. The three women will be

[293] S. G. F. Brandon, *The Fall of Jerusalem and the Christian Church: A Study of the Effects of the Jewish Overthrow of A.D. 70 on Christianity*, 2nd ed. (London: SPCK, 1957).

blamed. Mark did not write that Jesus himself appears to the three women. Why is this? Jesus has already warned his disciples to flee to Galilee in 14:28. They should have followed his directions. However, they did not. If Jesus had appeared to them at the tomb, it would have been more difficult to explain why they did not escape from the tragic moment.[294] Mark needed a stand-in to give them the message instead of Jesus. The young man is Jesus's alter ego who wants to save Jesus's followers from suffering. He is a messenger who can transmit the knowledge of Jesus's resurrection and give the disciples Jesus's message that he is on his way to Galilee. Mark took a good model from Homer, Elpenor, to write the young man's episode. They are similar anti-heroic figures. Mark, however, creates a better work by transforming the young man into the messenger of Jesus. Most of all, the young man plays the pivotal role of exonerating Jesus for the sufferings of his followers, along with unbelievers, during the fall of the Jewish temple and the Jerusalem church.

Why did Mark Compete with the Homeric Epics?

Imitation should not be mere interpretation of the original. Its role is to rival and vie with the original in the expression of the same ideas. Imitation is a starting point for a successful composition. Authors must seek the best model to improve their writing. One way to accomplish this is by borrowing admirable traits from several models, what one might call "eclectic emulation" (*Instit. Orat.* 10.2.12; 10.2.26). Burton L. Mack deals with Mark's literary genius in that he combines Jesus's tradition with Greek myths. Mark is a mediator between them.[295] Some people might feel uncomfortable with the idea of a relationship between Mark and myth. But, if one understands that religion mainly

[294] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 250-51.
[295] Burton L. Mack, *A Myth of Innocence: Mark and Christian Origins* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1988).

consists of religious practices and that practices are strongly connected to myth, then it makes sense that the formation of a new religion, like Christianity, might be influenced by myth.[296] Surely, the composition of Mark heavily depended on the Jewish scriptures. One would not deny this relation. However, Mark lived in the Greco-Roman culture. As Riley says, whereas Judaism is the mother, Greco-Roman culture is the father in the formation of Christianity.[297] Therefore, one should not neglect either side. But, so far, scholars have predominantly focused on the Jewish side.

It is time to discover a buried early Christian legacy. Religion is important to the lives of human beings, but religion is struggling to survive. The best way to survive is through education. According to Raffaella Cribiore, "By the late antique period, there were competing systems of education."[298] Christian education was one of these. Both Christians and pagans emphasized the need for early religious education.[299] Cribiore says Christian and pagans attended the same schools of higher learning in the fourth century.[300] Christians pursued a traditional Greek education. They learned elementary material and then took poetry and grammar. Students could stop their schooling after taking grammar, but others went on to higher levels of education. At the higher level, they read poets such as Homer, Pindar, and the tragedians, and they learned philosophy and rhetoric eloquence. Students were exposed to Greek myths in school, and traditional stories were present in people's daily lives. In addition, myths were available to

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[296] Burton L. Mack, *Who Wrote the New Testament: The Making of the Christian Myth* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 1995).

[297] Gregory J. Riley, *The River of God: A New History of Christian Origins* (San Francisco: Harper San Francisco, 2001), 7.

[298] Raffaella Cribiore, "Why did Christians Compete with Pagans for Greek Paideia?" In *Pedagogy in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity*, ed. Karina Martin Hogan, Matthew J. Goff, and Emma Wasserman (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2017), 359-374.

[299] Cribiore, "Why did Christians Compete," 361.

[300] Ibid., 361.

Christians and pagans through literature, mimes, and the visual arts.[301] Cribiore says, "Myths and stories about Greek gods became increasingly part of an imaginative world that was embedded in everyday life."[302] For this reason, Christian learners were also familiar with myths, even though some of them criticized myths as fictions or ridiculed them. Nevertheless, they learned those works and developed a passion for them.[303] At the elementary level, Christians learned and used Christian symbols in their schoolwork. But, when they moved on to higher levels, they stopped using the symbols.[304] Christians learned the same subjects pagans did. In particular, Christian students read Greek literature at the higher levels of learning.[305]

By the late antique period, there were competing systems of education; especially in higher education, those who studied rhetoric and philosophy claimed that their disciplines were superior. Most of all, literature was paramount and it had to inform every level of *paideia*, including rhetoric and philosophy.[306] According to Sandwell, "the religious game" was pervasive in the fourth century. This game was sort of a religious competition between Christians and pagans regarding the validity of myths and stories about pagan gods. Probably some students were deeply immersed in myths and gods, while some were not because of their identity. Some teachers asked their students to accept myth as part of a world of fiction, neither true nor false, but some students had difficulty accepting myths. Although this was the situation in the fourth century, this struggle and rivalry has continued. Mark played the same game with pagan literature.

[301] Ibid,, 370.
[302] Ibid., 371.
[303] Ibid., 359.
[304] Ibid., 362.
[305] Ibid.
[306] Ibid., 360.

Cribiore gives us this conclusion:

> Pagans looked at ancient texts and myths as important traditions and as means to hone their skills in writing and speaking, but they also expected the ancient myths to help guide them in life. Christians rejected this view and did not presume that the pagan writers had to provide moral guidance. Instead of giving up on those texts, however, they appropriated them. They cherished pagan literature and myths because they were exposed to them in school but . . . they could not accept them wholesale; they were treacherous, like the sirens in Homer who attracted sailors with their sweet voice and then caused their deaths.[307]

Scholars who do not accept mimesis criticism often criticize it for underestimating the authority and impact of Jewish scriptures. For example, the story of Jesus calming down a storm in Mark 4:35–41 is modeled on Jonah's story in the Hebrew Bible. In addition, Jesus at Gethsemane takes after the image of David in 2 Samuel 15:30–32.[308] For this reason, mimesis criticism has not been supported. Scholars are suspicious of the literary relationship between Mark and Homer because Homer's writings are pagan.

Mimesis criticism, however, does not slight the influence of the Jewish scriptures on Mark; rather, it agrees that Mark used the Bible as a literary source and model. However, as MacDonald says, "To acknowledge the pervasive influence of the Jewish Bible on the Gospels and Acts does not exclude other literary influences."[309] There can be one or a multitude of literary models depending on an author's literary skill. A model could have come from either the Jewish Bible or pagan literature, depending on the author's level of education. Students usually imitated a single work, but experienced

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[307] Ibid.

[308] T. F. Glasson, "Davidic Links with the Betrayal of Jesus," ExpTim 85 (1973-1974), 118-19; and L. P. Trudinger, "Davidic Links with the Betrayal of Jesus: Some Further Observations," ExpTim 86 (1974-1975), 278-79.

[309] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 7.

authors borrowed from many.[310] Seneca compared these veteran literary authors with bees that take the best nectar from many blossoms to produce textual honey.[311] No matter how many models authors borrowed, imitation is not bare interpretation of the original; it is about rivaling and vying with the original in the expression of the same idea (*Instit. Orat*. 10.5.5). In order to achieve this task, it is important to find and choose the best models. Then, authors must seek to improve their models by means of "invention," "power," and "competence."[312] As Sandwell says, they play "the religious game." Discovering early Christianity is not about finding the historicity of a particular person or community, but about uncovering early Christians' religious identity, which they wanted to defend through literary competition.

[310] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 5.

[311] "Authors should blend those several flavors into one delicious compound that, even though it betrays its origin, yet it nevertheless is clearly a different thing from that whence it came" (*Epistles* 84).

[312] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 4.

CHAPTER 4
THE JEWISH TEMPLE DESTRUCTION AND MARK'S LITERARY MOVEMENT

The Gospel of Mark was not created in a vacuum. Mark's composition derived from the author's social situation and the demands and challenges of his time. Thus, Mark communicated with his world and society. Just as texts interact with a larger web or network of other texts, Mark is situated not in an isolated or independent place, but in interconnected diversity. So, it is necessary to take a look at the historical circumstances of the writing of Mark. Of course, it is more difficult to find evidence in the text for its historical background than to compare it with other texts. For this reason, trying to find the author's literary intention by looking at other texts is more crucial. Therefore, I propose that literary criticism should be prior to historical method. Nevertheless, it is advisable that we consider the historical context that may have affected the writing of Mark's Gospel.

In a recent study, David C. Sim argued that the early Christian mission to Jews failed.[313] The quantity of converts from Judaism was much less than Luke's exaggerated reports in Acts. Sim insists, "the Christian movement made very little impression upon the Jewish people in the first century."[314] According to him, the number of Christians was approximately 1,000 in the year 40 CE and around 2,700 in 70 CE.[315] This is a very

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[313] David C. Sim, "How Many Jews Became Christians in the First Century?" *HTS* 61, no. 1 & 2 (2005): 417-440.

[314] Ibid., 418.

[315] Ibid., 418. Sim notes, "These figures are very suggestive, and they reinforce the point that in its initial decades the Christian movement represented a tiny fraction of the ancient world."

small percentage of the population at that time. To be straightforward, Christianity was an "insignificant socio-religious movement in the Greco-Roman world."[316]

To support his claim, Sim points out several factors. The first and major factor is the destruction of the Jewish temple. He argues, "The destruction of the Jerusalem church during the Jewish War decimated the numbers of Christians of Jewish background, and only a few hundred remained by the end of the century."[317] Nevertheless, Gentile membership expanded considerably in this context, even in the ensuing centuries.[318] The second reason is related to the Christian proclamation of Christ. Sim determines that the failure of the Christian mission was not with the Jewish response. The Christian proclamation about the law-observant and law-free forms of Christianity failed to convince the vast majority of Jews who heard it.[319] This is exactly what Paul said would happen. He asserted, "We proclaim Christ crucified, a stumbling block to Jews and foolishness to Gentiles" (1 Cor. 1:23). The point is that Jews never understood the Christ who suffered and died; this kind of Messiah was not in the Jewish scriptures, they thought. Jesus, who is called "messiah" in the Christian church, is shameful to Jews. The third factor concerns the Torah and the relationship between Jews and Gentiles. This has to do with how Jews treat the Torah in their lives and how to harmonize that with Gentiles. Sim says, "The Hellenist and Pauline Law-free Gospel faced the additional difficulty of convincing the Jews that the Torah was now rendered invalid and that there was no longer any distinction between Jew and Gentile."[320] On the basis of these

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[316] Keith Hopkins, "Christian Number and Its Implications," *Journal of Early Christian Studies* 6 (1998): 195-96.
[317] Sim, "How Many Jews Became Christians," 437.
[318] Ibid.
[319] Ibid.
[320] Ibid., 438.

observations, I think Mark also had these challenges in his time and situation. I imagine Sim bringing his ideas and asking us, “What concerns does Mark have about these matters?” I think we need to see again what Mark teaches us about these issues.

In brief, the Jewish temple’s destruction was an inflection point for Mark to identify what kind of ideas and ethos his community should pursue. The temple had significant meaning to the Jews. They believed that God was present in the temple, and they observed the Jewish laws, which were dependent on the continuation of the sacrificial system in the temple. The priests were in charge of rituals, and the Jewish elites, the Sadducees, were also connected to the temple, as were part of the Sanhedrin. However, the Jewish War and the temple’s destruction greatly changed Jewish society. The Jewish priests ceased to perform sacrifices. Since many laws were dependent on the sacrificial system, the absence of a temple meant that Jews could not observe the laws. The war decimated the Jewish people and caused the collapse of Jewish groups such as the Sadducees, the Essenes, and the Sicari, a radical Jewish group that led a battle in Masada in 73 CE.[321] Jews in Judea had difficult lives in Jerusalem.

What about the Christian church in Jerusalem? Some have thought that Christian groups were safe, unlike the Jews. Sim says this is not true:

> The Jerusalem church came to an inglorious end in the year 70. If the Pella tradition is not historically reliable, then we have to assume that these Christians remained in Jerusalem throughout the war and shared the same horrific fate as its other residents when the city eventually fell to the Romans.[322]

Newly begun Christianity was at stake. As Sim argues, these traumatic events decimated the number of Christians. However, crisis can also become opportunity. The Jewish War

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[321] Derek Cooper, *Twenty Questions That Shaped World Christian History* (Augsburg Fortress, 2015), 12-13.

[322] Sim, “How Many Jews Became Christians,” 426.

and the temple's destruction became watershed events in the church and in the history of Christianity. S. G. F. Brandon argues, "Not only did Christianity in its primitive form cease to exist, but Christianity as a whole was subsequently virtually reborn."[323]

Mark's composition sheds new light on the identity of Christianity in a difficult time. The Jewish temple's destruction as a result of the Jewish War was a traumatic experience, but Mark's literary movement turned the tragic into a new paradigm and a moral vision for Jesus. Karen Armstrong notes, "These traumatic events resulted in the formation of religious communities no longer so dependent on a physical building but on words written down on scrolls and later collected together in books."[324] Whereas the Pharisees were responsible for creating a new tradition among the Jews, Mark launched this project by writing the Gospel of Jesus after the temple's destruction. The temple's destruction radically reshaped Christianity.

W. C. H. Frend says, "After circa AD 100 there was . . . more of a tendency to contrast Christianity and Judaism as separate religions."[325] By then, the relationship between the two groups was fine, even if they had been a scramble in the first century. However, there were tensions and conflicts inside the church in Jerusalem between Greek-speaking Hellenists and Aramaic speakers (Acts 6:1–7). The fall of the Jewish temple also caused the destruction of the Jerusalem church. It shared the same fate as Jews n Jerusalem. Church membership rapidly decreased and the Christian mission in Jerusalem experienced difficulties. However, in spite of this situation, there was a growing movement of Gentile Christian groups. Whereas Jewish membership decreased,

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[323] J. Julius Scott Jr., "The Effects of the Fall of Jerusalem on Christianity," *Eastern Great Lakes Biblical Society* 3 (1983): 3.

[324] Karen Armstrong, *The Bible: The Biography* (London: Atlantic Books, 2015), 54.

[325] W. C. H. Frend, *The Rise of Christianity* (Minneapolis, MN: Augsburg Fortress, 1986), 124.

Gentile membership expanded.[326] This signifies that the church, which was open to those of all ethnic backgrounds, was taking another step to transform itself after the tragedy of the temple's destruction. Paul's letters could have been a help to the Gentile church movement by teaching the church to open itself to all ethnic groups. Paul's ideas and thoughts in his letters were intended to bring pagans into the kingdom.[327] The role of Israel, which had been to be a bridge to connect God and people in order to give them salvation, was transmitted to the church, which functioned as an intermediary between God and Gentile and Gentile-Jewish Christian communities. This was a new idea and paradigm—that, through Jesus, Gentiles are also full partners with Jews in the plan of salvation. On the one hand, Paul played a crucial role for the Gentile mission through his literary works. On the other hand, Mark is called a literary creator for his composition of Jesus's narrative, and his story likewise influenced the Gentile mission. While Paul's letters taught the early church and the Christian community, Mark's Gospel created an impression and excitement through the story of Jesus and his compassion.

Mark's interpretation of the Jewish War and the temple's destruction is told through Jesus's teachings and actions in the Gospel.[328] In Mark's view, the temple was a den of thieves (Mark 11:17). Mark takes a position against the temple throughout his Gospel. Jesus appears as a debater with the temple leaders. His teachings are superior to those of the Jewish leaders (Mark 1:22). Jesus intentionally violates Jewish laws established in the temple. Finally, he is killed at the hands of Jewish leaders. Mark

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[326] Sim, "How many Jew become Christians," 437.

[327] Peter Brown, *The Body and Society: Men, Women, and Sexual Renunciation in Early Christianity* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1988), 45.

[328] Joel Marcus, "The Jewish War and the Sitz im Leben of Mark," *JBL* 111/3 (1992): 446. Marcus argues, "Mark 13 reflects features of the Jewish War that have had a profound effect on Mark's community."

understands that the Jewish temple's destruction is due to Jesus's death at the hands of the Jewish religious leaders. This causes God's judgment upon the Jews.

The Jewish revolt and the temple's destruction were traumatic events. Thus, the Gospel of Mark was composed in the middle of a whirlwind of great change. It was written to serve the needs of a specific community, and it became a new milestone for them by describing Jesus as a suffering hero. The story of Jesus has become greater than his actual experiences thanks to Mark's great work.

CONCLUSION

A month ago, a professor asked me for a copy of my dissertation. I told him about Mark's literary creation of the young man by imitating Homer's Elpenor. After he listened to me, he said that he had been curious as to why the young man is in Mark. He also found it suspicious that Mark says every disciple deserts Jesus and flees, so why does another follower appear and flee naked? Because this professor had not found a good answer, he had ignored the young man. And, he said, there is no change if the young man's story is overlooked. I responded to him with my understanding of the young man as best as I could. He seemed to be surprised by the new approach to the Gospel of Mark that I have used. The meaning of the story of the young man has been fixed between him being a historically reliable or a symbolic figure. However, mimesis criticism sheds new light on the mystery of the young man in Mark.

In this work, I have investigated Mark's genetic imitation of Homer's Elpenor as a targeted literary model. Not only does Mark imitate this model, he creates a new version of Elpenor. As I discussed earlier, some scholars regard the young man as an eyewitness or at least a historical figure. They read the Gospel on the basis of their belief in the historical factuality of Mark. The young man provides the needed eyewitness to report what happened to Jesus in Gethsemane. There is no need to read myths or any other literature to learn about the young man because the mysterious young man is nothing but a historical figure. However, this argument is naive and an unsophisticated idea. Mark did not write the Gospel on the basis of historical fact. This is not to deny the historicity of Jesus, but Mark's concern should not be fixed there. The story of Mark's Jesus in the Gospel is Mark's own creation in response to the temple's destruction.

Mark's basic framework, which focuses on meaning rather than historical reliability, originated with mimesis of the Homeric epics. Mark's mimesis was a sort of weapon to vie with other great literature in the ancient Greek world. The goal of mimesis is to write better, and a good model is necessary to do that. I argue that the model is Homer. However, mimesis does not mean slavishly making a reproduction of Homer; rather, it involves interacting with the model to produce a creative work.[329] Mark's creativity was designed to convey this theme: "Jesus is superior to heroes of Greek mythology, and Jesus's God is superior to the Olympians."[330]

The mysterious young man is Mark's variation of Homer's Elpenor. The young man and Elpenor resemble each other. They are both young men. Although they were following their leaders, the two young men just appear in a couple scenes and play an insignificant role, like that of a minor character. In particular, neither one has a heroic death. They are both anti-heroes. However, Mark's imitation develops Homer's work in that the weeping at Elpenor's burial contrasts with the joy of Mark's empty tomb.

Homer's Elpenor inspired many ancient imitations, including Plato's Myth of Er, Plutarchus's Thespesius, Virgil's Palinurus and Misenus, Apuleius's Acimus, Eutychus in the Acts of the Apostles, Patroclus in the *Acts of Paul*, and Karinus and Leucius in the *Passion and Resurrection of Jesus*. This shows that Homer's Elpenor was popular as a literary model (criterion 2—analogy). Each author wrote the author's own version of the Elpenor story, creating new characters to present various attitudes toward the afterlife.[331] Mark stood on the mimetic tradition when the author imitated Elpenor. Mark's

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[329] Elaine Fantham, "Imitation and Evolution: The Discussion of Rhetorical Imitation in Cicero *De oratore* 2. 87-97 and Some Related Problems of Ciceronian Theory," *Classical Philology* 73 (1978): 1-16.

[330] MacDonald, *Does the New Testament Imitate Homer?* 13.

[331] MacDonald, *The Homeric Epics*, 166.

dependence on Homer is revealed by significant literary parallels (criterion 3—density), and a similar sequence and order (criterion 4—order).[332]

Reading the Bible should involve noticing when an author has borrowed from another text, and readers should consider the specific meanings conveyed through the literary relationships. Homer was definitely accessible to Mark and his readers (criterion 1—accessibility or availability). The certain young man's abrupt appearance before Jesus's trial is similar to the appearance of Elpenor before Odysseus goes to Hades. In addition, the young man's enigmatic conduct of leaving his garment behind corresponds to the death of Elpenor. The loss of a garment and the naked fleeing are unique to Mark and are considered evidence of his serious dependence on the model of Elpenor (criterion 5—distinctive trait). Mark, however, did not just copy the Homeric model. The burial of Elpenor's corpse is radically transformed into a resurrected body through the appearance of the young man in Jesus's empty tomb. Mark emulates Homer and replaces death with resurrection.

The young man reappears at Jesus's empty tomb with a different shape and look, just like Jesus looked in his transfiguration. At one time the young man had died, but now he is revived and has become a messenger of Jesus's resurrection. What good news he delivers to the women who visit Jesus's tomb; he also tells them where Jesus is going to meet the disciples. Unfortunately, they do not convey this important message to Jesus's disciples because they are afraid. For this reason, none of Jesus's disciples or followers knew to leave Jerusalem. Instead, they stayed and experienced the tragic ending of the temple's destruction. The Jerusalem church was unable to avoid this traumatic incident. If someone asked who was responsible for this result, the answer, according to Mark, would

[332] See pages 94 of this dissertation.

be the women, not Jesus. As MacDonald argues, “The women’s failure to transmit the message doomed Jesus’ followers to the carnage of the war.”[333] The Gospel’s abrupt ending, with the women not telling about Jesus’s resurrection and his whereabouts, was Mark’s intentional literary strategy designed not to blame Jesus for the suffering of the Jerusalem church during the Jewish War. The young man who is an imitation of Homer’s Elpenor is Mark’s literary creation to substitute for Jesus and to exculpate him from responsibility for not warning his followers to leave Judea before the temple’s destruction. Finally, one can understand the identity and meaning of the young man in the Gospel of Mark (criterion 6— interpretability). Mark is a creative literary author.

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[333] MacDonald, *The Gospels and Homer*, 251.

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