Is Jesus Athene or Odysseus?

Investigating the unrecognisability and metamorphosis of Jesus in his post-resurrection appearances

Max Whitaker

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Abstract

This thesis is an investigation of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, via a comparison with other ancient stories where characters appear in an unrecognised form to their followers. In both canonical and apocryphal stories, which relate Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form to other characters, including people who knew him well just before his death. The motif of a character appearing in an unrecognisable form to people he or she knows well is not unique to stories about Jesus; it is one which exists in folk literature, as well as Greco-Roman and Jewish literature from a range of genres. In many cases the unrecognisability is caused by metamorphosis.

I will investigate a range of different stories in which characters appear in an unrecognisable, or metamorphic, form in order to define patterns and themes. Through the analysis of these stories - the role the unrecognisable character plays in the story, the function of the type of stories in which characters who take those roles and the way in which knowledge is gained or transferred between characters - different categories are identified, and tabulated for comparison.

Two distinct story types are identified: those in which a god appears in disguise to mortals, and those in which a human hero appears in disguise to his or her family or followers, often after having been thought to be dead. Another set of stories where a character appears in a metamorphic form, and yet is still recognised, will also be examined. By comparing the stories about the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus to these story types, it will be seen that they also fit into these categories. In the canonical Gospels, Jesus is often presented as a returning disguised hero in his post-resurrection appearance. In the apocryphal Gospels and Acts, however, Jesus is presented as either a disguised god helping the hero of the story, or else as a metamorphic or polymorphic being. Jesus is presented in a number of different ways, but each representation corresponds to characters in stories following the literary conventions which existed when accounts of Jesus were being composed, and I will argue that the authors would have been influenced by these conventions, not via
directly quoting or copying ancient texts, but rather by being influenced by literary themes which were prevalent in the cultural environment.
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Chapter One: Once Upon a Time

1.1: Introduction and Outline

1.1.1 Introduction to the question

In the canonical Gospel accounts of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, Jesus often appears for the first time in an unrecognised form. This is clearest in the Gospels of Luke and John, but is also hinted at in Matthew, and the long ending of Mark. One explanation for the unrecognisability is that Jesus has undergone a metamorphosis into another form. The theme of Jesus not being recognised continues to be developed in the apocryphal Gospels and Acts, where it is made more explicit, with Jesus appearing as other people, both known characters, such as one of the Apostles, or as a stranger.

The theme of characters appearing in unrecognised forms to their friends or followers is not a new one, and was utilised many times in Greco-Roman writing, both before and after the stories about Jesus were recorded, for a variety of thematic purposes.

This thesis will examine two types of stories in classical literature where characters appear in unrecognised forms. In the first type of story, the hero of the story appears in disguise to his friends and followers, often after a long absence or after the hero was thought to be dead. In the second type of story, gods, or other supernatural beings, appear in disguise to help the hero of the story, for example as a messenger, or by providing direct assistance. The thesis will also examine a related class of metamorphosis stories where the character physically changes form into another shape, possibly for the purpose of disguise, and will investigate the concept of metamorphosis as a whole in the ancient world, including the metamorphosis of inanimate objects.

1 What is almost certainly the oldest original text of Mark ends at 16:8 and so does not contain any post-resurrection appearances. This issue will be discussed in Chapter 6.
2 This possible explanation will be examined in Chapters 6 and 7.
The thesis will then investigate how these literary themes and devices appear in stories about Jesus’ appearances to his disciples after his death and resurrection. The approach will be an analysis of the narrative; any questions about the historicity of the canonical or apocryphal works are outside the scope of this study.

There are three interlinking approaches with which I will investigate the unrecognisability stories, which will be outlined in this chapter. The first is an analysis of the role the unrecognisable character plays in the story. The second is an analysis of the type of stories in which characters who take those roles appear in disguise. The third is an analysis of the manner in which knowledge is gained or transferred between characters in each of these types of stories. The purpose of these methods is to identify criteria which differentiate between the different types of stories which are being investigated.

By looking at a number of examples, criteria for distinguishing what I have called disguised hero stories, and disguised god stories will be created. Each of these sets of criteria will have two aspects. The first aspect is the structure of the story and the sequence of events common to a particular type of story. The second aspect is the purpose of the story in the wider narrative. From these sets of criteria some heuristics will be created to categorise stories into different groups. The final aim is to show that stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances where he is unrecognised can be grouped into two types of stories.

The title of the thesis refers to a pair of archetypical examples of these types of stories, and the two sorts of characters with which the thesis will deal. Throughout this study the characters of Athene and Odysseus will be used as examples of the disguised hero and the disguised god, although many other examples will also be examined. By analysing Greco-Roman literature it will be demonstrated that quite distinct disguised character story types can be identified.

The stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances will be compared to each of these story types. The central question of the thesis could therefore be phrased thus: In the various accounts of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances in the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts, does Jesus most resemble Athene or Odysseus?
I will argue that, when Jesus is the main character, or the hero, of the story, the story is written as a disguised hero story. In other stories, where the main character of a story is no longer Jesus, but is instead one of the Apostles, Jesus is no longer the hero, but is rather presented as a disguised god. The answer that emerges to the question of whether Jesus is presented as a disguised god or a disguised hero is that it depends on the role Jesus is playing, the relationship he has with his disciples, and what purpose the story plays in the wider narrative.

In the canonical Gospel accounts Jesus appears as either a disguised hero or a disguised god, depending on the purpose of the particular passage. However, in the apocryphal Gospels and Acts the theme of the disguised hero vanishes and the theme of the disguised god is much more common. As well as this, in the apocryphal works sometimes the metamorphosis is used for a purpose other than disguise, and in these cases metamorphosis is used to communicate something about Jesus’ nature, rather than about his relationship with his disciples, or to develop the plot in a particular manner.

In terms of the thesis title: Jesus is presented in a narrative context as Odysseus or Athene depending on the purpose of the narrative. I will argue that the reason for this, although it may also be indicative of the author’s theological views, is that the character role of Jesus, and so the way he is presented, fits in with narrative conventions. This does not necessarily imply that the author considered Jesus to resemble one of the characters more than the other, although it does not rule this out.

This study provides a set of criteria for classifying Jesus’ post-resurrection appearance stories into different groups by paying special attention to the way these stories are structured. In this thesis the argument will be constrained to how the narrative structures influence the way that the figure of Jesus is presented in his post-resurrection appearances. This means that the study will be limited in two major ways.

First, there are other instances of disguise and recognition in the Jesus narratives which occur before his resurrection, most notably the transfiguration. I will address
these accounts briefly, but as this would be a complex study in itself I will be limited in the depth I can look into these accounts and how they relate to the post-resurrection disguise-recognition accounts. Second, I will not be presenting an in-depth analysis of the Christological beliefs of each of the writers. This would also be too great a task to cover with any thoroughness. An outline of the thesis is provided in Section 1.5.

1.1.2 Some examples from literature

Disguise, metamorphosis, unrecognisability, and discovery are ubiquitous literary themes throughout history, and across cultures. Whilst undertaking this study, I have found that it is hard to read a book, watch a TV show or film, or even play a video game without these themes being present. Before looking at some classical examples, therefore, some modern instances will be presented which display a range of different types of metamorphosis and unrecognisability, and different reasons for a character being unrecognisable.

In *The Sixth Sense* a troubled young boy who can see ghosts is befriended by a counsellor. Only after the counsellor has helped the boy come to grips with his life does the counsellor recognise his own true nature and realise that he is a ghost himself. In *The Empire Strikes Back*, a Jedi Knight is fighting against an evil warrior. After cutting off the Jedi Knight’s arm the warrior reveals that he is in fact his father who had supposedly died many years ago. The Jedi Knight is devastated and must rethink his whole identity, and his relationship to the warrior Darth Vader. In another instance the Jedi Knight is seeking out Yoda, a legendary teacher, but instead finds himself with an annoying imp-like creature. The imp-like creature tests the Jedi Knight, who fails these tests of character, before the imp reveals that he himself is Yoda. In *The Little Mermaid*, both the heroine (a mermaid) and the villain (an anthropomorphomorphic octopus) undergo a form of metamorphosis and take on the form of humans, and thus forms unrecognisable to the handsome Prince. While changing the mermaid into a human, the villain takes her voice, which is in fact the only sign by which the Prince will recognise the heroine. The villain uses this sign of recognition

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3 Chapter 2 will show how these themes are used in folklore, Chapters 3-5 will show how these themes are prevalent in Greco-Roman literature.
to fool the Prince into marrying her. In the film, *The Ten Commandments*, Moses realises his own identity, as a Hebrew, when he is shown a piece of cloth which was used to wrap him as a baby.\(^4\) In *Big* a child is metamorphosed into an adult, and is unrecognisable to his closest friend, until he sings a secret song which only he could know.

The number of examples could be multiplied endlessly, but this is enough to show that the themes of metamorphosis and recognisability are ones which continue to be popular in modern works of fiction.

However, the existence of these themes in modern literature, although demonstrating the universality of such themes, would be irrelevant if these themes were not present in literature which existed before the stories about Jesus were composed. The following examples illustrate that the same themes were present in ancient literature:

1. Two warriors face off against one another outside the walls of a besieged city. One seeks to flee, but a goddess appears to him in the form of his brother and convinces him to stand his ground. Only when death has come does he realise his brother was never there, and it was a goddess disguised with his brother’s form and voice.\(^5\)

2. A goddess appears to help a young man whose father’s house is in danger. She appears at the gate as a stranger, unrecognisable as a goddess, and he invites her in, offering her hospitality.\(^6\) Later she returns in another form\(^7\) to help plan his quest, then takes the form of the young man himself\(^8\) to recruit companions. Finally, she journeys with the young man on his ship in disguise before finally vanishing and revealing her true identity.\(^9\)

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\(^4\) This is a creation of the film makers, which expands on the Biblical story. As will be seen in Chapter 5, the use of items left with a baby, and then found when the child is grown up, are common signs of recognition in Greek literature.


\(^6\) Homer, *Od.* 1.105-124.

\(^7\) Homer, *Od.* 2.267-268.

\(^8\) Homer, *Od.* 3.383-384.

3. A leader returns to his homeland after years away to find it is threatened by many enemies in his own home. He returns in disguise, metamorphosed into a different shape by a goddess. Despite his disguise his servant recognises him because of his distinctive scar.

4. After a woman is raped by a god, she abandons her child, leaving with him a distinctive piece of clothing. Years later, the child has grown up and is unrecognisable to her. They become enemies, but tragedy is averted when they recognise one another through the items left with the son as a child, and their relationship is healed.

5. A father sends his son on a quest to collect some money from a relative in a distant land. The angel Raphael arrives to guide him disguised as one of his kindred. Only when the journey is complete, and having given much help, does the travelling companion reveal his true identity as an angel of God.

6. An elderly and impoverished couple is visited by two gods disguised as poor men. Unlike their richer neighbours, the elderly couple treat them to an elaborate show of hospitality and in doing so end up saving their own lives.

As with the modern instances, these examples display a range of different types of unrecognisability, and different reasons for a character being unrecognisable.

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15 Tob 5:4-6.
16 Tob 11:11-22 (especially 11:15).
1.1.3 Some examples containing Jesus

In the following examples, I have deliberately stressed the similarity of these stories about Jesus to other unrecognisability stories so that the goals of this study can be seen from the start. In Chapters 6 and 7 it will be explained in detail why the stories have been interpreted in this manner:

1. While walking along, dejected after the death of their leader, a man they thought was going to save their people, two people are approached by a stranger on the road. Oddly, although this is the very man they have been talking about, and a man they know well, he is unrecognisable to them. He walks with them, talks with them, even about himself, but still they do not recognise him. He does however provide some clues about his identity, so that they are primed to recognise him when he provides a sign for them later in the day. The “stranger” tests his followers, acting as though he will continue journeying on alone in the dark, and they respond well, offering the humble and perhaps homeless stranger hospitality. It is at this point that the “stranger” makes a distinctive gesture, and the two people suddenly realise who he is. Only now do they realise that the “stranger” was the very leader they had been mourning, and that he has seemingly come back from the dead. Now they must reassess their whole lives in light of this revelation. The people they thought were doomed have hope, the battle they thought was lost is now won, and the relationship with the leader they thought was gone for ever is rekindled. As their lives’ direction is reversed, so also is their physical direction, and they immediately head back the way they have come with their lives changed forever.\(^\text{18}\)

2. Several of the same leader’s followers have shut themselves up in a room, out of fear of their enemies. The leader appears to them, but in an initially unrecognisable form.\(^\text{19}\) The followers do not immediately recognise him. However, after he has shown them some distinctive wounds, they realise who he is. One of the followers was not there at this time and is understandably sceptical. Upon hearing his


\(^{19}\) This is not immediately obvious from reading John 20, but the reasons for this interpretation will be presented in Chapter 7.
companions talk about how the leader has returned from the dead, and has proved his identity to them by showing the sign of his wounds, he also insists that he must see the wounds before he will believe this story.20

3. A follower of a new religious movement has been captured in a hostile and foreign city. A divine being appears to a missionary, and commands him to travel across the sea to find and save his devotee. The same divine being appears in an unrecognisable form, disguised as the captain of a ship, and guides the missionary across the sea before magically transporting him to the city. The divine being then appears to the missionary as a small child, and the missionary falls upon the ground and worships him. The divine being continues to aid the missionary on his quest to save his fellow devotee.21

The character appearing in an unrecognisable form in all of these stories is Jesus, and all of these stories take place after his death. The purpose of this study is to investigate the similarities between stories such as these, and other post-resurrection stories where Jesus appears in a changed or unrecognisable form, the ways in which they differ from one another, and the ways in which they are similar to unrecognisability stories from other traditions.

1.2: Review of previous studies

This study engages with a wide range of primary sources, from Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Christian texts.22 As such, a range of biblical, and other, commentaries are used, which will not be listed here.

The narratives studied span different times and cultures, yet have many similarities both thematically and structurally. The works of folklorists address the phenomena of

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20 John 20:19-29.
21 Acts Andr. Mth. 4-17.
22 Including Homer, Tragedy, Greek and Roman comedy, Old Testament passages, other Jewish writings, the canonical Gospels, and the Apocryphal Gospels and Acts. The works containing Jesus are examined in Chapters 6 and 7, and those containing other characters in Chapters 4 and 5.
changed or unrecognisable forms from a particular perspective. Stith Thomson created a ground-breaking and still invaluable Motif Index of Folk-Literature, which will be used to provide a background for the themes studied in this thesis. The works of folklorists Propp and Aarne will also serve as a starting point for understanding the narrative structures of stories which exist in multiple cultures. Aarne’s The Types of the Folk-Tale provides a classification system for tale types, and Propp’s Morphology of the Folktale attempts to identify the underlying narrative structure of folktales by separating the stories into their component parts. These works will be used mostly in Chapter 2.

The themes of metamorphosis and disguise will be central to this study. Richard Buxton provides a comprehensive analysis of a range of Greek metamorphosis stories, addressing the issue of how seriously the Greeks took metamorphosis stories, and what their purpose was, in The Forms of Astonishment. He shows that metamorphosis was used for a diverse number of reasons, such as for love, escape, or deception. He argues that all gods could undergo metamorphosis, and also points out similarities between Greco-Roman culture, and other traditions, including modern films and literature, while the specific area of gods appearing in other forms has been addressed by H. J Rose in Divine Disguisings.

The literary purpose of metamorphosis stories in Greek mythology is investigated in P.M.C. Forbes Irving’s Metamorphosis in Greek Myth. He summarises a number of stories, and shows that metamorphosis stories appear in a range of literary genres. He also shows that a vast range of different sorts of metamorphosis take place in Greek literature. His focus is on the way metamorphosis is used in stories, rather than an

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29 He states that his “approach is rather to suppose that the myths are primarily stories, and that the imaginative and emotional response they evoke is not something to be distinguished from their narrative function but a central part of it”, ibid., 6.
attempt at explaining metamorphosis as derived from a “myth and ritual” theory.\(^\text{30}\) He concludes his book with a catalogue of metamorphosis stories.

This thesis investigates the unrecognisability of Jesus in his post-resurrection appearances in the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts. It also describes the way unrecognisable Jesus stories differ within and between these different works. As such, a range of previous studies which investigate unrecognisability and metamorphosis in both canonical and apocryphal works will be useful.

These works attempt to make sense of why Jesus is presented as unrecognisable, or in a different form, and these will be examined now. The literature vital for this specific question can be broken down into two approaches. The first approach investigates the Jesus stories as metamorphosis stories, seeing the metamorphosis as the attribute of primary interest. The main focus is on the apocryphal Gospels and Acts, but this involves showing how these themes also existed in and developed from the canonical Gospels. The second approach investigates the Jesus stories as disguise/recognition stories, and sees the recognition of Jesus’ identity as the attribute of primary interest. Both of these methods have their strengths and their limitations and these will be outlined briefly below, and discussed in more detail in later chapters.

1.2.1 Jesus as a metamorphic being

Papers written about Jesus as a metamorphic or polymorphic being compare the way Jesus is described in both his pre- and post-resurrection appearances to the descriptions of other metamorphic characters from surrounding cultures.

Pieter J. Lalleman investigates the polymorphous appearances of Christ in the Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, and argues that the instances of metamorphosis of Jesus in the New Testament, coupled with a worldview which underemphasised the value of mortal life, could lead to the development of stories about the polymorph of

\(^{30}\) These explanations are examined and rejected. See ibid., 38–57.
Christ, without it being necessary to assume that there was an influence of gnostic or docetic viewpoints.31

Paul Foster also investigates metamorphic and polymorphic appearances of Jesus. He concludes that polymorphy is compatible with both “orthodox” and docetic Christologies, where polymorphy may be used as a tool to demonstrate the transformation of the world, as well as the rejection of the world.32

Both of these authors are concerned primarily with the Christological or Theological ideas which may have influenced metamorphosis and polymorphy stories. These approaches highlight and help to clarify how metamorphic beings were portrayed in ancient literature, and assess which Christological views are compatible with a metamorphic or polymorphic Jesus. However, they do not differentiate between the character types undergoing metamorphosis, that is, whether it is a god or a hero. They do not therefore attempt to explain why a metamorphic being is being used from a narrative viewpoint, which is examined in this thesis.

1.2.2 Jesus stories as recognition scenes

The recognition scene, and its importance in plot development, has been analysed at least since Aristotle’s Poetics. The terms he used to describe recognition and its impact on plots are still used today.33 A number of scholars have concentrated on the theme of recognition: Perrin analyses recognition scenes in a range of Greek literature;34 Sheila Murnaghan explores the motifs of disguise and recognition in the Odyssey, drawing attention to the themes of social recognition and hospitality;35 Peter Gainsford presents a formal analysis of recognition scenes specifically in the Odyssey.

33 Chapter 4 will introduce and discuss these terms.
which he breaks into “motifs” and “moves”. Some of this analysis is applicable only to the *Odyssey*, but other aspects are applicable to a wider range of recognition scenes. Terence Cave has explored how recognition scenes have been used in a much broader range of literature, and across different genres, from antiquity up to the twentieth century, showing these scenes are very common in literature.

Several scholars have analysed biblical passages through the recognition-scene lens. Liv Inglebord Lied investigates how the recognition motif is used in 2 Bar. 50:1-51:6. This thesis is limited to investigating the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus as recognition scenes. However, several scholars have seen the Gospel as a whole as a recognition plot, as people Jesus encounters are challenged to recognise his true identity. Thus, in these previous studies, it is either the social status of Jesus which is in need of recognition, rather than his identity (as the man Jesus), or it is the Logos which is in need of recognition, rather than the man from Nazareth.

Friedrich Gustav Lang sees a moment of both anagnorisis and peripeteia in Mark 8:27ff. This is the moment when the disciples recognise Jesus’ social status, which changes the way they relate to him, and (as vs. 31 indicates) the future direction of the plot. Craig T. McMahan compares the recognition scene in Luke 24 to the recognition of Odysseus. He sees three recognition scenes in Luke 24 (Luke 24:1-12;
13-35; 36-53), and concludes that they follow the pattern of a Homeric recognition scene.\textsuperscript{43}

Kasper Bro Larsen investigates how recognition scenes are used in the Gospel of John, showing similarities with Homer and other Greek literature.\textsuperscript{44} Hitchcock identifies four recognition scenes in the Gospel of John, two before Jesus’ resurrection, and two after his resurrection, but only sees the passages after the resurrection as genuine recognition scenes.\textsuperscript{45} R. Alan Culpepper takes a broader approach, and sees anagnorisis as a motif which occurs throughout John’s Gospel and sees the Gospel as “a series of episodes that describe attempted, failed, and occasionally successful anagnorisis.”\textsuperscript{46} Culpepper sees the signs Jesus performs throughout the Gospel of John as signs which point towards Jesus’ identity.\textsuperscript{47} Mark W. G. Stibbe also pays attention to the theme of recognition in the Gospel of John.\textsuperscript{48} Stan Harstine pays particular attention to the recognition of Jesus by Thomas, investigating it, in part, in light of the recognition of Odysseus.\textsuperscript{49}

Hence, these approaches suggest that Jesus’ recognition can be understood in the same way as other recognition scenes in classical literature. They also explain why a disguised being is being used from a narrative viewpoint, that is, in order for a recognition to take place. They do not, however, discuss the issue of metamorphosis, or look at whether the recognition scene motif is also applicable to the post-resurrection appearances in the apocryphal works. Therefore, these approaches also do not address the question of whether Jesus is appearing in the role of a god or a hero, which is the focus of this thesis.

\textsuperscript{44} Kasper Bro Larsen, \textit{Recognizing the Stranger: Recognition Scenes in the Gospel of John}, BIS 93 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2008).
There are a number of stories in which Jesus appears in a changed or unrecognisable form after his resurrection. This thesis examines this as the key common factor between what otherwise seem to be quite different types of stories, and quite different representations of Jesus. It will show that the unrecognisability and metamorphosis themes have been used in two quite different ways. In contrast to the above approaches, this thesis will compare Jesus’ post-resurrection encounters to stories in which gods appear in disguise or a changed form, as well as to disguised hero stories. Both of these ways would have been understood by an audience familiar with Greco-Roman stories, and with folklore imagery.

1.3: Methodology and tools of analysis

This study will examine the narrative structure of unrecognisability and metamorphosis stories. The focus will be on how the structure of the story is presented, rather than on what the specific details related are. This means that the order of the elements of the story, and the way the elements relate to one another, is of as much (or more) interest as the elements themselves. Narratologist Mieke Bal defines the elements of the narrative as the events, the actors, the location, and the time. As an example, a story which involves Thomas recognising Jesus by seeing his wounds in Jerusalem in 30 CE, would be seen as similar to a story in which Rita recognises Dennis by seeing his reaction to a mark in a brick wall in Weatherfield in 2011 CE, despite the fact that none of the events, actors, location, or time are the same. It is the relationship of the elements to one another which are stable.

The methodology of this study will utilise previous tools which have been created to describe the structure of hero recognition scenes, but I will apply them to a different purpose. I will adapt the tools, creating a set of criteria to classify each narrative as a disguised hero story, a disguised god story, or neither (stories which are neither, are stories in which no disguise is present).

50 Mieke Bal, Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative (Toronto; Buffalo: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 7.
51 A plotline from the English soap opera “Coronation Street”. Dennis had been absent from the show since 1968 and returned in the form of a homeless man.
Despite the grouping of these stories into two groups according to a limited number of factors, there are several ways in which the two key types of unrecognisability stories differ from one another, and several ways in which they are similar to one another. As well as this, there are several other important features that the stories within each class share with other stories within that class. As the stories are investigated in Chapters 4 and 5, key features will be investigated in two categories: the structure of the story, and the purpose of the story. The structure describes the way the elements of the story relate to one another. The purpose describes why this story appears where it does, and how it impacts on the plot of the narrative. It is from an understanding of the structure and purpose of each story type that the three tools below will be created.  

1.3.1 Three tools of analysis

A number of post-resurrection stories in which Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form will be investigated in this study (Chapters 6 and 7). Through investigating unrecognisability stories from Greco-Roman literature (Chapters 4 and 5) a number of factors will be identified which can be used to differentiate and group stories. The stories of primary interest include a character who is unrecognisable in some manner, and is at some point recognised. Several similar stories, which have a character in a changed form, who is nevertheless instantly recognised will also be identified. Although the stories of primary interest can all be grouped as disguise-recognition stories, there are a number of ways in which they can be further differentiated.

A number of differences and similarities between the stories will be identified, but three overarching tools will be utilised for grouping the stories into broad categories:

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52 This methodology shares some similarities to Formgeschichte or form-criticism (Taken from the title of Martin Dibelius’ classic work Die Formgeschichte des Evangeliums [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1919]), in as much as it is interested in the stories in their most basic form. The stories have a certain form which can exist in multiple different locations, times, and with different characters (or portrayals of characters). See, Laurence J. McGinley, “Form Criticism of the Synoptic Healing Narratives 1: The Principles of Form Criticism,” TS 2 (1941): 456-7. I am not, however, making any claim that the Gospel stories examined in this study can be traced back to some original oral form. I am, rather, examining the stories as complete units in their finished form (or forms).

53 And will be summarised in Chapter 6.
1. Whether the unrecognisable character is a hero or a divine helper.
2. Whether the recognition comes about through discovery or revealing.
3. Whether new significant knowledge is gained as a result of the recognition.

The first tool groups stories depending upon whether the unrecognisable character is the hero of the story, or a character the hero interacts with - most often someone who aids the hero on their quest. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus himself appears in disguise, but in *Tobit*, rather than the hero of the story, it is Raphael the helper who appears in disguise. The second tool groups stories depending upon the manner in which the unrecognised character is recognised. In some of the stories the unrecognised character simply declares who they are, or removes their own disguise, whereas in other stories the identity is discovered due to some significant action or event. The third tool groups stories depending on the way new knowledge is gained by characters in the story. In some instances the character learns something new by being given a verbal message, while in other cases the character learns new knowledge from the recognition event itself.

The first tool, the role the disguised character is playing, draws upon work done in the analysis of folktales. In particular the two roles of the Hero and the Helper, and how they interact, will be examined. The second tool, the way in which a character’s identity is revealed, will draw upon the work done on the analysis of Greek disguise-recognition stories, and will examine and contrast hero recognition stories and disguised god stories. These stories, although they have some overlap, can generally be differentiated. The third tool will look at how knowledge is transferred in the story, and how the plot is driven forward by this knowledge transfer. The starting point for this investigation will be Aristotle’s discussion of *anagnorisis* in his Poetics.

Already there is a hint of how these three tools fit together. The role that a character is playing will influence the sort of recognition scene which is used, and the sort of

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54 For example see Homer, *Od*. 13.429-438. There are of course examples of characters who aid Odysseus and others who appear in disguise as well. These instances will discussed in depth in Chapters 4 and 5.
55 Tob 5:4-6; 11:15.
56 The details of which will be discussed in Chapters 4 and 5.
recognition scene will influence the way in which knowledge is transferred and the way the plot is driven forward. For this reason, although a description of a story type will include elements highlighted by each of these tools, the answers to the questions the three tools pose will not be independent of one another.

If the answers to the questions posed by these three tools are related in the manner described, then the same reasoning could go in the opposite direction. That is, if the knowledge which is to be gained by the characters is of a certain type, then the recognition must be of a certain type, in which case the character who is described must take on a certain role.

This implies that the type of character used in a narrative could be influenced by the way in which the plot is to be advanced. If the plot is to be advanced by means of the recognition itself, and this results in a reordering of the worldview, then a hero-recognition story will be used, and in this case the disguised character will be cast in the role of the hero. If, on the other hand, the plot is advanced by an instruction being given to the hero, and there is no great reordering of the worldview, then a disguised-god story will be used, and in this case the disguised character will be cast in the role of the divine helper.

1.3.2 Two story types

Presented above, are the central tools used in this thesis to differentiate between types of stories which contain a subsequently recognised but initially unrecognisable character. Because these three tools will be treated as binary in nature, assuming that they are independent, there would be 2^3 (i.e. 8) possible story groupings:

The following codes will be used:

Tool 1: unrecognisable character is [0 = hero; 1 = divine helper]

57 Strictly speaking these tools are not binary in nature and theoretically there could be some grey area where, for instance, it is debatable whether a disguise was seen through by an observer or deliberately cast aside by the observed. In practice however, these tools turn out to be useful dividing lines between stories.
Tool 2: recognition comes about through [0 = discovery; 1 = revealing] 
Tool 3: new significant knowledge is gained via [0 = recognition; 1 = other means] 

This yields 8 possible story types:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code:</th>
<th>Description:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-0-0</td>
<td>Hero, discovered, knowledge via recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-0-1</td>
<td>Hero, discovered, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1-0</td>
<td>Hero, revealed, knowledge via recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0-1-1</td>
<td>Hero, revealed, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-0-0</td>
<td>Helper, discovered, knowledge via recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-0-1</td>
<td>Helper, discovered, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1-0</td>
<td>Helper, revealed, knowledge via recognition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-1-1</td>
<td>Helper, revealed, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These codes will allow stories to be classified and tabulated. If the three questions presented in the above table were in fact independent of one another, then one would expect an even distribution of stories in this table. However, as it turns out, stories which contain a disguised but later identified character tend to fall into either the 0-0-0 cell or the 1-1-1 cell.

**The Disguised Hero Story:**

The 0-0-0 cell (hero, discovered, knowledge via recognition) represents a typical hero recognition story.

In a hero recognition story a (usually human) hero is unrecognisable for some reason, appears to a person or people, and is subsequently recognised. The hero’s identity is usually discovered (by other characters and/or by the hero himself or herself) via a token or sign. The recognition tends to result in a moment of *peripeteia*\(^{58}\) and a reappraisal of the recognising character’s world and their place in it.

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\(^{58}\) This is moment of reversal of fortunes. See Section 1.4.3 below for a discussion on this concept.
The Disguised God Story:

The 1-1-1 cell (helper, revealed, knowledge via other means) represents a typical revealed god story.

In a disguised god story a (usually not-human) helper is unrecognisable in some manner, appears to a person or people, and is subsequently recognised.

The god’s identity is usually revealed (to other characters and never to himself or herself) without the use of a token or sign. The recognition does not tend to result in a moment of peripeteia, but is often accompanied by the god providing knowledge in the form of information, or the issuing of instructions, or both.

1.4: Concepts for analysis

In this section a number of important concepts will be introduced, some terms defined, and some limits set for the scope of this study. The following concepts will be essential to understanding and using the tools presented above. The discussion is split into four sections:

1. Metamorphosis.
2. Disguise, recognition, revealing, and discovering.
4. Character roles.

The first section introduces the overall theme of metamorphosis, which is a component of many of the stories examined in this study. The second section relates to the second tool in Section 1.3.1 (whether the recognition comes about through discovery or revealing). The third section relates to the third tool (whether new significant knowledge is gained as a result of the recognition), and the fourth section relates to the first tool (whether the unrecognisable character is a Hero or a helper).
1.4.1 Metamorphosis

“Metamorphosis” refers to an object or person changing into another form.\(^59\) However, this definition is too broad and all encompassing. While some instances should unambiguously be classified as metamorphosis, there is some ambiguous ground. Taken to an extreme, any change in the world could be seen as a form of metamorphosis as one shape or form is being replaced with another shape or form.\(^60\)

If every natural change in the world was referred to as “metamorphosis”, then the word would lose its meaning.\(^61\) Strictly speaking things like aging,\(^62\) death, and illness could be seen as forms of metamorphosis.\(^63\) “Metamorphosis” will, therefore, only be used to refer to instances of change which are unexpected or go against how we know the world works.\(^64\)

The emphasis of this study will be on people changing form in some manner, where “people” is used in a broad sense and could refer to divine or supernatural beings, as well as humans. Since stories containing the metamorphosis of people often take

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\(^{59}\) Defined as “to remodel” or “to change into another form” by Behm “μορφή” in Gerhard Kittel, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans. Geoffrey William Bromiley, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1964), 755; See also Frederick W. Danker, Walter Bauer, and William Arndt, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature*, 3rd ed (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000), 639 which lists two uses in the New Testament, first “to change in a manner visible to others” (as in the Transfiguration), and secondly “to change inwardly in fundamental character or condition” (as it is used in 2 Cor 3:18). This study is very much concentrating on the first sense of the word.

\(^{60}\) As noted by Richard Buxton, who says that metamorphosis could refer to “any kind of change, whether corporeal or non-corporeal,” adding that changes in an individual’s psychological state could also be classed as metamorphosis. Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, 20.

\(^{61}\) Buxton notes that the concept of metamorphosis could “be taken to refer, by extension, to any kind of change, whether corporeal or non-corporeal”, ibid, 20. He also notes that psychological changes could also be covered by the word, but restricts his own study to “narratives about certain sorts of drastic, corporeal transformation, narratives mostly drawn from the area usually called ‘mythological’”. This study will also deal with corporeal transformations, although this still leaves some ambiguity when it comes to the forms taken by gods and other supernatural beings, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

\(^{62}\) Aging, as seen below, is a common form of “disguise”, where the lack of recognition is due to a child growing up, or a young man reappearing as an old man, and so forth.

\(^{63}\) As could melting ice, digesting food, plants growing, and so forth.

\(^{64}\) This does still leave some grey areas since many of the transformations in Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* could be seen as “natural” in some sense, especially if they are viewed as an explanation of the way the world is now (such as explanations of how various species of birds and animals were created). This is a theme addressed at some length by Boios (See Chapter 3). Generally excluding natural processes is a useful dividing line.
place in a world where animals and inanimate objects are also metamorphosed, a study of metamorphosis in general will be necessary.

To help to remove any ambiguity due to the way terms are used in this study, a few definitions need to be set down. This will help to distinguish between different sorts of metamorphic events or characters.

I use the word “metamorphosis” as an umbrella term which covers the widest possible range of transformation stories. This includes changes which a person brings about in him or herself, such as Jupiter appearing as Diana in order to rape a nymph;\(^{65}\) changes made by one person upon another person such as Circe changing Odysseus’ men into pigs;\(^{66}\) and changes which seem to come about due to a process with no stated causal agent such as Phaethusa and her sisters transforming into trees as they grieve for their brother.\(^{67}\) The term could also embrace the transformation of one non-personal substance into another non-personal substance, such as the miracle at Cana where water is transformed into wine.\(^{68}\) In Chapter 2, the range of metamorphosis stories which exist in folklore will be discussed, which will show the vast range of transformation stories which are possible.

The following table shows the possible variety of metamorphoses:\(^ {69}\)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Metamorphosis</th>
<th>Causal Agent</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type I</td>
<td>Person → Person</td>
<td>Caused by the transformed individual themselves</td>
<td>Self-actualized trans-personal metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Type II</td>
<td>Person → Person</td>
<td>Caused by an outside force</td>
<td>Imposed trans-personal metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^{65}\) Ovid, *Metam.* 2.425.


\(^{67}\) Ovid, *Metam.* 2.346.


\(^{69}\) This table could be completed by adding in all of the transformations of non-personal substances e.g. Type V Non-Person → Person; caused by the transformed substance itself; description: self-actualized imposed intra- personal metamorphosis (i.e. abiogenesis), Type VI Non-Person → Person; caused by an outside force (e.g. For instance a fairy godmother creating footmen out of mice). Metamorphoses of all of these sorts exist in folklore (see Chapter 2).
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type III</th>
<th>Person → Non-person</th>
<th>Caused by the individual themselves</th>
<th>Self-actualized extra-personal metamorphosis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Type IV</td>
<td>Person → Non-person</td>
<td>Caused by an outside force</td>
<td>Imposed extra-personal metamorphosis</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The transformations which will be the focus of this study will be the ones which fall into either Type I or Type II. The transformations of Jesus, which are of most significance for this thesis, fall into either Type I or II, or a mixture of Types I and II.\(^70\)

One important issue when considering metamorphosis accounts is whether the “metamorphosis” in question is actually a change of the shape of the perceived object, rather than a change in the perception of the object by the perceiver with no actual change to the perceived object itself. That is: are we dealing with a real bodily change, or with an illusion, or even delusion?\(^71\)

Two examples will illustrate this difference: In the *Bacchae* of Euripides, when Agave holds up her son’s severed head she thinks it to be that of a lion,\(^72\) but as her madness recedes she realises the truth.\(^73\) No actual transformation has taken place to Pentheus’ body, rather the “metamorphosis” here is Agave’s flawed perception, brought about by divine madness. On the other hand, when Odysseus’ men are transformed into pigs in the *Odyssey*,\(^74\) the transformation is physical and not merely a delusion.

This distinction is unproblematic and clear in many instances, but more ambiguous in others. When it comes to looking at gods in disguise or in other forms this distinction will be important.\(^75\) Whereas sometimes the god’s appearance is described using

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\(^70\) This would include a transformation of a human into an angel or god, the transformation of a god or angel into a human, and transformations performed by the being, or by another divine being. A wide range of different Christological views are embraced in these categories.

\(^71\) A distinction noted by Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, 20.

\(^72\) Euripides, *Bacch*. 1202-1215.

\(^73\) Euripides, *Bacch*. 1284.


\(^75\) And angels and other divine persons, and sometimes humans transformed by the gods.
words such as “seem” or “appear”, at other times they “become” another shape, implying genuine shape-shifting rather than an illusion cast on the perceiver’s mind.\textsuperscript{76} I will use the word “metamorphosis” to refer to both situations as well as for situations where it is unclear what the cause of the changed perception is, but this distinction will be kept in mind. Since the important feature of all of these stories is the unrecognisability of the character, the exact mechanism by which the unrecognisability comes about is a secondary, though still interesting, question.

One special subset of metamorphosis is polymorphy. As the name implies, it means the transformation of something into multiple forms, but in general it is a term applied to people rather than inanimate objects. Many examples immediately fail to be polymorphic. When Lycaon is turned into a wolf, he remains in that form permanently.\textsuperscript{77} This is a case which is metamorphosis, but not polymorphy. However, as will be outlined in the discussion on the apocryphal writings, the term “polymorphy” is used in a variety of situations, and seems to be employed with two main meanings: having multiple forms one after the other, and having multiple forms at the same time. Pieter Lalleman defines polymorphy in a very specific sense as “a metamorphosis of such a kind that the person or deity can be seen differently by different people \textit{at the same time}.”\textsuperscript{78}

The last clause means that many instances of metamorphosis, where different forms are taken on one after the other would not classify as polymorphy, even though the shape-shifter might take on many different shapes. In order to avoid any ambiguity I will differentiate between these two meanings by referring to Lalleman’s grouping as “parallel-polymorphy” and instances where the person appears in different forms at different times (with any intervening amount of time) as “serial-polymorphy”.

\textsuperscript{76} For a discussion on this issue see Irving, \textit{Metamorphosis in Greek Myths}, 171.
\textsuperscript{77} Ovid, \textit{Metam.} 1.213. The mythological werewolf would also be seen as a metamorphic rather than polymorphic creature, since it is capable of only taking on one (additional) form. To classify as a polymorphic person, therefore, the person must be capable of taking on at least three distinct shapes.
Homer’s gods, particularly Athene,\textsuperscript{79} are polymorphic in the latter sense,\textsuperscript{80} and Proteus who, in order to avoid capture, transforms rapidly into many forms one after the other (lion, serpent, leopard, boar, flowing water, tree) is an extreme example of serial-polymorphy.\textsuperscript{81} Some Greek heroes are also gifted with the power of serial polymorph such as Periclymenus to whom Neptune gives the ability to take on multiple forms, which Periclymenus uses in battle.\textsuperscript{82} Shape-shifting, then, is a form of serial-polymorphy.

Instances of parallel-polymorphy, when a person appears in multiple different forms \textit{at the same time}, are much rarer. This would happen when multiple people were looking at the same person and reported different appearances, or when one person was looking at the polymorphic person and could not comprehend what they were seeing or seemed to see conflicting things simultaneously.

In Chapter 7, the examples of parallel-polymorphy which are found in the apocryphal Gospels and Acts will be discussed. Instances of parallel-polymorphy are rare, if existent, in Greco-Roman literature, and the blurred line between illusion and metamorphosis makes this a grey area. In an example already used above, Pentheus’ head appears in two forms to two different characters,\textsuperscript{83} but the cause for this lies in the minds of the perceivers, not in the head itself. Another possible instance in the \textit{Bacchae}, where Dionysus appears to Pentheus in the form of a bull and a man at the same time,\textsuperscript{84} is possibly an instance of parallel-polymorphy.

More instances of metamorphosis will be discussed in Chapters 2 and 3, and these themes will remain important when investigating the stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances.

\textsuperscript{79} In the Odyssey alone, she appears as Mentes (1.105), Mentor (2.267-268), Telemachus (2.383-384), a bird (3.371-372), a maiden (7.19-20), and many other forms.
\textsuperscript{80} Although again there is a difference between “appearing” as multiple people and “becoming” multiple people. Whereas Periclymenus and Proteus actually change physical shape in order to fight or escape, Athene perhaps merely takes on the outward form as a disguise.
\textsuperscript{81} Homer, \textit{Od}. 4.455ff.
\textsuperscript{82} Ovid. \textit{Met} 12.556-8.
\textsuperscript{83} A lion to Argave, and a man to Cadmus.
\textsuperscript{84} Euripides, \textit{Bacch}. 920.
1.4.2 Disguise, recognition, revealing, and discovering

This section relates to the second tool in Section 1.3.1, by discussing, among other things, the distinction between whether a recognition comes about through discovery or revealing.

The themes of disguise, revealing, discovery and recognition cannot be entirely separated from the theme of metamorphosis. Metamorphosis and unrecognisability stories are related and overlapping themes in folklore and Greco-Roman stories, but they are not identical, and each theme can occur without the other.

Not every metamorphosis story is a recognition story, or even an unrecognisability story. Metamorphosis can serve a number of purposes: to punish transgressors, to fight enemies, to avoid capture, to strengthen a hero to overcome a trial, to impersonate another person with no recognition taking place, and for divine beings to visit humans. One of the uses of metamorphosis, however, is to disguise a person, who will perhaps be recognised or revealed later in the story.

Similarly, not every unrecognisability story contains metamorphosis. A story containing someone who is unrecognised, and possibly subsequently revealed or recognised can come about for a number of reasons: a long absence of the unrecognised person, the unrecognised person never having been seen before and not actually changing, or the person being unrecognised due to a quite mundane non-supernatural disguise, such as a mask or cloak. One of the circumstances which is used to set up an unrecognisability story is, however, metamorphosis, or a disguise imposed by a supernatural power. These stories include gods disguised in human form, and human heroes initially unrecognised. It is these types of metamorphosis stories which are of most interest for this study.

85 Examples of each of these are provided in the following chapters.
86 This may involve the status rather than the identity being unrecognised. As an example: In Robert de Boron’s retelling of the legend of King Arthur, Arthur is not recognised as the King until his true identity is revealed in drawing a sword from a stone. In doing so he does not change in appearance at all. His “disguise”, as the bastard son of Sir Ector, is due to a long separation from those who might have known his origins as a child.
There is a range of ways in which a person may be “disguised.” This word is being used to indicate that person X does not know who person Y is. This can, as mentioned above, come about for a variety of reasons: metamorphosis, time apart, never having met, intentional camouflage, delusion, and so forth. Sometimes the disguise will be used deliberately by person X to fool person Y, but at other times person X may not know they are in disguise, or the disguise may even prevent person X from recognising person X themselves (i.e. a person may be unaware of their own identity).

The word “disguised” is being used to refer to two quite different kinds of unrecognisability. In order to investigate what exactly is meant by the word in different situations, consider the following three examples:87

1. A child, Lazum, is raised by his loving but poor mother in a small village. When he reaches adulthood he visits the Palace and sees many murals showing the True King’s face which has a distinctive birthmark. Lazum has this birthmark, and so the people of the palace (and Lazum) realise that Lazum is in fact their True King.

2. A young man, Figwit, is cursed after insulting a gremlin, and is turned into a withered old man. He returns home to his village and pretends to be his own elderly relation. However, when a villager sees him patting a vicious dog which will let only Figwit touch it, she realises that the man is in fact Figwit.

3. Queen Aumi decides to go and live among her subjects to test how they treat the poor. She throws on the cloak of a well-known beggar called Deidre and hides her face. When she casts off her cloak, her subjects see that it is not the beggar Deidre, but is in fact their Queen, Aumi.

In all of these stories the main character is in disguise, however there are two sorts of disguise involved, and so two sorts of recognition. Kasper Bro Larsen refers to these as first “Identification”, and secondly “Social recognition”. 88

87 While many such examples exist in Greco-Roman literature and folklore, these example are contrived using common classical and folklore motifs to illustrate the key points identified below.
88 Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 51–2.
Identification refers to recognising that an individual X answers to the name of Y, or is identical with the individual Y. Social recognition means recognising that the individual performs the social role of Z. It is possible for both of these sorts of recognition to take place simultaneously (or sequentially), by recognising that X is identical to Y and (perhaps therefore) performs the social role of Z. These two forms of recognition are thus not mutually exclusive, and it is common for identification to lead to social recognition. In the case of social recognition, the identification of a character is not merely one of learning his or her identity, but also involves an exploration and renegotiation of the social roles that exist between the recognised and the recogniser, and social roles that exist in the society as a whole. As Liv Ingeborg Lied points out “the term [recognition] may also imply a formal acceptance, or acknowledgement, of the status or legitimacy of a person or group, and last but not least, the term may involve identification of a person or group of persons.”

In the story of Lazum, only social recognition is taking place. It is recognised that Lazum performs the social role of the True King. In the story of Figwit, only identification is taking place. The villager realises that the withered old man is identical with Figwit. In the story of Aumi, both sorts of recognition are taking place at the same time. When the subjects recognise that it is not Deidre, but Aumi in disguise, they simultaneously recognise that the person in front of them performs the social role of the Queen. This will change the nature of their relationship with the character.

In the case of social recognition, it is possible to continue holding the prior belief and the posterior belief at the same time. So in the case of Lazum, the people in the palace do not need to stop believing that the man is called Lazum and is the son of a

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89 Murnaghan, *Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey*, 5–6. This is a theme which is particularly important in Homer’s world, as will be investigated in Chapter 3.
91 The belief held about who the person is before they are recognised.
92 The belief held about who the person is after they are recognised.
poor woman in order to start believing that he is the True King. I will refer to this as an “addition-recognition”, since an additional posterior belief has been added to the prior belief. In other cases, however, it is not possible to continue to hold the prior belief, and to also hold the posterior belief. One cannot continue to believe that the woman in a beggar’s cloak is Deidre, and that it is also Queen Aumi at the same time; or that a man is both Figwit, and Figwit’s elderly relation. These sorts of recognition will be referred to as “replacement-recognitions” as the prior belief must be replaced with the posterior belief. In the same way that an instance of identification could be followed by or accompanied by an instance of social recognition, an instance of replacement-recognition could be followed by an instance of addition-recognition.

The stories above allow some other distinctions to be seen. In the first story, the disguise is in place even for Lazum, whereas in the other examples the character knows that they are unrecognisable. This means that while Lazum will undergo the experience of recognition himself, in the other stories any recognition will take place in the minds of only the other characters. A distinction can therefore be made between stories which contain self-recognition and stories which contain recognition of another.

Another distinction is how the uncovering of the disguise comes about. In the first two instances the unrecognised person is discovered without any volition on their part, whereas in the third case the character chooses to reveal her identity. These two situations will be referred to as “discovery” and “revealing.” A character may choose at any time to simply reveal his or her identity, and there is no necessity for any clues, or signs, about the hidden identity to exist.

In the case of discovery, in order for recognition to take place, there must be, at least at the moment of recognition, two appearances both of which are accessible to the recogniser. That is, the prior and posterior beliefs are both accessible to an observer.

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93 Perrin includes “spontaneous recognition” as one of his categories of recognition: Perrin, “Recognition Scenes in Greek Literature,” 384, but others downgrade such instances to mere “re-union.” See: Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 64. Spontaneous recognition simply means that a person instantly knows who the other person is, and so there is no form of disguise or confusion over the other’s identity. The discussion which follows deals specifically with those instances where there is a disguise of some kind.
If only the disguise, or prior belief, was accessible to the potential recogniser, then recognition would be impossible (i.e. a perfect disguise). If only the recognised nature was accessible, then no recognition would be necessary at all.\footnote{Larsen, \textit{Recognizing the Stranger}, 46–8.}

Recognition takes place when there are two identities presented to the observer, and the clues which point to the hidden identity are given priority to the camouflage. So although the camouflage may still remain when the recognition takes place, the hidden identity can be seen behind it. When the “disguise” takes the form of a long absence there is no opportunity for the disguise to be removed,\footnote{For example, Euripides, \textit{Ion} 1397-1438.} but even when the disguise could be lifted, it can remain in place with recognition still taking place.\footnote{For example, Homer, \textit{Od.} 19.375-475.} In other instances the disguise is removed entirely, either through the reversal of a metamorphosis, or removal of some other form of disguise.

Recognition differs from revealing in that revealing is an action performed by the disguised person,\footnote{Or in some cases at the initiative of a third party who has disguised the character. For example, Athene reverses the metamorphosis of Odysseus so that Telemachus can recognise him (Homer, \textit{Od.} 16.172f).} whereas recognition is an action which takes place within the observer’s mind. Recognition also requires there to be two appearances simultaneously accessible to the recogniser, whereas revealing does not. In the case of revealing there may be no clues to the disguised person’s identity, and they simply choose to drop the disguise. Details about how unrecognisable people are revealed or discovered will be discussed in detail in Chapters 4-5.

\subsection*{1.4.3 \textit{Peripeteia} and knowledge transfer}

This section relates to the third tool in Section 1.3.1 by addressing whether new significant knowledge is gained as a result of the recognition.

Recognition, whether it comes about through discovery or revealing, is by its nature an event which takes place in a character’s perceptions. It may be precipitated by
physical events, and the fact that recognition has taken place may cause the characters to react in a particular way with physical actions, but the recognition event itself occurs in the character’s mind.\(^{98}\)

Whenever a character recognises another character, they gain some new knowledge. In some instances this knowledge is merely factual (i.e. “This person is Bob”), but in other instances it may be life-changing for the character involved, changing the way they view their whole lives, and even the way they view the world itself.

Aristotle’s analysis of plots containing recognition scenes is outlined in Chapter 4, but it is worth introducing some of his terms here. For Aristotle anagnorisis (recognition) involved a change from ignorance to knowledge and he noted that the anagnorisis was most effective when it coincided with peripeteia.\(^{99}\) He uses the term peripeteia to convey the idea of a change of fortunes contrary to expectation.\(^{100}\) Aristotle’s emphasis is on tragedy, but recognition also has more dramatic impact in other genres if the fortunes of the characters are at stake.\(^{101}\)

It is of course possible for anagnorisis to occur on its own. Consider the following short plot:

A woman is sitting home alone when a man in a uniquely distinctive yellow raincoat bursts through the door. The man removes the raincoat and it is her husband.

Technically speaking this is a very short recognition scene, but it has neither any signs of recognition, nor any great significance for the woman or the plot as a whole. But

\(^{98}\) And in some cases the audience’s mind. In the examples from films presented above the audience is expected to share the character’s experience. It should be a shock to the audience as well as Luke Skywalker to learn that Darth Vader is his father. In the vast majority of examples this thesis will examine, it is only the character who experiences a change in their cognitive position, whereas the audience is told the secret at the start of the story. For example, in Luke 24:15 the reader is told that the stranger is Jesus, but the disciples do not discover this until 24:31. Similarly the audience knows the true identity of Ion from the start of the play, but the titular character does not make this discovery until the end. The audience of these ancient stories is a spectator to the character’s moment of recognition, rather than being a participant in the recognition themselves.

\(^{99}\) See Aristotle, Poet. 1452a 32-33 – citing the discovery in Sophocles’ Oedipus Tyrannus as a prime example.

\(^{100}\) Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 25.

\(^{101}\) Chapter 4 addresses these issues.
by modifying the story through the addition of some extra elements this simple plot can be made into a complex plot:¹⁰²

A woman is sitting home alone and has just seen a news report about a serial killer in a uniquely distinctive yellow raincoat when a man in this yellow raincoat bursts through the door. The woman recognises the man’s wedding ring and realizes the killer is her husband.

This plot has both the element of a token of recognition (the ring), which allows the woman to see both the disguised character and the husband simultaneously, and the element of peripeteia: in recognizing that her husband is the serial killer, the nature of her relationship with him has (presumably) changed, given her new significant knowledge which she did not previously have, which turns her world upside down and requires her to reassess her life both future and past; if this short passage were part of a larger story it would drive the plot in a new direction.

The second type of story with the more complex plot is what Terrance Cave calls “true recognition” as opposed to a merely technical or “purely material” recognition.¹⁰³ What stops it from being “purely material” is that it adds a cognitive element to the plot. The gaining of new significant knowledge is what Greimas calls a “cognitive dimension”, rather than an “evental dimension” of a plot.¹⁰⁴ The evental dimension deals only with the physical events which happen, whereas the cognitive dimension also addresses the cognitive states of the characters involved.

In order to move beyond a simple narrative, where the cognitive and evental events are identical, “the producer of the narrative… can distribute the knowledge differently by attributing it (partially or totally) to certain characters and by depriving others of it.”¹⁰⁵ The cognitive event, which changes this distribution, is what leads to peripeteia, which may generate a new sequence of events, and thus create a new direction in the plot.¹⁰⁶ The cognitive elements of the plot are concerned with the

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¹⁰² In Poetics, Chapter 10, Aristotle distinguishes between simple (aploi) and complex (peplegmenoi) plots. This will be discussed in Chapter 4.
¹⁰³ Cave, Recognitions, 6.
¹⁰⁵ Ibid., 439.
¹⁰⁶ Ibid.
knowledge held by each character, and the manner in which this knowledge is gained or transferred as the plot develops. Naturally the cognitive and evental dimensions of the plot are interconnected, each one driving the other at certain points.

In the above story, it is an action of the husband (entering the room wearing his wedding ring and the costume of the serial killer) which leads to the change in the woman’s knowledge (the realization that the serial killer is her husband) and this, in turn, leads to an action on the part of the woman (running away for instance), which would create a new plot line in the story.

It is important to note that the husband does not need to say anything in order for the woman to gain new knowledge. The new knowledge stems from the recognition event, and the already provided background material. The new knowledge, thus, comes directly from the recognition event itself.

The following story differs on this point:

A woman is sitting home alone when a man in a distinctive yellow raincoat bursts through the door. The man removes the raincoat and she recognises that it is her husband. The husband proceeds to tell her that he has just come from the hospital and has been told he has cancer.

This story also contains disguise and recognition, and within it the woman gains new and life altering knowledge which has the potential to drive the plot in a new direction. The new knowledge does not, however, stem from the recognition event, but rather from what the husband verbally related to her. This will turn out to be a key differentiating factor between different story types.

When considering recognition scenes, Greimas differentiates between a range of different cognitive states a character can occupy. Greimas uses the word “knowledge” to refer to situations which do not correlate to reality so that he is able to

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107 In this instance the recognition comes about because the husband reveals his identity. If the woman had recognised the husband by his wedding ring, this would tell her nothing about the fact that he had cancer. The way the information is passed on is via a means other than via the recognition event.
say that “‘recognition,’ is not the passage from ignorance to knowledge, but the passage from a certain knowledge (erroneous) to another knowledge (true).”

“Knowledge” may not be the most useful term to use, since, at least in the tradition of western analytical philosophy “knowledge” is defined to be at the very least a “true belief”. A less confusing way to phrase this would be: recognition is the passage from a false belief to a true belief. This maintains the important point which Greimas is making: that the recogniser has a cognitive stance at all times, rather than moving from having no belief to having a belief.

Greimas gives the example of a long lost son visiting his parents’ inn. The parents, not recognising him, murder the visitor to take his money. Afterwards, they realise that their murder victim is in fact their own son. So in the above example he can say that from the point of view of the parents the man in the inn “appears to be a stranger, whereas in reality he is their own child.”

Greimas talks about four cognitive positions that a character can hold which he presents in the chart reproduced below:

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    TRUE
   /   \
  /     \  \
SECRET     DELUSION
     /     \
   /       \
Not Appearing Not Being
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The four categories refer to the epistemological state of the characters, rather than to a feature of the external world of the story. The four possible cognitive positions can then be summarised as:

Truth = being and appearing

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109 The example provided comes from the play by Albert Camus, Malentendu: Pièce en trois actes (Chicoutimi, QC: J. M. Tremblay, 2010).
Secret = being and non-appearing
Lie/delusion = not-being and appearing
Falsehood = not-being and not-appearing

Rephrased in terms of “beliefs” rather than “knowledge” these could be renamed as:

Believed truth = being and appearing
Unbelieved truth = being and non-appearing
Believed falsity = not-being and appearing
Unbelieved falsity = not-being and not-appearing

The cognitive stance of the parents who murder the man in the inn is an instance of delusion (a believed falsity), as the man appears to be a stranger but he is not a stranger. The moment of recognition changes the cognitive position of the parents from that of delusion (a believed falsity) that the man is a stranger to that of truth (believed truth) that it is their son. The parents accept appearance as being, and so, deluded by appearances, they make an epistemological error: although the man is unfamiliar to them, he is, in fact, their son. This happens, in this story, with no actual change in the appearance of the son, or any change in the external world.

In the above example, the visitor to the inn can either fall into the category of “stranger” or “son”, but not both at the same time. Once the parents realise that it is their son, they cannot continue to believe that he is also a stranger. This is an example of what was defined above as replacement-recognition.

On the other hand, in Example 1 from Section 1.4.2, it is perfectly possible to believe that Lazum is the True King, and to continue to believe he is the villager he always has been. The two different ways in which the recognition can change the knowledge of a character were referred to as “addition-recognition” and “replacement-recognition”.

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111 Ibid.
By examining these two sorts of stories we can see how they relate to Greimas’ cognitive positions before the recognition takes place.

For the replacement-recognition story the categories of delusion and secret are naturally paired together. There is not in reality a stranger present (not-being) but it does appear to the parents that there is a stranger there (appearing) = delusion. The son is there (being) but does not appear to the parents to be there (not appearing) = secret.

For addition-recognition stories, truth and secret are naturally paired together. The villager Lazum is really present (being) and people think he is there (appearing) = true. The True King is also really present (being) but people do not think he is there (not appearing) = secret.

The situation in the two sorts of recognition scenes before the recognition takes place can be summarised as:

Addition-recognition (prior) = True + Secret
Replacement-recognition (prior) = Delusion + Secret

All forms of disguise recognition stories, therefore, involve a secret, but not all involve delusion.

The cognitive position after the recognition can also be examined, using a similar process:

For the replacement-recognition story the categories of false and true are naturally paired together. There is not in reality a stranger present (not-being) but it no longer appears to the parents that there is a stranger there (not-appearing) = false. The son is there (being) and now he does appear to the parents to be there (appearing) = truth.

For addition-recognition stories, true and true are naturally paired together. The villager Lazum is really present (being) and people think he is there (appearing) =
true. The True King is also really present (being) and people now do think he is there (appearing) = true.

The situation in the two sorts of recognition scenes after the recognition takes place can be summarised as:

- Addition-recognition (posterior) = True + True
- Replacement-recognition (posterior) = False + True

The cognitive change which comes about in both recognition scene types can now be summarised:

- Addition-recognition = True + Secret $\rightarrow$ True + True
- Replacement-recognition = Delusion + Secret $\rightarrow$ False + True

The precise way in which this cognitive shift takes place in various different stories, and its significance, will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5.

1.4.4 Character types and roles

This section relates to the first tool in Section 1.3.1, which asks whether the unrecognisable character is a hero or a helper.

Within the various unrecognisability stories a range of different characters appear in disguise. Sometimes it is a human, sometimes a supernatural being; sometimes it is the main character of the story, and sometimes it is someone encountered by the main character. The way in which unrecognisability is treated differently depending on who is unrecognised is one of the issues which will be explored in Chapters 4 and 5 in particular.

In Chapters 6 and 7, one of the central questions to be addressed will be: which of the characters or *dramatis personae* is Jesus in the various stories in which he appears? The answer to this question is determined by the role he plays in the narrative.
Propp, in his analysis of folktales, creates a classification of stories and the elements of the stories.\textsuperscript{112} This classification is based on the structure of the story,\textsuperscript{113} rather than on the elements which fall into that structure. In taking this approach Propp sought to provide a classification system which was unambiguous and non-overlapping, stating that “if types do exist, they exist… on the level of structural features of similar tales.”\textsuperscript{114}

For Propp, what is important (or atomic and basic) is not the exact details of the motif, but rather the relationship between the elements. As an illustration, the following three stories have the same form, since the relationship between the elements is the same, despite the fact that they are, on the surface, talking about very different events:

1. “a dragon kidnaps the Tsar’s daughter”  
2. “a whirlwind blows away the peasant’s wife”  
3. “a devil imprisons the priest’s servant”

Under another classification system these sorts of stories might be grouped into very different groups; for instance “stories containing the devil”, “stories containing magical winds” etc. The basic unit of the story is also not “a dragon kidnaps the Tsar’s daughter.” The structure into which the characters and events fall is, Propp argues, more basic.\textsuperscript{115}

In this case the structure could be expressed as:

“a VILLAIN\textsuperscript{116} takes away the SENDER’S\textsuperscript{117} [person of value]”

\textsuperscript{112} Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 5.  
\textsuperscript{113} Ibid., 6.  
\textsuperscript{114} Ibid., 11.  
\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 13.  
\textsuperscript{116} Capitalisation original.  
\textsuperscript{117} That is the person who sends the Hero on the quest to save the person of value.
Where VILLAIN could be replaced by “dragon”, “devil”, “whirlwind” and so on; 
SENDER could be replaced by “tsar”, “peasant”, “priest”, and so on; \[118\] and [person of value] could be replaced by “daughter”, “wife”, “servant”, and so on.

The importance of this is that “this makes possible the study of the tale according to the functions of its dramatis personae.” \[119\] The emphasis is on what a tale’s dramatis personae do rather than who does it or how. \[120\]

The function in the above statement refers to the action of a character, and in particular the significance of this action in the story. The functions of the characters, Propp contends, are the constant elements of the tale, and can be analysed independently of how and by whom they are fulfilled. \[121\]

This means that when examining a story, and the way a character acts in a story, the question which should be asked is not “what does this action tell us about the character” but more “what does this action tell us about the plot.” This makes sense with a completely fictional or archetypal character such as “The Princess” or “The Dragon”, but may also be applicable to more complex characters, or even story versions of real, historical people.

As Manfred Pfister argues: “unlike real characters who, of course, are influenced by their social context, but who on reaching maturity are able to transcend it, dramatic figures cannot be separated from their environment because they exist only in relationship to their environment and are only constituted in the sum of their relations to the environment.” \[122\]

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\[118\] As Fischer points out, although Propp sees the structure of the story as stable, and the characters as interchangeable, it may be possible to set up a system where the characters are stable, and their structure is interchangeable. But it is not essential that this framework is the only way to analyse a story, but that it is one valid and useful way. See: J. L. Fischer, “The Sociopsychological Analysis of Folktales,” Current Anthropology 4 (1963): 289.

\[119\] Propp, Morphology of the Folktale, 20.

\[120\] Ibid.

\[121\] Ibid., 21.

This seems counterintuitive, if it is considered that the stories told about an historical character are always intended to be historical in nature. However, if an historical character is being placed in a story with a certain structure, then the actions the character takes may be conditioned more by the structure of the story than by the personality of the historical person the character represents.

When this approach is applied to examining stories where Jesus is a character, concerns over the historicity of the passage are not paramount. This does not imply that the story is not historical, as historical events can be rephrased and rewritten in the form of traditional stories.123

Consider briefly the Road to Emmaus story, where Jesus “deceives”124 his disciples. This may cause some concerns about what this says about Jesus’ nature (one may be concerned that Jesus would lie). However, if the character “Jesus” in this story is required to be in disguise in order for the rest of the plot to follow, then this, rather than any historical considerations, explains why Jesus is potentially deceptive.

Everything that I say about Jesus in this thesis will be about the character contained within the particular story being examined. This means that I will say nothing about the historical Jesus, unless this is needed to throw light upon the character. As David Rhoads states “narrative criticism works with the text as ‘world-in-itself’ [and] brackets these historical questions and looks at the closed universe of the story-world.”125

As well as concerns over historicity, it may be asked whether a trait of a character that is necessary in order for a plot to work, or for a story to fit a certain structure, can be used to inform a Christological theory. To use the same example, can the “deceptive”

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123 For example, in a political cartoon, a real politician could be recast in the role of “David” against his political opponent “Goliath”. This would tell us something about the two politicians, but many aspects of the story may be changed to fit with the story type. For instance, we could say that the historical person represented by the “David” character really was a political underdog, but would not want to conclude that he carried a sling.

124 I use this example for illustrative purposes. Whether any deception did take place in this story will be considered in later chapters.

way in which Jesus acts in the Road to Emmaus story be used to argue something about the nature of Christ from a theological viewpoint? This is not the focus of this study, but the shadow of this question will always be in the background. By concentrating on the character in the story, the “deceptive” nature is analysed as a trait of the character Jesus, rather than the historical Jesus. Of course, the writers may also have been trying to say something about the historical Jesus, or may have been intending to present particular Christological viewpoints in the post-resurrection depictions. The claim made in this study is that one of the reasons Jesus was presented in certain ways was because of the structure of the plot, and the role in which Jesus was cast.

In the above examples, although the characters themselves differ (the villain could be a dragon or a devil, and the sender a Tsar or peasant), the relationship between the characters remains the same. When examining the plot in this manner, the emphasis is more on the relationship between the different characters than on the features or nature of the characters themselves. When the stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances are examined, the relationship between Jesus and those who encounter him will be given more emphasis than the characteristics of Jesus himself. It will be seen that when Jesus is cast in different roles, this says different things about the relationship between Jesus and those who encounter him.

Propp has a limited number of character types who can appear in a story: Hero, Helper, Villain, False Hero, Donor, Dispatcher, Princess and Father (he also mentions some “special personages” – complainers, informers, and slanderers).

Some of these roles may be fulfilled by the same character, for instance a fairy godmother may be both the helper (who aids the Hero on his quest), and the Dispatcher (who sends the Hero on a quest).

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127 A term which would have been anachronistic at the time when the first stories about Jesus were circulating in any case.
Greimas has a similar, but smaller, list of character types, which he calls *actants*: Subject, Object, Sender, Receiver, Opponent, and Helper.\(^{129}\)

However many types there are, the essential feature of this way of viewing narratives is that there are identifiable character types, and these character types have certain sorts of actions associated with them. For instance, Heroes go on quests, face villains, and return to their home. Dispatchers or Senders initiate quests. Helpers aid the Hero in some way. Donors provide magical objects (such as a magical sword).

As the title of this thesis alludes to, two of these character types in particular, the Hero and the Helper, are the focus of this study.

The Hero is simply the protagonist, or the person whose adventures the story narrates. This is the character who is facing the challenges to be overcome.

The Helper, is, as the name suggests, a character who helps the Hero overcome his challenges in some way. Although Propp included objects such as a sword or a ball of string in this category,\(^{130}\) I will be interested only in Helpers who are intelligent agents, and who fit into the category of Helper which Propp calls “universal.”\(^{131}\)

Propp lists (and encodes) a number of ways in which a Helper helps the Hero such as “the spatial transference of the Hero (G)”; “liquidation of misfortune or lack (K)”; “rescue from pursuit (Rs)”; “the solution of difficult tasks (N)”; “transfiguration\(^{132}\) of the hero (T)”.\(^{133}\)

As we will see in later chapters, the sort of characters, and the actions performed by characters identified by Propp in folklore, are also present in written stories, both Greco-Roman literature, and stories about Jesus. Chapter 2 will examine some of the motifs and characters in folklore in more detail, and Chapter 6 will include a section

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\(^{130}\) Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 82.

\(^{131}\) Ibid.

\(^{132}\) I.e. Metamorphosis.

\(^{133}\) Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 82.
which investigates how this is relevant for analysing stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances.

1.5: Outline of the thesis

This thesis consists of eight chapters, including this one which has introduced the key claim that the way Jesus is presented in an unrecognisable form in post-resurrection stories is determined in part by the literary conventions of unrecognisability stories. It has discussed some of the key concepts which will be important for this study: metamorphosis, disguise and recognition stories, the concept of cognitive plots and peripeteia, and the character roles of the hero and the helper, including a review of previous work in these areas. This chapter has also outlined the two main types of stories into which the Jesus stories will be categorised, as well as the tools which will be used to perform this categorisation.

Chapter 2 will look at how the key concepts introduced in Chapter 1 exist in folklore. A number of folklore motifs will be explored, including metamorphosis, recognition, disguise, and returning heroes. The characters common to folklore and the roles they perform will be explored, and finally the chapter will discuss how folklore themes continue to be relevant at the time stories about Jesus were written.

Chapter 3 will discuss metamorphosis stories in Greco-Roman literature, starting with Homer and then showing how metamorphosis continues to be a theme until the time when stories were being written about Jesus.

The next two chapters will concentrate on the Greco-Roman literature which may have had an influence on the themes of disguise and recognition found in both the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts. By necessity, the areas of classical literature which I have chosen to pay particular attention to are influenced by how useful they will be in analysing stories about Jesus in later chapters. In an effort not to assume my conclusions, and select classical themes which fit with a pre-determined theory, I have chosen to look at three broad themes which are relevant to the themes of Christian writing I wish to analyse. Three relatively uncontroversial claims have
governed this choice of material: (i) Jesus was at times not recognised by people, but as the story unfolds he is recognised; (ii) in at least some early Christian writings Jesus was considered to be a divine entity of some sort; and (iii) in at least some early Christian writings Jesus undergoes metamorphosis of some sort. Chapter 4 will look at Greco-Roman divine visitor stories which contain unrecognisable gods, and will identify the distinctive features of these stories. Chapter 5 will look at Greco-Roman returning hero stories which contain unrecognisable heroes, and will identify the distinctive features of these stories. These chapters will also briefly examine some Jewish narratives which contain the same themes.

Chapters 6 and 7 will address, specifically, those stories where Jesus appears in a disguised or metamorphic form. Chapter 6 will look at the canonical Gospels and discuss how the themes of metamorphosis and disguise are used in Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. In particular it will investigate whether the stories are best understood as disguised hero stories or disguised god stories. Chapter 7 will look at the apocryphal Gospels and Acts, addressing the same question.

Finally, Chapter 8 will summarise the findings of the entire thesis, and describe how the canonical Gospels differ from the apocryphal Gospels and Acts in the way they describe Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. Conclusions about why Jesus is described in different ways will then be presented, stressing that whether an Odysseus-like, or an Athene-like, Jesus appears is strongly linked with the narrative structure and the literary conventions of the story.

It may seem that this process is circular, since the stories which are examined are used to create criteria for categorisation, which is then applied to the same types of stories. The process is not, however, circular in nature for two reasons. First, it will be demonstrated that the story types identified are distinct with some strong differences between them. These differences exist within the stories themselves, and create a natural division. Secondly, the groupings determined by examining Greek literature will be shown to exist in a much wider set of stories, including later Greco-Roman works, Jewish stories, and Christian writings.
Chapter Two: Folklore Stories

2.1: Introduction

This chapter explores the way the themes introduced in Chapter 1 exist in folk literature. The themes of metamorphosis, disguise, and recognition, and the distinctive character types all occur in folk literature. This is important for this study for two reasons. First, if folklore is the basis for the metamorphosis and recognition themes in the earliest written literature, this shows that the two ideas were related to each other in the earliest stories. Second, and perhaps more importantly, since folklore did not die out when written narratives started to appear, folklore will remain a possible source for later writings up to the time when the stories about Jesus were being written in both the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts.

2.1.1 Definition

The term “folklore” was first used by William Thoms in a letter to The Athenaeum, and since then many definitions of both folklore and folk literature have been attempted. At the very least they agree that the definition of folk literature includes it being both oral, and passed on tradition. Francis Lee Utley, noting the difficulty in defining folklore, proposes an “operational” definition: “folk literature is orally transmitted literature wherever found among primitive isolated or civilized marginal

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cultures, urban or rural societies, dominant or subordinate groups.” This will work as a good definition for folklore in the time period this thesis is dealing with.

The topics which folklore traditions address span all aspects of human experience, but include “ideas [...] relating to the universe; the supernatural; wisdom; heroism, beauty, desirability and propriety and their opposites.” Folklore is not a remnant of a lost past, but the passed-on stories, songs, and customs recognised as the common property, or knowledge, of any group of people, be it an ancient and vanished culture, or a contemporary university campus.

2.1.2 Using folk literature as a source

Using folk literature as a possible source for ancient literature is problematic since, due to the nature of the genre, there are no written records of the stories existing in oral tradition in the ancient world. There are, however, instances where ancient literature mentions stories which were told by the people, and themes and motifs which exist in other genres can often be seen to have come from a folktale background. In order to argue this last point, however, more recent folktales must inevitably be relied upon. This use of more recent folk literature is justified for a number of reasons.

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138 This definition is problematic in the modern era, since modern folklore can be transmitted via electronic media: emails, blogs, online forums and so forth. Although written, these sources are not composed in the same way written literature is, and could be considered to be a “oral” transmission in a sense.
140 John Miles Foley makes this point strongly, stating that rather than being primitive and preliterate communication device, “rather, if the whole truth is told, oral tradition stands out as the single most dominant communicative technology of our species, as both a historical fact and, in many areas still, a contemporary reality.” John Miles Foley, “What’s in a Sign” in E. Anne Mackay, ed., Signs of Orality: The Oral Tradition and Its Influence in the Greek and Roman World, Mnemosyne, Bibliotheca Classica Batava 188 (Boston: Brill, 1999), 1–2.
141 Dundes, The Study of Folklore, 2.
142 That is: When looking at an ancient piece of writing, we look at folk literature which was written down long afterwards and work on the assumption that similar folk literature existed before the written work.
Firstly, certain themes and imagery occur in folktales universally wherever human society exists, as will be demonstrated in this chapter, particularly via an examination of Stith Thompson’s *Motif Index*.\(^{143}\)

Secondly, there is a very strong correlation between the themes in folklore and the themes in written narrative. There are two explanations for this. Either the written literature is drawing on older folklore which has the same themes as the more modern folklore (which we have access to), or the more modern folklore is based upon ancient written stories. The second conclusion is unlikely since modern folklore exists in diverse cultures which did not have a shared literary history, and what is found is that the folk tale set in a homely surrounding is, in written texts, placed within a more complex narrative, which indicates that a writer of sacred texts, epic poetry, or drama,\(^{144}\) is using an already existing story and is adapting it to fit their own narrative purpose. Therefore, it is more likely that the folktale is the source rather than the opposite.

Thirdly, there are many instances in ancient literature where it can be demonstrated that written narrative relied upon folklore as a source. As John Miles Foley states, “[w]e are becoming ever more aware of how indebted many of our cherished literary works and most treasured artefacts are to preliterary or paraliterary media.”\(^{145}\) H. J Rose argues that the metamorphosis stories in the Odyssey are part of an inheritance from pre-literary shapeshifting folk stories.\(^{146}\) Malcolm Davies uses Propp's functions of *Dramatis Personae* to argue that the *Iliad* as a whole has themes reminiscent of folklore. The Trojan war story, he argues, has the form of the classic folkloric tale of the princess being captured by the dragon, and being rescued for half of the kingdom.\(^{147}\) He also points to many instances of characters and distinctive events

\(^{143}\) Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*.
\(^{146}\) H. J. Rose, “Divine Disguisings,” 63. The transformation of Odysseus’ men by Circe into pigs (Homer, Od. 10.238) fits with Stith Thompson’s Motif D100-D199.
which owe something to folklore. Similarly, Denys Page discusses the folktales which are preserved in Homer’s *Odyssey*, including Odysseus’ encounter with Circe, the Sirens, and Cyclops. He also points out that the theme of the *Odyssey* as a whole is a common folk literature motif: that of the husband returning home after many adventures. Ovid’s *Metamorphoses* also contains a range of stories which are derived from folklore, but reworked into a more sophisticated and coherent worldview. The similarly named *Metamorphoses* of Apuleius also contains folklore-like themes both within the main narrative, and in the stories within the story which the characters relate to one another. Folk literature has also been proposed as a source for Biblical narratives such as the story of David and Goliath, and the story of Job.

Folklore should not be thought of as an ancient source which was at some point replaced by written narrative. It remains a live source throughout the period this thesis will examine, and indeed remains a live source up to this day.

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148 For example the Lotus Eaters (Homer, *Od. *9:82-104) offer a magical food which makes it impossible to return to the real world, and the returning Odysseus failing to recognise his homeland is reminiscent of people returning from the fairyland ibid., 31–33.

149 Denys Page, *Folktales in Homer’s Odyssey* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1973) Page points out that the Odyssey assumes that its audience had a background knowledge of folk literature (p. 57).


152 For a discussion see Anderson, *Folktale As a Source of Graeco-Roman Fiction*, 233–237.

153 Heda Jason, “The Story of David and Goliath: A Folk Epic?,” *Bib* 60 (1979): 36–70. Heda analyses this story using Propp’s model with the hero, David, villain, Goliath (pg. 46).


155 The “urban legend” is the present form of folk literature in a modern western environment. Urban legends also share the feature of being used in larger narratives. One example will suffice: In an urban legend which was existent in the 1960s a babysitter is looking after two children who are upstairs. She gets a prank call from a stranger saying he is going to murder the children, but ignores the call twice. On the third time she calls the police to complain and they call her back to tell her that the phone call is coming from the same house she is in. She rushes upstairs and finds the children dead (see Jan Harold Brunvand, *The Vanishing Hitchhiker: American Urban Legends and Their Meanings*, 1st ed [New York: Norton, 1981], 53–7). This urban legend occurred as part of a larger narrative in a number of films: **When a Stranger Calls** (1979); **Black Christmas** (1974); **Urban Legend** (1998). This shows that
seen the themes of folklore occur in Greco-Roman literature, but also continue to appear in Christian writings, particularly those describing the lives of saints. Seeing folk literature as a potential source for both classical and Biblical literature is therefore justified.

### 2.2: Themes and Motifs

There are various themes which occur in the folk literature of different cultures which are temporally and spatially separated. Whether they go back to some common very early oral source, or whether our shared human psychology and experience is such that certain themes will always emerge in any culture (fear of the dark or of death, for instance), or a mixture of the two is an interesting question, but not one which is of importance for this study. What is important is that the following motifs are part of our shared cultural heritage, for whatever reason.

Stith Thompson's *Motif Index of Folk Literature*\(^{156}\) lists thousands of examples of recurring motifs in folktales. For the purpose of explaining the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, several motifs are of particular interest, namely, those which relate to transformation, disguise, recognition and revealing, and returning. In the following sections, references to the motif-index will be given by the motif number, rather than the page number in Thompson’s work.

#### 2.2.1 Metamorphosis in folklore

Shape-shifting and transformation, or metamorphosis, are very common themes in folklore tradition from societies across the globe. The story of a prince transformed into a frog is one familiar to those who grow up in an English-speaking society, as are the metamorphosis themes in *Cinderella*. Traditional metamorphosis themes still

\(^{156}\) Thompson, *Motif-Index of Folk-Literature*. 

the mechanism whereby folk literature (an urban myth) which exists in an oral form becomes part of a written narrative (a film script) is still alive to this day (see: http://www.snopes.com/ for a list of modern urban legends and their appearance in works of literature).
continue to be consciously used in modern films. There is a vast range of different sorts of transformations of people and animals in folklore. Humans are transformed into other people, animals, the opposite sex, and inanimate objects. Gods transform their shape, often into the guise of a mortal. Animals are transformed into people or other animals. The reasons for the transformations are equally wide; the transformation may be as a punishment for a transgression, to aid in combat, for disguise, as a form of “poetic” justice, and other reasons. The transformation of inanimate objects is also very common (of the straw-into-gold variety), and an awareness of these non-personal transformations will be useful to see the wider context in which the metamorphosis of people takes place. However, for the purposes of this study, the most crucial transformations are those of both humans and gods, often for the purpose of disguise, which are well attested in folklore.

Stith Thompson’s motifs D0 – D699 deal with the theme of transformation in folklore. The vast number of instances makes it impossible to give a full overview, but Thompson divides the index into a number of sub-categories.

The transformation of a man is broken into: to a different man158 (D10-D99) - different sex (D10), social class (D20), race (D30), to the likeness of another person (D40), magical changes to the man himself (D50) such as a change in a person’s size (D55.1); to an animal159 (D100-D199) of a vast range from domestic beasts to insects,160 to mythological animals (D199.3); or to an object (D200-D299), either a natural object such as a rock or a tree, or a man-made artefact. Transformations of animals to people are addressed in a separate sub-category (D300-399), and contain the same diversity as the opposite transformation.

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157 Such as the woman who is beautiful by day and ugly by night (D621.3) which is given a new twist in Shrek where the hero completing the dragon quest is in fact an ogre more attracted to the “ugly” version.
158 I.e. By “man” a person of either gender is meant. Also included in this section are instances of spirits and gods taking on the guise of men, although a separate section of the index (A120-40) deals with the appearance of gods in folklore.
159 Again this includes a god or spirit taking the form of an animal (see also A120-40)
160 Including familiar instances such as the werewolf (D113.1.1), and the less familiar Indian wer-tiger (D112.2.1) and African Wer-crocodile (D194.1) etc.
Transformations of objects into people, or animals, transformations of animals into other animals or objects into other objects,\textsuperscript{161} and every other permutation, are also assigned sub-categories (D400-D479). In addition to the transformations, the sub-category of “size of object transformed” is included (D480) which describes folklore traditions of changes in size to people, as well as other objects.\textsuperscript{162} The fact that every permutation is present with multiple attestations from multiple locations and traditions shows that the general theme of things in the world being able to shift and change form is a lasting and universal one in folklore.

A special section exists for repeated transformations (D610), which is an attribute shared by gods, magicians, and other trickster characters. A common reason for these multiple transformations is to outdo an opponent in battle (D615). The theme of periodic transformations (D620) includes wer-creatures, as well as the theme of taking one form by day and another by night.\textsuperscript{163}

A special case of metamorphosis is that of the shape-shifter character. These stories differ from other metamorphosis stories in a number of ways. For instance, the transformation is under the control of the transformed one, it is reversible, and the shape-shifter can often take on multiple different forms either at different times or one after the other (see D610). Many characters have this power to transform and disenchant at will (D630), including gods, angels, and spirits, but also heroes who have been gifted this power by either a god, a demon, or their fairy parents. Some are full transformations, such as a man changing into a bird,\textsuperscript{164} or a god taking the form of an animal (D133.4.1) while others possess the power to change their size or some other aspect, while remaining basically the same shape.

Thompson also discusses the motives for both voluntary (D640) and involuntary (D660) transformations. A character may choose to change form to reach a difficult place (D641) including the otherworld, to escape danger (D642), see also D670.

\textsuperscript{161} E.g., Transformations of objects to gold (or the reversal) is a common theme (D475)
\textsuperscript{162} Cf. Homer, \textit{Il.} 12.450 where Zeus makes a stone lighter so Hector can lift it in battle.
\textsuperscript{163} D621.3 describes a character who is ugly by day and fair by night. See footnote 157.
\textsuperscript{164} A power possessed by the Maori hero Maui (although not included by Thompson) see also A527.3.1. For a list of folklore motifs in Polynesian narratives (including many from New Zealand), in the same categories as Stith Thompson’s index see: Bacil F. Kirtley, \textit{A Motif-Index of Traditional Polynesian Narratives} (Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 1971).
“magical flight”) or else rescue another (D643), to travel quickly (D463), to test another character (D464), to battle (D651), to seduce (D658), and other reasons concerned with a specific plot. Characters are transformed by another often as a punishment (D661), to be rid of a person, but also as a reward or to save a person.

The Index also classifies the means whereby transformation comes about (D500-599). These include: breaking a taboo or other forms of disrespect or disobedience (D510); through the power of a word, wish, curse, or song (D520); by putting on a skin or clothing or another object (D530); by eating or drinking (D550); and, by various other miscellaneous (and odd) means (D560), such as jumping three times (D561.3).

Both gods and mortals, and both heroes and helpers, undergo metamorphosis in folk-literature. The range of metamorphoses covers all of the possibilities suggested in Section 1.4.1. There is “self-actualized trans-personal metamorphosis,” “imposed trans-personal metamorphosis,” “self-actualized extra-personal metamorphosis”, “imposed extra-personal metamorphosis”, and the metamorphosis from and into animals and inanimate objects. The types of metamorphosis which exist in the written texts which will be examined in this thesis also exist in folk traditions from around the world, as do the ways in which the metamorphosis comes about, and the purpose of the metamorphosis.168

2.2.2 Disguise in folklore

As noted in Chapter 1, metamorphosis, illusion, and disguise are related concepts. When a character appears in another form, this could be due to metamorphosis of a physical nature, but it could alternatively be due to an illusion, or a disguise of some

166 C.f Alice in wonderland.
167 My descriptions. See table in Section 1.4.1.
168 For a perspective from another discipline see: A. A. Younis and H. F. Moselhy, “Lycanthropy Alive in Babylon: The Existence of Archetype,” Acta Psychiatria Scandinavica 119 (2009): 161–64. In this paper, the phenomena of people believing that they have transformed into another animal is examined from a psychological perspective, concluding that “[l]ycanthropy delusion is a rare delusion but appears to have survived into modern times with possible archetypal existence.”
other sort. Thompson deals with the related theme of disguise in a separate section of his index. Section K deals with the broad category of “deceptions”. Of particular interest are the sections “Escape by deception” (K500-699), and “Deception by disguise or illusion” (K1800-K1899).

Several of these motifs overlap with those of transformation. For example, D642.4 “Transformation to escape ambush” also fits into K500, “Escape from death or danger by deception.” Escapes also come about via mundane disguises such as wearing an animal skin (cf. Odysseus and his men escaping Polyphemus by hiding under sheep169), or changing bodily appearance in some other way, such as shaving or disguising him/herself as another person.

Similarly motif D1891, “transformation to old man to escape recognition,” also fits into K1810 “Deception by disguise” showing that the link between disguise and transformation is, unsurprisingly, a well-established one. However, again, disguises can be performed using quite mundane means, such as wearing another’s clothes, or putting on a king’s crown.

Disguise in a humble form (K1816) or as a wanderer (K1817) are common, for a number of purposes. One central and common theme is that of gods (or saints)170 visiting mortals in disguise (K1811) often to test their loyalty (see also Q1.1 “Gods (saints) in disguise reward hospitality and punish inhospitality” and A120.0.1 “God as shape-shifter”). Gods, and angels, also take on the form of particular people, strangers, and animals. A supernatural helper, such as a god, saint, or angel, may also disguise himself in a humble manner in order to test a mortal’s character,171 or aid them (N810, H984).

169 Homer, Od. 9.425f.
170 For a discussion on the “disguised saint” in folklore see: Carmen Blacker, “The Folklore of the Stranger: A Consideration of a Disguised Wandering Saint,” Folklore 101 (1990): 162–68. Included are examples of Jesus, and Saint Peter appearing in the form of strangers, and then cursing a baker who repeatedly refused to give them bread (165). Interestingly, a similar story, of a woman cursed for greed and lack of hospitality to a (Japanese) saint is widespread in Japan, but Blacker concludes that the stories do not have a common origin (167).
171 A modern piece of folk-literature relates the story of a group of seminary students who are told that their final exam has been moved to another room on the other side of the campus. On the way to the new exam room they pass a beggar who asks for their help, and only one student stops to help him. It turns out that the beggar was actually the professor in disguise, and that this was the real final exam
The incognito king is also a common motif (K1812), where the king takes on a disguise for a range of reasons, from testing loyalty (and spying on his subjects), to escaping battle (K1812.10). Like gods, the king may reward those who show him kindness in his disguised form (H384.1.1). A hero may also disguise himself as a beggar to gain entry to a place otherwise inaccessible (K2357.14). A related theme is gods/kings/heroes disguising themselves as a menial or other person below their true station (K1816). All of these themes will occur in both Greco-Roman and Biblical literature.

The theme of disguise of both mortals and supernatural beings is common in folk-literature, and like the related category of metamorphosis, there is a broad range of causes and reasons for the disguise. The sorts of disguises which occur in the written stories this thesis will examine are contained in folk-literature from around the world.

2.2.3 Recognition and revealing in folklore

Since the themes of disguise and metamorphosis are common in folklore, it is not surprising that the theme of recognition is also common. Even after short absences, signs of recognition are often sought in folktales, such as the recognition of Cinderella by being able to fit a shoe (H36.1).

Recognition can come about through a number of means. This could be by common knowledge (H10), such as two people both knowing the same story (H11), or having a shared life history (H12). (which in this version of the story only one student passes). The god has been replaced by the authority figure of the professor, but otherwise this modern story is very similar to ancient folk literature, but placed into a contemporary context.

172 Such as King Saul putting on a humble disguise to visit the witch of Endor, which required passing through enemy territory.

173 On face value the proof of identity seems superfluous. The recognition of the heroine by her shoe, for instance, makes little sense to a modern audience without the additional detail that it was a masquerade ball that Cinderella attended. In earlier versions of the story the recognition is necessary because the prince or king has acquired the shoe never having met the princess, but by some other means knows that its owner is a suitable bride. For other bride tests see H360.

A person can be recognised by having a distinctive skill or personal peculiarity (H30), such as an ability to pull a sword from a stone or tree (H31.1), or a unique way of playing an instrument (H35.1).

Distinctive marks on the body can also lead to recognition, such as scars, birthmarks, and branding (H50) all of which have many instances. For instance, a birthmark may be a mark of royalty (H51.1, H71), or a person may be recognised by a missing finger (H57.2) or a distinctive scar (H51). Note that the first instance is an example of social recognition, while the others are instances of identification.

People can also be recognised by physical objects such as tokens (H80, H100), ornaments (H90), clothing (H110) or weapons (H125). For instance, a werewolf is recognised because the man is carrying a knife which was carried away by a wolf (H132), and an unseen lover is later recognised by a fragment of a garment (H81).

Many of the means of recognition common in folklore are also noted in Aristotle's Poetics, as will be seen in Chapter 5. The way in which the recognitions are used in the plot may be more complex in later written literature, but the many ways in which recognition comes about are well represented in folk-literature.

Revealing is similar to recognition, but is initiated by the unrecognised character. A god or divine agent may reveal themselves to mortals (A182). This may be coupled with the theme of hospitality given by mortals being rewarded by a disguised god, angel or other being (Q45). These themes also occur in the written literature which this thesis will examine.

### 2.2.4 Returning in folklore

The theme of a character “returning” to his or her people is also a common theme in folklore. The character may be a god, or supernatural being, or else a cultural hero

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175 Cf. Odysseus’ ability to string his bow.
(e.g. King Arthur) returning at some proper time to rescue his or her people from some trouble (A580). In other cases it is an exile returning to his people and succeeding (in his mission) (L111.1). This is part of the category “L100-L199. Unpromising hero (heroine)” which describes stories of heroes who come from humble backgrounds, who would not be expected to succeed (e.g. a peasant, an old man, or the youngest son/daughter). King David would fit into this category. The concept of the “Unpromising Hero” is contained as a subsection of “L. Reversal of Fortune.” As will be seen, reversal of fortunes, and a hero returning are themes which are also paired together in the written narratives examined in the following chapters.

Folk literature is replete with stories of the lowly rising to high places (often linked with the theme of reward for virtue or hospitality) and the high and arrogant falling from grace. A person’s return to their people may be in the form of a humble person (K1815.1). The return may be to a people or a kingdom, but it may also be more personal in nature, such as the reunion of lovers (T96), or family members (N736-8). Returns and reunions of these types, often with the theme of returning in a humble and disguised form, occur in the written literature to be examined.

2.2.5 Summary of motifs

The motifs of metamorphosis, disguise, recognition, revealing, and return, are all well represented in folk literature. In the following chapters the same motifs are shown to occur in written literature. The occurrence of a motif in two pieces of literature does not imply any connection between the two, if the same motif is also very common in folk literature. The manner in which the motifs are used and combined may however indicate a link beyond both pieces of work tapping into the rich and ever present source of folk literature.

176 The story in 1 Samuel 17 describes David as the youngest son (17:14), and he is seen as unpromising by both his brother (17:28) and Saul (17:33). Despite this unpromising appearance, he goes on to be the hero of the story (17:49-50).

177 Compare this to the wheel of fortune image of the rise and fall of fortunes, which is a recurring theme throughout human history.

Fortune rota volvitur;
descendo minoratus;
alter in altum tollitur;
2.3: **Characters and their roles**

An understanding of the characters who occur in folklore, as well as the motifs discussed above, is important. Two in particular, “divine helpers” and “returning heroes,” are discussed below.

**2.3.1 Divine helpers in folklore**

A helper may be a normal human being, or an animal. Often, however, they are supernatural beings, sometimes disguised. The figure of the divine helper is very common in folk literature. The range of divine helpers is as diverse as the cultures from which they come, and includes gods (both monotheistic and polytheistic versions depending on the context in which the particular tale emerges), angels, giants, genies, saints, semi-divine heroes, the devil, fairies, kobolds, goblins, ghosts, and so forth (N810 – see also F601 “Extraordinary companions”).

As well as appearing in disguise to test and reward or punish mortals, gods and other divine beings also appear to help the hero on his or her quest. H970 lists a range of helpful beings including the grateful dead, demons, fairies, captive spirits, angels and saints. Divine beings may also initiate a quest, taking the role of the sender (see H1210).

The helper aids the hero in various ways in order for him/her to complete his/her quest. These beings can appear in a range of forms. Shape-shifting gods, or gods that appear as men or animals are common (see A120), as are other shape-shifting supernatural beings (see, for example, F235 for shape-shifting or transformed fairies).

Antti Aarne, in *The Types of the Folk-tale*,\(^\text{178}\) composed a list of supernatural helpers in folktales and the roles they play. Characters familiar to most children would be the

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\(^\text{178}\) Aarne, *The Types of the Folk-Tale*, section II 500–599.
Fairy Godmother of *Cinderella* (II 510), who in different versions is variously, a dead mother, a tree, a supernatural being, a bird and so forth. Another common character is Tom-Tit-Tot (II 501), a supernatural creature who will help only for a steep price. In modern fairy-tale books the name Rumpelstiltskin, who demands a child for help with some metamorphosis magic, may be more familiar.

The idea of divine beings helping the hero of a story is ubiquitous, and the divine being can appear in a range of forms. The concept of the divine helper character is well established in folk literature, and this character type also occurs in the written literature examined in this thesis.

**2.3.2 Returning heroes in folklore**

In folk literature, hero characters are seen returning home in disguise, being recognised by means of a sign, and undergoing reversals of fortune.

The theme of a hero returning to his home or people, combined with the theme of the hero in disguise, provides much of the material needed to make up many of the Greco-Roman and Jesus-related stories which this study will examine. That is, there is a hero who is initially disguised who returns to his homeland and is later recognised by some means. As will be seen, many of these stories also involve signs of recognition, another common folk literature motif, which are important in driving the plot forward and passing on information to the characters and the audience.

A number of scholars have attempted to isolate the key attributes of the hero’s story in folk literature, and demonstrate that as well as heroes having one or more of the above motifs attached to them, the hero characters’ stories have specific plot elements in common.

Propp lists thirty-one functions or actions which account for the heroes’ actions in folktales. Lord Raglan lists twenty-two features including “on reaching manhood

he returns or goes to his future kingdom.” As early as 1864 Johann Georg von Hahn similarly noted that part of the hero’s story is that “he returns victorious and goes back to the foreign land.” Returning to his homeland after victory is central to the hero character.

Other common themes in folk literature heroes’ life stories include: an unusual conception and possibly illegitimate birth, claims of divine lineage, abandonment or an attempt on his life as a child, going to a foreign place, becoming the ruler after returning to his land where he was once banished, and an extraordinary death.

The story of the returning hero is well established in folk literature, as is the theme of the disguised and recognised hero. These themes are not surprisingly taken up in written accounts of heroes and adapted by the authors to serve their own purposes, as will be seen in later chapters.

2.3.3 Summary of characters in folklore

In Chapter 1 the concept of there being a limited number of characters in narratives, with a limited number of roles was introduced. In this chapter we have seen that both heroes and helpers undergo metamorphosis, and appear in disguise for a number of reasons. The character types of the hero and the helper, as well as the tasks which each undertakes, are well established in folk literature.

2.4: Summary

The investigation this chapter undertook shows that the plot devices of metamorphosis, disguise, and recognition and revealing are common and display a good degree of cross-cultural similarity in folk literature. These motifs can be

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connected to either a hero or a helper character. Stories of heroes returning in disguise are present in folk literature, as are stories of divine beings taking on other forms and revealing themselves to mortals, to provide assistance, or to test, reward and punish. When we come to examine the stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, these themes will all be present. Although it will be argued that the literature examined in the next three chapters, or at least the themes of the literature, would have been familiar to, and a source for the post-resurrection story composers, the living stream of folk literature would also have been an accessible source for character types and plot devices.
Chapter Three: Metamorphosis Stories

The concept of metamorphosis, and the range of metamorphosis stories possible was discussed in Section 1.4.1. Instances of metamorphosis in folk literature were discussed in Section 2.2.1. This chapter will discuss metamorphosis narratives in Greco-Roman literature. Those which were written before Jesus stories were composed are one of the possible influences on stories where Jesus appears in a changed or unrecognisable form. The discussion in this chapter will, therefore, provide a background for the post-resurrection accounts which are discussed in Chapters 6 and 7.

3.1: Introduction

Metamorphosis is a common theme in folk literature, with both objects and people undergoing changes in shape. It is not surprising then, that the written literature of the Greco-Roman world also contains many examples of the metamorphosis of gods, humans, animals, and inanimate objects.

Metamorphosis serves a number of purposes in Greco-Roman literature, but one of the results (and sometimes the intention of the character) is disguise and unrecognisability. For this reason, a literary world in which metamorphosis is possible is a world in which there is a ready-made disguise for both supernatural beings, and humans whom they choose to help (or hinder).

The phenomenon of metamorphosis in Greco-Roman written literature is widespread, ranging from Homeric examples, through different literary genres in the Greco-Roman world, and then existing in literary works which were contemporary, or near contemporary, with the writing of both the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts. This chapter will examine a range of metamorphosis stories, and as it is the
most important and well known work in the Greco-Roman world, we will start the
survey of metamorphosis stories with the works of Homer. 183

3.2: Metamorphosis in Homer

Both the Iliad and the Odyssey contain a number of instances of metamorphosis. In
some cases this involves a person taking a form of disguise, or appearing to have
taken on another form. There are other instances of metamorphosis where there is an
unambiguous change in a person’s form. There are also some hints of the
metamorphosis of non-person objects.

3.2.1 Metamorphosis of gods

Metamorphoses of gods, and gods appearing in multiple forms (sequentially), are
common themes in both the Iliad and the Odyssey. A subcategory of these instances,
where the god is disguised and/or recognised, will be dealt with in more depth in
Chapter 4, but an overview of the sorts of transformations gods undertake will be
provided here. Whether or not the gods ever appear in their “true” form is a question
which will also be addressed in Chapter 5.

Whether the gods were conceived of as really being human shaped or not, they did
take on human shape at many times when they interacted with mortals. 184 In the Iliad
the gods often appear in the form of both strangers and familiar people, and
sometimes, but not always, they are later recognised for who they really are.
Warren Smith says that in the Iliad, “the gods need to take on human form to soften
the differences when they pass into the mortal realm.” 185 There are some
unambiguous cases where gods took on human form, and the other characters clearly

183 For a discussion on the importance and centrality of Homeric literature, see Section 6.2.2.
184 Alfred C. Schlesinger argues that this is a literary necessity, and that “whenever a writer wants to
draw a vivid picture of deity acting specifically in this world, that author must assume deity to be
(1936): 19.
believed that they were seeing a human. For example, Apollo takes the form of Asius to encourage Hector to fight on, and Athene that of Deiphobus (in both form and voice). It is interesting to note that in Homer’s work, Zeus never appears in this way to mortals, but only the other gods.

In other instances, whether a human form has been taken by a god is less certain. Does the river god Scamander take on a human shape to talk to Achilles, or does he resemble a man only in so much as he talks? Either way, unlike the preceding examples, Scamander is not trying to fool anyone that he is really human. The human-like form is taken only so communication is possible. Similarly, Athene and Poseidon come in the likeness of humans to talk to Achilles, with no pretension that they are anything but gods.

The gods of Homer take on human or human-like forms for three main purposes. The first is for outright deception to allow them to meddle in human affairs. Athene’s disguise as Deiphobus is taken to bring about Hector’s death, so Hector being deceived by this form is essential. The second reason is to allow communication with mortals, even while their divine identity is revealed. A third reason for gods undergoing metamorphosis, in the Iliad in particular, is to allow the gods to influence human affairs not just by communicating with the humans, but by directly joining the fray and fighting alongside their favoured mortals. In one instance a god, Poseidon, takes on human form to fool, not mortals, but Zeus himself, who has at this point banned the gods from interfering.

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186 Homer, Il. 16.715-25.
188 Homer, Il. 21.213.
190 Homer, Il. 21.284-5.
191 Homer, Il. 22.226-7.
192 E.g. Ares takes on the form of Acamas and fights directly in the battle (Homer, Il. 5.462).
193 Due to a gift bestowed upon him by Athene (5.124-8), Diomedes recognises that it is Ares disguised as a man (5.604), and manages to defeat the god in battle (5.855-860).
193 Homer, Il. 13.357.
Whether or not the gods do in fact undergo metamorphosis into non-human forms in Homer’s works is uncertain, due to the idea that Greek religion has moved beyond theriomorphic ideas of gods, and has fully adopted an anthropomorphic conception. There are, however, several instances in Homer’s work where the gods do take on non-human animal forms.

One form adopted by the gods is that of birds. Athene departs in the form of a bird in the *Odyssey*. It could be argued that what Homer meant was not that Athene departed in the (corporeal) form of a bird, but that she departed in the manner of a bird (for instance flying quickly). The root verb used to describe Athene’s metamorphic appearances is εἰδομαί, which is the same word used when she takes on the form of Mentes earlier in the story. In the latter case she at the very least physically resembles Mentes, and so without a preconceived idea that Athene would not take the form of a bird, the natural conclusion is that Homer meant that she left by metamorphosing into a bird. Similarly, in the *Iliad* Athene and Apollo appear as vultures, and Boreas takes on the form of a horse (again using the verb εἰδομαί). The concept of gods, including Athene, taking on animal forms, does therefore seem to exist in Homer’s work. Proteus, in perhaps the most extreme form of metamorphosis in the *Odyssey*, seeking to avoid capture, undergoes a rapid number of transformations, into a range of animals (a lion, a serpent, a leopard, and a bear) as well as flowing water and a tree. This is a case of serial-polyomorphy under the control of the metamorphosed, making Proteus a shape-shifter.

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194 Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, 32. See pages 177-190 for a discussion on whether or not Greek religion, and Homer in particular, had rejected theriomorphic gods in favour of anthropomorphic ones.
197 Homer, *Od*. 1.105.
198 As argue Heubeck, West and Hainsworth, pointing out that the alternative of “Mentes suddenly levitating towards the roof and squeezing out through a chink in the tiles” is absurd. Alfred Heubeck, J. B. Hainsworth, and Stephanie West, *A Commentary on Homer’s Odyssey*, vol. 1 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1988), 116.
199 Homer, *Il*. 2.759-61. Warren Smith asks the question: “Have they really taken on vulture form, or are they merely like predators, insofar as one or the other will profit, depending on which champion falls?” See: Smith, “The Disguises of the Gods in the ‘Iliad,’” 161.
203 In the *Iliad*, Poseidon (another god associated with the sea) takes on several forms: Ajax (13.45), Idomeneus (13.216-18), and an old man (14.136). The gods are said to take on any shape in Homer, *Od*. 13.313.
3.2.2 Metamorphosis of humans

As well as the metamorphosis of the gods themselves, instances where the gods transform the shape of mortals are also common in both the Iliad and the Odyssey. Perhaps the most distinctive case is Circe turning Odysseus’ men into pigs. Circe, like Proteus, who is also strongly linked with the theme of metamorphosis, is a divinity far removed from Olympus, living alone on an island. Circe performs this metamorphosis with the use of drugs, and a magic wand, and is “the antecedent of later semi-divine or human sorceresses,” such as Medea, and the witch Pamphile. The story of Circe is reminiscent of folk literature metamorphosis stories, although Alfred Heubeck argues that the story is placed in the epic world, with Circe having a complex character, and that “the central elements of the folk-tale are restricted to a minimum.” However, Richard Buxton maintains that the entire narrative surrounding Circe is concerned with the theme of metamorphosis. At the least, the theme of metamorphosis of humans is preserved in this story.

On several occasions a person is transformed into a more impressive version of him or herself: for instance, Athene makes light blaze around Achilles, she makes Odysseus taller and stronger, and makes Penelope more beautiful, taller and whiter. The most central metamorphosis in the Odyssey, however, is the one used

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204 Homer, Od. 10.238.
205 For the island home of Proteus see Homer, Od. 4.412; for the home of Circe see Homer, Od. 10.212ff. Buxton, Forms of Astonishment, 38.
206 For a discussion on the relationship between witches and the objects they use in magic, and the way these ideas have been presented in both literature and paintings see Lilah Grace Canevaro, “Witches and Wicked Objects,” New Voices in Classical Reception Studies, no. 10 (2015): 27–41.
207 Buxton, Forms of Astonishment, 39.
208 Media uses magical herbs to transform an aged ram into a lamb in Ovid, Metam. 7.312-21. See also Apollonius, Argon. 3-4.
209 Pamphile transforms herself into a bird using magical balms (Apuleius, Metam. 3.21). Lucius tries to use this witch’s magic, but instead turns himself into an ass (3.24). This work is discussed below.
211 Buxton, Forms of Astonishment, 41.
212 Homer, Il. 18.204-6.
213 Homer, Od. 6.230; see also 18.70 where Athene increases the strength of Odysseus before his fight with the beggar Irus.
214 Homer, Od. 18.195-6.
as a disguise to allow Odysseus to enter back into his own land unrecognised. This disguise takes place in two ways. The first time Athene puts a mist around Odysseus to avoid him being recognised before her plan is put into place, rather than transforming his shape.\footnote{Homer, \textit{Od.} 13.189f.} This mist makes Odysseus’ homeland unrecognisable to him, and so prevents him from immediately revealing his presence to his enemies. It is not a transformation of him \textit{per se} but of his perception of his surroundings.\footnote{Mists are used throughout the Iliad as a way for gods to hide themselves, or as a way to hide mortals whom they wish to protect.} Later, Athene does not merely cast an illusion over Odysseus, but transforms his actual shape.\footnote{Homer, \textit{Od.} 13.429f (a description of this also occurs in 13.397f).} The first disguise is more reminiscent of the disguises which the gods give themselves, where their actual form is not altered but they \textit{appear} as another person.\footnote{This will be further discussed in Chapter 4. H. J. Rose sees Odysseus’ transformation as the same as the gods give their own bodies – that is an outward transformation only (see: H. J. Rose, “Divine Disguisings,” 63–72 particularly 65). However, it seems that two traditions are being relied upon here. (i) the stories of how gods disguise themselves, making Telemachus’ mistake about his father’s identity when Athene reverses his metamorphosis reasonable (Homer, \textit{Od.} 16.172f); (ii) folk metamorphosis traditions which are also the background for Circe’s magical transformation of Odysseus’ men.} The latter disguise, however, is more reminiscent of Circe transforming Odysseus’ men into pigs; it describes in some detail the actual mutations of the body, and Athene, like Circe, performs the transformation with a wand.

The changes made to Odysseus were largely for the purpose of disguise, but they also say something about his identity at that time. When Athene wishes him to be more impressive, she changes his form to a more impressive one. When she disguises him, the disguise itself, that of an old man who is down on his luck, also represents Odysseus’ actual state. Odysseus’ metamorphosis also serves the purpose of testing his people, and is perhaps a reworking of the folk literature idea of a god or king appearing in disguise to test people.\footnote{Wendy Olmsted, “On the Margins of Otherness: Metamorphosis and Identity in Homer, Ovid, Sidney, and Milton,” \textit{New Literary History} 27 (1996): 170.}

So, Homer’s work does contain some instances of metamorphosis, but the transformation of men into animals or other creatures, which are common in folklore and later literature, is largely lacking in Homer. This does not seem to be due to Homer being unaware of such traditions, but rather may reflect a sharp distinction
between the nature of gods and humans, where the mortality of humans is stressed, and might be compromised by the glimpse of immortality that metamorphosis offers.\textsuperscript{220} The end of human existence in Homer comes through death, not, as was the case in other metamorphosis stories, through a permanent change into another non-human form.\textsuperscript{221}

The works of Homer do contain some reference to metamorphosis stories where there is a permanent transformation, and the transformation functions as a mythological explanation for observed phenomena. He alludes to the metamorphosis of Aedon into a nightingale,\textsuperscript{222} and Halcyone into a bird,\textsuperscript{223} each displaying a transformation which has a significance in itself, rather than just being a transformation showing divine power. However these instances, which are in any case sub-stories rather than elements of the main plot, are the exception rather than the rule. For the most part, the metamorphosis of humans in Homer is not permanent. The metamorphosis of Odysseus, and other major characters was temporary and reversible.

\subsection*{3.2.3 Other metamorphoses}

There are also instances of the metamorphosis of things other than people, such as animals and inanimate objects. Zeus turns a snake to stone,\textsuperscript{224} and Poseidon turns an entire ship to stone.\textsuperscript{225} Both of these instances act as signs to the people who observe them – the snake as a sign about the capture of Troy, and the boat as a warning by Poseidon to the Phaeacians not to thwart his will by carrying any more travellers across the sea.\textsuperscript{226} Here, as is also the case with instances of a god revealing him/herself (for instance Athene as a bird), the transformation acts mainly as a sign to communicate the involvement and will of the gods, rather than the nature of the transformation itself being of primary significance.

\textsuperscript{220} Irving, \textit{Metamorphosis in Greek Myths}, 10–11.
\textsuperscript{221} Buxton, \textit{Forms of Astonishment}, 47.
\textsuperscript{222} Homer, \textit{Od.} 19.518-23.
\textsuperscript{223} Homer, \textit{Il.} 9.563.
\textsuperscript{224} Homer, \textit{Il.} 2.319
\textsuperscript{225} Homer, \textit{Od.} 13.156
\textsuperscript{226} Irving, \textit{Metamorphosis in Greek Myths}, 8–9.
3.2.4 Summary

Both gods and humans undergo metamorphosis in Homer’s works. The gods undergo metamorphosis in order to disguise themselves, and to get involved in human affairs; primarily the purpose of this is to communicate with their mortal allies, or deceptively communicate with their mortal enemies. The humans are metamorphosed in order to disguise them, make them more impressive, and to harm or punish them.

As well as the metamorphosis of these two sorts of characters, there is a hint of a world where metamorphosis of other objects is possible, and the form of objects is not stable and fixed.

Hence, metamorphosis is a convenient literary device for providing a character, be it a god or a human, with a ready-made disguise. Homer’s writing is part of a developing literary tradition in which metamorphosis is used to disguise both gods and heroes. As will be seen in Chapters 4 and 5, Homer’s work, in particular the Odyssey, contains both hero recognition, and revealed god stories.

3.3: Metamorphosis in other literature

Irving suggests that there are three distinct stages in the development of metamorphosis in Greco-Roman literature: Homer, early Greek poets and mythographers (from Hesiod to the tragedians), and the writers of the Hellenistic period and onwards.\(^{227}\)

3.3.1 Metamorphosis in early Greek poets and mythographers

Hesiod contains at least thirteen instances of metamorphosis, and the tragedians relate a further fifteen.\(^{228}\) Because the Hesiodic instances come through their citation by

\(^{227}\) Ibid., 7.

\(^{228}\) See: ibid., 12–13 for a list of these instances.
later writers from works now lost to us, Irving speculates that these metamorphoses were imposed as a punishment after an insult to a god.\textsuperscript{229} So, whereas Homer used metamorphosis as a sign that divine power was at work,\textsuperscript{230} Hesiod used it as a display of divine punishment.\textsuperscript{231}

Irving argues that the tragedians use transformations as examples of the grotesque, or of a disharmony with nature, but in other instances as a means of escape from reality. As an example of the former, Aeschylus treats the transformed Io as a grotesque monster of half human and half cow,\textsuperscript{232} which caused fear, rather than a fully transformed creature.\textsuperscript{233} The transformations display a breaking of taboos and of the natural order, in the same way that Oedipus’ incest does. In other instances it is escape from the harshness of the world which transformations represent, such as Cassandra’s lament that she is to face a harsh death unlike the transformed nightingale,\textsuperscript{234} or the desire to be changed into a bird, or trees, like the Phaeton’s sisters, to escape from grief.\textsuperscript{235} Both of these themes differ from the punishments which are common in Hesiod’s stories,\textsuperscript{236} and from the transformations as a sign of power which are common in Homer. Athenian drama also contains examples of the gods using metamorphosis for disguise, as in Euripides’ \textit{Bacchae}, where Dionysos takes the shape of a mortal, rather than that of a god.\textsuperscript{237}

The themes of metamorphosis were also utilised by comedy writers. Aristophanes uses these themes for humorous effect. In Sosias’ dream at the beginning of \textit{Wasps} for instance, Theoros has transformed (partially) into a raven,\textsuperscript{238} and \textit{Birds} also uses

\textsuperscript{229} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{230} Or, in the case of Circe and Proteus, as an encounter with a powerful and dangerous “magician”, if not an Olympus dwelling god.
\textsuperscript{231} See for instance the story preserved by Antoninus Liberalis, in which Battus is tested by the God Hermes. Hermes entrusts Battus with protecting a herd of cattle, and later returns in disguise to see if Battus will give up the herd for a reward. When Battus does betray the god, Hermes turns him into a stone as a punishment (Hesiod, \textit{Great Eoiae} 16; Antoninus Liberalis, \textit{Metam.} 23). See Irving, Irving, \textit{Metamorphosis in Greek Myths}, 12-13 for further examples, and information on who recorded Hesiod’s fragments.
\textsuperscript{232} Aeschylus, \textit{Suppl.} 564ff.
\textsuperscript{233} Such as the transformation of Odysseus’ men, or the hero of Apuleius’ \textit{Metamorphoses}.
\textsuperscript{234} Aeschylus, \textit{Ag.} 1146.
\textsuperscript{235} Euripides, \textit{Hipp.} 732.
\textsuperscript{236} Irving, \textit{Metamorphosis in Greek Myths}, 17.
\textsuperscript{237} “\textit{μορφὴν δ᾽ άμίσθας ἐκ θεοῦ βροτησίαν}” Euripides, \textit{Bacch.} 4.
\textsuperscript{238} “οὐκοῦν ἐκεῖν ἄλλοκοτον, ὁ Θέωρος κόρας γενόμενος;” Aristophanes, \textit{Vesp.} 47.
the themes of metamorphosis for humorous effect. The theme of disguise of a mundane nature is also common, for instance the disguise of Dionysus as Hercules by throwing on a lion skin in Frogs.

3.3.2 The explosion of metamorphosis stories

In the Hellenistic period, there is both an increase in the number of metamorphosis stories, and the emergence of literature with metamorphosis as the central theme. According to Irving’s count there are thirty-five instances of metamorphosis in the classical period (Homer, Hesiod, the tragedians) but around two hundred and fifty in Ovid alone, many of which are based on stories which appear first in the Hellenistic poets Boios and Nicander (2nd or 3rd Century BCE). Boios’ Ornithogonia describes the origin of species of birds as being transformed people. Ovid also at times uses metamorphosis as an explanation for the origin of animals and plants. Nicander’s work, Heteroioumena, probably from the second century BCE, recounts many transformations of animals and objects. Several other lost Metamorphosis works existed including those of Theodorus, Parthenius, Didymarchus, and Antigonus. Later mythographers provided prose summaries of metamorphoses.

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239 For a discussion of how Aristophanes used the theme of metamorphosis in Birds and his other works see: Buxton, Forms of Astonishment, 63–75.
240 Aristophanes, Ran. Dionysus wears this disguise as the play (“Frogs”) begins.
241 This does not include instances of gods in disguise or the minor alterations made to human heroes, but rather includes the more unambiguous instances only; nevertheless, there is clearly an explosion of metamorphosis instances in later writing.
242 Irving, Metamorphosis in Greek Myths, 19.
244 Boios’ work has been lost but Antoninus Liberalis, in his second century Metamorphoses, summarizes Boios. For an English translation, see: Antoninus Liberalis, The Metamorphoses of Antoninus Liberalis: A Translation with a Commentary (London: Routledge, 1992).
245 Syrinx, when trying to escape Pan, is transformed into reeds, which explains the origin of the reeds used to make pan-pipes (Ovid, Metam. 1.704f).
246 Irving, Metamorphosis in Greek Myths, 24.
247 Nicander wrote the lost work Heteroioumena, fragments of which are also recorded in the work of Antoninus Liberalis.
248 Irving, Metamorphosis in Greek Myths, 19–20.
249 For instance Antoninus Liberalis. See also the list of metamorphoses found on a papyrus: T. Renner, “Papyrus Dictionary of Metamorphosis,” HSCP 82 (1978): 277–93. The text of Heraclitus the Paradoxographer, which was composed in the 1st or 2nd Century CE, also contains a number of
collections is largely aetiological, explaining the origin of both animals, and geographical features, such as stones, trees or springs.

Ovid, when he uses earlier sources, tends to ignore the cult aition, but places emphasis on the traits of the transformed human continuing in the transformed form. Ovid often has a moral message in his metamorphosis stories. The metamorphosis not only explains the origin of a certain creature, plant, or landmark, but also why it was appropriate for the particular human transformed to take their new form. For instance, when Lycaon, the King of Arcadia, having insulted Zeus, is transformed into a wolf, he maintains traces of his former shape, not as signs of recognition but to show that the wolf maintained the King’s evil character. In Ovid, the transformations are sometimes permanent, but can also be reversible. Tiresias was changed from a man into a woman for seven years before being changed back to his former self.

While at least some of the metamorphosis stories recorded in this time period were based on traditional stories, there is a vast explosion in the number of such stories, and many may have been created by Boios, Nicander, Ovid and other Metamorphosis composers, rather than having their origin in folk literature. For the purposes of

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250 A theme which existed in earlier works (e.g. the origin of the nightingale), but which was not the main emphasis of metamorphosis stories, where the themes of disguise, trickery, and divine punishment took priority.

251 For Boios there is an obvious connection between the behaviour of the animal and the characteristics of the transformed human. See: Irving, Metamorphosis in Greek Myths. 25.

252 Nicander, in particular, is concerned with explaining the origin of landmarks important to religious cults. See Antoninus Liberalis, Metam. 4, 23, 30, 31, 32. cf. Apollonius of Rhodes, Argon, which contains several aetiological stories: e.g. the forming of the Cleite spring from the tears of nymphs. (1.1063f)

253 Ovid’s Metamorphoses, although a collection of individual tales, is more than a compilation of stories. Although it does not possess “the unity of a common hero and continuity of plot exhibited in episodic epic like the narrative of Odyssey 5 to 12” it does possess a common theme and structure. Robert Coleman, “Structure and Intention in the Metamorphoses,” CQ, New Series, 21, (1971): 461. Coleman argues that Ovid is aware of and intentionally undermines the heroic ideal of the Homeric tradition (475). See also: Peter E. Knox, Ovid’s Metamorphoses and the Traditions of Augustan Poetry, CPS Supplementary Volume, 11 (Cambridge: Cambridge Philological Society, 1986).

254 Ovid, Metam. 1.237. Similarly, the cow Io is transformed into maintains her beauty (1.610-11), the swan Cycnus is transformed into maintains the fear of heights and the love of water (2.377).

255 Ovid, Metam 3.326f. Other characters also had reversible metamorphoses. The gods themselves are also able to change back from a transformed shape: Io was transformed back into a woman (although still maintaining some of the traits of the heifer) 1.738f.

256 Although the themes themselves, if not the exact examples, are prevalent in folk literature.
this study it is important to be aware of the increased popularity of this sort of story in the Hellenistic period.257

3.3.3 Metamorphosis stories after Jesus

Before stories about Jesus were composed, there existed large number of metamorphosis stories, and it is in the decades before Jesus’ ministry that there is an explosion in the number of metamorphosis accounts, as metamorphosis stories become a genre in their own right, rather than being a minor theme in another genre of work.258 The popularity of metamorphosis stories continues unabated both during the time Jesus’ stories are being chronicled, and afterwards. Ovid’s work was used by authors such as Seneca (c. 4 BCE – c. 65 CE), Lucan (39 CE – 65 CE), Statius (c. 45 – c. 96 CE), and Martial (c. 40 – c. 100 CE),259 all of whom wrote around or shortly after Jesus’ death, in a similar time period to when the stories about Jesus were being written. The theme of metamorphosis, and the existing metamorphosis literature was also known to some Christian writers. As will be demonstrated in Chapter 7, people composing stories about Jesus incorporated metamorphosis themes into their literature, including the metamorphosis of people, animals, and inanimate objects, although this could have been influenced by folk literature as well as written literature. However, the discussion of metamorphosis can also be found in non-narrative Christian writings. Tertullian (c. 155 – c. 240 CE) rejected the idea of human to animal metamorphosis, as it would be impossible for a human soul to occupy an animal body.260 Ambrose similarly rejects the idea of a rational mind entering an irrational animal,261 explicitly mentioning the transformation of Odysseus’
men into beasts. Augustine also displays an interest in metamorphosis stories, and a familiarity with metamorphosis literature. He offers the explanation that any metamorphosis that does take place, is by God’s authority, but that many metamorphosis accounts were in fact delusions caused by demons rather than real transformations.

One of the most notable metamorphosis stories written after the time of Jesus was Apuleius’ *Metamorphosis*. This work narrates the events which take place after a man obsessed with magic, while attempting to transform himself into a bird, accidentally turns himself into an ass. As well as the central metamorphosis of the main character, the work also describes a number of other transformations. For example, a woman’s lover is turned into a beaver because he loves another woman. This is a fitting transformation because, it was thought, a beaver was known to bite off its own testicles and leave them behind to forestall hunters and their hounds. This transformation has a similar logic as an aetiological metamorphosis, but in reverse: rather than a beaver having this characteristic because it is a transformed version of a man who was a betrayer, a man who is a betrayer is turned into this form as a punishment. Other witches possess the ability to transform themselves into any shape they choose. At times the transformations are for humorous intent. In the same

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263 Augustine, *Civ.* 28.17-18. In this passage Augustine explicitly mentions several metamorphosis stories found in Homer, Ovid, and Apuleius’ works. He also relates stories of metamorphosis he has heard in his own travels from both strangers and friends, showing that he was aware of both written literature and the folklore or urban myths of his own time.
265 Although as Perry points out this work differs in genre from other works which are named *Metamorphoses*. Rather than a collection of metamorphosis stories, it contains one central metamorphosis, and follows the story of one main character. Despite Perry’s claim that the story contains only one metamorphosis “properly speaking,” there are a number of transformations described throughout the story. See B. E. Perry, “The Significance of the Title in Apuleius’ *Metamorphoses*,” *Classical Philology* 18 (1923): 229–38.
266 The work is often thus called *The Golden Ass* (*Asinus aureus*) a name coined by Augustine (*Augustine, The City of God* 18.18.2).
269 Apuleius, *Metam.* 2.22.
story, a number of bladders are transformed into men and later killed in a fight. The central transformation, where the protagonist turns into an ass is described in great detail, describing how the hair became more rugged, how the five fingers merged into a hoof and so on. The witch’s transformation into a bird, which the main character was trying to emulate, is similarly described in great detail, leaving no doubt that the metamorphoses in this work are bodily in nature, and are not meant to be thought of as illusions. Like Odysseus’ men, who were transformed into pigs, the transformed characters in this story retain their human minds in their new form.

Interest in metamorphosis collections also continued into the second century CE, with, for example, Antoninus Liberalis compiling a list in his *Metamorphoses*, and a papyrus scroll containing an alphabetised list of metamorphoses in Greek literature which was compiled in the second or third century CE. Up until the fifth century metamorphosis was still a theme in literature, with the poet Nonnos’ *Dionysiaka* containing a wide range of metamorphoses.

### 3.3.4 Metamorphosis stories in Jewish Literature

Both the disguised God and recognised Hero stories in Greco-Roman literature take place against a background of a world in which metamorphosis is featured. Although metamorphosis of people and objects is rare in the Old Testament, there are a few examples which show that there was some presence of the theme of metamorphosis.

Perhaps the most memorable example of metamorphosis of objects takes place during Moses’ and Aaron’s magical duel with the Egyptian magicians. At least two of the rounds of this thaumatalogical boxing match consist of transforming objects into other objects or animals. The first, which has its precursor in Exodus 4:3, involves the

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270 Apuleius, *Metam.* 2.32.
271 Apuleius, *Metam.* 3.24. The sort of detail which has been replicated in any number of werewolf films, where the fingers are seen turning into talons, the nose elongating, and hair getting longer and thicker and so forth. *An American Werewolf in London* provides an archetypal example.
272 The very idea which Tertullian, Ambrose, and Augustine rejected.
274 See Buxton, *Forms of Astonishment*, 143–53.
transformation of a stick into a snake. The second involves the transformation of water into blood. As seen in Chapter 2, stories of duelling magicians are common in folklore, and there are examples of humans and gods transforming both themselves and other objects to outdo their opponents. The miracle where an axe head is made to float\textsuperscript{275} could also be seen as an instance of metamorphosis of an object, which is similar to both folklore instances of objects’ properties being changed, and instances in Greco-Roman literature where the gods similarly make objects lighter than they should be; for instance Zeus makes a boulder lighter so that Hector can hurl it in battle.\textsuperscript{276}

There is at least one clear example of a human person being transformed into a non-living object when Lot’s wife is transformed into a pillar of salt.\textsuperscript{277} The story itself is in the realm of folklore; there is the common motif of being warned by a god not to look back, and disobedience of the god’s command resulting in punishment.\textsuperscript{278} The transformation itself is seen to be partially aetiological, providing an explanation for the origin of salt pillars. This story is similar to many of the transformations found in the \textit{Metamorphosis} collections, in which humans are transformed into animals or geographical features, but is not common within the Old Testament.

Another possible human metamorphosis story is that of Nebuchadnezzar,\textsuperscript{279} also reminiscent of folkloric transformations, in which the transformation acts as a punishment for the King’s arrogance in declaring himself divine.\textsuperscript{280}

\begin{footnotes}
\item[275] 2 Kgs 6:1-7.
\item[276] Homer, \textit{Il.} 12.450.
\item[279] Daniel 4.
\item[280] The transformation of Nebuchadnezzar is reminiscent of the transformation of Enkidu, but in reverse, where instead of a transformation of a beastlike man into a civilised man, the most high of men is reduced to the level of a beast. See M. H. Henze, \textit{The Madness of King Nebuchadnezzar: The Ancient Near Eastern Origins and Early History of Interpretation of Daniel 4}, JSJSup (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 206. Henze points out that this story may have been influenced by Babylonian mythology, which was rewritten to ridicule the King. See also Jason A. Garrison, “Nebuchadnezzar’s Dream: An Inversion of Gilgamesh Imagery,” \textit{BSac} 169 (2012): 172–187.
\end{footnotes}
One might also consider the change which came over Moses’ face after he has been talking to God\textsuperscript{281} as a metamorphosis of a person, as it is reminiscent of the appearance of both gods and heroes whom the gods favoured in the \textit{Iliad} and \textit{Odyssey}. Thus, although not as common as in Greco-Roman literature, the theme of metamorphosis is not missing from Hebrew literature.

In some Jewish writings close to the time the Gospels were composed,\textsuperscript{282} polymorphy is an ability possessed by evil beings; for instance, in the \textit{Testament of Job} (1\textsuperscript{st} Century BCE or 1\textsuperscript{st} Century CE) Satan takes the form of a beggar (6:4), a king (17:2), a whirlwind (20:5), and a peddler (23:1).\textsuperscript{283} Justin Martyr (100 – 165 CE) argues that the entities in Genesis 6:1-4, masqueraded as gods throughout human history, which may indicate they shifted shape.\textsuperscript{284} A similar tradition is maintained in \textit{Paradise Lost} where the fallen angels are described unambiguously as shape-shifters.\textsuperscript{285}

\section*{3.4: Summary}

Metamorphosis is a theme which has excited people’s imaginations since the emergence of the first written material, and from the evidence of folk traditions most likely long before. Metamorphosis was a theme for Homer and the tragedians – but had a surge of popularity with the collections of metamorphoses which began to be compiled in the Hellenistic period when metamorphosis stories had become a genre in their own right. By the time the Gospels and Acts were written, there was an

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Exod 34:29-35.
\item See Section 6.2.2. for a brief discussion on the dating of the Gospels.
\item “They enslaved humankind through trickery, coercion, and magic, encouraging them to worship the demons as gods.” (Justin, 2 Apol. 5). See Annette Yoshiko Reed, “The Trickery of the Fallen Angels and the Demonic Mimesis of the Divine: Aetiology, Demonology, and Polemics in the Writings of Justin Martyr,” \textit{JECS} 12 (2004): 142.
\item “For spirits, when they please, can either sex assume, or both; so soft and uncompounded is their essence pure, not tried or manacled with joint of limb, nor founded on the brittle strength of bones, like cumbersome flesh. But, in what shape they choose, dilated or condensed, bright or obscure, can execute their aery purposes, and works of love or enmity fulfil.” (Milton, \textit{Paradise Lost} 1.23-31). The poem goes on to explain that it was this shape-shifting power which allowed the fallen angels to pose as false gods and lead humanity astray.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
established literary tradition of metamorphosis stories, which continued during and beyond the time the Gospels and Acts were being compiled.

Metamorphosis has been used for a number of purposes in narratives: to provide disguises, to allow gods to interact with mortals, to provide victory in fights, to explain the origin of animals, plants and geographical features, to teach moral lessons, and of course for entertainment. Metamorphosis stories contain accounts of gods undergoing metamorphosis, usually under their own control. They also contain stories about humans undergoing metamorphosis, often due to the will of a god. There are also, however, stories about the metamorphosis of animals and inanimate objects. If a narrative world allows the possibility for metamorphosis, then if a character needs to appear in disguise then metamorphosis is an available option whether the character is a god or a human. For this reason, when looking at the stories in which Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form after his resurrection, it will be informative to see if the wider story takes place in a narrative world where metamorphosis is possible (that is, if other people or objects in the story undergo metamorphosis).

Metamorphosis of humans, gods, and other objects occur in literature from well before to well after the time of Jesus, and there is a particular interest in metamorphosis stories just before the time Jesus’ stories were being composed. The extent to which the writers of the Gospel and Acts would have been influenced by these writings, or whether their audiences would have been aware of these traditions will be discussed in Chapter 6. However, it would be hard to imagine that the composers of the Gospels and Acts would have been ignorant of this widespread narrative tool, and a narrative world which allows metamorphosis would be able to explain Jesus’ unrecognisability whether he is cast in the role of the hero of the story, or as a divine helper aiding other characters.
Chapter Four: Disguised Hero Stories

4.1: Introduction

Humans often appeared in disguise, but the way these characters were used in the literature under discussion, the manner in which they were recognised, and the impact this had on the plot differs from the cases of disguised gods. In this chapter the form or genre of the disguised hero story will be examined, and similarly in Chapter 5 the disguised god story will be investigated. A number of stories in which initially unrecognised heroes appear will be examined in order to determine the common structure and purpose of these stories. The primary example will be Homer’s Odysseus, but a number of other examples will be used to show that there is an identifiable story type. When classifying the various stories investigated in this study, it will be important to know whether the disguised character is the hero of the story, or a helper character; whether the disguised character reveals their identity, or they are discovered via some significant sign or token; and whether any new significant knowledge gained is directly caused by the recognition event. Close attention will be paid to these questions in this, and the next, chapter.

4.2: Introductory Issues Relating to the Analysis of Hero Recognition Stories

Before looking at the stories themselves, a few terms will be introduced. Each of these stories contains a plot device in which some sort of recognition of the hero takes place. I will use the Aristotelian term *anagnorisis* to describe this plot device. An introduction to the concept of *anagnorisis* is best facilitated through the use of examples, which was Aristotle’s approach. However, before moving on to look at the particulars, it will be useful to define, in brief, a number of technical terms which will be used throughout this chapter and those that follow. The terms I use are Aristotelian, taken from his *Poetics*, but the final analysis of *anagnorisis* will not be identical with that of Aristotle. Plot (*mythos*) I will define simply as any account of
events which leads from one state of affairs to a different state of affairs\textsuperscript{286} – or as Aristotle defined it simply “the arrangement of the incidents.”\textsuperscript{287} Every plot, according to Aristotle, needed to have \textit{metabasis}, a term Aristotle uses to mean the turning point of fortunes; a turning from bad fortune to good or from good to bad.\textsuperscript{288} Without \textit{metabasis} there can be no plot – not even a simple one. Aristotle notes that the plot of every tragedy can be broken into two sections - the “tying” and “untying” (τὸ μὲν δὲσις τὸ δὲ λύσις), or “complication” and “unravelling.”\textsuperscript{289} The complication is that part which leads from the beginning of the action up to the point of \textit{metabasis}; the unravelling is that which happens from the beginning of the \textit{metabasis} until the end.\textsuperscript{290} Every plot then requires by definition, according to Aristotle, some change of fortune from good to bad or from bad to good. Aristotle also differentiated between simple and complex plots, which will be discussed after the introduction of two other terms: \textit{peripeteia} and \textit{anagnorisis}.\textsuperscript{291}

\textit{Peripeteia} is related to \textit{metabasis} in that it relates to the changing of fortunes. However, it had a different nuance from \textit{metabasis}, and conveyed the idea of a change of fortunes contrary to expectation,\textsuperscript{292} or a “reversal” of fortunes. Aristotle defines \textit{anagnorisis} as a change from ignorance to knowledge.\textsuperscript{293} This includes the recognition of a person’s identity but goes beyond this to include the recognition of the true situation the character is in.\textsuperscript{294} As will be seen, \textit{anagnorisis} and \textit{peripeteia} are plot devices that often (but by no means always) occur together.\textsuperscript{295}

\textsuperscript{286} Bal says that each fabula “may be considered as a specific grouping of series of events.” Bal, \textit{Narratology}, 189.
\textsuperscript{287} Aristotle, \textit{Poet.}, 1450a4-5.
\textsuperscript{288} Aristotle, \textit{Poet.}, 1451a13-14.
\textsuperscript{289} This is very similar to “Freytag’s Pyramid” which describes plots as having a rising of action (\textit{Steigende Handlung}), which corresponds to Aristotle’s “tying” and a falling action (\textit{Fallende Handlung}), which corresponds to Aristotle’s “untying”. These were on either side of the climax of the plot. Freytag Gustav, \textit{Technik des Dramas}, 3rd ed. (Leipzig: Hirzel, 1876), 100–20.
\textsuperscript{290} Aristotle, \textit{Poet.}, 1455b24-29. This relates to the maxim that every story must have a beginning, a middle, and an end – a saying which also has it roots in Aristotle’s \textit{Poetics} (1450b25-27).
\textsuperscript{291} Aristotle, \textit{Poet.}, 1452a22f.
\textsuperscript{292} See Larsen, \textit{Recognizing the Stranger}, 25.
\textsuperscript{293} Aristotle, \textit{Poet.}, 1452a30.
\textsuperscript{294} These two realizations naturally go together in many instances. For example, the recognition of Odysseus by Penelope is both a recognition of a person (by seeing through his disguise) and a recognition of the changed situation she is in (she is no longer a widow threatened by hostile and greedy suitors – but a wife now protected from danger by a strong man). The changed position she is in – as an unexpected change of fortune – is an instance of \textit{peripeteia}.
\textsuperscript{295} Aristotle notes that \textit{anagnorisis} is most effective when it coincides with \textit{peripeteia} in \textit{Poet.} 1452a 32-33 – citing the discovery in Sophocles’ \textit{Oedipus Tyrannus} as a prime example.
In *Poetics*, Chapter 10, Aristotle distinguishes between simple (*aploei*) and complex (*peplegmenoi*) plots. Both sorts of plots include *metabasis*, by definition, but complex plots also include either *anagnorisis* or *peripeteia* or both.

A last point about Aristotle’s analysis of plots which will be of importance for this study is his observation that a third element of a plot (alongside *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis*) is needed in order for the plot to be a success, which is *pathos*,²⁹⁶ or suffering.²⁹⁷ The presence of reversal and recognition without some emotional impact, on both the characters and the audience, makes the scene much less effective in its ability to communicate the significance of the events, and the changes in the characters’ lives and worldviews.²⁹⁸

Aristotle does not, however, just define *anagnorisis* and these related terms but also discusses *how* this discovery takes place within the Greek poetic genres which existed at the time of his writing.²⁹⁹ Before examining his breakdown of how *anagnorisis* comes about, and what he considered the best sort of *anagnorisis*, it will be expedient to examine a few examples.

### 4.3: Recognition of Odysseus

The most well-known and influential human character to appear in disguise in Greco-Roman literature is Odysseus. In order that Odysseus did not meet the same fate as his comrade-in-arms Agamemnon, who was killed upon arrival in his homeland,³⁰⁰ it was necessary for Odysseus to enter into his own homeland in disguise. Doing so

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²⁹⁷ In some cases this may be the result of *peripeteia* (as is the case in a dysphoric recognition scene), whereas in other instances the moment of reversal of fortunes will eliminate the *pathos* (as is the case in euphoric recognition scenes).
²⁹⁹ The fact that Aristotle had access to only a subset of the material available at the time the Gospels and Acts were written is one of the reasons why the examination of later studies of *anagnorisis* is also essential.
³⁰⁰ The ghost of Agamemnon advises Odysseus to approach his own land and people in disguise (Homer, *Od.* 11.455-6).
meant that he was able to move freely among his friends and enemies without any suspicion that he was in fact the head of the household, and this allowed him to test the loyalty of his servants and companions (including his son and wife). The other purpose of his disguise, from a narrative point of view, is that this allows for a recognition scene (anagnorisis) which is the impetus for the reversal in fortunes (peripeteia) of both Odysseus and the characters who recognise, or fail to recognise, him. In the case of his allies, it means that their time of longing for his return and the uncertainty they constantly live in are going to come to an end. For his enemies, however, their downfall and, ultimately, their deaths are brought about because of their failure to recognise him.

There are several scenes where Odysseus reveals his identity, or he is recognised despite his disguise. In several instances the fortune of the recogniser is changed at the moment of recognition. These are the examples where peripeteia and anagnorisis coincide.

The first such recognition – by Odysseus’ son – seems at first somewhat contrived, as Athene simply magically reverses Odysseus’ metamorphosis temporarily so that his son can see his true identity. Telemachus initially mistakes Odysseus for a god – a reasonable assumption since there are many instances in the Odyssey where gods appear in the form of a human. In fact, the hero recognition story may be an adaptation of disguised god stories, and they share some, but not all, characteristics in common. After Odysseus declares his identity, there is a strong display of emotion with embracing, kissing, and tears.

When Odysseus’ identity becomes clear to his son, Telemachus, the latter is not expected to continue believing that the identity of the beggar is still genuine. That is, this is an instance of “replacement-recognition” rather than “addition-recognition”. The true identity of Odysseus is supposed to replace the false identity of the beggar.

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301 This distinction between revealing and discovery will be explored below.
302 Homer, Od. 16.172f
303 Including instances where Telemachus is the one being visited. E.g. Homer, Od. 1.323, 420.
304 See Murnaghan, Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey, 5–6.
305 Homer, Od. 16.190f, 213f.
entirely. Odysseus is secretly present, but people are deluded in as much as they think that a beggar is present.

In another instance, Odysseus is recognised against his desire, by his elderly servant, Eurycleia. She initially notes a resemblance between the beggar she is charged to wash and her former master Odysseus (his voice and his feet both resemble those of Odysseus). It is the moment when she sees his scar, however, that the realisation dawns upon her and she is certain of the man’s true identity. At this moment the servant’s fate is changed significantly as the household which is being overrun by suitors and enemies of Odysseus is going to be restored to its rightful and former state. The same reversal of fortunes is brought about in Penelope when she finally recognises Odysseus. In her case she takes a great deal of convincing with a number of signs being needed before she acknowledges his identity: first his stringing of the bow that only Odysseus can string, then an actual change in shape to his former glory and, finally, his knowledge of the construction of his bed.

One of the distinctive features of the recognition of heroes is that there is often no need for any word to be spoken for the significance of the recognition to be known, and for new knowledge to be passed onto characters. When Eurycleia recognises Odysseus by his scar, Odysseus does not need to say anything to her in order for the significance of the event to become clear to her. The new knowledge, that the rightful ruler of the household is alive and has returned and that the household will be set back in order, becomes clear to her merely through recognising Odysseus. The same can be said about the recognition scene centred on Joseph in Gen 42-45. When

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306 Although aspects of the beggar’s story are also true of Odysseus.
307 In fact, the next recognition of Odysseus is by his dog, Argos (Homer, Od. 17.300-23), and one of the suitors expresses a concern that the beggar (Odysseus) may be a god in disguise (Homer, Od. 17.484).
308 Homer, Od. 19.380f.
309 This scar will be used as a proof of Odysseus’ identity two more times – in both instances because Odysseus is deliberately revealing his identity (Homer, Od. 21.221f.; 24.300).
310 This could be because she is still unsure of his identity, or because she was not willing to outwardly acknowledge him.
311 Homer, Od. 21.409.
312 Homer, Od. 23.156f.
313 Homer, Od. 23.205.
314 Homer, Od. 29.391f.
the brothers finally recognised who the Egyptian official is,\textsuperscript{315} it gave them new knowledge instantly, and caused them to re-assess their entire past dealings with him, as well as their own past actions. The recognition event also greatly changed the fortunes of the family, and so contains the element of \textit{peripeteia}.\textsuperscript{316}

Within Homer’s world, at least, identity and recognition of a person’s social status would have been strongly bound together,\textsuperscript{317} and the identification of a person’s name would lead to an understanding of their social role. Identifying who Odysseus was, meant more than just the fact that a lost man had returned, it also meant that there was inevitably going to be a reordering of the society around him, and the social recognition that the man was a ruler.

When Odysseus is recognised, his relationship with the recogniser is healed,\textsuperscript{318} and the whole of the society is destined to be restructured. The same is true when Oedipus is recognised,\textsuperscript{319} except in this case relationships are fractured, and the governance of the society is put at risk.

Recognition can come about due to discovery, and seeing through a disguise (even against the wishes of the recognised person) as in the case of Euryclea discovering Odysseus’ identity, or due to the disguised person revealing themselves, or being deliberately revealed by a third party, as is the case when Athene reveals Odysseus’ identity to Telemachus. Even when the recognition is engineered by the disguised individual, tokens or some sort of proof are usually necessary (for example, Odysseus tells his servants who he is, but he still shows them his scar to prove his identity).\textsuperscript{320}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Gen 45:3f.
\item An excellent modern example occurs at the end of \textit{The Sixth Sense}, when the doctor recognises his own identity as a ghost (via the token of his own wedding ring in his wife’s hand) and this causes an instant reassessment of his past experiences (displayed via a quick sequence of flashbacks) and also causes him to reassess the nature of his relationships with both his wife (who is seen to be faithful rather than on the verge of adultery) and his patient (who is suddenly revealed to be a teacher figure, rather than the student).
\item Murnaghan, \textit{Disguise and Recognition in the Odyssey}, 5–6.
\item Although “healed” may be the wrong word to be used with respect to the suitors. However, the relationship between the suitors and Odysseus is changed dramatically, and the relationship is healed in the sense that it is put back into the right orientation, with Odysseus again in charge. Homer, \textit{Od.} 22. See particularly Odysseus’ speech from 22.35ff.
\item This tragedy is discussed below (Sophocles, \textit{Oed. tyr.} 1180f).
\item Homer, \textit{Od.} 21.221f.
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For a human hero, then, there seem to be two options – being discovered or disclosing their identity deliberately – both of which require some sort of sign or proof.\(^{321}\)

### 4.4: Structure and purpose of returning hero stories

There are two ways to address the question of whether the recognition scenes in other stories are similar to those in the *Odyssey*. The first is to see whether the recognition scene plays the same thematic role (such as a healing of relationships, a stimulus for a character’s future actions, a transfer of knowledge, or the stimulus for a radical change in fortunes). The second is to see whether the recognition scenes have the same structure in as much as similar events occur, the events occur in the same order, and the same motifs are used to frame the recognition scene, and so on. These two approaches can be summed up in the two questions about hero recognition scenes: “What are they for?” and “What do they look like?” If it turns out that the majority of recognition scenes have *both* thematic and syntactic similarity to all the other stories of this type, then this weighs strongly in favour of a distinct narrative form.

#### 4.4.1 The structure of hero recognition scenes

**Aristotle’s Analysis of Recognition Scenes**

The vocabulary Aristotle uses has already been outlined above. In this section the manner in which *anagnorisis* comes about will be discussed. Recognition, however it comes about, unless it is completely spontaneous, is typically generated by some sort of evidence, either physical evidence, or verbal evidence, or a mixture of the two. In Chapter 16 of his *Poetics*, Aristotle talks about the various tokens or signs which can bring about recognition. Aristotle puts some effort into not only differentiating

\(^{321}\) As will be seen in Chapter 5, in the case of divine agents sent to help the human hero the recognition is almost always at the initiation of the angel or god. They are never recognised against their will, and the recognition seldom comes as a surprise to them.
between the different ways in which recognition can come about, but also ranking them according to their artistic merit.\textsuperscript{322}

The first category is recognition by tokens/signs (διὰ τῶν σημείων).\textsuperscript{323} By this Aristotle means a physical sign which is visible to the recogniser. He lists a number of possibilities, broken into congenital signs (τὰ σῶματα) such as birthmarks, and signs acquired after birth (τὰ ἐπίκτητα) whether they are bodily (τὰ μὲν ἐν τῷ σώματι) such as scars\textsuperscript{324} or external to the body (τὰ ἐκτός) such as clothing, swords, broaches,\textsuperscript{325} signet rings,\textsuperscript{326} and so forth. Aristotle is scathing of recognition scenes using physical tokens,\textsuperscript{327} but also acknowledges that they are the most commonly used technique for bringing about recognition\textsuperscript{328} (presumably because they require the least writing skill to use).

The second of Aristotle’s types of recognition scene is that invented by the poet (αἱ πεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ).\textsuperscript{329} Naturally any part of a (fictional) account is invented by the poet, but Aristotle meant more than this, and this type of recognition scene is to be contrasted with those which arise from the events themselves (see below). Aristotle is talking about instances where the recognition does not flow naturally from the events in the plot, but certain events have been created specifically in order for a recognition scene to take place. Aristotle contrasts the recognitions of Orestes and Iphigenia, stating that it is natural that Iphigenia should wish to send a

\textsuperscript{322} This aesthetic ranking is not, however, of primary concern for this study; the question is: “Did the writers of the Gospels and the Acts utilize recognition scenes, and were these scenes used for the same purpose as in classical literature?” and not, “Did the Gospel and Acts writers write particularly good recognition scenes to rival Sophocles and Homer?”

\textsuperscript{323} Aristotle, Poet. 1454b20.

\textsuperscript{324} The most famous example being that of Odysseus, although Oedipus also had scars inflicted on him as an abandoned baby, and in Euripides’ rendering of Electra the recognition takes place via an Odysseus-like scar (Euripides having mocked the unrealistic way in which Aeschylus uses the signs of hair, a footprint, and a piece of clothing) See Section 4.5.5.

\textsuperscript{325} These last three were all possessed by Daphnis’ adoptive parents and were the signs by which his true father recognised him.

\textsuperscript{326} Orestes is recognised by a signet ring in Sophocles’ rendering of the Electra narrative (cf. Judah’s recognition in Gen 38:24-26)

\textsuperscript{327} Although he admits that they can be used with more skill in some instances than others.

\textsuperscript{328} This is true for the set of literature Aristotle had at his disposal, but also remains true for material written after Aristotle’s time (as will be seen below in the section which addresses the later development of recognition scenes).

\textsuperscript{329} I.e. The author of the narrative.

\textsuperscript{330} Aristotle, Poet. 1454b30.
letter, but that Orestes revealing himself is a contrivance of the author. Aristotle’s example may be debatable, and which recognitions seem to fit with the plot, and which do not, is to a degree, a subjective judgement. Nevertheless, it is a sound principle that a recognition that does not immediately make the reader aware of the author (by dispelling the suspension of disbelief which a skilful author creates) is a better one.

The third type is that which comes about through memory (διὰ μνήμης). Again this category is not mutually exclusive from the other categories, and it is seldom that any recognition takes place without linking the recognised person to some memory of them.

The fourth category is recognition that comes about through reasoning (ἐκ συλλογισμοῦ), where the reasoning again may be linked to another sort of recognition such as a physical token as is the case with Aristotle’s example: In the Choephoroi (of Aeschylus) Electra reasons thus: someone resembling me has come, no one resembles me but Orestes, therefore Orestes has come. But this reasoning, logically valid as it is, was only possible because of the physical tokens of the hair, and the footprint which informed her that someone resembling her had indeed come. Alongside valid inference, Aristotle also mentions false reasoning (παραλογισμός) for which he provides an example no longer extant (Odysseus the False Messenger). This makes it difficult to know exactly what Aristotle meant by this sort of recognition.

Lastly, Aristotle considered that the best sort of recognition scene was that which arose from the events themselves (ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων) as already

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331 Aristotle, Poet. 1455a18-19.
332 Aristotle, Poet. 1454b33-34.
333 Aristotle, Poet. 1454b37.
334 Aristotle, Poet. 1455a4.
335 Aeschylus, Cho. 194.
336 See Section 4.5.2 for a discussion of the Electra/Orestes recognition stories.
337 Aristotle, Poet. 1455a13-14.
338 Aristotle, Poet. 1455a16.
mentioned. This sort of recognition, especially if it dispensed with the artificial aid of tokens, was considered by Aristotle to be the most artful.

Although Aristotle's categories are not mutually exclusive sets, and his ranking of artistic merit is certainly up for debate, he does give a good overview of a number of ways in which recognition can come about.

**Other Analyses of Hero Recognition Scenes**

The signs of recognition, as described above, form part of the structure of a recognition scene, but this structure can be expanded upon in a number of ways: first by investigating other ways in which the signs of recognition can be described or classified, and secondly by looking at the other aspects of a recognition scene that lead up to and follow the moment of recognition itself.

As noted above, there are several problems with Aristotle’s analysis of signs of recognition: the groups he suggests are by no means mutually exclusive, and which form is better is often a subjective judgement. Perrin, for instance, splits both epic and “dramatic” recognitions\(^{339}\) into four categories:

1. Spontaneous recognitions.
2. Recognitions induced by proof.
   1. Direct and formal by the means of “signs”.
   2. Indirect, informal, and artistic.
      1. With the use of “signs”.
      2. Without the use of “signs”.

Perrin’s reason for this reclassification is that he contends that “Aristotle has been compelled to group together superlatively good and superlatively bad scenes,”\(^{340}\) by which he means that the use of tokens is not the most natural dividing line for assessing the artistic quality of a scene.\(^{341}\) However, although disagreeing on artistic

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\(^{340}\) Ibid., 380.
quality, Perrin uses the same criteria to identify a recognition scene, and debates over the artistic quality are not of primary importance for this study. What Perrin does show, however, is that the criteria he uses for identifying and classifying epic recognition scenes can be applied equally well to dramatic recognition scenes. The main point on which he differs from Aristotle is including “spontaneous” recognitions as a category. Indeed, the example of Dolius’ recognition of Odysseus is instantaneous, and also contains (to a certain degree) peripeteia – although by this time in the story Odysseus was no longer in disguise, and the re-ordering of society and relationships was already well progressed. Since this study is an investigation of disguise, stories of instant recognition will ultimately not be central, but the category will be useful to help differentiate between different types of recognitions. The important point is to be able to identify a recognition scene, rather than to be able to rank it.

There are, of course, many other ways to group or classify recognition scenes. Renaissance writer Lodovico Castelvetro broke down all recognitions into three groups:

I. physical marks  
II. actions  
III. spoken words

This was in reference to a much longer history of recognition scenes than Aristotle had access to.

Kasper Bro Larsen breaks them down into:

I. showing – non-linguistic signs of identity  
II. telling – a spoken claim of identity

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342 He confines himself to Attic tragedy, but as we will see the same criteria will be applicable to later genres.
343 Perrin says that Aristotle places some of these spontaneous recognitions into his category “through memory”, Perrin, “Recognition Scenes in Greek Literature,” 374.
344 Homer, Od. 24.391-399.
III. whispering – information provided prior to the entry of the disguised hero.  

The stimulus for the moment of recognition is not, however, the entire recognition scene. There are events which commonly lead up to a recognition as well as events that commonly follow one. Looking at the surrounding events, as well as the moment of recognition itself, allows hero recognition scenes to be distinguished from the similar divine visitation stories which are examined in the next chapter.

Peter Gainsford examines what he calls the four “moves” which recognition scenes, specifically of Odysseus, tend to have. These are:

- **T=testing**,  
- **D=deception**,  
- **F=foretelling**,  
- **R=recognition**.

The first, testing, takes place when Odysseus is still in disguise and tests whether or not a potential ally is trustworthy and loyal to his cause; deception is where he tells a deceptive story, often about Odysseus’ whereabouts; foretelling is where he foretells the imminent return of Odysseus; and, lastly, recognition is where his identity as Odysseus is revealed. Since foretelling and recognition cannot both occur in the same story a maximum of three of these moves can exist in a recognition scene, and a recognition scene, according to Gainsford, need not involve recognition itself. Much of Gainsford’s paper deals with issues which are applicable only to Odysseus, but many of the themes have a wider utility.

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348 Ibid., 5.  
349 Ibid., 4.  
350 Examples such as “R1: The protagonist’s appearance is enhanced by Athene, thus adding impact to his/her revelation; this often involves a bath” or “D4: He [Odysseus] recalls meeting Odysseus” [ie. Odysseus tells fictional stories about meeting himself, while pretending to be someone else] are not applicable without adjustment outside of the Odyssey. Examples such as “D2: The protagonist gives a false identity” or “R7: The addressee requests evidence [of identity]” or “R9: Joy and weeping at recognition” are applicable to a wider range of stories.
What is immediately apparent is that these four moves must be modified in order for them to have utility outside of the *Odyssey* for several reasons. First, Odysseus is knowingly in disguise, and so is capable of knowingly foretelling his future arrival, knowingly testing his potential allies, and knowingly deceiving them. For characters whose disguise is one that fools even themselves, these sorts of moves cannot be made by the characters themselves, but the same moves can perhaps be made by the author. Also, while the recognition scenes in the *Odyssey* tend to be euphoric in nature, leading to rejoicing and tears of joy, dysphoric recognitions are marked by different outcomes.

Kasper Bro Larsen suggests a different sequence of “moves” whereby recognition comes about, which is applicable to a wider range of recognition scenes. These moves are:

1. The meeting.
2. The move of cognitive resistance.
3. The move of displaying the token.
4. The moment of recognition.
5. Attendant reactions and physical (re-)union.

With the exception of the second point, these moves are self-explanatory, but some explanation of the second move, and how it fits with the material in Chapter 1, will be useful. A move of “cognitive resistance” takes place because there is a moment when both the disguise and the reality are accessible to the recognising character at the same time. In the case of a “replacement-recognition,” two ways of seeing the world are potentially open to the recogniser at the same time:

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351 E.g., Oedipus or Daphnis.
352 That is, the author may set up scenarios that test the other characters’ response to the hero, and so the audience gains knowledge of the trustworthiness of certain characters even if the hero does not.
354 Ibid., 64–6.
1. Before the recognition takes place the hero is present, but does not appear to be present, whereas the character the hero is disguised as appears to be present, while he is not.

2. After the recognition it will become clear that the hero is present, and that the character the hero was disguised as is not present after all.\(^{355}\)

The recogniser must move from the first cognitive state to the second, but often resists this move until more evidence has been provided. At a certain moment both cognitive states are accessible to the recogniser, and something makes the recogniser move from one cognitive state to the other.\(^{356}\) It is the displaying of a token (in Larsen’s list), or another sign of recognition, which allows the recogniser to make this cognitive transition.

How well each of these lists of moves functions over a wide range of recognition scenes from a number of genres will be examined below.

**Framing and motifs:**

As well as the four moves of testing, deception, foretelling, and recognition, outlined above, Gainsford also identifies three scene motifs which do not describe the recognition scene itself, but rather are common motifs that surround the recognition scene:

I: Boundary or framing device marking start of scene.

II: Hospitality scene motifs, such as the providing of a meal.

III: Boundary marking end of a scene. This often takes the form of the protagonist insisting on the need to make plans immediately.\(^{357}\)

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\(^{355}\) In the case of an “addition-recognition,” a similar process takes place. But in this case the two possible cognitive states are 1. Before the recognition takes place the hero is present, but does not appear to be present, and the character the hero is “disguised” as is present and appears to be. 2. After the recognition, it will become clear that the hero is present, and that the character the hero was “disguised” as is also present. In both cases what was formerly a secret is recognised and seen as truth.

\(^{356}\) This is very similar to a “paradigm shift” in the philosophy of science.

\(^{357}\) Gainsford, “Cognition and Type-Scenes: The Aoidos at Work,” 44–5.
Motifs I and III are concerned with the recognition scene as a discrete scene. Motif II indicates that the type-scene of recognition “interlocks” with the hospitality type-scene.\(^{358}\) Although not present in all recognition scenes in the *Odyssey*, the use of hospitality helps to indicate that the person meeting Odysseus has an awareness of his ethical responsibilities in general, and shows that his or her relationship to the house of Odysseus is sound. If the world of the *Odyssey* had any moral code it was that of hospitality to strangers.\(^{359}\) It is for this reason that the suitors, in rejecting hospitality to the “beggar” Odysseus, were both showing themselves to be morally corrupt, and also showing that they were not the legitimate guardians of Odysseus’ kingdom.

Harry L. Levy points out that the suitors are relying upon the hospitality of Odysseus’ household, and they abused this hospitality to the point where they threatened the livelihood of the family.\(^{360}\) The theme of hospitality displaying reliability is prevalent in Homer’s work and in the work of other classical writers, and, as will be seen in Chapter 5, was used in disguised god stories as well as in disguised hero stories.

The recognition scenes which occur in the *Odyssey* may not be an original creation of Homer, but they are the first *recorded* instances that are extant, although, as seen in Chapter Two, the folklore motifs of returning heroes and disguised kings contain all of the same essential elements. The *anagnorisis* device was used throughout the history of literature leading up to and extending beyond the period in which the Gospels and Acts were composed as will be demonstrated below.

In order to demonstrate the way in which recognition scenes form a quite well defined “type scene,” Section 4.5 will examine a number of such scenes and indicate how the

\(^{358}\) See also Gainsford, “Formal Analysis of Recognition Scenes in the ‘Odyssey,’” 44.

\(^{359}\) See for instance Homer, *Od*. 6.207f. where the concept that all strangers and beggars are under the special protection of Zeus is given explicit expression. This is a recurring theme. For example see also: Homer, *Od*. 7.159-164 14.57-8; 14.389. Another reason to be hospitable to strangers, of course, was that it was possible that in abusing a stranger, one was actually angering a god in disguise – a fear expressed by one of the suitors in 17.484. Michael Gagarin argues that hospitality, unlike many of the other actions taken by the characters in Homer, is genuinely moral as it is not motivated by self-interest (or interest for family and friends): Michael Gagarin, “Morality in Homer,” *CP* 82 (1987): 291–2.

\(^{360}\) Harry L. Levy, “The Odyssean Suitors and the Host-Guest Relationship,” *TAPA* 94 (1963): 150–1. Levy suggests that this theme is influenced by a folktale in which hospitality is abused, and this leads to a punishment of the abuser by the gods. This theme is first mentioned in Homer, *Od*. 1:248-51.
recognition scene is represented, and its function in the plot. But before looking at more instances, the structure and purpose of the stories will be summarised.

4.4.2 Summary of Disguised Hero Stories:

The following is a summary of the features common to disguised hero stories. The set of criteria is divided into two sections. The first list is the “structure” of the story, by which is meant the elements of the story which commonly occur. The second list is the “thematic purpose” of the story, by which is meant, the purpose this story serves in the larger narrative. This set of criteria will share some features in common with recognised god stories, but also has some distinctive differences. This list will be used to examine the remainder of the stories in this chapter and later, when investigating Jesus stories, to test how similar the Jesus stories are to disguised hero stories. This list is based on the most relevant criteria from the above discussion, and is strongly reliant on the works of Larsen and Gainsford. The list is used not only to describe disguised hero stories but also, along with the list which will be presented in 5.5.1, will be used to determine whether particular stories fit best into this framework, the framework of a disguised god story, or neither.

The Structure of Disguised Hero Stories:

(i) The hero appears in a disguised form.
(ii) The hero tests his potential recognisers for their loyalty and hospitality.
(iii) Tokens or signs are used to bring about the recognition.
(iv) There is a moment of cognitive resistance, which needs to be overcome.
(v) There are physical manifestations of the recognition, in terms of embracing, tears, and other shows of emotion.
The Purpose of Disguised Hero Stories:

(i) There is a moment of *peripeteia*, or a change in the worldview of the recognisers.
(ii) A re-ordering of society is brought about.
(iii) There is a healing of relationships.
(iv) As well as a recognition of identity, there is also social recognition of social station.
(v) The recognition itself provides new information and drives the plot forward.

4.5: *Other Disguised Hero Stories*

The structure and purpose of a hero recognition story can now be tested on a number of stories from classical literature, starting with some other examples of Odysseus’ recognition, then looking at hero recognitions in a range of different genres.

4.5.1 The *Odyssey*:

Several examples from the *Odyssey* have already been examined. The recognition of Odysseus contains a number of the features outlined in Section 4.4.2. First of all Odysseus is of course in disguise, and this particular disguise is one which has deliberately been chosen, and one he is aware of and works to perpetuate. He has created a “false” identity, which cannot be believed in at the same time as the truth. Any recognition which does take place will be a “replacement recognition” where belief in the fake character is replaced with belief in the true character. Odysseus tests people’s loyalty, deliberately deceives them, makes hints about his return, and is eventually recognised.
A number of different tokens and signs are used to facilitate his recognition (scars, abilities,\textsuperscript{361} shared memory); in some cases the people recognizing him do so reluctantly, slowly, and only after several signs (particularly his wife), displaying cognitive resistance. Even after Odysseus has been transformed to his former glory, Penelope does not recognise or acknowledge who he is.\textsuperscript{362} It is only after he has proved his identity by having knowledge only Odysseus could have (the way his bed was constructed\textsuperscript{363}) that she finally recognises her husband.\textsuperscript{364}

Thematically, at the moment of recognition, there is a moment of peripeteia where the recognizing character must reassess the way they view the world. This involves both a reordering of society, and a healing of broken relationships as Odysseus will now return to being the leader, the husband, and the father. When Odysseus is finally recognised, it is a recognition not just of his identity but also his station: Yes, this is Odysseus! Yes, he is our rightful leader! Those who recognise him have emotional reactions including crying.\textsuperscript{365} After the recognition new plans are laid down, and Odysseus, with the help of those loyal to him, sets about to reclaim his kingdom. It is of course no surprise that the Odyssey fulfils the set of criteria, as the Odyssey was for the most part the work upon which the criteria were created. So we now turn to a range of recognitions to see how they compare to the criteria presented above.

4.5.2 Tragedy

Stories of unrecognised heroes returning home are common in Greek tragedy. These unrecognised characters have some similarities with Odysseus, but some important and distinctive differences. Usually the “disguise” was not supernatural in nature, such as metamorphosis or illusion, but was rather natural, with the most common “disguise” being time: characters do not recognise one another because they have

\textsuperscript{361} Such as his ability to string his bow (Homer, \textit{Od.} 21.409), which causes the suitors great distress 21.12-13.
\textsuperscript{362} Homer, \textit{Od.} 23.156f.
\textsuperscript{363} Homer, \textit{Od.} 23.190f.
\textsuperscript{364} Homer, \textit{Od.} 23.205.
\textsuperscript{365} E.g. Homer, \textit{Od} 19.472.
been apart for a long time, and have grown up and changed in appearance. This is particularly the case for heroes abandoned as babies who would naturally not be recognisable as adults. A corollary of this is that often the character does not know that they are in disguise or unrecognisable (unlike Odysseus who both knew he was unrecognisable, and made efforts to maintain this illusion). This means that the recognition of the hero was one which the hero underwent, as well as the characters he met. It also means that in many cases it was an “addition-recognition”, in as much as an additional identity was recognised, but this did not necessarily involve the old identity being simultaneously rejected. Some examples will demonstrate the similarities and differences to the recognition of Odysseus.

Iphigenia at Tauris

The central characters of interest in Euripides’ Iphigenia at Tauris are Iphigenia and Orestes, brother and sister, children of Agamemnon. Unlike in the Odyssey, in the Iph. taur. we find a dual recognition, as neither Iphigenia nor Orestes initially recognises the other. In their case the “disguise” is not supernatural in nature, but involves aging or time, that is, it is due to them not having seen one another since childhood. Additionally, each thinks the other is dead, so when Orestes is captured and to be sacrificed by Iphigenia neither immediately recognises the other. Learning the two men are from her own homeland, Iphigenia decides to free one and send a letter by his hand to her brother Orestes. In this way Orestes’ recognition of Iphigenia comes about ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων. Upon declaring his own identity, Orestes’ sister disbelieves him, displaying cognitive resistance. She demands a sign, which he gives in the form of old shared memories. The re-union is marked

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366 Several examples are provided below.
367 E.g Homer, Od. 19.480f.
368 Pylades, the comrade of Orestes, is the other central character but is not intimately involved in the recognition scene.
369 This has some similarity to Odysseus’ situation, where part of the reason Odysseus is not recognised is that he has been away for so long and returns looking much older. The Odyssey could perhaps have worked with just this mechanism, but the addition of Athene transforming Odysseus makes it completely clear that it is the Goddess’ plan, and her will that Odysseus returns to his home.
370 Which for good measure she narrates lest the letter itself be lost.
371 Euripides, Iph. taur. 808: τί φης; ἐγὼς τι τάνοδε μοι τεκμήριον;
by them physically embracing one another, with many tears.\textsuperscript{372}

The recognition of each other forces them to reassess their past and future life stories. The supposed enemies are friends, those they thought dead are alive, the victim will live, and the enslaved will be freed. A new plan for future action is also hatched, as they now have to work out how to escape and return home together.\textsuperscript{373} It can be seen then that the \textit{Iph. taur.} contains much of the structure and many of the themes of the recognition scene as defined above. There are signs of recognition, there is resistance to believing (on the part of Iphigenia), and the recognition is sealed with embracing and tears. The recognition is accompanied by \textit{peripeteia}, as each character reassesses their past and future lives, as well as their attitude to one another. The relationship between brother and sister is healed, and plans are now made about how to leave, and return together to their rightful home.

\textit{Electra Stories}

The three tragedians, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aeschylus, all relate the reuniting and recognition of the children of Agamemnon: Orestes and Electra.\textsuperscript{374} Orestes has returned to avenge the death of his father and, like Odysseus, return the household to its rightful owners. However, the three writers have the recognition take place through different means. Aeschylus uses a series of tokens; hair,\textsuperscript{375} a footprint, and an item of clothing, which all indicate to Electra that her brother has returned.\textsuperscript{376}

Euripides, however, rejects the idea of such tokens, pointing out the logical flaws and fallibility of such methods of recognition. Instead, he has Orestes recognised by a distinctive scar,\textsuperscript{377} which recalls Odysseus’ recognition by his scar. For Sophocles the means of recognition is a distinctive signet.\textsuperscript{378} Whatever the method used, the

\textsuperscript{372} Euripides, \textit{Iph. taur.} 831-3.
\textsuperscript{373} In order to bring about this future plan it is necessary for the integrity of the disguise of both Iphigenia and Orestes to be kept.
\textsuperscript{374} The story is related in Sophocles’ \textit{Electra}; Euripides’ \textit{Electra}; Aeschylus’ \textit{Choëphoroi}.
\textsuperscript{375} Orestes leaves a lock of his hair on Agamemnon’s grave (Aeschylus, \textit{Cho.} 5).
\textsuperscript{376} Aeschylus, \textit{Cho.} 165-263.
\textsuperscript{377} Euripides, \textit{El.} 575.
\textsuperscript{378} Sophocles, \textit{El.} 1220-4.
convention of a sign or token of some sort being needed for recognition is adhered to.

There is also in each play an element of cognitive resistance where Electra is reluctant to believe that Orestes has returned, thus necessitating the use of the signs of recognition. The recognition leads to a healing of the relationship between brother and sister, to a reordering of society where the household will be returned to the “rightful” owners, and the moment of peripeteia where defeat is transformed into (potential) victory drives the plot forward and forces the characters to make plans for future action.

**Oedipus Tyrannus**

*Oedipus Tyrannus* contains another example of the unrecognisability being due to vast quantities of time spent apart, and also another example where the unrecognisable character does not know his own identity. Unlike in the *Ion*, the tragedy in *Oedipus Tyrannus* is not averted at the last moment, and it is only after the sins of patricide and incest have been long since committed that the dreadful recognition takes place.

The theme of a healed relationship is inverted, so instead the truth about a taboo relationship is revealed. The moment of peripeteia does, however, lead to a reordering of society, and even to its healing. Oedipus wishes to undertake a self-imposed exile to remove the usurper and the curse on the land, although the play ends with Creon sending him into the palace to seek divine guidance. The dread moment of peripeteia did lead to a drastic shift in the way the characters viewed themselves, each other, and their futures.

Oedipus begins to realise the truth about his identity with a creeping horror, and unlike a euphoric recognition scene, where a character might be reluctant to believe the truth too quickly lest hope be shattered, Oedipus is reluctant to believe the truth because of the horrors accepting it will unleash. The cognitive resistance is

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present, but reversed. Electra may have resisted the idea that Orestes was her brother, despite wanting it to be true, but Oedipus resists the recognition hoping it is false.

There are a series of signs that lead Oedipus to the moment of recognition. The story which the messenger brings him corresponds to his own memories, and finally he can no longer deny the truth about his own identity, and lets out a dreadful cry. As with other abandoned-as-a-child stories, there is a physical sign connecting the adult with the abandoned baby, damage done to Oedipus when he was bound as an infant and left to die, although this is not the primary evidence for his recognition.

This instance then, as a dysphoric rather than euphoric recognition, lacks some elements of the other recognition scenes. There is no joy, embracing, tears and kissing when mother and son recognise who the other is, but rather horror and self-mutilation, which are also very physical signs of a strong emotional response.

The Bacchae

The main character to appear in disguise in the Bacchae is Dionysus, but there is a mortal character who appears in disguise and whose discovery meets some of the criteria laid out in Section 4.4.2.

Pentheus is disguised as a woman in order to spy upon his own subjects. It is Dionysus who suggests and aids Pentheus in this disguise. Thus Pentheus takes on the role of the hero, and Dionysus that of the divine helper, although in this case the divine intent goes against the wishes of the hero. Dionysus also acts as a disguised divine guide as he leads Pentheus to his demise.

When Pentheus arrives to spy on the worshippers of Dionysus, he appears in a

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382 Sophocles, Oed. tyr. 1182.
383 Sophocles, Oed. tyr. 1032-5.
384 Who will be discussed in Chapter 5, which investigates disguised gods.
385 Euripides, Bacch. 821f.
386 As the god himself states in Euripides, Bacch. 965.
different form to his mother, Agave, and companions. Fooled by this divine illusion, they kill Pentheus.\(^{387}\) His mother in her divine madness continues to see the head of a lion,\(^{388}\) rather than her own son’s severed head. The gruesome recognition of the son by the mother comes about not by signs, but by the fading of madness, and the words of her father.\(^{389}\) She then learns that she was the one who killed him, and that this was due to the city’s rejection of Dionysus.

This recognition does not take place due to signs or tokens, but does have some of the attributes of hero recognition scenes, such as the emotional reaction (a negative one as in *Oedipus Tyrannus*), and resistance on the part of Agave to recognising her son. The realisation that it is her son’s head makes the horror of the situation immediately clear. The moral of the story is that one should show respect to the gods, or else face the same fate as these characters, so in a sense there is a re-ordering of society, which is represented not as the healing of relationships, but the breaking down of relationships as the remnants of Pentheus’ family leave their ancestral homes and head into exile.

**Ion**

Euripides’ *Ion* describes another disguise and recognition story where the disguise takes the form of a long period of separation. Creusa abandons her son Ion, who is a product of rape by the god Apollo, to die as a baby.\(^{390}\) Apollo, however, intervenes and the child ends up growing up at Apollo’s temple in Delphi.\(^{391}\) When leaving the child to die, Creusa left the child in a distinctive cot with a distinctive piece of clothing.\(^{392}\) Years later, the now-married Creusa visits the same temple to inquire why she is without child.\(^{393}\) All this is known to the audience from the start of the play, but the characters remain ignorant about each other’s true identities.

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\(^{387}\) This is outlined in Euripides, *Bacch.* 997-1030; the violent description of the death itself in Euripides, *Bacch.* 1115f.

\(^{388}\) E.g. Euripides, *Bacch.* 1174; 1278.

\(^{389}\) She finally realises it is her son’s head in Euripides, *Bacch.* 1284.

\(^{390}\) Euripides, *Ion* 18.

\(^{391}\) Euripides, *Ion* 33f.

\(^{392}\) Euripides, *Ion* 19, 26-7.

\(^{393}\) Euripides, *Ion* 65-66.
Before the true recognition of mother and son, there is a false recognition, where Xuthus and Ion think themselves to be father and son. All the pieces seem to fall into line. The son is the right age, the “father” visited the right region and did indulge in a drunken orgy at a Bacchic feast, and that such a girl may have abandoned the baby to Apollo’s temple seems plausible enough, and lastly Xuthus has received a prophecy that the first man he saw as he came out of Apollo’s temple would be his son. However, this recognition lacks the essential element of tokens or signs of recognition, but despite this the two men accept this “recognition” as the truth, although Ion displays some resistance to accepting Xuthus is his father.

Creusa learns of her husband’s long-lost “son” and is given a false theory about his origin by an old servant. Poised by this false tale and grief over her own “dead” son, Creusa seeks to kill Ion with the poison of Gorgon’s blood, and then Ion seeks to kill Creusa but before either slays the other recognition finally dawns.

This happens when Pythia brings before Ion the items he was abandoned with as a baby and Creusa, by these tokens, recognises Ion as her son. Ion, being sceptical, demands that Creusa tell him what the items he has been handed are. After she correctly identifies these tokens Ion recognises Creusa as his mother. Unlike the false recognition which occurs earlier, this true recognition has proof in terms of signs, emphasising their importance in hero recognition scenes.

The Ion has many of the elements which are outlined in Section 4.4.2. There are signs and tokens of recognition, resistance to recognition, a physical reaction to the

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394 Euripides, Ion 517-561.
395 Euripides, Ion 560.
396 Euripides, Ion 808-831. Xuthus, knowing his wife to be barren secretly took a slave to have his child, and then smuggled the child to be raised in a temple, then lured his wife there pretending to be concerned about their lack of children – but really organizing the reception of his now grown son.
397 Euripides, Ion 1029-1038.
398 See e.g. Euripides, Ion 1220-1028.
399 Euripides, Ion 1351.
400 Euripides, Ion 1397-1401.
401 At this point he is on the verge of killing his mother, Creusa, so he reasonably suspects this is just a ploy to save her life.
402 They are a weaving of a Gorgon (Euripides, Ion 1421), a distinctive necklace (Euripides, Ion 1431), and an olive wreath which has remained miraculously fresh for years (Euripides, Ion 1433-1436).
403 He “recognises” her in two senses of the word. First, he finally believes that she is his mother, and he also outwardly recognises it by declaring it and embracing her. Due to Athena’s advice (1601-1602), however, there is never to be a public recognition – as Xuthus is to be allowed to continue to think that he is the father – this is the false recognition mentioned earlier which Ion now knows to be a lie, but remains true in the eyes of Xuthus.
recognition (embracing and tears). There is a healing of relationships, a reordering of society, and new plans are made where, rather than plots of murder, unity and cooperation and the building of a strong household are planned.

### 4.5.3 Other Hero Recognition Stories

As will be demonstrated in Chapter 6, the writers of the stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances would probably have been familiar with both Homer and the stories related in tragedy. However, it is also possible to show that hero recognition scenes, with the same structure and purpose, continued to exist up to and beyond the time of Jesus. This section will briefly describe a range of these stories which exist in several different genres.

#### New Comedy

Roger Herzel points out that both *peripeteia* and *anagnorisis* are present in comedy as well as tragedy, with, in the case of comedy, the audience actively willing the moment of *peripeteia*, which brings on the happy ending.404

Menander’s *Perikeiromene* (performed around 314/13 BCE)405 is a comedy of reconciliation, which again uses time apart as the disguise which prevents recognition. Like Oedipus, Ion, and Daphnis and Chloe, two of the main characters (Glykera and Moschion) were exposed to the elements to die as infants, but survived. Like these other characters they are later recognised due to the careful retention of the items left with them when they were abandoned to die. The moment of recognition, when brother, sister, and father find out who they all are is euphoric, with shows of positive

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404 Roger W. Herzel, “‘Anagnorisis’ and ‘Peripeteia’ in Comedy,” *Educational Theatre Journal* 26 (1974): 502. Herzel also points out that although Aristotle was writing about tragedy, he would have been writing at the time when “new comedy was the only vital dramatic form,” and therefore states that it is “not unreasonable to speculate that Aristotle’s analysis of the dead form [tragedy] would have been shaped to some extent by the characteristics of the living one [comedy].” (497).

emotion. The moment of recognition\textsuperscript{406} is again joined with *peripeteia*, with each character reassessing how they stand in relationship to each other and society as a whole. David Konstan notes the recognition scene in this play is skilful, as the recognition tokens are discovered during a conflict which leads to various items being retrieved from a house.\textsuperscript{407} In Aristotle’s terms, this is a recognition which arises from the events themselves.\textsuperscript{408}

The recognition in the *Perikeiromene* brings about a healing of relationships, not only between the family members, but also between Glykera and her husband Polemon, who was jealous of the affections Moschion showed towards Glykera. There is also a restructuring of society, as the childless father becomes the head of his now healed household, with his children both married. As was the case in the *Odyssey*, the restoration of the household is the final result of the recognition.\textsuperscript{409} This play thus contains the central features of the hero recognition scene.

**Roman Comedy**

Roman comedy contained similar themes. In the *Poenulus* of Plautus (composed between 198-195 BCE)\textsuperscript{410} for instance, the lack of recognition between the father and his daughters, and nephew, is due to separation when the daughters and their cousin are kidnapped as children.\textsuperscript{411}

Hanno and Agorastocles recognise one another first by a *tessera hospitalis*,\textsuperscript{412} then by a shared memory displayed by them knowing the same people in their past,\textsuperscript{413} then lastly by a distinctive scar (caused by an animal bite) on Agorastocles’ hand.\textsuperscript{414} When

\textsuperscript{406} The recognition scene is contained in Menander, *Perik.* 774-825.
\textsuperscript{408} ἐξ αὐτῶν τῶν πραγμάτων (Aristotle, *Poet.* 1455a16).
\textsuperscript{410} Gregor Maurach, *Der Poenulus des Plautus*, Wissenschaftliche Kommentare zu griechischen und lateinischen Schriftstellern (Heidelberg: Winter, 1988), 33.
\textsuperscript{411} Plautus *Poen.* Prologue; See also Plautus, *Poen.* 4.2.
\textsuperscript{412} A token of hospitality. Plautus, *Poen.* 5.2.87-89, Hanno declares that he possesses the same token in 5.1.25.
\textsuperscript{413} Hanno is related to Agorastocles’ parents so recognises their names. Plautus, *Poen.* 5.2.107-111.
\textsuperscript{414} All three signs of recognition are contained in Plautus, *Poen.* 5.2.112-115.
they realise they are related, Hanno promises that Agorastocles will have his property returned to him. He also asks for the help of his new kinsman, which eventually leads Hanno to be reunited with his daughters. There is no great turn of fortunes or display of emotions with this recognition, since that is reserved for when father and daughter are reunited. Hanno learns about the presence of his daughters not via the recognition of Agorastocles itself, but rather because Agorastocles reveals the presence of his daughters to him verbally.

The recognition of Adelphasium and Anterastilis by their father also comes about through a memory of his which is shared with that of the slave Milphio who describes how these two women were stolen as children, and provides an accurate description of their nurse, who was kidnapped with them. The nurse instantly recognises Hanno. When Hanno reveals his identity to his daughters, they show some reluctance in recognising him, but the nurse’s testimony convinces them.

The play ends with healed relationships: the daughters have regained their freedom; Adelphasium and Agorastocles are to be married; Hanno has his household back and is now the head of a family. This example shows that the narrative device of a hero recognition scene can work in a romantic comedy as well as it does in epic and tragedy.

Roman Tragedy

Roman tragedy continues to produce hero recognition scenes. Seneca (c. 4 BCE – 65 CE) created some dysphoric examples. In his *Hercules Furens*, Hercules recognises not another person, but the fact that he has slain his own family. This is similar to the recognition on the part of Agave that she has slain Pentheus. Hercules

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415 Plautus, *Poen.* 5.3.
417 Alan McN. G. Little lists several other plays of Plautus which all contain anagnorisis: Cistellaria, Rudens, Curculio, Aulularia, Epidicus, Captivi. See Alan McN. G. Little, “Plautus and Popular Drama,” *HSCP* 49 (1938): 219.
realises that he must have been the killer in part because only he could have drawn the bow.\footnote{Cf. Odysseus being the only one being able to string his bow.}

Seneca also retold the Oedipus story. He places more emphasis upon the scars Oedipus bears from the failed attempted murder of him as a baby, and it is this sign which brings about his self-recognition.\footnote{Seneca, \textit{Oedipus} 811-2, 857.} The result is the same as Sophocles’ rendering of the story with a display of negative emotion,\footnote{See for example Seneca, \textit{Oedipus} 952f.} the self-mutilation (in more graphic detail), and a breakdown of his relationship with his mother and wife (resulting in her suicide). Seneca makes it more explicit that this recognition does in a sense lead to a positive reordering of society as Oedipus’ guilt is expunged, and a curse removed from the land.\footnote{At least this is Oedipus’ hope. See Seneca, \textit{Oedipus} 975-6.} Seneca’s reworking of Greek tragedy both demonstrates and helps to maintain the popularity of these works containing hero recognition scenes at the turn of the first century CE.

The genre of tragedy continued to present hero recognition stories which had the same structure and purpose as Greek tragedy, at least up until the time when Jesus was born.

\section*{Greek Romance:}

The second century CE\footnote{Bryan P. Reardon, ed., \textit{Collected Ancient Greek Novels} (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 285.} work \textit{Daphnis and Chloe} contains one pivotal recognition scene. The recognition scene is clumsily constructed, and strictly unnecessary for the plot, but it is intended to serve the purpose of creating a moment of \textit{peripeteia} where the fortunes of Daphnis and his family are reversed.

Daphnis was abandoned by his rich family as a baby, suckled by a goat, and then raised by a peasant family as a goatherd. When his biological parents abandoned him, they left several tokens with him (a purple cloak, a golden brooch, and a small
His adoptive parents stored these tokens away and raised him as their own son. Years later, when engaged to be married and seeking the permission of his master, Daphnis caught the eye of a man with some influence with the master’s son, and was to be taken away to be his lover. This caused the parents to reveal the tokens to prove that Daphnis was from a noble family, and save him from being taken away from his fiancée. The “twist” is that the master recognises the tokens as the items he had left with his own son when he abandoned him, and so father and son are re-united, and what seemed like a disaster as the two lovers were about to be torn apart is turned into a perfect marriage as Daphnis not only marries her but is also set up with wealth for life.

Although the recognition scene is not strictly necessary, it does fit the criteria outlined above. The recognition scene heals relationships, reverses the situation of the hero from disaster to perfection, and allows the plot to reach its conclusion. As well as this, it is accompanied by signs of recognition in the form of tokens, and a change in the knowledge of the characters takes place directly from the recognition. The hero remains after the recognition to make new plans, and the recognition takes place while entertaining guests, linking in with the theme of hospitality.

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425 Longus, Daphn. 1.1-2.
426 Daphnis is a slave, and Gnathon petitions Astylus to ask his father (Daphnis’ master) to give him Daphnis to be his lover. Earlier in the story, while drunk, Gnathon had attempted to seduce and then rape Daphnis (Longus, Daphn. 4.12).
427 Longus, Daphn. 4.16-17.
428 Longus, Daphn. 4.18-20.
429 Longus, Daphn. 4.21.
430 Chloe, Daphnis’ love interest, also has tokens which indicate that she, like Daphnis, is of noble birth (4.30ff). These are used to show that she is worthy of marriage to Daphnis, and are also used to re-unite her with her father – although there is no reversal initiated by this recognition which merely ties up some loose ends and completes the symmetry between the two main characters.
431 Earlier in the story Daphnis had been provided with the opportunity to marry Chloe by divine intervention, and the recognition was only needed to escape the amorous man who seemed to be introduced precisely so a recognition scene could be used.
432 Almost self-consciously so. The biological father is made to point out that the items were left with Daphnis as funeral items, not as tokens of recognition – perhaps showing that the author was well aware that his audience would be well acquainted with the genre he was using. There is an obvious echo of Euripides’ Ion here.
433 Daphnis and Chloe also provides evidence that metamorphosis stories were still in circulation at this time. Although the story does not involve any metamorphosis in the narrative itself, some of the stories which the characters tell one another occur in Ovid’s Metamorphoses (e.g. the origin of pan-pipes; the story of Echo).
Another second century CE story of lovers reunited, thinking each other to be dead is Xenophon’s *Ephesian Tale*[^434]. The eventual reuniting of the romantic couple does not involve a classic recognition scene, but it does recall the Electra and Orestes story[^435] as their reunion is brought about due to them both visiting the same memorial[^436].

### 4.5.4 Hero Recognition Stories in Jewish Literature

Jewish literature also contains a number of stories in which a human appears in an unrecognisable form. This section will discuss a selection of these stories to see if they have similar characteristics to Greco-Roman stories containing an unrecognised mortal.

When Tamar finds out that she is not to be given Judah’s son in marriage, she disguises herself in order to force Judah’s hand. She disguises herself by changing her clothing[^437] and putting a veil over her face[^438]. The veil may have been a sign that she was a prostitute, but its purpose in this story is to make sure that she is not recognised[^439]. Unlike characters such as Oedipus, Tamar is completely aware that she is in disguise. The disguise is so successful that Judah has sex with her, thinking her to be a prostitute. She demands that he give her a selection of objects[^440] as a guarantee that she will be paid later, but in reality she takes these items to prove his identity later. From a narrative perspective, these objects are taken by Tamar so that they can be used as tokens of recognition later in the story.

[^434]: See Reardon, *Collected Ancient Greek Novels*, 125.
[^436]: The temple contains a memorial to the two lovers themselves (Habrocomes and Anthis) which has been set up by their former servants. Both lovers stumble upon this memorial (Xenophon of Ephesus, *Ephesian Tale* 5.10–12).
[^437]: Wenham argues that the implication is that she must have adopted both the “dress and posture” of a prostitute in order to be so readily mistaken for one: Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, WBC (Waco, TX: Word, 1994), 368.
[^438]: Gen 38:14.
[^439]: Victor Hamilton translates verse 15 as “Seeing her, Judah assumed she was a prostitute, even though she had veiled her face” and argues that it was the place she met Judah, rather than the veil, which led him to believe that she was a prostitute. See: Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18–50* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 438. See also Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 368, who states that “while not actually saying that Tamar dressed as a prostitute, the text implies that the dress and posture she adopted made her easily mistaken for one.” What is important is that she was in disguise.
[^440]: A seal (קדש), cord ( اللعبة), and staff (палец) (Gen 38:18).
When it is later discovered that Tamar is pregnant, she is accused of an illicit sexual relationship. She is to be executed, but sends a message to Judah saying that if he wants to know the identity of the man by whom she is pregnant, then he can be identified by the three tokens which she has held onto. Judah, upon recognising his own seal, cord, and staff realises the truth of the situation.

As a result, Tamar is transformed from being a disgraced woman with an illegitimate child about to be executed into a mother with children from Judah’s family line (which was her original intention). Judah’s perception of her, and relationship with her, is fundamentally changed as soon as he recognises that she was the woman with whom he had sex. This change comes about without any words having to be spoken. The recognition itself communicates all of the new knowledge which Judah gains. The recognition is not merely the identification of Tamar, but also reflects Judah’s recognition of his own situation, and the change in his attitude.441

The relationship between Tamar and Judah is healed, in as much as she is now in a secure place in his household. Judah acknowledges that Tamar is in the right, but there is no celebration at this recognition. There is also no cognitive resistance on the part of Judah, and the recognition itself is presented in just two verses.442

Despite the suddenness of the recognition itself, this scene does contain an initially unrecognisable heroine who is recognised through the use of tokens. This recognition by itself brings about new knowledge, a change in relationships, and a change in Judah’s understanding of his life, and relationships.443

This scene resembles the recognition of Odysseus in as much as both characters are deliberately and knowingly disguised. Any recognition that takes place is a

441 Thomas L. Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, & Theological Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001), 364; David W. Cotter states that this passage belongs in its present setting because “it shows us how [Judah] grows enough to take on the challenges that his generation will face and to lead it successfully through them” (*Genesis, Berit Olam* [Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003], 278–9). In other words, the purpose of the scene is to allow Judah to recognise not only Tamar, but also aspects about himself.


443 Jonathon Kruschwitz points out that the Tamar story interrupts the story of Joseph, and both of these stories contain *peripeteia* and *anagnoristis*, and deception which makes the recognition necessary: “The Type-Scene Connection between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story,” *JSOT* 36 (2012): 383.
replacement-recognition, since once Judah realises the truth he can no longer go on believing that Tamar and the prostitute both exist. Once he knows that it was Tamar all along, the “prostitute” character is revealed to be a lie.

The next example - the story of Joseph - resembles the recognition of Oedipus, and several other characters from tragedy. The character in question does not deliberately take on a disguise, but also does not reveal his identity. It is an example of an addition-recognition, with an additional identity being added, rather than his identity being completely replaced. Also in common with Oedipus, time apart from his family after being abandoned is the cause of the unrecognisability.

Joseph is abandoned by his brothers, and sold into slavery. His father is led to believe that he has been killed.\[^{444}\] The brothers do not see Joseph again until they venture into Egypt in search of food and Joseph is the one in charge of distributing grain. Joseph recognises\[^{445}\] his brothers instantly, but pretends\[^{446}\] not to recognise them. The reason for not recognising him may be due to the time spent apart, the assumption that he is dead, and his different appearance as Egyptian official (including the fact that he uses an interpreter to talk to them). Joseph tests his brothers in a number of ways, the first in demanding that they bring the youngest brother to see them.\[^{447}\] Like Odysseus, Joseph listens to his brothers discussing his own fate,\[^{448}\] and in displaying remorse the brothers partially redeem themselves.

Joseph’s full identity becomes known to his brothers when he becomes so overcome with emotion that he declares who he is.\[^{449}\] His brothers are too shocked to reply, and he again tells them who he is. But the second time he says not only his name, but provides proof of his identity by giving them some information which only Joseph

\[^{444}\text{Gen 37:12-36.}\]
\[^{445}\text{נָכַר.}\] This idea is stated in verse 6 then further emphasised in verse 8 using the same verb twice:
\[^{447}\text{This may be simply because he wishes to see Benjamin, but Joseph could also be fearing that his younger brother has met the same fate as himself and been killed or sold into slavery. He is in effect testing that his brothers are worthy of his aid.}\]
\[^{448}\text{Gen 42:21-23.}\]
\[^{449}\text{Gen 45:3.}\]
could know: that he was sold into captivity by his brothers. This is presumably a secret known only to the brothers and their victim, and is not a piece of information an Egyptian official would have access to, and so acts as a recognition sign. This disclosure is followed by a display of emotion with kissing and weeping.\footnote{Gen 45:14-15.}

The final recognition is that of Joseph’s father, who is still convinced his son is dead.\footnote{Gen 45:26.} The brothers tell their father Joseph is still alive, but he does not initially believe them, thus displaying cognitive resistance.\footnote{Gen 45:28.} After hearing the brothers’ story, and seeing the wagons Joseph has sent to collect him and his family, he finally believes.\footnote{Gen 46:29.} When he meets his long lost son he hugs him and Joseph weeps.\footnote{Gen 45:28.}

The end result is that the family is reunited, relationships healed, and the family has moved from a situation of poverty and desperation where they are struggling to find enough food, to one of great wealth and privilege. Although Joseph does issue instructions to his brothers and his father, the moment of recognition itself communicates the fundamental shift in knowledge: the father now knows his son is alive, and the brothers know that their relationship with their brother is healed.

The stories surrounding Jacob and his family also contains a false recognition, when Isaac is fooled into blessing Jacob because he “recognises” him as Esau due to the Esau-disguise which Jacob has put on.\footnote{Gen 27:1-29.} The theme of disguise and recognition also plays a part in the “witch of Endor” story when Saul puts on a disguise, and is recognised.\footnote{1 Sam 28:8-14.}

Hence, within the Hebrew narrative literature there are examples of hero recognition stories which share many of the characteristics of Greco-Roman hero recognition stories, including: a disguised hero, testing of the recognisers, signs and tokens being used, cognitive resistance on the part of the recognisers, emotional displays upon recognition, peripeteia and a change in worldview, a healing of relationships,
reordering of society, new knowledge being gained, and the plot being driven in a new direction due to the recognition.

4.6: Analysis and criteria

The above selection of examples demonstrates that the theme of the unrecognisability of a hero was a theme used in literature well before, during, and after the time the Gospels and Acts were composed. The recognition scenes also continued to demonstrate a similar structure, and to serve a similar purpose in the plot. These story types exist in both Greco-Roman literature, and the Hebrew Bible.

The set of relevant criteria for identifying and describing unrecognisable hero stories have already been presented in Section 4.4, and in Section 4.5 it was demonstrated that this set of criteria was applicable to a range of literature beyond Odysseus’ story. Having examined a range of different unrecognisable hero stories, it is now possible to summarise the findings in terms of the three questions asked in Chapter 1.

The first question asked whether the unrecognisable character was a Hero or a Helper character. This chapter has been confined to looking only at disguised heroes, so all of this set of stories fall into the “Hero” subset. The second question asked whether the recognition of the character came about through the character revealing his or her identity, or as a result of recognition due to some significant action, sign, or event. In the case of heroes, whether the hero knows he or she is in disguise or not, some form of proof is required in order for the other characters to be convinced of the hero’s identity. This may be physical, like a scar or a distinctive object, or else verbal, in the form of a shared memory. As will be seen in the next chapter, this differs from the recognition of gods who either reveal themselves as a fait accompli, or else are recognised due to features of their nature, rather than distinctive features of their identity. The third question was whether new significant knowledge is gained as a result of the recognition. In contrast to the case of the gods, a great deal of significant knowledge is passed on merely by recognising the hero’s identity without any additional information needing to be provided. In terms of the binary codes outlined in Chapter 1, then, this set of stories fall into the grouping:


4.7: Summary

This chapter has investigated stories in which a human appears in an unrecognisable form and is subsequently recognised. Humans appear in disguise for one of two reasons. The first is to deliberately fool other people that they are communicating with someone else (as does Odysseus). In other instances, however, the unrecognisable human is not deliberately disguising themselves at all, and may not know either that they are in disguise, or even what their hidden identity is (as is the case with Oedipus). The moment of recognition is one which the unrecognisable character shares in. When a hero is recognised it usually drives the plot in a new direction, as is the case with gods, but there are a number of dissimilarities. The recognition is brought about by a sign or token, and the recognition itself confers knowledge. This knowledge precipitates a paradigm shift in the way the recognisers (which may include the hero him or herself) view the hero, their relationship with the hero, and their place in the world. That is the recognition of heroes is accompanied by peripeteia.
Chapter Five: Divine Visitor Stories

5.1: Introduction

In Chapter 3 instances of gods or other supernatural entities appearing in disguised forms were discussed. This chapter will deal specifically with the instances where gods appear in human form to mortals, including when they are disguised as a known or unknown man or woman and the instances where they are either recognised as divine, or else reveal their divinity deliberately.

Divine visitation stories constitute a potentially huge category, and so, for the purpose of this thesis, I only discuss the most relevant aspects. Although gods sometimes appear undisguised, or at least in a form that does not hide their divine identity, I am interested specifically in those times when either the god is initially disguised and later recognised, or the god’s identity remains a secret to all but the author and audience. I will outline the different ways in which gods appear, and then discuss the instances that fit a disguise-recognition or a disguise-revelation pattern.

As with disguised heroes in the preceding chapter, when looking at disguised god narratives, the three questions raised in Section 1.3.1 will be used to assess the characteristics of the stories.

5.2: Undisguised and unrecognised gods

The purpose of this thesis is to investigate specifically those instances where a person (including gods) appears first in a disguised form, and is later recognised. However, since the stories in which a recognition takes place may also contain gods who appear undisguised, or else who remain disguised, and since it is possible for a character to be recognised in one scene, appear undisguised in another, and be unrecognised in a

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457 1. Whether the unrecognisable character is a hero or a divine helper.
2. Whether the recognition comes about through discovery or revealing.
3. Whether new significant knowledge is gained as a result of the recognition.
third, it will be useful to examine the instances where a god is either undisguised, or else unrecognised.

5.2.1 Undisguised gods

Two different senses of “undisguised” will be used in this section. In the first category, a god may appear in a different form, but fully expect the people to “recognise” who they are. In the second category the god appears in their full divine form with no disguise or veil whatsoever.

It is generally the greater deities who appear in disguise. The *plebs superum*, although powerful in their local environment, and dangerous if offended, since their nature is not one which is so terrible and destructive to behold, could interact with humans in their natural shape.\(^{458}\) For example, Thetis visits Achilles\(^{459}\) without any dire effects or great fear.\(^{460}\) It is less certain that the greater gods ever appeared in their true form to mortals. In order for gods to communicate with humans at all they had to take on some form and in the Greco-Roman world this was often a human form.\(^{461}\) This means that they were, by necessity, taking on a form which was significantly different from their own even when they were not disguising their identity. Throughout the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*, the gods take on the form of other humans, either specific humans,\(^{462}\) or else an unnamed human such as a herald,\(^{463}\) a young lord,\(^{464}\) or an unspecified man.\(^{465}\) At other times the gods appeared

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\(^{459}\) Homer, *Il.* 18.70.

\(^{460}\) Cf Appolomius’ Argonautica I, 1296 where the (lesser) god Glaucus causes no great distress to the Argonauts, though appearing openly. According to Ovid this god started out life as a mortal before a magical herb transforms him into a sort of merman (Ovid, *Metam.* 917-959).


\(^{462}\) E.g. Iris disguises herself as Laodice to influence Helen (Homer, *Il.* 3.121-2). Poseidon takes on the form and voice of the prophet Calchas (Homer, *Il.* 13.45). Athene disguises herself as Mentes (again with the “form and voice” formula) (Homer, *Od.* 1.105f), as Mentor (Homer, *Od.* 2. 268), and as Telemachus (Homer, *Od.* 2.383). Many more examples exist.

\(^{463}\) Athene in Homer, *Il.* 2.280.


\(^{465}\) Athene in Homer, *Od.* 8.93 and again in 13.221-2. Again many other examples exist.
“undisguised” in a human form which permits the person to whom they appear to recognize that they are in the presence of a god.\textsuperscript{466}

In the case of divine visitors who do initially appear in a disguised form, it is an instance of replacement = delusion + secret. That is, once it is realized that a god is present, the observer cannot also continue to believe the man or woman is also present. Whereas it might turn out that a long lost son is in fact also the King’s servant, or a long lost daughter is now the Princess, this cannot be true about a Divine being revealing his or herself. Once it is realised that it is a god who has been met, the previous identity of the Herald, the servant, the beggar, and so on, must be rejected.

For the Ancient Greeks, at least, the assumption seems to be that the “true” form of their gods is anthropomorphic, but vastly larger, stronger, more beautiful, and so on, than that of any mortal.\textsuperscript{467} The epithet, “god-like” in Homer,\textsuperscript{468} although formulaic, is used of mortals whose physical or mental attributes exceed the “run-of-the-mill” mortal, especially those who have a god at the head of their family line.

Hence, any anthropomorphic form could be seen as a “disguise” or a form taken on for the sake of interacting with the mortal world. However, whether this is true may differ from story to story. Even within one work the way the gods are presented may not be consistent. George M. Calhoun points out that Homer’s presentation of the gods is a mixture of the numinous and the absurd or humorous.\textsuperscript{469} Zeus is at once the almighty “whose nod shakes great Olympus”, but also a “furtive, henpecked

\textsuperscript{466} For example Athene in Homer, \textit{Od}. 13.287-90 appears in the form of a woman to talk to Odysseus, and the river god Scamander appears in human form to talk to Achilles in Homer, \textit{Il}. 21.213. In each of these cases the form they take is not necessarily their “own” form, but is a human form which is necessary to talk to the humans they interact with.

\textsuperscript{467} At least within narratives. As Cicero notes, among philosophers there was a vast range of opinions about the outward form of the gods, where they dwelt, whether they influenced the world, and indeed whether the gods existed at all. See Cicero, \textit{Nat. d}. 1.1-2.

\textsuperscript{468} E.g. \textit{θεοειδής} in Homer, \textit{Il}. 17.494 (of Arethus),17.534 (of Chromius), in Homer, \textit{Od}. 1.113 (of Telamachus); \textit{ἀντίθεος} (“equal to the gods”) in Homer, \textit{Od}. 1.21, 4.741 (of Odysseus); 11.512 (of Nestor); rarer \textit{θεοείκελος} in Homer, \textit{Il}. 1.131 (of Achilles).

\textsuperscript{469} Calhoun compares this to the Dionysus of the Frogs who is “at once the august divinity of the festival and the chief buffoon of the play.” George M. Calhoun, “Homer’s Gods: Prolegomena,” \textit{TAPA} 68 (1937): 19.
husband." This raises the question of how seriously the anthropomorphic depictions of the gods were supposed to be taken in Homer. Calhoun suggests that the concept of the gods had already been elevated to the “realm of the rational and the universal,” but that Homer also maintained the stories of the gods from older myths and folk tales in which the gods were presented much more like humans than transcendent powers and exemplars of ethical ideals. Others, however, argue that Homer, and other early Greek writers clearly believed that the gods were primarily human shaped. Looking for a consistent theology in Homer may be a futile task since Homer uses the gods sometimes as cosmic forces, sometimes as characters from mythology and folklore, and sometimes as comic relief in an otherwise dark plot. G.M.A. Grube similarly warns that “Homer was a poet and not a theologian, and passages that are not logically consistent may well be by the same hand.” This means that within Homer there can be found examples of gods who are both cosmic and transcendent, and gods who are almost human-like, or perhaps even so farcical as to be subhuman. The theological views of Homer are not the focus of this study, but it is important to realise that a range of different ways of presenting gods exists.

When gods are taken as a cosmic force, and thus immaterial, every appearance of the gods in human shape is a “disguise” of some form. If gods are seen as transcendent, then there are two levels of being “undisguised” for a god. The first is where the disguise is genuinely and fully removed, resulting in catastrophic effects for

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470 Ibid., 11.
471 A similar question might be asked about the anthropomorphic presentation of the God of the Old Testament in the courtroom depictions and allusions, such as those in 1 Kgs 22:19, Dan 7:9, Zech 3, and Job 1:6-7.
477 See footnote 467.
478 Calhoun points out that “when gods are dramatic personae, they are subjected to the artistic necessities involved in the action; to this extent they must on occasion lay aside their godhead.” Calhoun, “Homer’s Gods: Prolegomena,” 19.
the humans who encounter the god. The second is where some form of disguise is maintained, but the disguise itself is intended to reveal the god’s identity. As Warren Smith argues, “many passages [of the Iliad] point to the utter alienation of divine from mortal in appearance and nature; because of this alienation, the gods need to take on human form to soften the differences as they pass into the mortal realm.”

If, on the other hand, the gods are seen as actually being human-like, then some of the appearances may be in the god’s actual form. In either case the god has no intention to deceive or disguise himself or herself, so for the purpose of this study, this theological question can be put to one side.

The most dramatic instance of a greater god appearing in an undisguised form is perhaps the destructive appearance of Jupiter to Semele. The mortal woman requests to see the god in his true form and is then utterly consumed. The presence of Apollo at the start of the Iliad, although couched in anthropomorphic language, and although it is the arrows of Apollo which reap destruction, rather than an appearance completely undisguised, also displays the catastrophic and deadly result of an encounter with a greater god. In the story of Cupid and Psyche, the mortal woman’s life is also destroyed when she disobeys the god and looks at his face, although here the destruction seems to be linked more to disobedience than to the nature of the god being inherently destructive. Other examples abound. As will be seen, the tradition that looking upon God leads to death is one which is also prevalent in the Hebrew tradition. The dreadful and, at its worst, destructive nature of an encounter with the gods was usually reserved for the greater gods.

When not destructive, being in the presence of a god who has deliberately revealed him or herself can still cause intense fear and awe. This is the case in those instances

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480 Ovid. Metam. 3.30-9-9.
481 Homer, II. 1.47.
482 Apuleius. Metam. 4.28-6.24.
483 E.g. In Euripides’ Ion, Ion says that he and Creusa should flee when Athena appears, for fear of gazing upon a God. (Ion 1549-1552). In Apollonius’ Argonautica, 2.650f, an appearance of Apollo leaves the Argonauts awestruck and afraid to look at the god. Elsewhere, however, Athene remains unseen as she aids them by saving their boat, despite the very anthropomorphic imagery used (2.590f). Exodus 20:20-23 also presents the idea that to behold a god directly is inherently dangerous.
where the god has taken on a human form, but one which is too impressive to be mortal: luminescent, beautiful, and strong. Although this is perhaps still a mask over the god’s true and destructive nature, it is not a disguise in as much as the god wants the mortal to be aware of his or her identity.

When Athene appears to Odysseus as a tall and beautiful woman, she does so not to fool him that it is a mortal woman he is seeing, but to make him aware that he is in the presence of a goddess. This is to be contrasted with her appearance to Telemachus as Mentes, or as Laodocus to Pandarus where she does not intend the human to realise she is a goddess.

The Homeric Hymns also describe the unearthly appearance of gods. For instance, in the Hymn to Aphrodite, Aphrodite claims to be a mortal woman (complete with a fabricated history). One reason she appears in the form of a human is so that Anchises will not be frightened by her. When the goddess does reveal herself, however, Anchises reacts with fear. Similarly, Metaneira is struck with fear by the divine form of Demeter.

The gods, in order to be able to communicate with mortals at all, must by necessity, appear in some form; but the form a given god took was not constant, and this could be taken as evidence that there was no true form, although there was perhaps a habitual form. It is for this reason that Odysseus can imply that Athene is polymorphous since she has the power to take on any shape she chooses. In one

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485 Or alternatively is appearing in his or her true human-shaped form. As noted above distinguishing which of these ideas was intended by each author is not important for this study. The important fact that both interpretations agree upon is that the god is not hiding his or her identity, even if they are hiding their true nature.

486 It is for this reason that Telemachus mistakes Odysseus for a god, since the appearance which Athene gives Odysseus matches that which the gods give themselves when they wish to be recognised as gods (see H. J. Rose, “Divine Disguisings” for a longer discussion on Odysseus taking the same form as a divine visitor).

487 Homer, Od. 13.288.

488 In this case the recognisable disguised form is one taken on after an unrecognizable disguised form. This is a pattern that is common with gods revealing themselves.

489 Homer, Od. 11.313-14.

488 HH 5 182.


492 Homer, Od. 11.313-14.
sense, then, the gods never appear in an undisguised form, apart from the rare cases where their presence is destructive. So when not obliterating mortals, the greater gods, although always “disguised”, sometimes choose to be recognised as a divine beings, and it is in this sense that the gods are appearing in an “undisguised” form.

5.2.2 Unrecognised gods

Gods appear in disguise, then, so that mortals encountering them are not harmed, so that some form of direct communication between the human world and the divine world is made possible, and to aid humans directly. The disguise also acts as a sign that the gods are involved in this action, and so to indicate to the audience that the event and the character the god interacts with are central to the plot. “It is an established convention of the Homeric epic that a major character must be attended by gods, and great events in his or her career must be marked by supernatural manifestations.”

This is true whether the hero is being helped or opposed by gods (as in the case of Hector’s death). It is important to point out that the events unfolding are the will of the gods.

In many instances the god would take on the form of a human and complete their “human” task without ever being recognised. Thus Iris deceives Helen in the form of her sister-in-law, completes her task and then departs with Helen none the wiser that she has encountered a god.

There is little need, in terms of plot development, for the messenger to be a god, apart from the fact that such a main character’s appearance must be accompanied by a divine actor to underline the significance of the scene.

Similarly it is a god in disguise (this time Aphrodite) who leads Helen from the walls to Alexander’s palace. In this instance, however, the god is recognised due to her

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495 Athenes disguises herself as Hector’s brother (Deiphobus) in order to lure him into fighting and being slain by Achilles. Homer, Il. 22.226f. Similarly Apollo speaks to Hector in the form of Mentes and departs without the deception coming to light (Homer, Il. 17.73).
496 Homer, Il. 3.121f.
498 Homer, Il. 3.383f.
beauty and flashing eyes. Although it is possible that the god will be recognised, as in the previous example, this is not essential. The audience knows that the event has been guided by divine powers.

When disguised as human beings, gods either appear as an unknown and generic person (e.g. Poseidon appears as an unnamed man), as an unknown but well defined person - possibly with a fictitious identity (Hermes appears as a young lord with a ready-made history), or as a particular existing individual (Iris as Laodice, or as Mentes).

5.2.3 Summary

The gods are presented in a number of ways in Greco-Roman stories. In one story a god could be presented as a being too awesome to come face to face with, while in another story a god could be almost human in manner. When the gods appear to humans “undisguised” this takes place in one of two ways: either the god is an unveiled awesome power which is fatal for mortals to encounter, or else they are a much more glorious version of a human, but obviously divine.

In other instances the gods could appear in a disguised form which characters they encountered never uncovered. This could be to directly help a character, and to act as a sign to the audience that this was a character of significance, and an event of significance.

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499 Homer, Il. 13.357.
500 Homer, Il. 24.353f.
501 Homer, Il. 3.121.
502 Homer, Il. 4.87.
503 Homer, Od. 1.105.
5.3: Recognised or revealed hidden gods

There are, however, other instances where the god is recognised for who he or she really is. This recognition is usually due to the god revealing his or her identity, but there are some instances where it seems as though the god has been discovered rather than revealed. Daniel Turkeltaub describes a number of the ways humans recognize the divine in the *Iliad*: 1) Post factum recognition, where the human deduces the divinity after the god has left, 2) the unrecognised god announces his or her identity, 3) the human recognises the god’s voice, 4) the mortal recognises the god via some visual clue, 5) the mode of recognition is not mentioned in the text, but the human seems to know they are dealing with a god. Even in the cases where the mortal “discovers” that the god is not really a human, this is often because the god wishes to be recognised, and it is “calculated to inspire action or cooperation in a mortal.” As will be seen below, the same god can appear in some instances entirely unrecognisable, and in other instances recognised via signs of divinity, within the same literary work.

I will look at three types of scenes in which gods appear disguised. In the first, a god appears to help a hero by providing a piece of information, or by giving them a mission or command; that is, the disguised god acts as a messenger. In the second, the god comes to test the hero by appearing in disguise to see how he reacts, while in the third, a god travels with a hero and aids him on his mission.

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504 In Heliodorus, *Aeth.* 3.12.1-2, the priest Kalasiris claims that the gods can be recognised by eyes which never blink and have extraordinary intensity, and by the way they move by gliding without touching the ground. See Kathryn Chew, “Eyeing Epiphanies in Greek, Latin, and Sanskrit Texts,” *Phoenix* 65 (2011): 162–3.
5.3.1 Gods as messengers

Often a god will visit a human in disguise in order to pass on some information or instructions or to influence them to act in a certain way. In order that the god’s mission be successful, they often take on the form of a person who is close to, or trusted by, the human they are visiting. The information they pass on to the human, or the instructions they give them are by no means always true or in the best interests of the human. Rather, the information or instructions are to further the god’s aims.

While Iris disguises herself as Laodice, and Athene as Laoducus and they remain undetected, Aphrodite similarly disguises herself as a friend of Helen, but in this instance the god is recognised by Helen due to her radiance. The key difference between these cases may be that Aphrodite did not wish to disguise herself fully, and that it was in her interests that Helen knew her true identity. Although the god is recognised, it is not due to any particular sign, token, or action, but due to the disguise being incomplete. This differs from the recognition of heroes in the previous chapter.

When Athene issues instructions to Odysseus, she at first appears as a young man, but then reveals herself as she outlines her instructions to him. Although the information could have been given to Odysseus equally well in another form, the source of the information is important. Knowing that it is a god who is advising him makes Odysseus receptive to the plan.

Similarly, at the start of the Odyssey, Athene visits Telemachus, who immediately responds with an offer of hospitality (which is not offered by the suitors). She arrives disguised as Mentes, an old friend of Odysseus’, and represents herself in words also as this man. The knowledge that she passes on to Telemachus is that Odysseus is not dead, and that indeed his return is imminent. This knowledge is not about Athene,

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507 As the word suggests, in some cases (particularly Christian literature) angels take the place of gods as the messengers who pass on information and instructions.
508 Which may or may not also be in the interest of the person they visit.
509 Homer, Il. 3.385f.
510 Homer, Od. 13.221f.
511 Homer, Od. 1.105f.
and it is also knowledge which is not, and could not, have been gained directly from Telemachus’ recognition of Athene. She also advises Telemachus to set out on a quest to find out what has happened to Odysseus. The disguised god is a helper and a sender, rather than the hero of the story. It is only after the knowledge has been given to Telemachus, and he has once more offered hospitality that Athene reveals her identity. She transforms into a bird and flies off, letting Telemachus know that it is a god with whom he been conversing. This does not change the knowledge which he has received; but knowing that the information came from a god does give it additional weight, prompting him to act. It also lets the audience know that this is a character of importance, and a significant event, although this could have been accomplished without Telemachus sharing the audience’s knowledge.

One of the ways in which a god acts as a messenger is by commissioning the hero to a role of significance, such as prophet, king or missionary. Istvan Czachesz explores the way commission narratives are used in the ancient world, including the Acts of the Apostles. Commission narratives often result in the hero’s life being altered in a dramatic manner (for example, Saul is changed from a farmer’s son, looking for his lost stock, into the king of a land; another Saul is changed from a persecutor of Jesus’ followers, into Jesus’ missionary). These stories serve an aetiological purpose, in as much as they explain why the hero is who he is, or how he ended up in that role. Why is Saul the King, or why is Paul now an apostle of Christ? Again the god is not the central character in the narrative, but a helper and sender character.

In order for a commission story to work, the hero must be (at some stage in the story if not immediately) aware of the identity of the one speaking to him. In order for the commission to be of any significance to the hero, the god can no longer be in disguise,

512 This differs from the knowledge gained through the recognition of a human hero which was outlined in Chapter 4.
513 The same can be said about several divine/angelic visitation stories in the Bible, for instance, Gen 18:1-15; Judg 6:11-24, 13:3-23, as well as the visits of angels in the infancy narratives of Luke.
515 1 Sam 9:10-10:16. The anointing itself takes place at 10:1.
although he or she may have been in disguise at the initial meeting.

A commission narrative is possible without any form of disguise, so only a subset of these stories would fit into the scope of this study. Many of the Old Testament commission narratives state the nature of the commissioner openly: Pharaoh places Joseph in charge of his Kingdom;\(^517\) Yahweh sends Moses to Egypt and explicitly declares who he is.\(^518\) In Jonah we are simply told that the word of the Lord came to Jonah and commanded him to go to Nineveh.\(^519\) On the other hand, Athene sends Telemachus on his mission when disguised as Mentes.\(^520\)

Some commission stories, however, do contain an element of disguise. Czachesz identifies the key features in what he describes as the “commission form”:

1. An introduction which sets the scene.
2. A confrontation where the “sender” confronts the hero in some way.
3. A reaction to holiness (fear, covering the face, falling down).
4. The commission itself where the sender tells the hero what he is to do.
5. Protest or reluctance, such as the hero declaring his unworthiness.
6. Reassurance from the sender.
7. Description of the task.
8. Inauguration, possibly involving ceremonial acts.
9. Conclusion, and the hero beginning the commissioned task.\(^521\)

Several of the appearances of Jesus in the apocryphal Acts have many of the above features, as will be seen in Chapter 7.

Uriel Simon, when specifically looking at Biblical call narratives, notes that reluctance is a common feature of the stories. He also notes that an initially erroneous

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\(^517\) Gen 41:41.
\(^519\) Jonah 1:1.
\(^520\) Athene does, however, reveal her identity to Telemachus and he realises she is a god (Homer, *Od.* 1.323, 420), and also importantly, her identity is known to the audience, who therefore know that Telemachus’ mission is commissioned by a god.
identification of the divine is common. Commission stories therefore perform the roles of making it clear (to the commissioned character and the audience) that the present plan of the hero is supported by the divine agent, and of driving the plot in a certain direction, and thus altering human history. The way in which the hero gains knowledge is via direct communication (usually verbal) from the sender, rather than via a moment of realisation (peripeteia) brought on by the recognition of the sender.

5.3.2 Gods as guests

Hospitality is closely tied to divine visitation scenes – possibly more so than it is to hero recognition scenes. A recurring theme in the Odyssey is gods visiting in disguise and being (or not being) given a hospitable welcome. This idea, that all strangers and beggars are from Zeus, is repeated elsewhere in the Odyssey, and elsewhere such as in the Argonautica where Zeus is mentioned as the strangers’ god. Similar points are made concerning the encounter with the Cyclops, where Odysseus relies on the expected hospitality of the Cyclops to strangers, but instead is captured to be eaten. Another perversion of the expected rules of hospitality occurs when Odysseus’ men encounter Circe, who, like the Cyclops, rather than giving them food, makes them into food, in her case by turning them into pigs rather than by direct cannibalism. Even one of the suitors trying to steal Odysseus’ home is aware of the importance of hospitality in case the guest turns out to be a god.

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523 E.g. Homer, Od. 1.119-20, 1.123-4, 17.484-7.
525 Apollonius of Rhodes, Argon. 2.360.
526 Homer, Od. 9.173f, 9.265f.
527 Homer, Od. 17.484.
This theme is preserved in the *Idylls* of Theocritus where the virtue of welcoming the stranger is lauded, in particular the hospitality shown towards poets.\footnote{Theocritus, *Id.* 16.19 has a householder state: θεοὶ τιμᾶσιν ἀοιδοῦς. “The gods honour poets,” but in order to point out that he need not show hospitality himself! The poet then goes on to explain the folly of this attitude.} Similarly in the *Argonautica* of Apollonius of Rhodes, King Cyzicus has received a prophecy that things would bode ill for him if he met Jason and his men with arms. Taking this prophecy seriously, he showed them hospitality, and the next day they left. However, prophecy and fate are not so easily cheated, and an ill wind saw the Argonauts returned to the same land the next night, and Cyzicus fearing an invasion went out to battle and was slain by Jason. This is an instance where the lack of recognition, and breaking of hospitality rules are closely tied together, and lead to disaster – even though the lack of hospitality was unintentional.\footnote{Apollonius of Rhodes, *Argon.* 1.960f; 1040f.} The theme of the virtue of hospitality, and the dangers of refusing hospitality, even inadvertently as in the case of King Cyzicus is a near universal theme in Greek literature.

The categories of “entertaining gods” (*theoxeny*) and “god as messenger” are not mutually exclusive. Telemachus entertains Athene as a guest, and is then provided with information and issued instructions. In fact it is the providing of hospitality to the disguised god which shows that Telemachus, unlike the suitors, is worthy of receiving the help of the god. Odysseus is also received by the swineherd and shown hospitality in the same way as a visiting god would be, supporting the hypothesis that Odysseus’ disguise, at this time, is meant to be seen as similar to that of the gods.\footnote{John Taylor argues that “In the Odyssey and in later Greek literature recognitions of people (and internalised recognitions, moments of self-knowledge and of insight into the workings of the world) are modelled on scenes where a god is recognised and retain something of the atmosphere of those encounters.” John Taylor, *Classics and the Bible: Hospitality and Recognition* (London: Duckworth, 2007), 4.}

The theme of the entertained god or angel occurs in a number of other Greco-Roman works. For instance, several *Homeric Hymns* also have stories where gods appear in disguise and are entertained (or not) by humans. In the *Hymn to Dionysus*, Dionysus is captured by pirates and, due to the lack of hospitality shown to him, wreaks...
destruction upon them. One man however realizes that he is a god, and demands Dionysus be shown respect. Nevertheless, the others ignore him and only recognise that Dionysus is a god when vines start to appear on the ship, in other words, when Dionysus reveals his divinity. The one man who did show hospitality to the god is not punished, but rewarded. Here, as in the case of Telemachus, hospitality and recognition are closely tied together. The already mentioned *Hymn to Aphrodite* also follows this pattern in as much as Anchises shows hospitality to the disguised Aphrodite, and is rewarded by gaining a son who will rule over the Trojans. In the *Hymn to Demeter* the god (Demeter) takes on the form of a mortal woman to retreat from the world of the gods, and in disguise is shown hospitality by a human family, first by the daughters, but later by the mother. The family is rewarded by having their infant son raised to be a god-like immortal. There are two places in this story where the god is recognised. The first is only a partial revelation and recognition, where the god is described as both large and radiant and causes fear in Metaneira. However, she fully transforms herself when she is caught seemingly mistreating the infant. Here she stops looking old, changes her size and appearance and even her smell. Her divine body also shines brightly. This fits the general pattern of gods in Greco-Roman literature being more radiant and larger than humans even when disguised, and then becoming still larger and more luminous when they reveal their identity. Again Metaneira reacts with fear, but this time in a more extreme form.

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531 *HH* 7 6-54.
532 By interpreting the fact that the bonds holding Dionysus fall away as a sign of divinity. Cf. Euripides, *Bacch.* 615f where the fact that bonds cannot hold him is a sign of his divinity, and 443-450, where the chains of his followers fall away. The story of Peter being freed from his bonds by an angel (Acts 12) also bears certain similarities to both of these Dionysus stories.
533 This story also serves as an instance of metamorphosis, which often takes place when a god is recognised, but in this case it is into a Lion in order to punish the sailors for their lack of hospitality. The transformation of Dionysus may fall into the category of shape-shifting, rather than divine disguise since here, and in the *Bacchae*, Dionysus is presented as a god visiting the human world. The sailors also undergo metamorphosis, turning into dolphins as they dive into the sea.
534 *HH* 5 196-7. Note that this story bears a strong resemblance to the story of Abraham being visited by divine visitors in Gen 18:1-16, as Abraham is also told that he will be the father of a great nation. See the beginning of the next chapter for more on this story, and whether it fits the pattern of a reward for hospitality due a disguised god.
535 “For the gods are not easily discerned by mortals” *HH* 2 111. Note that the goddess is disguised as an old woman (γυναῖκα) which is reminiscent of Odysseus’ disguise as an old man.
536 This reward is only partial however – as the god relents when she is disturbed performing some magic on the child. The result of this disturbance, and the main emphasis of the story, is the formation of the cult to Demeter – which could also be seen as a reward of sorts.
537 *HH* 2 190.
538 *HH* 2 275-280.
After revealing her true identity the god vanishes. This story also fits into more than one category – the goddess issues a command to the woman (to build a cultic centre for her) before vanishing, so as well as receiving and rewarding hospitality, she also acts as a messenger.  

In the Bacchae, as in the Hymn to Dionysus, Dionysus appears in disguise, and again the lack of hospitality theme plays a central role. The first lines of Euripides' Bacchae reveal that Dionysus walked upon the earth in Hellas in the form of a man, specifically a priest of his own cult. Pentheus seeks to destroy the cult, and thus sends soldiers to capture the disguised Dionysus. Like Odysseus (and Athena), Dionysus creates a false identity and uses a fictional history to validate his physical “disguise.” Dionysus mocks the fact that Pentheus cannot see that the very god he inquires about is standing right before his eyes, saying that it is his impurity which stops him from seeing. Ultimately the punishment delivered to Pentheus for his inability to recognise the disguised god, and for his lack of hospitality, was death at the hands of his own mother.

The theme of hospitality also occurs in Ovid’s Metamorphoses which relates the story of Philemon and Baucis: Jupiter and Mercury visit an elderly and impoverished couple in the disguise of poor mortals, and are shown elaborate hospitality by them, after having been rejected by their wealthy neighbours. The gods then cause a great flood, from which only Philemon and Baucis are saved, displaying both a reward for the hospitable, and a punishment for the inhospitable.

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539 It is interesting to note that the goddess was in the process of making the child immortal as a reward for her hospitable reception, but that this reward is withdrawn on account of the mother’s negative reaction. The demand for the establishment of the cult will prove to be a boon for the family and region, but it is imposed to offset the offence to her initial ξενία.


541 Euripides, Bacch. 355. The shackles fall from the hands of Dionysus’ devotees (444f) and doors of jails are opened by supernatural forces. (A similar event happens in Acts 12:7f when Peter is aided by an angel who makes his shackles fall away and leads him out of the jail).

542 Euripides, Bacch. 460f.

543 Euripides, Bacch. 501-2.

544 Although a disguised god plays a major role in the Bacchae, as will be seen in the next section, a main purpose of disguise for the tragedians was to disguise the mortal hero, and use the removal of this disguise as a plot driver. In fact the “disguise” in the Bacchae which causes the most dismay is the failure of Agave to recognise her own son before she kills him. This was discussed in Chapter 4.

545 Metam. 8.631-720. The elderly couple is also given the further reward of having their house turned into a temple to Jupiter and Mercury, and also granted a form of immortality by being transformed into
5.3.3 Gods as companions

The final type of story to be considered is the God-as-Guide story, where a divine helper accompanies the hero on his quest, and facilitates its successful completion. As has already been seen, this sort of story is common in folk traditions, and again can be found in Homer.

The gods intervene directly in the battle in the *Iliad* in multiple ways. The most basic is by micromanaging the battle to the extent of deflecting arrows and spears (Diomedes thinks his enemy *must* have an invisible god by his side who is deflecting the well-aimed arrows\(^5^4^6\)); actively joining in the battle (Aphrodite and Apollo intervene to save Aeneas from the raging Diomedes\(^5^4^7\)); or lead the battle from the front.\(^5^4^8\) They also routinely intervene by hiding their mortal charges from view (Hephaestus covers Idaeus in darkness to allow him to escape in battle\(^5^4^9\)), and even transporting them back to safety (e.g. Aphrodite both hides Paris in a mist and then transports him away\(^5^5^0\)). The gods also at times heal (e.g. Apollo heals Glaucus’ wound,\(^5^5^1\) and Thetis “heals” the corpse of Patroclus, making it incorruptible\(^5^5^2\)).

These actions are relatively short term, and do not involve the god travelling with the hero, or taking on a disguise for a significant period of time. They do, however, show that the gods of Homer are very active in human affairs, and are their helpers even if they are not always present. Two examples, where a god does accompany the hero for a longer period, stand out in Homer. The first is the assistance given by Hermes to

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\(^5^4^6\) Homer, *Il.* 5.185-189.
\(^5^4^7\) Homer, *Il.* 5.311ff.
\(^5^4^8\) Poseidon in Homer, *Il.* 14.384ff. Whether these instances are meant to be taken metaphorically or as literal interventions by the gods, the *imagery* used is that of gods directly intervening in human struggles as divine helpers.
\(^5^5^0\) Homer, *Il.* 3.380-2.
\(^5^5^2\) Homer, *Il.* 19.25ff. The body of Hector is similarly made incorruptible by Apollo (23.185ff).
Priam. Hermes takes on the form of a young lord (complete with a fictional history) and travels with Priam into the Greek camp, assisting him in a number of ways. At the end of the journey Hermes reveals his true identity. The second is Athene accompanying Telemachus on his journey, constantly disguised as Mentor. She too assists the hero in a number of ways, and then at the end of the journey reveals her identity. One of Telemachus’ companions explicitly states that Telemachus must indeed be a good man if he has gods as guides at such a young age! In each of these cases the god is not the hero character with a quest to fulfil, but rather is helping the hero; the god reveals his or her identity, rather than it being discovered via a sign or token; and in each case no new significant knowledge is gained from the recognition event itself. As a final example, in the Bacchae Dionysus acts as a guide for Pentheus, while disguised as one of his own priests. He is leading Pentheus to his demise, rather than acting to help him, but still performs the role of a disguised divine companion.

5.3.4 Summary

Although the gods often appear to mortals in disguise and their identity is never known, in a subset of stories the god reveals his or her identity, or else is recognised by the hero due to some divine characteristic. The reasons gods appear and then are recognised in these stories is the same as the reasons they appear in stories in which they are not recognised: to directly influence human affairs, and to indicate that the events which are taking place are under divine guidance, and therefore of great importance. Since the gods seldom reveal their divinity in all of its glory, even the recognised gods appear in a form which protects mortals from harm.

Whether the god appears as a messenger, as a guest, or as a companion to the human, or a combination, they are in general not the character who has a quest or mission, but are rather the character who gives a quest, or aids the hero on the quest. As such the

553 Homer, Il. 24.345f.
554 Homer, Il. 24.460.
555 Homer, Od. 3.372.
556 Homer, Od. 3.375.
557 As the god himself states in Euripides, Bacch. 965.
gods are not usually the heroes of the story. Even in the *Bacchae* where Dionysus plays a central role, it is Pentheus and Agave who undergo a vast change in their situation and knowledge. In most of the encounters, the relationship between the god and the hero is not radically reassessed in light of the god revealing their identity, *in as much as* the mortals knew before the god revealed themselves that the gods were powerful beings who intervened at times to help them; they just did not know that this was happening at that exact moment. This is particularly the case in Homer, where the gods routinely visit and assist humans.  

5.4: *Disguised supernatural beings in Jewish literature*

While metamorphosis stories about people and objects are comparatively rare in the Old Testament, stories about God in disguise (or disguised angels) are relatively common, as is the idea that divine beings are dangerous creatures to encounter face to face. The motivation for the use of disguises by God (or other supernatural beings) in the Old Testament, as will be seen, is the same as the motivation in Greco-Roman literature: first, to protect mortals from harm, second to test them (and punish or reward), and lastly to act as a divine helper or guide. The stories also let the audience know that the events to follow are part of a divine plan. The following examples will illustrate the existence of these ideas in the Old Testament.

There is at least one instance of a divine being appearing undisguised in Genesis. When Hagar is banished by Sarai and Abram, an angel of the Lord (מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה) visits her in an undisguised form, causing her to marvel that she had not died after seeing

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558 The dysphoric recognition of Dionysus by Pentheus is slightly different, since at the beginning of the story he did not recognise the god’s existence at all. He is no atheist, as he prays for other gods, but omits Dionysus! See Euripides, *Bacch. 45-6.*

559 Here, as elsewhere, there is an ambiguity between whether the visitor is “the Lord” or an “Angel of the Lord”. Gordon Wenham argues that when used in the singular בַּעֲשַׂרְתָּן refers to “God himself occurring in human form, nearly always to bring good news or salvation.” Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 9. Didymus suggests that the word “angel” suggests an activity, rather than a substance, and that Hagar refers to the angel as God (יהוה), because the words spoken come from God, whatever the identity of the speaker (Didymus, In Gen. 247-8.) What is clear is that a divine agent of some kind is visiting the mortal, and the exact identity is not important for this analysis.

560 Gen 16:7.
God. Gordon Wenham suggests that in fact the angel of the Lord initially appeared in disguise, as a normal man coming to the well. In this case it is only in verse 13 that Hagar recognises God’s identity, and this is in fact a disguised and recognised god story.

This angel aids her, gives her instructions and information about her future. The fact that Hagar marvels that she has seen God, supports, rather than contradicts, the idea that God could not be seen face to face in an undisguised form without putting the person in mortal danger; the same tradition is presented in Exodus when Moses requests to see God’s glory, but is warned that to see God’s face leads to death. For this reason, in the majority of cases where humans encounter divine agents in the Jewish literature, the divine agent is in disguise.

A clear example is found in Genesis 18, when Abraham is approached by three strangers, who it turns out are the Lord and two others, presumably in disguise. As with the Hagar story, there is some ambiguity over whether it is יְהוָה or מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה who is visiting. Three people appear, but Abraham only addresses one of them, and there is a mixture of plural and singular language used in this story. As is the case with Greco-Roman literature, the audience is told right away who the disguised character is, but it is only at the end of the scene that Abraham and Sarah realise the significance of the visit, and who the visitors are. Abraham reacts by showing the visitors both respect and hospitality, welcoming them, offering water to wash their feet, and preparing food for them. The reward for this show of hospitality is the blessing of Sarah with a child despite her great age. In the next scene, Abraham is told the divine visitor’s plans, and is even allowed to give his input on the issue. This

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562 Wenham, Genesis 16-50, 11.
565 A similar ambiguity of number occurs in Gen 19 when Lot is met by two angels, but speaks to them in the singular as “my Lord” (אֲדֹנָֻֽי). For a discussion on why both plurals and singulurs are used see Hamilton, The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50, 7. Two possibilities are suggested. Either this story is a redaction of two stories, one of which has a singular god visit, and the other multiple angels, or else the use of language reflects an Israelite conception of God as both one and multiple. See also A. R. Johnson, The One and the Many in the Israelite Conception of God (Cardiff: University of Wales Press, 1961), 30–1.
story has some similarities with Greco-Roman theoxeny stories such as Jupiter and Mercury’s visit to Philemon and Baucis. However, the most obvious lack of similarity is that there is no obvious recognition mentioned in the scene. There is a hint in the final lines when Sarah displays fear after the visitor chastises her for laughing. At this point the visitor has identified himself as the Lord (יְהוָה). In the next scene Abraham debates with the same visitor, now clearly aware of his identity.\textsuperscript{566}

This scene has much in common with the Greco-Roman recognisable god scenes discussed above. A god appears in disguise, tests Abraham to see whether he will provide hospitality, then rewards him when he does. There is a mention of the human displaying fear in the face of the divine,\textsuperscript{567} although this theme is minimal. There are no tokens of recognition, but rather the visitor declares his identity. The god then provides the mortal with information about his future part in the divine plans. The knowledge gained comes from the words the divine visitor speaks, rather than from the recognition itself.

The scene of Gideon’s call also contains an appearance of a מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה.\textsuperscript{568} This scene contains the theme of entertaining the gods, with Gideon providing hospitality in the form of food for the divine agent. Although the angel declares his identity, Gideon demands some proof that the angel is who he claims to be, which the angel provides by creating fire to consume a sacrifice. Gideon reacts with fear, and, like Hagar, expresses concern that he is in mortal danger from having seen God face to face.

The purpose of the visit was to issue Gideon with instructions about the part he is to play in the divine plan. The importance of this information is emphasised by the fact that it is an angel delivering it, but no information is actually gained through the recognition itself.

\textsuperscript{566} Gen 18:22f.
\textsuperscript{567} Gen 18:15.
\textsuperscript{568} Judg 6:11-24.
The birth of Samson is also heralded by an angel, who was an object of terror even when disguised.\textsuperscript{569} Samson’s mother sees that he looks like an angel of the Lord but refers to him as a “man of God.”\textsuperscript{570} The narrator specifically points out that Manoah (her husband) is said to not recognise the identity of the angel,\textsuperscript{571} making this a clearer example of an unrecognised “god”\textsuperscript{572} story than Abraham’s encounter described above. Manoah offers hospitality in the form of food,\textsuperscript{573} but rather than eating it the angel consumes it in a flame and vanishes causing the couple to fall to the ground. Then Manoah realises that it was an angel\textsuperscript{574} and, like Gideon, expresses fear that they will die.\textsuperscript{575} The unrecognisable divine agent reveals his own identity without the use of any tokens or signs and provides information to those he appears to, which is emphasised, but not communicated through, the realisation that he is indeed an angel. In this instance this is explicit, since the couple had received and acknowledged the message before realising that it came from an angel of the Lord.

The final example comes from the deuterocanonical book of Tobit. Tobit consists of one long divine visitor story. When the angel first appears, it is made clear that Tobias does not know that the angel is a divine being. Raphael goes as far as fabricating an identity for himself,\textsuperscript{576} claiming to have relations in the area to which Tobias wishes to travel.\textsuperscript{577} Although there is no display of hospitality in the way of food, Tobit does promise to compensate Raphael well for acting as his son’s guide.\textsuperscript{578}

\textsuperscript{569} The participle form of יָרֵּא is used in verse 6.
\textsuperscript{570} אָדָם הָאֱלֹהִים (verse 16).
\textsuperscript{571} Whether or not an angel is a “god” or not is not of central importance. The important point is that the form of the story in which an angel appears is the same as the Greco-Roman stories in which gods appear.
\textsuperscript{572} ת.ObjectId(190,392) ת ObjectId(190,392) (verse 16).
\textsuperscript{573} Judg 13:15. As is the case in Greco-Roman stories, hospitality for strangers is an important theme. Barry G. Webb, The Book of Judges, NICOT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 15.
\textsuperscript{574} Judg 13:21 uses the same formula used to express his ignorance in verse 16: אִישׁ הָאֱלֹהִים כִּי מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה הֻֽוּ (verse 16).
\textsuperscript{575} Judg 13.22. Crenshaw points out that this account, and others like it, correlates to the folklore motif of “Terror over Theophany”, James L. Crenshaw, Samson: A Secret Betrayed, a Vow Ignored (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1978), 49–50.
\textsuperscript{576} Raphael creates the false identity of “Azariah” in the same way Hermes creates the false identity when speaking to Priam (Homer, II. 24.390-399. As the gods in Homer sometimes took on the form of other people who actually existed, and people known to the other characters, it is possible that Azariah was a real relation of Tobit and Tobias, and this is why they trust him. Certainly Tobit knows that man “Azariah” (i.e. Raphael) claims to be his father (Hananiah). Was there a real Azariah who was his son? See: Carey A. Moore, ed., Tobit: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, AB 40A (New York: Doubleday, 1996), 183.
\textsuperscript{577} Tob 5:4-6, 14.
\textsuperscript{578} Tob 5:15-16.
This theme is repeated when Tobias and Raphael return, and Tobit agrees to give Raphael half of the money they have returned with as a reward.\textsuperscript{579}

Raphael acts as both a divine helper, and a commissioner. Rather than simply guiding Tobias, he instructs him on how to act on a number of occasions, instructing him on how to use a fish for medicinal purposes,\textsuperscript{580} even going so far as to arrange his supposed employer’s son’s marriage.\textsuperscript{581}

The angel’s identity becomes known when he decides to reveal himself. As he makes clear, there is no way the mortals could have discerned his identity otherwise (he even created an illusion that he was eating and drinking in order to make the disguise complete).\textsuperscript{582} The humans react with fear, but are reassured and told to not be afraid before the angel ascends and vanishes. No new instructions are given to the men, other than to write down everything which has happened. No significant change comes about due to the angel’s identity being revealed other than knowing that all that has happened has been due to the will of God.

This small collection of stories shows that the unrecognised god (or angel) story was one which occurred in Jewish narratives, and that the form of the narratives has much in common with their Greco-Roman counterparts.

\textbf{5.5: Analysis and criteria}

The following is a summary of the features common to disguised god stories. The set of criteria is divided into two sections. The first list is the “structure” of the story, by which is meant the elements of the story which commonly occur. The second list is the “thematic purpose” of the story, by which is meant the purpose this story serves in

\textsuperscript{579} Tob 12:4-5. It is worth noting that a King giving half of his wealth to a hero who helped save the princess from a beast is a common folktale. Raphael has done exactly this, in freeing Tobias’ wife from a monster in her bridal chamber. For a discussion on the folklore themes in Tobit see William Michael Soll, “Misfortune and Exile in Tobit: The Juncture of a Fairy Tale Source and Deuteronomic Theology,” \textit{CBQ} 51 (1989): 209–31.

\textsuperscript{580} Tob 6:4-9.

\textsuperscript{581} Tob 6:11-13.

\textsuperscript{582} Tob 12:19.
the larger narrative. These criteria will be used when investigating Jesus’ stories to ascertain how similar they are to disguised god stories.

5.5.1 Structure and purpose of disguised and later recognised god stories

The structure of disguised god stories:

Although there is a range of different types of stories where gods appear in disguise and are subsequently recognised, a number of characteristics in common can be listed.

(i) The character appears in disguise in the form of a known or unknown human.
(ii) There is testing of mortals, often using hospitality as the central test.
(iii) Punishment or reward often follows.
(iv) Mortals react with fear and awe when a god reveals his or her identity.
(v) Gods give information or instructions to the human to whom they appear.

The thematic purpose of divine visitation stories:

Several reasons why the gods appear to aid humans have been discussed, but they all have the following features in common:

(i) To drive the plot in a certain direction, and alter human history.
(ii) The appearance is to make it known (to the audience and possibly the character) that the present plan of the heroes is supported by divine agents.\textsuperscript{583}

\textsuperscript{583} In cult formation stories the two previous points combine. Instructions are given about how the god is to be honoured, and it is obviously clear that the plan is supported by the god.
5.5.2 The classification of disguised god stories

In Section 1.3.1, three criteria for classifying different sorts of unrecognisability stories were presented in the form of three questions. This chapter has been confined to looking only at disguised gods interacting with mortals, so all of this set of stories fall into the “helper” subset. In most instances the gods reveal their identity deliberately. In the instances where a god’s disguise is seen through, it is due to some divine characteristic being discerned, rather than the sorts of signs of recognition associated with heroes which were discussed in Chapter 4. Lastly, although the gods may pass on information (both true and false) and issue instructions, the recognition itself does not add any additional information. The fact that the information came from a divine source underlines the importance of the information, but does not provide any extra information. This is highlighted by the fact that in many instances a god is not recognised by the hero, but can still perform the same function as the recognised god, such as passing on information, aiding the hero, or highlighting the importance of an event or a character in the story. The recognition is of secondary importance to the other actions of the god. In terms of the binary codes outlined in Chapter 1, then, this set of stories fall into the grouping:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-1-1</td>
<td>Helper, revealed, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Or in some cases:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-0-1</td>
<td>Helper, discovered, knowledge via other means</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I have noted, however, that the “discovery” in these instances lacks the significance which is present in the discovery of a hero’s identity, since the discovery does not, in itself, lead to new knowledge or a moment of *peripeteia*.

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584 As has been seen, the recognitions of heroes, when they come about via signs and tokens, rely upon the characters having met, or having a shared history. It is this shared history which allows tokens of recognition to come into play. If a character does not have a shared history with a god, then tokens of recognition cannot be used as a narrative tool.
The stories in which gods appear in disguise and are subsequently recognised have a number of features in common with each other both in terms of the narrative structure and the thematic purpose. The stories all contain a disguised helper character, who either reveals himself or herself, or else is recognised by a mortal due to divine characteristics. This recognition does not involve any tokens or signs. Although the fact that the mortal recognises that they are dealing with a god may underline the importance of any information they have gained, the recognition itself does not provide any additional information.

5.6: Summary

As the preceding survey has indicated, gods appear disguised for a number of reasons, but these may be broken down broadly into two categories: to protect humans from damage (by contact with the divine directly) and to fool humans that they are seeing someone else (in order to communicate “directly” and provide aid). These reasons often exist together in the one disguise event.

When a god appears in a disguised form it is usually to drive human history in a certain direction. This can be done through passing on information or commands, by testing and then rewarding or punishing, or by taking an active role as a companion or helper of his or her human charge. The intervention of disguised gods is thus often used to drive the plot forward; but they do so in a significantly different way than disguised heroes do.

While divine visitation stories have a number of similarities with hero recognition stories - involving disguise, hospitality themes, a form of recognition and the transfer of knowledge - there are also a number of dissimilarities: the recognition is not brought about by a sign or token, the recognition itself does not confer knowledge (rather the knowledge is dictated), and the knowledge gained is not necessarily related to the identity or relationship with the recognised individual.

585 That is they play the role of an “angel.”
Finally, the message delivered by the divine agent may create a massive shift, but it is not the recognition that prompts the change; rather, it is the message itself, although the recognition may lend weight to the message. The shift is also not generally one of reversal (peripeteia) where the fates of the characters change from one extreme to the other, and there is no great reordering of the worldview of the characters. In other words, whereas the recognition of the human hero occurs at the turning point of the story, when the fortunes change from bad to good (or vice versa), at the moment of metabasis, this is not usually the case with the recognition of gods, or other supernatural beings.

5.7: Comparison of unrecognisable gods and heroes

Two types of stories of interest have emerged: The disguised hero story, and the disguised god story. Human heroes appear in disguise for very different reasons from the appearances of gods. While a god might appear in disguise in order to protect humans from damage via exposure to the divine, or so that they can communicate with humans, this is not a motivation for other mortals. The recognition of a hero is the turning point of many plots. It is the moment of metabasis when the bad fortune turns to good, or else the good fortune turns to bad. The recognition of a god, on the other hand, need not, and usually is not the turning point in the story. Both of these story types sometimes contain elements of metamorphosis, and exist in a world where metamorphosis is part of the wider context. Although there is some crossover between these two types of stories, and there are many unique aspects to both types of stories, I have concentrated on three distinctive differentiating factors (which were discussed in Section 1.3.1): the role the character is playing, the manner in which the character is recognised, and the way knowledge is gained. In Sections 4.6 and 5.5 the

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586 For example, Athene helps to drive the events which will see Odysseus returned to power, and Abraham’s position as the father of nations is announced to him by angels, as is Mary’s role as the mother of the coming messiah.

587 An exception to this might be found in in Acts 9:1-19, in which Saul’s understanding is drastically altered. Even in this instance, however, he could not have come to the understanding he did through the recognition itself. Jesus had to reveal his identity and issue instructions about Saul’s next actions (Acts 9:5).


589 Aristotle, Poet 1451a 11-15.
structure and purpose of disguised hero, and disguised god stories were summarised. The following chart shows how the summary of the structure and purpose relates to the three criteria is Section 1.3.1:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Three Questions (see Section 1.3.1):</th>
<th>Unrecognised Hero Stories (see Section 4.6)</th>
<th>Unrecognised God Stories (see Section 5.5)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Role The Character is Playing</strong></td>
<td>Character is a returning Hero.</td>
<td>Character is a God/angel/divine being.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Way Identity is Revealed</strong></td>
<td>Tokens or signs are used.</td>
<td>The identity is revealed by the disguised individual without the use of signs/tokens.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Testing or deception takes place.</td>
<td>There may be a test/reward dynamic.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The identity may be unknown to the disguised character. The recognition of identity is linked to recognition of their rank in society.</td>
<td>Disguised character always knows his or her own identity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>When a character is recognised they may still maintain their initial identity.</td>
<td>When a character is recognised, the disguised identity is seen to be false.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The character usually remains after the recognition as the plot unfolds.</td>
<td>The character often vanishes after the recognition has occurred.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The disguise may be via metamorphosis or illusion, but it may also be</td>
<td>The disguise is usually via metamorphosis or illusion.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The Way Knowledge is Transferred</strong></td>
<td>The recognition drives the plot forward with no need for any further discussion (even if such discussion does take place).</td>
<td>The instructions/information rather than the recognition itself drive the plot forward.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The knowledge gained is</strong></td>
<td>(at least) about the recognised character.</td>
<td>The knowledge gained is not primarily about the recognised character.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is a moment of</strong></td>
<td><em>peripeteia.</em> There is a reordering of society and/or a healing of relationships. There is a change in the worldview of the recognisers (a paradigm shift).</td>
<td>The recognised gives instructions or information to the recognisers. The disguised character’s appearance makes it known that the hero’s mission has divine backing.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is a reaction of fear</strong></td>
<td>by the recognisers.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>There is some cognitive resistance</strong> on the part of the recognisers. There is a physical reaction with embracing, tears, etc.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>a natural disguise (often time spent apart).</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this chart it can be seen that there are a number of similarities between unrecognisable hero and unrecognisable god stories, but also a number of differences. Both story types involve a disguised character, and the theme of hospitality is often present in both types of story. However, the ways in which the recognition comes about, and the role the recognition serves in the plot, differ.
The table above demonstrates that the various criteria for determining what sort of story is being examined can be grouped into three groups which correspond to the questions asked in Section 1.3.1. These questions created eight possible story types (see table in Section 1.3.2).

Each of these factors is binary in nature (having one of two values) and so the situation can be represented in a 2x2x2 table thus:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recognition Type</th>
<th>Knowledge Management</th>
<th>ROLE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>HERO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Token</td>
<td>Via the recognition itself</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Via instructions or information</td>
<td>C (0-0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Token</td>
<td>Via the recognition itself</td>
<td>E (0-1-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Via instructions or information</td>
<td>G (0-1-1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

If the stories could take any form, and the answers to the different questions were independent of one another, then we might expect the stories to be distributed equally among the eight cells of this table. We would find stories where the Hero is in disguise, is revealed using a token, and then through this revealing knowledge is transferred (Cell “A”). We would also expect stories where a Helper appears in disguise, is revealed without the use of any sign or token, and then through this revealing knowledge is transferred (Cell “F), and any other combination.

By looking at a sample of the stories examined in the preceding chapters we can get an idea of how they are distributed in the above table. The following table contains the Greco-Roman stories. The Jewish stories are contained in a separate table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Recognised/recogniser</th>
<th>Signs/tokens/manner of recognition</th>
<th>Result of recognition</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od</em>. 16.172f</td>
<td>Odysseus/ Telemachus</td>
<td>Odysseus is transformed by Athene, and Odysseus simply declares his identity.</td>
<td>Emotional response, and Telemachus realises his father is alive and plans are made to reclaim house.</td>
<td>E (0-1-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od</em>. 19.380f</td>
<td>Odysseus/ Eurykleia</td>
<td>Recognised by distinctive scar.</td>
<td>Eurykleia realises that the household will be saved and her</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text</td>
<td>Leader is still alive. Relationships healed.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 21.221f</td>
<td>Odysseus/servants Odysseus declares identity and then proof of identity by scar. Servants know master has returned and household saved.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 23.190f</td>
<td>Odysseus/Penelope Knowledge only Odysseus could possess. Penelope realises her husband is alive, and her future life will be positive rather than negative. Relationships healed etc.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 1.105f</td>
<td>Athene (disguised as Mentes)/Telemachus Athene reveals her divinity. Telemachus is given instructions and now realises they came from a god.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euripides, <em>Iph.</em> taur..308f</td>
<td>Orestes/Iphigenia Shared memory. Reassessment of lives, healing of relationship.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aeschylus, <em>Cho.</em> 165-263</td>
<td>Orestes/Electra Physical tokens (hair, footprint, clothing). Reassessment of lives, healing of relationship.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophocles, <em>Oed.</em> tyr.1032-5, 1182</td>
<td>Oedipus/Oedipus Childhood scar and shared memories. Oedipus realises the truth about his entire life with tragic consequences</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, <em>Herc. fur.</em> 1192-1200</td>
<td>Hercules/Hercules Recognition of distinctive ability (to use his bow). Realisation that he has murdered his family, resulting in grief.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seneca, <em>Oed.</em> .811-2, 857</td>
<td>Oedipus/Oedipus Shares memory, and distinctive scar. Oedipus realises the truth about his entire life with tragic consequences</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Longus, <em>Daphn.</em> 4.16f</td>
<td>Father/Daphnis Tokens: Items characters were abandoned with as a babies. Realisation of his real identity, disaster and enslavement transformed into freedom and victory.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euripides, <em>Bacch.</em> 1284</td>
<td>Pentheus (who is dead)/Agave Recovery from divine madness. Horrific realisation she has killed her son, and an understanding of the true situation.</td>
<td>E (0-1-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Euripides, <em>Ion</em> 1397-1401</td>
<td>Ion/Creusa</td>
<td>Ion/Creusa Tokens: Items Ion was abandoned with as a baby. A healing of relationships, and a reassessment of their lives and histories.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Menander, <em>Perik.</em> 774-825</td>
<td>Pataikos/Glykera &amp; Moschion Tokens: Items left with abandoned infants. A healing of relationships, and a realisation of the characters past etc.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plautus, <em>Poen.</em> 5.2</td>
<td>Agorastes/Hanno Recognise via token, shared memories, and distinctive scar. Realise they are related, and so ally with each other. Agorastes/Hanno has his property returned to him, and Hanno is told about the possibility his daughters are close by.</td>
<td>C (0-0-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Plautus, <em>Poen.</em> 5.3-4</td>
<td>Adelphasmus &amp; Anterastilis/Hanno Shared memory (via recognition of nurse). Family reunited, relationships healed.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>HH</em> 7 6-54</td>
<td>Dionysus/pirate Dionysus is recognised due to the bonds holding him falling away, and due to some distinctive signs related specifically to Dionysus (e.g. The one who recognises Dionysus is rewarded for his respect and hospitality.</td>
<td>D (1-0-1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
the smell of wine, growing of a vine). These signs are created by the god to reveal his divinity.

Ovid, *Metam.* 8.631-720

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Recognised/recogniser</th>
<th>Signs/tokens/manner of recognition</th>
<th>Result of recognition</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 13.221f</td>
<td>Jupiter and Mercury/ Philemon and Baucis</td>
<td>Gods reveal their identity.</td>
<td>Mortals awarded for their hospitality.</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH 5 180f</td>
<td>Athene (as a young man)/ Odysseus</td>
<td>Athene reveals her identity.</td>
<td>Athene tests Odysseus, then gives him instructions and information to aid him.</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homer, <em>Il.</em> 3.385f</td>
<td>Aphrodite/ Helen</td>
<td>Divine radiance of god. Helen recognises that it is a god rather than the god revealing herself, but not by any token or signs.</td>
<td>God gives information and instructions to mortal.</td>
<td>H(1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HH 2</td>
<td>Demeter/ Metaneira</td>
<td>God reveals her identity</td>
<td>Instructions given to mortal</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table it can be seen that the majority of the stories fall into either cell “A” or cell “H”; that is the stories tend to differ on all three of the factors, rather than just one or two. What this tells us is that there are sets of features of stories which go together, and sets which do not go together. This is not random, but rather the three factors in the above tables relate to the various attributes which have been identified in the preceding chapters. It also shows that the criteria being used to categorise stories are valid over a range of genres and time periods.

In Sections 4.5.6 and 5.4 a small selection of Jewish literature which contained disguised characters was examined. The following table categorises these stories using the same criteria used for the Greco-Roman stories:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Recognised/recogniser</th>
<th>Signs/tokens/manner of recognition</th>
<th>Result of recognition</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gen 16:7-14</td>
<td>Angel of the Lord/ Hagar</td>
<td>“Angel of the Lord” appears undisguised but does reveal its identity without the need for signs or tokens.</td>
<td>Hagar is given aid, instructions, and information about her future.</td>
<td>H(1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 18:1-15</td>
<td>Angels of the Lord/ Abraham</td>
<td>The Lord declares his identity.</td>
<td>Abraham told about his part in the divine plans for the future.</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reference</td>
<td>Characters</td>
<td>Key Event</td>
<td>Narrative Impact</td>
<td>Group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judg 6:11-24</td>
<td>Angel of the Lord/Gideon</td>
<td>Angel proves identity with a miracle which Gideon requests.</td>
<td>Gideon is given instructions about how to deliver Israel, and is reassured that he has divine backing.</td>
<td>D (1-0-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Judg 13:3-23</td>
<td>Angle of the Lord/ Manoah &amp; wife</td>
<td>Reveals identity by ascending.</td>
<td>Information about the future role they will play in the divine plan – as the parents of Samson.</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tob 5-12, 12:6-22</td>
<td>Raphael/Tobit &amp; Tobias</td>
<td>Raphael reveals his identity.</td>
<td>Tobit and Tobias realise that what has happened has been God’s will.</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 38:12-26</td>
<td>Tamar/ Judah</td>
<td>Recognised by tokens: seal, cord, and staff.</td>
<td>Tamar's position in society radically transformed. The relationship between them fundamentally changed.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gen 42:45 (esp. 45:1-4)</td>
<td>Joseph/Brothers</td>
<td>Declaration and shared memories.</td>
<td>Relationships healed. Fortunes reversed.</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the above Jewish stories, unrecognised god stories occur and have the same structure and thematic purpose as unrecognised god stories in Greco-Roman literature. Unrecognised hero stories also appear and have the same structure and thematic purpose as unrecognised hero stories in Greco-Roman literature. This means that the writers and readers of the stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances would have found resonances of these story types in Jewish literature even if they had no familiarity with Greco-Roman literature at all.

There is one particular, hybrid, example which does not fall perfectly into the two defined groups. When Odysseus is recognised by his son, Telemachus, the recognition comes about via a metamorphosis of his form, rather than via the use of signs or tokens. This differs from his recognition by both Eurycleia, and his wife. This story therefore falls into group E (0-1-0), whereas the other instances fall into the group A (0-0-0). This example then, which involves Odysseus, who is a paradigmatic example of an unrecognisable hero, seems to offer a strong counter example to the claim that unrecognisability stories fall into two distinct groups. Two things need to be said about this: first, the existence of some counter examples does not completely invalidate the claim that the answers to the three questions are strongly correlated, and that stories are very likely to fall into two groups. Second, in this instance the narrator himself seems to be aware that boundaries are being crossed here. In this instance
Telemachus mistakes Odysseus for a god. He does this because of the way Odysseus’ identity becomes known to him. Not recognising Odysseus is understandable, since he has been absent at war for Telemachus’ entire life. An old man suddenly appearing as a young man is the sort of action which shape-shifting gods take, as is claiming to be a person known to the one they appear to. Telemachus has already been fooled by Athene doing just this! The recognition, or revealing, resembles that of a god, rather than that of a returning hero. There is no mention of Odysseus being mistaken for a god when he is recognised by other characters such as Eurycleia. The instance when the story does not fit into the expected pattern, and seems to resemble an unrecognisable god story in some respects, is singled out as different by the story-teller, and is seen as unusual by the recognising character himself. Under closer examination, what appeared to be a counter-example actually underlines the distinction between unrecognisable heroes and unrecognisable gods by pointing out the unusual and confusing nature of this story.

Although there are some examples which do not fall perfectly into the categories defined, it can still be seen that there is a general pattern where cells “A = (0-0-0)” and “H = (1-1-1)” contain the majority of stories. Even the examples which do straddle the line are doing so deliberately, and are using well established story types in a creative manner. Rather than contradicting the established patterns, they help to underline them. It can therefore be concluded that within both Greco-Roman and Jewish literature, there are two distinguishable types of unrecognisability stories: those where the hero is recognised by use of signs which brings about a change in knowledge and worldview directly from the recognition, and those where a god (or supernatural being) is revealed by his or her own will which brings about a change in knowledge via verbal commands or the passing on of information. The recognition of a hero is the turning point of many plots. It is the moment of \textit{metabasis}\footnote{Aristotle, \textit{Poet.} 1451a 11-15.} when the bad fortune turns to good, or else the good fortune turns to bad. The recognition of a god, on the other hand, need not be, and usually is not, the turning point in the story.
Chapter Six: Canonical Jesus Stories

6.1: Introduction

In the previous chapters it has been demonstrated that the themes of unrecognisable gods and heroes are prevalent in literature. The range of literature in which these themes occur is potentially universal, as they are themes which occur in folk traditions in a wide range of contexts. However, of most relevance to this study, these themes have been shown to occur in Greco-Roman and Jewish literature.

This chapter will concentrate specifically on the stories in which Jesus appeared in an unrecognisable form to his disciples after his death and resurrection, although some context will be set first. Thus, Section 6.2 will address the issue of whether the writers of Jesus stories would have been familiar with the stories addressed in the previous chapters, including a brief summary of where and when each of the Gospels was written. Section 6.3 will consider the world presented within each of the Gospels, looking in particular for instances of metamorphosis and disguise. If the Gospels’ narrative worlds are ones in which such events take place in other instances, then interpreting the post-resurrection Jesus as a disguised, or metamorphic god or mortal is justified. Section 6.4 will then present the post-resurrection stories themselves. In most of these stories Jesus actually appears as a character, but in some of the examples under consideration there are signs of his resurrection without him appearing as a character himself. Finally, Section 6.5 will summarise, and tabulate, the stories using the same criteria employed to summarise the Greco-Roman and Jewish stories. This will show how the unrecognisable Jesus stories integrate within the wider body of recognisability stories.

6.2: Reception of Stories

In this section it will be demonstrated that the readers of Jesus stories could reasonably be expected to have been familiar with the themes and narrative structures of the Greco-Roman stories considered in the previous chapters. This will be argued
in two mutually supportive ways: first, that Jesus stories contain a portion of material which has much in common with folk literature. Since it has been demonstrated that the key elements of Greco-Roman disguised hero stories and disguised god stories exist in folk literature, an awareness of folk literature would allow stories which have the same structure and purpose as Greco-Roman stories to be understood even if the Greco-Roman stories themselves were not known to the audience. Secondly, this section will show that it is reasonable to assume that the writers and audiences of Jesus stories were familiar with at least some of the Greco-Roman stories which contained metamorphosis, and disguised or unrecognisable gods and heroes.

One example from Acts shows that at least Luke was familiar with some of the themes discussed in the previous chapters. Acts 14:8-18 contains a false god-recognition story, where people falsely identify Paul and Barnabas as Zeus and Hermes, saying specifically that the people believed that the gods had come in the likeness of humans.591 The background to this story is the myth of Hermes and Zeus being welcomed by Baucis and Philemon,592 in which the visitors actually are gods in human form. The reference to this story shows that Luke was aware of the same tradition which Ovid drew upon, and that he was aware of the tradition that the gods were known to appear in human form.593 It is also highly suggestive that an early Christian audience was also expected to be aware of this sort of story.594 Fitzmyer does point out that the myth which caused the reaction of the Lystrans may not be in

591 Οἱ θεοὶ ὠμοιώθησαν ἀνθρώποις κατέβησαν πρὸς ἡμᾶς (Luke 14:11).
the exact form used by Ovid, and so it is possible that both Luke and Ovid are drawing on a common folklore version. Even if this is the case, Luke demonstrates an awareness of the Greco-Roman theme of disguised gods in this passage. The following section will demonstrate that the rest of the authors of Jesus stories were also very likely to have been familiar with Greco-Roman literary themes.

6.2.1: Jesus story tellers and folklore

The stories surrounding Jesus contain material possessing many features in common with traditional folk literature, both in the canonical Gospels and in the later Christian stories about him.

The infancy narratives in Matthew and Luke display a marked correspondence with themes which are common in folk traditions. For instance, the birth of an important person being preceded by a star, comet, or a shooting star, is a motif in folk literature. Luke hints at this idea by mentioning a bright light, and Matthew explicitly mentions a star. It has already been noted in Chapter 2 that the life of the folk hero can include an unusual conception and possibly illegitimate birth, claims of divine lineage, abandonment or an attempt on his life as a child, going to a foreign place, becoming the ruler after returning to his land from which he was once banished, and an extraordinary death. Jesus’ life story contains all of these elements. This does not mean that Jesus’ life, or any particular part of his story, was fabricated, but it does suggest that the writers of Jesus stories were aware of folklore and used these themes, whether consciously or unconsciously, which would be understood by the general population in order to indicate the sort of man Jesus was: a

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596 Gareth Lloyd Jones, “Jewish Folklore in Matthew’s Infancy Stories,” Modern Believing 52 (2011): 16. Pliny the Elder refers to the common belief that the birth of the famous was indicated by a bright star (Nat. 2:28). Jones lists several examples contemporaneous with the Jesus stories including: the birth of Augustus which was heralded with a star (Suetonius, Aug. 94), and the death of Nero (Tacitus, Ann. 14:22) as well as Jewish folklore origins of this idea.
598 Matt 2:2.
599 For an overview of several studies on the hero pattern see Taylor, “The Biographical Pattern in Traditional Narrative.” See footnote 182.
hero like the heroes they had heard of in popular stories. There are also other
instances of folklore like material in the canonical Gospels and Acts, while in the
apocryphal accounts the inclusion of folklore is much more obvious and more
prevalent. For example, the folklore-like metamorphosis of objects, and other folk
motifs occur frequently in the apocryphal Acts and Gospels. Examples in both the
canonical and apocryphal Acts and Gospels will be presented as each of the Jesus
stories is examined.

6.2.2: Jesus story tellers and Greco-Roman stories

What degree of familiarity might the authors and audiences of Jesus stories have had
with the sorts of Greco-Roman stories considered thus far? Would it have been strong
enough to support the contention that the authors were not only aware of Greco-Roman
literature, but were deliberately and consciously rewriting it? Or might their familiarity
extend only so far as to indicate their immersion in a world where the themes would
have been so well known that they would have been the natural way to present the story
they were telling?

To ascertain which is more likely, we must first have an awareness of the place of
literature in the Roman empire as a whole via an understanding of the various “canons”
or lists of books which existed at the time. This is important, because, as will be seen,
these are the works with which members of a Greek speaking community would have
been most likely to be familiar and to use in crafting their own literature. Secondly, we
need to investigate how accessible the ideas within these canons would have been to a
Jewish or early Christian audience, whether via direct reading or by the ideas having
entered the popular imagination via other routes. Lastly, the evidence contained within
Jewish and Christian writings themselves will be examined to see whether this
influence can in fact be discerned.

600 I am not arguing that the story of Jesus itself is folk literature, or that it was a story which developed
along the same lines as folk literature, but that the story is being communicated, in part, using pre-
existing folkloric patterns.
The Greco-Roman Influence

As Michael Kruger argues “[a]t its core, early Christianity was a religion concerned with books.”601 The early Christians saw the Hebrew Scriptures as essential for understanding who Jesus was, and were noted by their opponents as being a group very centred on written literature,602 both ancient and newly produced. Lucian describes the Christian priests’ and scribes’ pre-occupation with books,603 and Celsus’ critique of Christianity was in part based upon an analysis of Christian books and their exegesis of Hebrew literature.604 The Gospels cited directly and extensively from Old Testament books, indicating that the authors were literate, well-read, and actively used other written accounts in order to produce their own works.605 This raises the possibility that they may have used other, non-Jewish, Greco-Roman literature, as well as the Old Testament, when writing, and may have done so consciously, and even with the work before them as they wrote.

The story of Jesus, although it is a story about a Jew, and is linked explicitly with the story of the Jewish people, was both set, and written, in a nation which had been colonised by another culture. By the time Christianity arrived, Judaism had already existed alongside Greco-Roman culture for many years, with a range of different levels of involvement and detachment. Jews were in some respects distinct from other groups and some would not have engaged in much of the civic life, although others were very active in both the political and cultural sides of their cities.606 They had certain rights granted to them such as convening local courts, protection to

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602 Similarly, Martin Goodman points out that “no ancient society was more blatantly dominated by a written text than that of Jews in the Roman period,” and this is the context in which Christianity arose. Martin Goodman, Judaism in the Roman World: Collected Essays, AJEC 66 (Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2007), 79.
603 Lucian, Perigr. 11-12.
604 Origen Cels. 11.34-40.
605 As discussed below, it is very possible that passages were quoted from memory, and that the majority of Christians may have had an oral knowledge of scripture, but it is tautologically true that the people who actually wrote down the Gospels were literate!
606 For a list of examples, including Jewish members of city councils, see Margaret Williams, ed., The Jews among the Greeks and Romans: A Diasporan Sourcebook (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 109-116.
observe the Sabbath, avoiding military service,\textsuperscript{607} and paying taxes to the temple in Jerusalem.\textsuperscript{608} On the other hand, although Jews may not have attended the religious services of Gentiles, Gentile “God Fearers” were welcomed to worship with them, and even to convert.\textsuperscript{609} Judaism also presented a number of different ways of interacting with the dominant culture. Some Jews saw no contradiction in also embracing elements of Greek and Roman culture, while others saw Jews who embraced Greco-Roman culture as no longer Jewish at all.\textsuperscript{610} Any understanding of Judaism between 200 BCE and 200 CE, after which Judaism became less involved with Hellenism, is impossible without understanding that it existed as a part of the Greco-Roman world.\textsuperscript{611} This is as true in the Diaspora communities as it is in Palestine, and at the time when Jesus stories were being composed, “the majority of Jews had for hundreds of years lived outside Palestine in the Diaspora.”\textsuperscript{612} John Collins chronicles the “lively attempt by Diaspora Jews to appropriate Hellenistic culture while maintaining their Jewish identity, or rather to reconcile the two facets of their identity.”\textsuperscript{613}

Christianity, then, when it emerged as a Jewish group in the first century CE, was inevitably influenced by Greco-Roman culture. This meant that it was highly likely that even a Jewish Christian member of the population would have some understanding of Greco-Roman culture and its literary heritage. This was, however, particularly true for those who were able to read and write in Greek. While literacy

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{607} See Josephus, \textit{Ag. Ap.} 2.66-70. Apion criticises the Jews for their lack of loyalty and support to the dominant culture.
  \item \textsuperscript{608} Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 18.311-313; Philo, \textit{Spec. Laws I} 76-78.
  \item \textsuperscript{609} For example see Josephus, \textit{Ant.} 20.17-23 describes the conversion of Queen Helena and her son, Izates. See also, Luke Timothy Johnson, \textit{Among the Gentiles: Greco-Roman Religion and Christianity} (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2009), 112–13.
  \item \textsuperscript{610} Ibid., 117.
  \item \textsuperscript{611} Ibid., 118.
  \item \textsuperscript{612} Ibid., 111.
  \item \textsuperscript{613} John J. Collins, \textit{Between Athens and Jerusalem: Jewish Identity in the Hellenistic Diaspora}, 2nd ed, The Biblical Resource Series (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 261; See also John M. G. Barclay, \textit{Jews in the Mediterranean Diaspora: From Alexander to Trajan (323 BCE To 117 CE)}, Hellenistic Culture and Society 33 (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996), particularly the various continuums he sets out, such as: “Accommodation”, ranging from “Submersion of Jewish cultural uniqueness” through to “Antagonism to Graeco-Roman culture” (Figure 3, pg. 97); and “Acculturation”, ranging from “No facility in Greek”, through to “Acquaintances with common moral values”, “Familiarity with Greek literature, rhetoric, philosophy and theology”, and lastly “Scholarly Expertise [in Greek culture]” (Figure 2, pg. 95).  
\end{itemize}
levels were low by modern standards (at around 10-15%), the literacy rate among Christians may have been higher, as the Jewish setting from which they originally arose saw reading and writing as essential for synagogue worship. However, the illiterate majority could have acquired a thorough knowledge of the liturgy and Scriptures in the Jewish community without having to be literate due to repeatedly hearing and repeating texts.

The way one was educated in Greek literacy involved the study of a selection of classical Greek works. Education at the time the Gospels were written consisted of copying and memorising passages from literature, which would have included “the epics of Homer, the tragedies of Euripides, the comedies of Menander and the speeches of Demosthenes.” The youth learning Greek would have been expected to both read and imitate Greek authors, meaning that if a person was literate, then they would know Homer’s work. By the middle of the second century BCE there were established “canons” of works which were used in educational syllabuses, and with which educated people were expected to be familiar. These lists included Homer, the plays of Aeschylus, Sophocles and particularly Euripides, Hesiod, Aristophanes, Menander and others. The evidence for these lists and their use in education is of two kinds: literary and non-literary. The non-literary evidence consists of papyri, ostraca, parchment fragments, and waxed wooden tablets which contain examples of students’ work. The majority of the fragments are of Homer. A number of Greek


615 Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 5. A. R. Millard states that “only the most isolated hamlets in Herodian Palestine may have lacked anyone who could read.” A. R. Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, BibSem 69 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000), 168. Evans also states that literacy rates among the Jewish population may have been higher (Jesus and His World, 66).


and Roman authors give descriptions of the education system. Quintilian (in around 95 CE) said of education that “it is therefore an admirable practice which now prevails, to begin by reading Homer and Virgil, although the intelligence needs to be further developed for the full appreciation of their merits: but there is plenty of time for that since the boy will read them more than once.” 622 The elevation of certain literary works to almost canonical level meant that the works used for education did not differ from school to school, or even from region to region. 623

Since Jerusalem was the site of a Greek gymnasium, which was an educational hub, it is probable that the same educational program was in place here. 624 The Greek education system had penetrated into Jewish circles in Palestine as early as the third century BCE. 625 The reforms recounted in the second book of Maccabees describe the acceptance of Greek customs including the establishment of a gymnasium, and the acceptance of the Greek way of life. 626 Martin Hengel points out that “the instruction [would] have embraced not only sports, but also music and literature, like the reading of Homer.” 627 Even after the Maccabean revolt, the Greek schools did not entirely vanish, and had begun to gain popularity again before the time of Herod. 628 One reason why the Jewish elite may have found it essential to educate their children in Greek literacy and rhetoric would have been so they could interact with, and have influence over, the largely Greek speaking Diaspora, 629 as well as having to interact with foreign officials and merchants. Karl Olav Sandnes points out that Paul uses several expressions which show an awareness of the Roman education system, with an expectation that his audience would understand the allusions he made. 630

622 Quintilian, Inst. 1.8.5. This echoes the words of Plato who four centuries earlier said that children “are furnished with works of good poets to read as they sit in class, and are made to learn them off by heart.” (Plato, Prot. 325E – 36A). See also Plutarch (Mor. 19A-E) who alludes to the prevalent use of Homer and classical texts in education.
625 Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 75–76.
626 2 Macc. 4:10.
627 Hengel, Judaism and Hellenism, 74.
628 Ibid., 77.
629 Ibid.
630 In Gal. 3.24, Paul assumes his readers are familiar with the role of the παιδαγωγός (schoolmaster). In 1 Cor 4:14–17, Paul’s language “echoes that of the ancient pedagogical literature” (9). 1 Cor 3:1–2 uses a metaphor used in Greek education: milk representing teachings. Finally, in 1 Tim 4:8, the author
Many authors clearly did imitate and make overt references to Homer, notably many Hellenistic prose writers. Prose authors imitated the *Odyssey* more than any other book in the ancient world. Hellenistic novelists who directly referenced Homer include Chariton,631 Longus,632 Philostratus,633 Achilles Tatius,634 Heliodorus, Petronius,635 Lucian,636 and Apuleius.637 Jewish writers also imitated Homer’s style, both poets, such as Theodotus,638 and Philo Epicus, and Sosates,639 and more importantly for a comparison with the Gospels, prose writers such as Josephus640 and the author of Tobit.641

demonstrates that they have an awareness of the physical education which was a part of the schooling system. See Sandnes, *The Challenge of Homer*, 8–9.


638 Theodotus’ work was written in Greek, and used Homeric vocabulary. It was probably written some time in the second century BCE. See John Joseph Collins, “The Epic of Theodotus and the Hellenism of the Hasmoneans,” *HTR* 73 (1980): 101. See also Reinhard Pummer and Michel Roussel, “A Note on Theodotus and Homer,” *JSJ* 13 (1982): 177–82 which provides some specific examples where Theodotus, as preserved in Eusebius, Praep. ev. used the Illiad and Odyssey.

639 All of these Jewish Epic writers are mentioned in Eusebius’ “Preparation for the Gospel”, and has retained several lines from each of the plays (with the exception of Sosates, whose work is preserved in an 8th Century CE Latin text: *Excerpts Latina Barbari*) See Shaye J D Cohen, “Sosates the Jewish Homer,” *HTR* 74 (1981): 391–96.


This demonstrates that the idea that Jewish authors writing about Jesus would have utilised the themes from Greek literature, is reasonable. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in his classic paper “Parallelomania,” Samuel Sandmel warns against the dangers of seeing parallels between texts, and detecting patterns, which are not really there. There is a range of options when deciding whether there are parallels between pieces of writing. These options lie on a spectrum from the deliberate rewriting of a text, which the author can refer to in its written form, through to there being no connection between the texts at all.

This spectrum could be described in order of reliance from:

1. Direct quoting of another text, with the same words occurring in the same order, and with markers for the reader describing where a quotation came from.
2. Direct allusion to another text, but not using any quotation from the text itself.
3. Shared themes and imagery which come from the writers sharing the same cultural heritage.
4. Shared themes and imagery which come from a shared humanity, which is displayed in folk stories shared cross-culturally.
5. No discernible parallels at all.

There are two sorts of mistakes which can be made when trying to determine the relationship between two texts. The first would be to mistake instances of 3. or 4. for instances of 1., or 2., that is to see parallels which exist due to a shared cultural heritage, or a shared humanity, as instances of direct reference to or reliance upon another text. This is what is referred to by Sandmel as “parallelomania”. Another
mistake, which one could call “parallelophobia” would be to make the opposite mistake: to see instances of 1. or 2. as instances of 3. or 4. or even 5.

The present chapter and Chapter 7 of this study discuss how the stories of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances relate to instances of unrecognisable heroes and gods from a range of Greco-Roman literature, but focussing upon Homer and the tragedy writers. This raises the question of how the Gospels and Acts relate to Greco-Roman literature. In order for the argument to proceed, it is not necessary for 1., or even 2. to be the case, although obviously this would make the argument stronger; all that is needed is for 3. or 4. to be true, since the themes being examined are present in folk literature, as well as a large range of written stories from a number of genres.

**Rewriting of Ancient Stories**

The most extreme claim that could be made is that the Gospel writers were not merely influenced by Greco-Roman literature but were actively and consciously re-writing existing literature to pass on the Christian message, and furthermore that the writers were expecting their audiences to understand that the work they were reading was a rewriting of older literature. This would correspond to case 1. or 2. in the above list. This would require either that the writer had the text they were alluding to in front of them, or that they were familiar enough with the text to allude to and even quote from it from memory. If a person had gone through a Greek education which required the rote learning and repetition of classical literature, then even without access to the texts, allusion and even direct quotation would be very plausible, in the same way a modern educated novelist would be able to make allusions to *Hamlet* and even quote sections verbatim without having to go and get their copy off the shelf.

One scholar who argues very much for the upper end of the spectrum (i.e. 1. or 2.) is Dennis R. MacDonald, who argues that the Gospel writers directly used Homer. For instance, he claims that “Mark wrote a prose epic modelled largely after the *Odyssey*
and the ending of the *Iliad.*”

He supports this thesis by noting that there is a general similarity between Jesus and Odysseus, and Jesus and Hector (at his death).

MacDonald argues that Mark wrote his Gospel as a “transvaluation” of Homer by “making Jesus more virtuous and powerful than Odysseus and Hector.”

While ultimately I will conclude he holds a more extreme stance than the evidence allows, MacDonald does support this interpretation with a number of factors. First, education in Greek was very reliant upon Homer. The fact that the education of youth in reading and writing Greek took place by copying passages of Homer, meant that those who could read and write Greek would be familiar with Homer. Even at a primary level of education the first Greek and Latin learnt by pupils would have been by copying out and learning by heart sections of the poets.

Homer in particular would remain the central pillar of education well into adulthood making Homer the “educator of the Greeks” (and indeed of the Romans).

Given its Greek (language) authorship and readership, MacDonald claims that “Homer was in the air that Mark’s readers breathed” and that Mark’s readership would have recognised allusions (or even direct quotations) from Homer. A central claim of MacDonald is that Mark’s transfiguration of Jesus is based upon the metamorphosis of Odysseus in *Od.* 16.172-3.

Other examples include the comparison of Barabbas in Mark 15:7 and Irus in Chapter 18 of the *Odyssey*, both of which demonstrate a crowd’s preference for a rogue over a disguised King, and a comparison of Elpenor and Eutychus, both of whom have misadventures falling from windows.

MacDonald sees Jesus’ claim of identity at his trial as the central scene based upon the *Odyssey*, claiming that it is directly analogous and dependent upon Odysseus’ self-revelation at the banquet. The result of these self-disclosures is the

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646 Ibid.
647 Ibid.
648 See footnote 621.
651 Ibid., 91.
652 Ibid., 40–1.
defeat of enemies: Odysseus’ destruction of the suitors, and Jesus’ self-destruction and eventual victory and destruction of his enemies.\textsuperscript{654}

MacDonald lists a set of criteria for determining whether dependency on another text can be detected: accessibility (was the work available to the author); analogy (did other writers of the same period use the work); density (the number of significant parallels); order (parallels occur in the same order in the texts); distinctiveness (the use of rare words, expressions and scenes); interpretability (there is a narrative reason why the original text is being rewritten to provide it with new meaning).\textsuperscript{655}

MacDonald’s claim is, as mentioned, at one extreme of the spectrum,\textsuperscript{656} and raises some immediate questions. The first objection is that in many of his examples there can be found biblical rather than Greek classical stories which could serve as a basis for the Gospel passage. For instance, while MacDonald argues that Mark’s transfiguration account is reliant upon the Odyssey,\textsuperscript{657} this event is explicable in terms of Moses’ glowing face in Exodus.\textsuperscript{658} There is also a lack of direct quotations from Homer, whereas there are many direct quotes from the Hebrew Scriptures.\textsuperscript{659} There are Christian writings which directly quote Homer, but they occur much later. In the 5th Century CE, Eudocia Athenais composed a version of the Gospel consisting of verbatim quotes of Homer.\textsuperscript{660} This poem differs from MacDonald’s claimed

\textsuperscript{654} Ibid., 44–54.
\textsuperscript{655} Ibid., 8–9.
\textsuperscript{656} As Ronald F. Hock point out, if MacDonald’s thesis is correct, then this would require a major re-evaluation of the Jewish context for interpreting Mark. Ronald F Hock, “Review of MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark,” \textit{RBL} 4 (2002): 364; Sharyn Dowd is less optimistic about the potential influence and importance of MacDonald’s study, concluding: “MacDonald’s study is a useful source of evidence for an occasional allusion that may have been employed by the Evangelist to communicate with his Hellenistic audience. It will not, however, be influential in the ongoing debate about gospel genre.” Sharyn E Dowd, “Review of MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark,” \textit{CBQ} 63 (2001): 156.
\textsuperscript{657} MacDonald, \textit{The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark}, 94.
\textsuperscript{658} Exod 34:29–35. MacDonald is of course not unaware of the possibility of Mark modelling his account on Moses, saying that Matthew and Luke were largely reliant upon Exodus, but that Mark’s account has some distinctive features which parallel Homer more than Exodus, for instance the attention paid by Mark to the transformation of Jesus’ clothing. Ibid.
\textsuperscript{659} For instance compare Mark 4:12 “γὰρ βλέποντες βλέπουσιν καὶ μὴ ἴδουσιν καὶ ἀκούοντες ἀκούοσιν καὶ μὴ συνιστάν” to Isa 6:9 LXX “ἀκοή ἀκούστε καὶ οὐ μὴ συνήτε καὶ βλέποντες βλέψετε καὶ οὐ μὴ ἴδητε.” Or compare Mark 1:3 “φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἔρημῳ Ἐτομᾶσατε τὴν ὅδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιέτε τὰς τρίβους αὐτοῦ” to Isa 40:3: “φωνὴ βοῶντος ἐν τῇ ἔρημῳ ἐτομᾶσατε τὴν ὅδὸν κυρίου εὐθείας ποιέτε τὰς τρίβους τοῦ θεοῦ ἡμῶν”.
\textsuperscript{660} Karl Olav Sandnes, \textit{The Gospel “according to Homer and Virgil”: Cento and Canon}, NovTSup 138 (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 181. For instance in lines 1854–1859 we find: “Above the earth is raised a dry
examples in a number of ways: It was composed at a much later date, the order of the Homeric verses is chosen to fit with the Gospel story, and finally there are multiple verbatim quotes from Homer, rather than just alleged allusions and shared themes. A further problem with MacDonald’s approach is that he sees common themes as indicative of a literary connection. For instance, he argues that Mark 13:34-35a is a reference to the story of Odysseus' return as a whole, and Mark 15:7f is a reference to Od. 18 (as in both instances a crowd of the returning King’s people prefer a rogue to the disguised King). The problem with such examples is that both themes dealt with here, the return of a hero, and the disguised King, are common folklore motifs and so the existence in both cases may imply merely that both writers were drawing on folk literature.

Even if I cannot accept MacDonald’s thesis and see the Gospels as being based very overtly on Homer, it is at least likely that the readers and writers would have had a familiarity with the overall themes of Homer and other Greco-Roman literature, and with the literary conventions of the Greco-Roman world. As John Taylor notes, even if one “conclude[s] that whilst the claimed echoes in wording [found in the Gospels which echo Homer] are no more than trivial coincidence, the thematic similarity is the more remarkable for occurring independently.” Taylor is implying that the similarity of themes springs not from direct rewriting of Homer’s work, but from a piece of wood with length about six feet (Il. 23.327) of oak or pine; in rain it does not rot (Il. 23.328). The mark showing a man that died in time past (Il. 7.89) so huge it was in length and breadth to look upon (Od. 9.324). They bound around the man a twisted rope (Od. 22.175).” The poem continues in similar fashion to describe the whole Crucifixion story. For a book length discussion of this work see, M. D. Usher, Homeric Stitchings: The Homeric Centos of the Empress Eudocia (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

Rather than maintaining the same order, which is one of his criteria for determining dependency on another text.

Dowd raises a similar objection, pointing out that the more often a Homeric image is used by other writers in antiquity, the more likely it is that Mark has picked this analogy up not directly from Homer, but from a similar motif in another imitator (of Homer). That is, while it can be perhaps concluded that Mark is aware of the themes present in Homer, it goes too far to conclude that he is directly quoting Homer Dowd, “Review of MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark,” 156; Similarly, Morna D. Hooker states that: “To show that there are similarities in plot and theme between two authors is one thing, to prove dependence is quite another. That there are certain parallels between the two narratives is hardly surprising, for similar themes reappear constantly in stories told by very different people.” Morna D Hooker, “Review of MacDonald, Dennis Ronald. The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark,” ITJ 53 (2002): 198.

MacDonald at times goes so far as to imply that Mark would have had a copy of Homer in front of him as he composed his work, and that this is reflected by the same words being used in the same order. MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark, 14.

Taylor, Classics and the Bible: Hospitality and Recognition, 13.
shared set of understandings about some key narrative features. This could be due to having access to the same written sources (“3.” in the spectrum list above), or else by the same features occurring in the folk traditions to which each writer had access (“4.” in the spectrum list above).

Although it would be a stronger case if a direct reliance on another text could be established, what is essential is that there are common themes, and common narrative techniques being used. That these shared themes stemmed from a familiarity with Greco-Roman literature, which in light of the texts being written in a society where Greco-Roman culture was dominant and any education in Greek would imply a knowledge of classical literature, seems axiomatic.

Of course, not every member of the population was literate, or would have read Greek literature. However, reading is by no means the only, or even the prevalent way, to gain knowledge of a culture’s foundational stories. Euripides’ Ion contains a scene which describes Creusa’s handmaids entering a shrine, going from sculpture to sculpture and relating the stories each carving depicts. The use of weaving as a way to record and pass on stories is also mentioned. This is a dramatic representation of the way people in the ancient world would have learned about their cultures’ myths and literary tradition (particularly those who could not read and write). The theatres in Sepphoris, Caesarea, and Jerusalem would have contained reliefs detailing plays and the costumes, and even everyday objects, such as lamps and wall paintings would have depicted the plays performed at the theatres. Heraclitus (writing in the 1st Century CE) describes children chanting passages of Homer from

665 Euripides, Ion 184f.
666 Euripides, Ion 197. Cf. Apollonius of Rhodes, Argon. 1.721f (Jason’s cloak, given to him by Athene is embroidered with a number of stories).
667 Benedikt Schwank argues that archaeological evidence shows that the theatre in Sepphoris existed at the time Jesus was in Nazareth, and raises the possibility that Jesus himself might have attended performances there. See Benedikt Schwank, “Das Theater von Sepphoris: Seine Ausgrabung: Schlüssel Zur Sprachenfrage,” CV 45 (2003): 163–68. James Charlesworth concedes that it is a possibility that the theatre was constructed in two stages, and that “Jesus and his contemporaries might have known a smaller theater at Sepphoris.” James H. Charlesworth, Jesus and Archaeology (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2006), 54. Charlesworth gives a good overview of the debate on the dating of the Sepphoris theatre (p. 51-55). For an overview of the wider debate on the architecture and its significance in Galilee see Mark Rapinckhu, “The Galilee and Jesus in Recent Research,” CurBR 2 (2004): 197-222.
memory at religious festivals. This means even an illiterate audience would have had access to the prevailing culture’s literary tradition through artistic representation, and hearing the stories read out.

For the educated New Testament writers, a familiarity with the Greco-Roman world in which they lived, seems uncontroversial. This is evidenced in the Gospels and Acts and the Epistles. C. A. Evans lists 200 possible parallels between Paul’s writings and non-Jewish writings. Although some of these parallels could be seen as very common sayings at the time, he also notes that Paul uses specifically philosophical vocabulary including parallels with Seneca (19 times), Epiktetos (17 times) and Plutarch (18 times). Lawrence DiPaola compares the metamorphosis language used in the Epistles (Phil 2:7b; 1 Tim 3:16b) to Greco-Roman metamorphosis literature. Wendy Cotter lists a number of Greco-Roman parallels to miracle stories found in the New Testament, including healing miracles, exorcisms, control of nature, and other magic and miracles. Other examples will be introduced as the Jesus stories are investigated in the rest of this study. In light of these parallels, while one extreme of the spectrum, that represented by MacDonald, is likely making claims that go beyond the evidence, the other end of the spectrum, where it is thought that there is no influence of Greco-Roman literature on the Jesus stories (represented by 4 and 5) must also be rejected.

The Cultural and Literary Contexts of the Canonical Gospels

It has thus been demonstrated that a Greek speaking writer was very likely to be familiar with Greco-Roman literature and culture. In this section a little will be said

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670 In which he includes the Pastoral Epistles.
673 Wendy Cotter, *Miracles in Greco-Roman Antiquity: A Sourcebook* (London; New York: Routledge, 1999). Cotter does not argue that there are direct quotations of the Greco-Roman stories, but rather that the allusions used by the New Testament writers were ones the audience, with a basic understanding of Greek culture and tradition, could be expected to understand (see Introduction, p. 6).
about the situation in which each of the canonical Gospels were written, to show that in each case it is probable that the author was familiar with Greco-Roman literature.

**Matthew**

The name Matthew was attached to the Gospel at a later date, and did not appear in the earliest manuscripts. Nolland considers that it is very unlikely that the Apostle, Matthew, was responsible for this Gospel’s composition. The dating of Matthew is often in the 80s or 90s, partially due to the observation that Matt 22:7 seems to display a knowledge of the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 CE. In contrast, Nolland argues that the way Matt 24 describes the destruction indicates that for the author the destruction was a future event which had not yet happened, and therefore says that “the state of Matt 24 excludes the possibility that Matthew wrote after A.D. 70.” Matthew shows a concern for Jewish themes throughout his Gospel, so probably wrote for Jewish Christians who were still concerned with their Jewish identity, but who were fluent in Greek. Matthew’s Greek is of good quality, suggesting a well-educated writer. Nolland suggests the Gospel could have been written in Antioch in Alexandria, Caesarea Maritima, Tyre of Sidon, Jerusalem, Edessa, or Pella, and states that the most likely choice is Antioch, but concludes that all that can be said is that it was most likely written in and for people living in an

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674 I will refer to the authors of the Gospels as “Matthew”, “Mark”, “Luke”, and “John” for convenience sake throughout this Chapter. This does not imply that a particular historical person, or even that one particular person was responsible for the Gospel.


681 The possibility that Matthew, or parts of Matthew, were originally compiled in Hebrew or Aramaic does not raise any issues, since even if this was the case, the version we have was written by a person competent in Greek, and therefore, as argued in Chapter 6, familiar with Greek literature. For a brief discussion on the possibility of a Hebrew/Aramaic version of Matthew see ibid., 3–4.
urban environment. David C. Sim also concludes that Antioch is the most likely location, and goes on to argue that the original community in Antioch consisted of Greek-speaking Hellenists. The references to Gentiles in Matthew suggest that there was a significant non-Jewish population in the area in which it was composed. We can, therefore, conclude that Matthew was written by someone with a good grasp of Greek, in an area where the population spoke Greek, and would have had interactions with a non-Jewish population.

Mark

Mark is traditionally considered to have been written between 60 and 70 CE for use in the Church in Rome. Mark 13:14 could be evidence that the Gospel was written before the destruction of Jerusalem, but when the writer could foresee this eventuality, placing the date before 70 CE. However, for the purpose of this study, what is more important is when the section contained in Mark 16:9-20 was written, as this is the section of Mark which contains any mention of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. The longer ending was in circulation by the middle of the second century, and was probably composed in the first half of the second century CE. These sections are thought to be later additions to the text for a number of reasons: It appears that they were not known to the earliest witnesses, and the language used

682 Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 18. Harrington says only that Matthew wrote sometime in the late first century in Palestine or Syria (The Gospel of Matthew, 10–16). Josephus confirms that there was a large Jewish population in Syria in J.W. 7:43.
683 Sim, The Gospel of Matthew and Christian Judaism, 31 (for detailed discussion see 40–62); Antioch is also seen as the most likely location by Craig S. Keener, A Commentary on the Gospel of Matthew (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1999), 42.
685 E.g. 5:47; 6:7; 18:17.
690 “There is no indication that Clement of Alexandria and Origen knew it, and Eusebius and Jerome claimed it was absent from almost all the Greek manuscripts known to them.” Donahue and Harrington, The Gospel of Mark, 462; C. S. Mann points out that up until the middle of the fourth century there were only two literary allusions to longer ending: Justin Martyr (Apology 1.45) and Irenaeus (Haer. 3.10.5) C. S. Mann, ed., Mark: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary, 1st ed, AB (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1986), 674; For a summary of all of the manuscript evidence see William Reuben Farmer, The Last Twelve Verses of Mark, Society for New Testament Studies Monograph Series 25 (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 3–75. His tentative conclusion (p.
and the style differ from the rest of Mark. It has also been pointed out that the ending at 16:7-8, makes sense as an ending of Mark’s gospel from a narrative perspective.

So, although the main body of Mark is usually considered to have been written before the other Gospels, the section of particular interest for this study (Mark 16:9-20) seems to be a “conflation of traditions found in Matthew, Luke, John, and Acts, enriched with a few legendary details.” This section contains references to several post-resurrection appearances: the road to Emmaus story (Luke 24:13-35) is mentioned in verse 12-13; the appearance to Mary Magdalene (Luke 24:10-11, John 20:14-18) is contained in verses 9-11, and the appearance in a room (John 20:19-29) is mentioned in verse 14. There are several further parallels with the other Gospels and Acts: Verse 20 may be a general summary of the book of Acts; verse 17 mentions speaking in new languages (an allusion to Acts 2:4; 10:46); verse 15 resembles the Great commission in Matt 28:19; verse 19 describes an ascension (Luke 24:51; Acts 1:2, 9).

In the next section, Mark 16:9-20 will be treated as a literary unit, and will be compared to post-resurrection stories contained in the other Gospels. More details on the connections and similarities will be discussed in the following sections, as each post-resurrection appearance is examined.

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74-5) is: “We can only say with certainty (concerning Mk. 16: 9-20 in this period) that manuscripts containing these verses were circulating in the second century.”; N. Clayton Croy concludes his survey of the textual integrity of Mark’s Gospel by saying it is “very probable [that] the conclusion of Mark’s Gospel has been lost.” N. Clayton Croy, The Mutilation of Mark’s Gospel (Nashville: Abingdon, 2003), 165.


692 For a survey of approaches see: Joel F Williams, “Literary Approaches to the End of Mark’s Gospel,” JETS 42 (1999): 21–35, who argues that that “The most satisfying viewpoint is that Mark concludes his Gospel by juxtaposing promise and failure. The prediction of 16:7 implies a promise that a restoration to discipleship is available in spite of failure, while the disobedience of the women in 16:8 serves as a warning that failure is possible even after the resurrection”, 22.

693 Craig A. Evans, Mark 8:27-16:20, WBC (Dallas: Word, 2001), 545; For a description of the parallels between Mark 16:9-20 and other NT passages see R. T. France, The Gospel of Mark: A Commentary on the Greek Text, NIGTC (Grand Rapids; Carlisle: Eerdmans; Paternoster, 2002), 686. The parallels in the post-resurrection appearances will be discussed as they occur in the sections which follow.

694 Evans, Mark 1-8, 546.
Luke

The name “Luke” is first attached to the document in the second century. Fitzmyer states that due to his reliance on eyewitnesses (Luke 1:2), the author of Luke “is not an eyewitness of the ministry of Jesus” but is “rather a second- or third-generation Christian.” It was probably composed around 85 CE. This date is arrived at via a number of factors including its use by writers in the 2nd Century, and reference to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE. These place an upper and lower limit on its date of composition. Fitzmyer notes that Luke’s lack of knowledge of Palestinian geography and customs suggests that he is not a native of Palestine. It is not certain whether Luke was a Jewish or Gentile author. The high quality of Greek, and the lack of a Semitic vocabulary, suggests that he was a Gentile Christian. With regard to the audience, Luke Timothy Johnson goes as far as saying “a great deal of Luke-Acts, in fact, would not make sense if its readers were not Gentile.” On the other hand, Luke’s interest in the Old Testament suggests a Jewish heritage. As an example, he cites Psalm 69:26 in Acts 1:20, explicitly linking the story he is relating to the Old Testament story. Tradition has it that Luke was writing in Antioch, and whatever his own ethnic background, was writing for a Gentile audience. His work is dedicated to a Greek named “Theophilus” and

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701 Ibid., 1:41.
Luke has an interest in mission to the Gentiles. It is not essential to come to any firm conclusions about Luke’s identity, ethnicity, or location and date. What needs to be concluded, and what can be concluded, is that Luke was fluent in Greek and had a familiarity with both Greco-Roman and Hebrew literature.

John

The Gospel of John traditionally has a later dating than the synoptic Gospels, sometime around 100 CE. As with the other Gospels, the identity of the author remains unknown, although he has been identified with John the son of Zebedee since at least the time of Irenaeus. Although John has many references to a Jewish background, it also contains material which would have been accessible to a wider audience, such as the use of λόγος to refer to Jesus. Beasley-Murray looks at a range of possible cultural influences on John’s Gospel, both Greek and Jewish, and says that rather than isolating one of these traditions, it must be concluded that the author was interacting with a wide range of traditions. Several times John uses both Greek and Hebrew names or expressions, which indicated a Greek speaking audience who are not all expected to be familiar with Hebrew terms. This could indicate a gentile audience, or else “John’s anticipated audience includes many Jewish

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707 See Francis J. Moloney, The Gospel of John, Rev. ed., SP 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2005), 2; although as Beasley-Murray says: “authorities can be cited for placing it in virtually any decade in the second century to its last quarter.” For his list of examples see George R. Beasley-Murray, John, WBC 36 (Waco, TX: Word, 1987), lxxv. Leon Morris goes so far as saying that a date before 70 A.D. cannot be ruled out, and is perhaps more likely, especially since there is no mention of the Temple’s destruction: Leon Morris, The Gospel According to John, Revised edition, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 26–7, 30; Michaels says that the statement in John 11:48 “the Romans will come and take away both our place and our nation” would have special poignancy and irony if the Gospel was, as he claims, written after 70 CE. J. Ramsey Michaels, The Gospel of John, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2010), 38. He also points out that the earliest fragment of the Gospel (the Rylands fragment) dates to the first half of the second century, putting an upper limit on the date of the Gospel of John’s composition (37).
708 Irenaeus, Haer. 3.1.2. Leon Morris argues that the reasons usually given against this John being the author are unconvincing. Morris, The Gospel According to John, 4–25.
709 See e.g. Ibid., 10–11.
711 Beasley-Murray, John, liii–lxvi.
712 John 5:2; 19:13, 17; 20:16 (ῥηφθοῦντι and διδάσκαλος are both used cf. 1:38); 1:41-2 (both Μοσσίας and Χριστούς are used). 9:7 (John explains that Σιλωάμ means ἀπεσταλμένος: “sent”).
people whose primary language is Greek – the situation of most Diaspora Jews.”

Ephesus is the city which is traditionally associated with John, but as with the other Gospels, there is no definitive proof.

6.2.3: Summary

The exact details of who the author of each of the Gospels was, and where and when each Gospel was written, are all unknown. What can be concluded, however, is that all of the Gospels were written by Greek-speaking authors, in environments where there was some knowledge of, and interaction with, Greco-Roman culture. This, combined with what has been discussed about a literate Greek speaker’s familiarity with Greco-Roman literature, means that the task of comparing the Jesus appearance stories found in the Gospels with similar stories in Greco-Roman literature is reasonable. If this is true, it means that the writers of canonical post-resurrection appearances were probably familiar with the themes of unrecognisability, disguise, and metamorphosis contained in Greek literature, and the thematic purpose for which they were being used. This will be demonstrated with several examples in Section 6.3.

This familiarity could have come about through a range of means. The authors may have been deliberately using Greek stories which they could recall or had access to, they may have had an understanding of the general themes of Greek narrative, or they may have been aware of themes which existed in Greek literature because they were themes which exist universally in folk literature, or a mixture of all three. In any case, it is now possible to proceed with a reasonable expectation that the stories which have an unrecognisable Jesus in them, will have much in common with the other unrecognisability stories which have been examined in the preceding chapters. Whether this is in fact the case will be argued in Section 6.4. It has also been pointed out that even an illiterate person could be familiar with the works of Homer and other

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writers, so the audiences of stories about Jesus could also have understood at least some resonances with Greco-Roman literature.

6.3: The Gospel Worlds

Although the main focus of this study is the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus, there are also themes of disguise, recognition, and metamorphosis during Jesus’ pre-resurrection existence. This section will briefly deal with a number of themes related to Jesus appearing in disguise and being unrecognised by his own people, and times where he might have undergone some sort of metamorphosis. The purpose of this section is not to give an exhaustive survey of all of the instances within the Gospels, but rather to demonstrate that the themes of disguise, recognition, and metamorphosis were ones with which the authors were familiar, and which they utilized elsewhere in their works.

6.3.1 The transfiguration

Perhaps the most prominent example of metamorphosis in the New Testament, which in two of the accounts uses the verb μεταμορφόω,715 is the “Transfiguration” (transfiguratus being the Vulgate translation for metamorphosis). The Transfiguration occurs in all three synoptic Gospels,716 but differs in significant ways both in the content and in the language used to describe the metamorphosis involved. In Mark it is Jesus’ clothing (τὰ ἴματα αὐτοῦ)717 to which attention is drawn, as it becomes exceedingly white, in a manner which no earthly launderer could emulate. In Matthew and Luke, however, it is the transformation of Jesus’ face which is concentrated upon. Mark, however, does not specify that Jesus’ body was not transformed (but rather only his clothes were) as Paul Foster maintains.718 In the

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715 Mark 9:2; Matt 17:2.
717 Mark 9:3.
718 “In the Marcan account the transformation only alters Jesus’ apparel, not his body, καὶ τὰ ἴματα αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στεφθεῖσθαι λευκὰ λίαι (Mark 9:3)” (Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 66–99); John Nolland, however, argues the opposite saying that: “whereas for Mark Jesus was transformed and his
preceding verse it is specified that in fact Jesus μετεμορφώθη ἐμπροσθεν αὐτῶν, that is he was metamorphosed before them. The following verse, therefore, adds the further detail that on top of this metamorphosis his clothing was also changed. Paul Foster interprets this to mean that his clothing changed, and this was the full extent of Jesus’ metamorphosis. This is a necessary reading for Foster since he is attempting to demonstrate a development of the metamorphosis theme where the later writers, Matthew and Luke, have an idea of a changed body which Mark did not possess. However, Foster’s view is unlikely.

Matthew uses very similar language to Mark. The verb μεταμορφόω recurs in the same form, and the bright clothing is also mentioned. The additional detail that Jesus’ face shone like the sun, is added to the detail about his clothing. As with Mark, the question remains as to whether the metamorphosis consists in these two details, or whether these two details are additional information on top of the transformation Jesus’ body underwent. As Joachim Gnilka points out, the transformation of Jesus bears little in common with the transformations of men into animals found in works like Apuleius Golden Ass, however it does have similarities with other Greco-Roman stories. R. T. France says that the Transfiguration is not as much a physical alteration as an added dimension of glory, which is similar to the way the Greek gods took on a more glorious form when revealing their true identity.
Luke does not use the verb μεταμορφώω, but instead says that his face became different (ἕτερος). Luke, unlike Matthew, does not say that Jesus’ face shone, but only that it was changed in some way. Luke also mentions the brightness of Jesus’ clothing, but like Matthew leaves out Mark’s detail about the heavenly launderer. Both the bright clothing and the glowing face have links with the wider Jewish tradition. T. Levi 18.4 states that the “Messiah will shine forth like the sun in the earth; he will take away all darkness from heaven,” and I Enoch 38.4 says that “the faces of holy ones [are] transformed so that nobody is able to look upon them.” The Matthean depiction of Jesus therefore particularly fits with Jewish ideas of a Messiah figure.

In the Marcan context in particular, the theme of a disguised person being revealed at the Transfiguration is prevalent. As Simon Lee puts it “his hidden cosmic rulership is temporarily revealed on a small scale” to Peter, James and John. After the Transfiguration, Mark’s Jesus demands that the three disciples who were present remain silent about his self-revelation. Matthew, like Mark, states that Jesus demanded the silence of his disciples until after the resurrection. In Luke it is also recorded that the disciples did not tell anyone about what they had seen at the Transfiguration, but this is not at Jesus’ command. Although Jesus has revealed himself to trustworthy friends, the success of his mission depends upon the secrecy continuing. As previously noted, the secrecy motif is also used by Homer, when

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726 Cf. Mark 16:12 where Jesus appears ἐν ἑτέρῳ μορφῇ which uses the language used in all of the Transfiguration accounts (i.e. the ideas contained in both the words μορφῇ and ἑτέρος). How this account differs from Luke’s Emmaus account will be discussed below. 727 This is a detail upon which Dennis MacDonald concentrates when trying to show that while Matthew and Luke were reliant upon Moses’ transfiguration narrative (Exod 24), Mark was at least partially using Odysseus’ metamorphosis by Athene as source material. See: MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark, 91–6. 728 For more detail see: Dale C. Allison, The New Moses: A Matthean Typology (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 243–8. 729 Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 69. 730 Lee, Jesus’ Transfiguration and the Believers’ Transformation, 14. 731 Mark 9:9-10. 732 Matt 17:9. 733 Luke 9:36. 734 In Matt 16:22, Peter has already made the mistake of trying to change Jesus’ plan to die on the cross. The need for secrecy may be so that the other disciples and others do not likewise put his plan at risk. France, Matthew, 652.
despite revealing his identity to Telemachus, Odysseus demands he does not tell anyone, so that his own plan may be a success.\textsuperscript{735}

Lee goes on to say that “Jesus’ radiant garments do not tell us that he is currently acquiring a heavenly citizenship at the very moment of his transfiguration. But instead, it reveals his divine identity by manifesting what he has been hiding.”\textsuperscript{736} This could lead to a docetic view of Jesus where the undisguised, and hence real, Jesus is the heavenly being, whereas the disguised Jesus who travels around with his companions is not truly who he claims to be. From one perspective, it may be thought that it would be to not take the revelation of Jesus’ identity seriously to credit as much reality to the disguise as to the person who is in disguise. As an analogy: when Odysseus, with the help of Athene, reveals his true identity to Telemachus,\textsuperscript{737} his son now knows that the beggar his father was pretending to be does not exist in any way. Telemachus is not expected to continue to believe in the beggar’s identity as well as his father’s identity at the same time, even after Athene transforms Odysseus back to his disguised form.\textsuperscript{738} The disguise is just that: a disguise.

However, this is not the only way to interpret the recognition which takes place at the transfiguration. What is being recognised is not the identity\textsuperscript{739} of the transformed person, since they knew that it was Jesus before the Transfiguration, and continued to believe this afterwards. Rather, the nature of Jesus is recognised, and the fact that he has a quite different status than hitherto thought.\textsuperscript{740}

Looked at from a different perspective, if Jesus’ Transfiguration is seen as a transformation into a different form, then the idea that the earthly Jesus is “real” can be maintained, and docetic conclusions do not follow. If the Transfiguration is,

\textsuperscript{735} Homer, \textit{Od.}, 270f.
\textsuperscript{736} Lee, \textit{Jesus’ Transfiguration and the Believers’ Transformation}, 23.
\textsuperscript{737} Homer, \textit{Od.} 16.172f.
\textsuperscript{738} Homer, \textit{Od.} 16.451f.
\textsuperscript{739} And by “identity” what is meant is merely that an individual X answers to the name of Y. See Section 1.4.2.
\textsuperscript{740} It could be compared to the recognition that Arthur is the King. This does not undermine the fact that he is still in fact Arthur as well. Similarly, the recognition that Jesus is the Messiah, or even a divine being, does not, on its own, undermine the fact that Jesus is still the companion the disciples have come to know.
however, analogous to Odysseus’ metamorphosis (or rather his reverse-metamorphosis), then Mark actually presents a very docetic Christology.

Although the three Gospel writers do not agree on the details, they do agree that some form of metamorphosis has taken place. Harrington may be right to say that in Matthew “[w]hat is described does not conform to the Greek idea of metamorphosis”, but even if the original authors had intended to recall Old Testament imagery, readers familiar with Greco-Roman metamorphosis collections would have seen parallels with Greek ideas of metamorphosis.

The Transfiguration has many similarities to a disguised god story: first of all if Jesus is to be identified with a god in this story, he has clearly been traveling in disguise, even to his companions. There is a hint that the theme of hospitality can be seen as something of a test when Peter offers to build “shelters” for Jesus and his supernatural companions. One interpretation of why Peter wanted to build the shelters was to prolong the experience, perhaps to keep Jesus from the cross as he attempted in Matt 16:22. Whatever his motivation, the way Peter reacts is by providing a form of hospitality. One suggestion is that the Feast of Tabernacles is the background for Peter’s offer. Keener suggests that the sort of shelters in mind were either those built for workers to provide protection from the elements, or those traditionally built by Mediterranean nomads for honored guests. Nolland also raises the hospitality

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742 Most strongly recalling Moses’ face in Exodus 34:29-35. For further OT (and Jewish) imagery see Nolland, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 700–1.
743 R. T. France suggests that the use of μεταμορφούμεθα (“we are changed”) in 2 Cor 3:18 gives an indication of the meaning the Gospel writers may have been intending to convey. That is, a transformation not in physical appearance or form but rather an enhanced “glory”. (France, *Matthew*, 647); Harrington thinks that the idea of “interior transformation” presented in 2 Cor 3:18 (and Rom 12:2) is not what is in mind here (Harrington, *The Gospel of Matthew*, 253), since the rest of the passage indicates that it is definitely a physical transformation which is being talked about.
744 Matt 17:4; Mark 9:5; Luke 9:33.
745 νόμισμα. The related word νομίζω is used in John 1:14.
theme saying that “perhaps the offer of shelters means nothing more than the desire to extend hospitality to the heavenly visitors.” Similarly, France posits that Peter wants to “provide them with accommodation befitting their dignity.”

Greco-Roman cult foundation stories also combine the elements of epiphany and building shelters. In the Homeric Hymn to Aphrodite, Anchises offers to build an altar on a mountain after Aphrodite appears in shining bright robes. In Matthew’s Gospel no opinion is offered about the appropriateness of Peter’s action, whereas both Mark and Luke state that Peter did not know what he was saying, and has thus acted inappropriately. One possibility for saying Peter acted incorrectly, may be to remove any suspicion that this is a cult formation story, such as that of Aphrodite.

This offer of hospitality does come after it has become apparent that Jesus is divine or glorified in some manner rather than being a test where the hospitality is offered to a supposed mortal and the god reveals his or her identity afterwards, but nevertheless the theme of divine visitation/revelation and hospitality are tied together in this story. Although the idea of a god providing a reward for hospitality, and a punishment for inhospitality is not present here from Jesus’ point of view perhaps, there is a hint that Peter is acting within this paradigm. He is suddenly confronted with the horrifying fact that not only is he in the presence of a divine being, but he has actually

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752 Herodotus, *Hist.* 6.105. (cf. 3.27.3).
753 HH 5 81-102.
755 οὐ γὰρ ἠδὲ τί ἄποκριθή (Mark 9:6) μὴ εἰδός ὁ λέγει. (Luke 9:33)
756 Hagner suggests that the mistake Peter makes is in treating Jesus as an equal to Moses and Elijah, and thus not putting the focus on Jesus; Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 14 – 28*, WBC (Nashville: Nelson, 2008), 494; See also France, *Matthew*, 649.
758 This is a theme in other parts of the Gospels - Matthew 25:31-46 displays exactly this sentiment. Although “Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me” could be interpreted to mean it is as though you did these things for me or it is the equivalent to having done these things for me – it could also, in light of disguised god traditions, be interpreted more literally – “I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat” means just that. Jesus, while in disguise, visited and was refused hospitality and so punishment will naturally follow. This story is not entirely out of place in the Jewish tradition (as we see in Chapter 3) – The divine visitors who visit Abram are shown the right sort of hospitality, and reward does follow.
been traveling with one for some time! His immediate reaction is to (belatedly?) offer the sort of hospitality which should be offered to gods in disguise.\textsuperscript{759} 

Jesus also resembles a disguised god in this passage due to his appearance and people’s reaction to him. He is radiant, glowing, and white, all attributes associated with divine visitations; coupled with this the disciples react in terror.\textsuperscript{760} These are both common features of a divine visitation.\textsuperscript{761} Lastly, Jesus’ metamorphosis is completed with instructions to the disciples: firstly by being told to listen to him,\textsuperscript{762} and secondly a command to tell no one.\textsuperscript{763} There are then many links here with a disguised god story, with the addition that mountains are often the site of theophanies.\textsuperscript{764} 

In contrast, the similarities to a hero recognition scene are few. There are no tokens or signs used in Jesus’ recognition. He merely changes to another form. There is no cognitive resistance on the part of the observers, no moment of peripeteia, and Peter’s reaction is one of fear rather than joyful reunion. The recognition does not lead to a healing of relationships, or (immediately or directly) to a new ordering of society. Since hero recognition stories require the recogniser to have known the recognised at some previous time,\textsuperscript{765} the transfiguration is unlikely to be viewed in this light. That

\textsuperscript{759} And as a consequence to everybody – or at least to every stranger. 
\textsuperscript{760} In Matthew the terror is in reaction to the voice from the cloud (17:6), but even in this instance Jesus responds with the usual words of a divine visitor “μὴ φοβεῖσθε” – do not be afraid. In Mark (9:6) the fear seems to be directly related to Jesus’ appearance, while in Luke (9:34) the fear occurs when a cloud descends. In each case the fear is due to the proximity to divinity, but there is ambiguity as to whether the divinity is to be found in Jesus, or the owner of the voice in the cloud. 
\textsuperscript{761} The tradition of divine appearances being correlated with terror and falling down is of course not a specifically Greco-Roman trait, and there are many instances in the Old Testament (e.g. Gen 17:3; Num 16:45; Judg 13:20; 1 Kgs 18:39). Angelic visitations in Luke are also accompanied with fear (e.g. Luke 1:12; Luke 2:9). Angels in the Old Testament (and Apocrypha) similarly cause fear and falling down; e.g. Daniel 8:17; Tob 12:16. A further post-resurrection example examined below is in Matthew 28:9-10. 
\textsuperscript{762} Matt 17:5; Mark 9:7; Luke 9:35. 
\textsuperscript{763} Mark 9:9; Matt 17:9. 
\textsuperscript{764} Matthew in particular links important milestones in Jesus’ mission with mountains (see Matt 5:1; 28:16 and also 4:8 where supernatural power is associated with mountains) - see Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 166. For Old Testament associations of God with mountains see e.g. Gen 22:1-14; Exod 3:1-2; Exod 19; 1 Kgs 19:8-18. For a discussion on the different traditions of mountain theophanies in the Old Testament see Edwin C. Kingsbury, “The Theophany Topos and the Mountain of God,” JBL 86 (1967): 205–10; Th. Booij, “Mountain and Theophany in the Sinai Narrative,” Bib 65 (1984): 1–26; For mountains in Greek Religion (e.g. Herodotus, Hist 6.105) see Merle K. Langdon, “Mountains in Greek Religion,” CW 93 (2000): 461–70. 
\textsuperscript{765} Even if it was only as an abandoned baby as is the case in many instances.
is, the disciples had not met this transfigured Jesus at a previous time, and are thus not realising that the man in front of them is their long lost friend.

The transfiguration then, when compared to Greco-Roman literature resonates most with a divine visitor story, and this is how this story would have most likely been understood by readers or hearers familiar with Greco-Roman tradition and literature. Collins says that the parallels are so striking that it “appears to have drawn upon the Hellenistic and Roman genres of epiphany and metamorphosis, but in a way that adapts them to the biblical tradition, especially to that of the theophany on Sinai.”

The authors may have drawn their imagery from Jewish or Greco-Roman sources, or a mixture of both. For the purposes of this study, what the transfiguration accounts demonstrate is that the writers of the synoptic Gospels were familiar with the key themes of metamorphosis, disguise, and recognition, which exist in both folk literature and written narratives. It is therefore legitimate to look for the same themes in Jesus’ post resurrection appearance stories that were composed by the same authors.

### 6.3.2 Other pre-resurrection events

Although the Transfiguration is the most prominent example of a person undergoing metamorphosis, there are several examples of the metamorphosis of non-human objects, as well as instances of Jesus being initially unrecognised, instances of him undergoing metamorphosis and disappearing, and instances of him being recognised as divine.

In the wedding at Cana, Jesus causes water to metamorphose into wine. For Greek audiences familiar with Dionysus, this story would communicate the significance and

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766 Collins, *Mark*, 419.
importance of Jesus by demonstrating that Jesus shared characteristics with the pagan god of wine. Dionysus was also known for wine miracles, and more specifically wine miracles which involved wine miraculously appearing in sealed vessels. The story relies upon an understanding of metamorphosis themes. This scene, and the scene where Jesus multiplies the amount of food, are both similar to the folklore motif of the multiplication of food. In light of these miracles, the words used by Jesus at the Last Supper in the synoptic Gospels could be taken to mean that one substance is being transformed into another: the bread transformed to body, and the wine into blood (linking in with the later doctrine of transubstantiation).

The theme of gods or heroes appearing in a disguised or humble form, and then rewarding those who treat them with respect, and punishing those who treat them with disrespect is found in Jesus’ parable of the sheep and the goats in Matthew 25:31-46. In this parable, the King says that he was a stranger, and either was, or was not shown hospitality by those to whom he appeared. Those who show hospitality are rewarded, and those who do not are punished. The story specifically says that “I was a stranger,” rather than merely saying that a stranger came to them. The King in the parable is thus placing himself in the role of a disguised character testing his

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770 Eisele, “Jesus und Dionysos,” 25.
771 E.g Euripides, *Bacch.*, 704-7; Athenaeus, *Deipn.*, 1.61 (in this account empty vessels are sealed, and then later opened and found to be full of wine, which is very close to Jesus’ miracle at Cana. Athenaeus was writing in the early 3rd century CE, so this account in itself could not have been an influence on the Gospels); a very similar miracle is described in Pausanias, *Descr.*, 6.26.1f (which was written shortly after the Gospels (2nd century CE), indicating that the account of Dionysus’ miracles would have been known to at least some of John’s audience). As well as written accounts, archaeological evidence from a 5th century BCE temple indicates that this miracle was actually performed (or claimed to be performed). Campbell Bonner, “A Dionysiac Miracle at Corinth,” *AJA* 33 (1929): 368–75; See also Barrett, *The Gospel according to St. John*, 188–9.
776 Strangers in Palestine would have been in danger (as shown in the parable of the Good Samaritan: Luke 25:30-37). The Old Testament also contains stories about the dangers to strangers who are not shown hospitality (e.g. Judg 15:15) Leon Morris, *The Gospel according to Matthew*, PNTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1992), 637–8.
777 ἥμην (Matt 25:35).
This is very similar to the tradition that all beggars were sent by Zeus to
test mortals, which is preserved in Homer. However, there is no need to assume a
reliance on Greco-Roman literature, since this parable is an example of the folklore
motifs Q1.1: “Gods (saints) in disguise reward hospitality and punish inhospitality”
(see Section 2.2.2).

There are several instances before the resurrection accounts where supernatural beings
interact with the human characters in the Gospels, particularly in Luke where angels
play a prominent role. However, most importantly, the theme of Jesus appearing
unrecognised is one which is prevalent throughout the Gospels during Jesus’ ministry
before his death. The prologue of John contains the idea that Jesus is returning to his
“own home” and that his own people did not receive him. This is the same
treatment which Odysseus received from the suitors when he returned to his home.
As with most ancient recognition scenes the audience is told right at the start of the
story who it is that is disguised: in this case “the Word.” The other characters in the
story, on the other hand, do not know the true identity of the disguised character, and
the audience is invited to observe the process of their recognition. Thus, the prologue
of John contains the themes of disguise, and (lack of) recognition.

These themes continue throughout John’s Gospel. Kasper Bro Larsen argues that
recognition stories are “an important epistemological and ideological laboratory in
John’s many-faceted narrative,” and that these recognition scenes are used to raise
and answer questions such as “who is Jesus?” and “how and when can one tell?”

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778 See the discussion in footnote 758.
779 E.g. Homer, *Od.* 6.207f, 7.164.
780 In Matthew, before the resurrection angels appear only in dreams (1:20, 24; 2:13, 19); In Luke they
appear to several characters (to Zechariah 1:11f; to Mary 1:26; To shepherds 2:9).
781 Cf. John 4:4, which also contains the theme of lack of welcome to one’s own home. Michaels, *The
Gospel of John*, 66.
782 John 1:11.
783 A point noticed by Keener, although the example he uses is “Orestes in Sophocles Electra;
784 E.g. Larsen sees recognition scenes in: call narratives as recognition scene (1:35-51); the recognition
by the Samaritan woman (4:4-42); Mary Magdalene recognising Jesus outside the tomb (20:11-18);
208–211 The last two of these scenes will be discussed in Section 6.4.
785 Ibid., 4.
786 Ibid., 4.
Hitchcock sees recognition scenes being played out in John 18-20 in particular, when the soldiers attempt to recognise Jesus in the garden, and Pilate attempts to recognise Jesus in the praetorium. Culpepper, unlike Hitchcock, does not constrain anagnorisis as a plot device to the final chapters of John, but rather sees the Gospel as “a series of episodes that describe attempted, failed, and occasionally successful anagnorisis (recognition scenes).” Stibbe lists a large number of characters who try to recognise Jesus: the disciples, Nathaniel, “the Jews”, Nicodemus, John the Baptist, the Samaritan woman, the official’s son, the crippled man at Bethesda, crowds, the man born blind, Caiaphas, Annas, and Pilate. All of these instances occur before Jesus’ death and resurrection. The type of recognition which is taking place (or failing to take place) is social recognition. The people are aware that the person in front of them is Jesus; what they do not know and are trying to find out is what his social station, and role, are. The post-resurrection appearances differ from this in that the identity of the person who has appeared is unknown, as will be discussed in Section 6.4.

One of the recurrent themes, particularly in Mark, is Jesus attempting to silence those who would reveal his true identity. The people he asks to be silent include his disciples, people he has healed, and demons or spirits. Jesus is in disguise (in the sense that he is unrecognised), but once again, before his death and resurrection it is his social status which is in disguise rather than his identity.

There is one prominent example which occurs before Jesus’ death where people attempt to recognise Jesus’ identity rather than his status: when he is identified by

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787 John 18:5f.
788 John 18:33.
790 Stibbe, “The Plot of John’s Story of Jesus,” 353.
791 Stibbe, John, 30.
793 E.g. Matt 16:20; 17:9; Mark 8:30.
794 E.g. Luke 5:15, Matt 8:3-4.
795 E.g. Mark 1:24-25, 34.
Judas in the garden. Origen finds a clue to the polymorphous nature of Jesus in the necessity for Judas to betray Jesus with a kiss796 because “Although Jesus was one, he had several aspects; and to those who saw him he did not appear alike to all.”797

There are other instances in the Gospels where the motif of disguise is used. One example is when Jesus evades detection, or escapes from his enemies in a mysterious manner. In Luke 4:28-30, Jesus has been (almost) captured by an angry mob who are about to throw him off a cliff, but before they are able to, Jesus went διὰ μέσου αὐτῶν (“through the middle of them”). This does not necessarily imply something miraculous has happened,798 and in a story about a character who did not perform miracles or gain the help of divine intervention, the explanation could simply be that Jesus ran off, or fought his way out of the situation. However, given that Jesus does use disguise and metamorphosis in other instances, and the similarity of this event to hero escapes in other literature, the most likely explanation for this event is that Jesus escaped by either hiding himself, or being hidden by some other agent.799 John relates a similar event800 where again an angry mob wishes to kill Jesus, this time by stoning him, and Jesus escapes because he “hid himself” and then went “through the middle of them.”801 The word ἐκρύβη is often translated as “Jesus hid himself”, but may be better translated as “Jesus was hidden.”802 Both translations would reflect traditions...
preserved in other documents, where gods and heroes do make themselves invisible, but it is also common for gods to intervene to hide the hero of a narrative. These events are very similar to instances in Homer’s work where gods save their heroes from danger by hiding them in clouds or mists and then transporting them out of danger. The ability to elude danger to one’s life is also demonstrated by Apollonius in Philostratus’ Life of Apollonius of Tyana written around 220 CE. Barrett states that “John probably intended to suggest a supernatural disappearance, comparable with the obscurity whence Jesus had come (7:4, 10).”

John 7:10-14 also contains a story in which Jesus uses disguise in order to achieve his goals, although the manner in which he hides himself is not made clear, only that he went “in secret”. John 10:39 also describes another occasion when Jesus escapes from the hands of his enemies. Papyrus Egerton 2 Fragment 1 recto (from around 200 CE) relates a similar escape from a crowd, where the explanation for Jesus’ escape is that the hour of his arrest had not yet come and that he therefore withdrew from them. This fragment may not, however, be independent from John’s Gospel, and may in fact have used John as a source.

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803 For arguments that Jesus made himself invisible in the manner of a magican see Morton Smith, Jesus the Magician (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1981), 120.
804 Which is what the translation “was hidden” would suggest.
805 E.g. Homer, II. 3.380-2; 5.23-4. See Section 5.3.3.
807 Scott Fitzgerald Johnson, Greek Literature in Late Antiquity: Dynamism, Didacticism, Classicism (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2006), 58.
809 ἐν κρυπτῷ (7:10)
810 Barrett again claims that John intends his audience to see this as a supernatural event. Barrett, The Gospel according to St. John, 386.
812 For a discussion of this possibility, see John W. Pryor, “Papyrus Egerton 2 and the Fourth Gospel,” ABR 37 (1989): 1–13. Pryor considers three possibilities: that the fragment is used as a source by the Fourth Gospel writer, that the fragment composer was aware of the Fourth Gospel, and that the two documents are independent works. He concludes that “John’s Gospel… is known to the author of UG, and he clearly respects it as providing authoritative guidance on the person and mission of Christ.” (p. 13). As such, this fragment cannot not be considered as an independent record of Jesus miraculously vanishing in order to escape from enemies.
These events demonstrate that even in the stories about Jesus’ life before his death and resurrection he either had the ability to hide himself and act in ways a normal human could not, or else he was aided by a divine being to achieve the same result.813

6.3.3 The canonical Acts of the Apostles

The canonical Acts of the Apostles also contains the themes of disguise and recognition, which although not all related directly to Jesus show that these ideas were known in at least Luke’s writing environment. Jesus’ appearance to Paul is described in three places in Acts (9:1-19; 22:4-16; 26:12-18).814 All three stories contain the same essential elements: There is a bright light (9:3; 22:6, 9;26:13); Paul falls down on the ground (9:4,6; 22:7; 26:14); there is a theme of fear or astonishment (9:6, 22:9815); Jesus declares his identity (9:5; 22:8; 26:15) and issues instructions to Paul (9:6 then 9:15-17 via Ananias; 22:21; 26:16-18). There are also some differences: In 9:7 the other people present hear Jesus, but in 22:9 it is reported that they see the light but hear no voice, and in 26:14 it is reported that Paul’s companions also fell to the ground.816 In each of these accounts Paul is now the hero in this story, and Jesus is acting as a visiting and initially unknown god. The scene has much in common with other theophany scenes, including the bright light,817 the fear in the face of the divine, the issuing of instructions, and the fact that Jesus reveals his identity, rather than being recognised via a sign or token. Paul’s Damascus Road experience is explicable in terms of Old Testament call narratives,818 but would also have been explicable from a Greco-Roman perspective, as there were many stories in which gods met humans, called them by name, and then instructed them to spread their message, or promote

813 This means that when similar events are observed after his resurrection this does not necessarily entail that he now has a different sort of body which is less genuinely human than before his death. This issue will be raised in Section 6.4.
814 The differences need not indicate inaccuracy, and Keener states that “[t]he differences are too minor and do not present Paul as dishonestly seeking to make himself look better at the expense of truth.” Keener, Acts, 1600-1.
815 καταπέσοντων ἡμῶν εἰς τὴν γῆν.
An awareness of Greco-Roman parallels would have made sense given Paul’s mission to the Gentiles. As already discussed in Section 6.2, Acts 14:8-18 contains a false god-recognition story, where people falsely identify Paul and Barnabas as Zeus and Hermes, saying specifically that the people believed that the gods had come in the likeness of humans. This demonstrates Luke’s awareness of the Greco-Roman theme of disguised gods visiting mortals.

The theme of disguise to escape from danger also occurs in Acts 12:6-10. Peter walks past the prison guards with the help of an angel in a scene with similarities to Hermes leading Priam into Achilles camp. In both stories there is a supernatural helper, a door which is miraculously opened, and the surprising evasion of guards. The angel acts as a divine or supernatural helper in the same way as Hermes. The story also shares details with Greco-Roman prison escape stories.

6.3.4 Summary

The world of the Gospels, where Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, which are the focus of this thesis, occur, is one in which issues of disguise and recognition are common, and where the metamorphosis of bodies (and other objects) could and does take place. In view of this it is reasonable to investigate the post-resurrection

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819 E.g. Pan appeared to Philippides, called him by name, complained that the Athenians were not showing him enough attention, and then commissioned Philippides to be his messenger to the Athenians (Herodotus, Hist. 6.105).
820 James Constantine Hanges, “‘Do We Really Need to Take the Damascus Road?: Ancient Epiphanies and Imagining Paul’s Conversion Experience,” ProcGLM 23 (2003): 68. Hanges argues that Paul constructed the Damascus encounter so that it was a convincing witness to people familiar with Greco-Roman call narratives, and that Luke preserved the same themes. See also James C. Hanges, Paul, Founder of Churches: A Study in Light of the Evidence for the Role of Founder-Figures in the Hellenistic-Roman Period, WUNT 292 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2012).
822 Homer, II. 24.440f.
appearances in terms of metamorphosis and disguise/recognition themes, both of which were clearly familiar to the Gospel writers.

6.4: The Post-Resurrection Appearances

This section will examine each of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the canonical Gospels, and will compare them to the categories of unrecognisable gods and heroes summarised in Section 5.7.

6.4.1 Tombs

All four of the Gospels include a scene outside Jesus’ tomb after his resurrection (Mark 16:9; Matt 28:1-10 (esp. 8-10); Luke 24:1-11; John 20:11-18). This section will investigate how the stories which take place at Jesus’ tomb have features in common with both unrecognisable god, and unrecognisable hero stories.

Matthew 28:8-10

In Matthew’s account, Jesus meets the women after they have visited the tomb, but does not appear, at first glance, to be in an unrecognisable form. Matthew, in fact, says nothing about Jesus’ appearance. There are several features of this story, however, which indicate that Jesus is being represented as appearing in a metamorphosed form, which I will go on to discuss. The first indication is Jesus’ use of μὴ φοβεῖσθε in this section and elsewhere, the second is via a comparison to the angel the women have just encountered, and the third is found in the disciples’ reaction to Jesus later in Matthew 28:17.

Firstly, when Jesus appears, the women immediately fall at his feet and worship him, but Jesus says to the women “μὴ φοβεῖσθε” (28:10). In Matthew, Jesus uses this expression at other times to reassure his followers. Each time it is used, it serves the

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824 Matt 28:10.
The purpose of telling people that, despite appearances to the contrary, it is Jesus they are seeing. In Matt 14:27 he reassures them that he is not a φάντασμα, and in Matt 17:7 Jesus uses the same expression to assert his identity after the Transfiguration. In Matt 28:10, the expression is used again, and once more Jesus asserts his identity, telling the women that despite what they are seeing he is indeed Jesus. The fact that Jesus uses the “μὴ φοβεῖσθε” expression elsewhere when his appearance is unusual, coupled with the fact that an angel, having a spectacular appearance, has just used the same expression (see below), indicates that there is something extraordinary about Jesus’ appearance here. As well as indicating an altered appearance, the expression indicates that it is “not just another human being but a meeting with a divine being.”

Secondly, these words are not just spoken by Jesus, but have just been spoken to the women by an angel. Coupled with this, there are indications that the women’s reaction to Jesus in 28:9 is the same as their reaction to an angel (they left “with fear”: μετὰ φόβου). The guards in 28:4 are also said to be afraid of the angel. Falling down at Jesus’ feet displays the same sort of terror in the face of the numinous. In the women’s case it is awe mixed with respect as they worship Jesus, since they now consider Jesus to be divine. This indicates that the women are reacting to Jesus in the way mortals typically react to supernatural entities: with fear. Another hint that Jesus has a form similar to the angel is that the description of the angel in 28:3 is very similar to the description of Jesus in the Transfiguration in 17:2. This angel is described as having an appearance like lightning, and clothing as white as snow. If, for Matthew, the transfiguration was intended to be a precursor of the resurrected Jesus, then it makes sense that Jesus would appear in a glorious manner in 28:10. Jesus in 28:17, standing on a mountain top and worthy of worship also recalls the

825 France maintains that the words used by Jesus are “almost banal” and “ordinar[y]”, but the fact that he echoes the language used by visiting angels makes his utterance much more powerful and significant (France, Matthew, 569); Nolland, however, recognises that the language of divine visitation expressed in the “do not be afraid” utterance is the language of divine visitations (Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 601). For instance see Gn. 15:1, Jdg. 6:23, Dn. 10:12l, Tob 12:17.

826 Luz, Matthew 21–28, 607.

827 Matt 28:3–5.


829 The word white (λευκός) is the only shared vocabulary with the description of Jesus transfigured in Matt 17:2, but as Nolland points out “the overall shape and thrust are so similar that he must have a connection in mind.” Nolland, The Gospel of Matthew, 1247.
Transfiguration. So although we are not told what Jesus looks like in 28:9, from what we know about his appearances elsewhere, and from the previous description of the angel, it can be deduced that Jesus also appears here in his transfigured, or metamorphic, form.

Thirdly, another hint that Jesus did not appear as he used to is found in 28:17, when his eleven disciples see him on top of the mountain. Although they worshipped him, it is also noted that “some doubted.” What is it that they doubted? Since Jesus has not yet commanded anything, the doubt is not over anything he has said. The doubt could be over whether Jesus will forgive them for their recent disloyalty, or it could represent a moment of hesitation or indecision. However, the most immediate reading, which does not require any additional theorising about the disciples’ state of mind, and which fits with the context, is that the doubt is over whether it is really Jesus who is on top of the mountain. This conclusion is supported by Nolland who states that “Matthew is probably drawing on some form of tradition in which the identity of the risen Lord is temporarily obscured from those with whom he interacts.” As will be seen, this tradition is preserved in each of the other Gospels, so this reading is well supported by other traditions surrounding the Jesus story.

The only other time Matthew uses διστάζω is in 14:31, where the doubt is in close proximity to both worship (14:33) and Jesus appearing in a form where he is initially not recognised (14:26). If “the eleven”, Jesus’ closest confidants, have

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830 Matt 28:17.
836 Ibid., 1262–3; Nolland says that there are three options for who it is who doubted (a) all of the eleven disciples (b) some of the eleven disciples (c) some who were other than the eleven disciples. Whoever it is, he concludes that “Matthew is probably drawing on some form of tradition in which the identity of the risen Lord is temporarily obscured from those with whom he interacts”. Hagner translates this verse as “And when they saw him, they worshiped him, but they doubted,” Hagner, Matthew 14 - 28, 880. For a discussion on how to interpret the οἱ ὅς, and whether it is best translated as “they” (i.e. all the disciples) or “some of” see BAGD 549b-550a. Pieter W. van der Horst, provides many classical examples of the use of οἱ ὅς and concludes that “it is a well-known and frequently used syntactical device to indicate a division of a group of persons or things into two (or more) subgroups.
doubts about his appearance then he must look different in some way. One solution is that in Matthew’s version of events, Jesus appears on the mountain at the end of the Gospel in a similar form to the form he took when as he appeared to Peter, James and John at the top of a mountain when he was transfigured (that is metamorphosed) before them. This solution is particularly fitting since it explains a number of features of the story. It explains why some of those present doubted, since Jesus appeared on the mountain in an unfamiliar form.837 It also potentially explains why only some of the disciples doubted, since at least Peter, James and John had already seen Jesus in this form. It also explains why the women reacted to Jesus in a manner which is usually reserved for angels, since if Jesus was appearing in his transfigured form he would have resembled the angel who rolled away the stone. Nevertheless, although it is an intriguing notion, Matthew could have here (as he did in 17:1) explicitly stated which of the disciples he had in mind. Whoever the doubters were, at least some of the people present doubted that it was Jesus.

While none of the individual factors examined prove that Jesus appears differently here, the various factors combined make a compelling cumulative argument. It is easy to see how a metamorphosis of Jesus into an angel-Christ could be read out of Matthew’s resurrection account.838 Coupled with what can be said about his likely appearance, like Matthew’s Transfiguration story, the appearance story in Matt 28:8-10 has many similarities with a “disguised god” story. There is, as mentioned above, an indication that Jesus appears in a more glorious form than before his resurrection: he is connected with the angel, is seen as an appropriate object of worship, and must reassure the women to not be afraid. If Jesus is immediately seen as a divine being, then this account differs in some ways from Greco-Roman stories of gods appearing in disguise. There is also no indication that Jesus is not initially recognised, which differs from John’s account of a woman meeting Jesus outside the tomb (discussed below). Jesus (if he does resemble the angels) is in a glorious form from the moment

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837 Matt 28:16-17.  
the women see him. Hence, this story has features of a divine visitation story. The reaction of fear is common when disguised gods reveal their true identity. Although there is no test of hospitality, with a reward for being hospitable, the women do welcome Jesus with the respect due to either a god or a king. The verb προσκυνέω used here is also used in 2:2 when the Magi “worship” Jesus as a child. The verb implies a “deferential posture of a suppliant to someone of recognized authority whose help is sought.”839 While not necessarily implying they recognised Jesus as divine, it certainly shows a recognition of Jesus’ importance.840 Nolland notes that in Matthew, προσκυνέω is used to “blur […] the distinction between deferential respect and religious worship.”841 Returning to the tomb also displays the respect and love they felt towards Jesus. While it may be going too far to refer to either of these actions as “hospitality”, the actions display that the women are treating Jesus in a way which his other followers have failed to live up to. They are rewarded for this “hospitality” by being the participants in the first theophany of Jesus after his resurrection. They are also sent as messengers to Jesus’ “brothers.”842 Thus, Jesus acts as a divine visitor by giving instructions about what the women are to do next. These instructions are what drive the plot in a new direction, rather than the recognition itself. What happens to Jesus next, whether he vanishes or stays, is not stated,843 there is no mention of a miraculous vanishing or ascending which often accompanies the withdrawal of visiting gods or angels.844 Although lacking some features of a divine visitation, the narrative purpose of this story is similar to other divine visitation stories in the ancient world. Jesus’ appearance makes it clear that the actions of the women are not just their own, but are commanded by Jesus. This is important not just for the characters and the internal plot, but for the readers and the continuing “plot” in which they are involved.

839 France, Matthew, 59, 303, 1102.
841 Compare 4:9, 10 (where respect is implied) to 14:33; 28:9, 17 (where it is more likely to be worship). See ibid., 111.
842 Jesus is almost certainly not referring to his maternal brothers here, but to his followers. Jesus “has had spoken of those who gave their allegiance to him as family (12:50; 25:40)” Morris, The Gospel according to Matthew, 740.
843 Matthew ends without Jesus vanishing as well.
844 E.g. Judg 13:20; Tob 12:20; Homer, Od. 3.372.
This particular appearance story does not resemble a hero-recognition story. There are no tokens or signs used; rather Jesus is immediately recognised. As such there is no moment of recognition.\textsuperscript{845} There is no moment of cognitive resistance, and the reaction of the women is one of fear and worship, rather than the emotional display of tears and embracing which accompany a (euphoric) hero recognition scene. The grasping of Jesus’ feet\textsuperscript{846} could be seen as an indication of a euphoric reunion, but is more akin to worship of a god\textsuperscript{847} than welcoming a lost friend or relative. The moment of peripeteia has already taken place before Jesus’ appearance. The women have already recognised Jesus and believed that Jesus is risen when they saw the empty tomb and heard the testimony of the angel. Jesus’ appearance here is therefore a post-peripeteia appearance. Since it has already been established that Jesus has returned, this story could not be a hero-recognition story. These stories rely upon the fact that the characters still believe the hero to be dead or missing. Hence, any story where Jesus is already known to have returned from the dead, cannot be an unrecognised hero story. Jesus’ use of the word ἀδελφος\textsuperscript{848} to refer to the disciples who recently abandoned him indicates a healing of relationships,\textsuperscript{849} and his subsequent statement in verse 18 shows that there has been a vast re-ordering of society. The knowledge of this does not stem directly from the recognition of Jesus, however, as it would in a hero recognition story. It was the recognition, by the tomb, that Jesus had returned from the dead, before the women see Jesus, which initially drives the plot forward. The women were already rushing off to report to the disciples before Jesus intercepts them. Jesus’ appearance here is not strictly necessary to the plot, but rather serves the purpose of giving a sign of divine approval of the message the angel has already delivered. Jesus is making it clear that what happens next is indeed supported by him, placing him in the role of a divine visitor.

\textsuperscript{845} Apart from in the mundane sense in which people recognise those they know on a regular basis.
\textsuperscript{846} Matt 28:9.
\textsuperscript{847} Nolland, \textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, 1252; Harrington says that “Matthew has shaped the story to his own purposes, especially to emphasize worship as the proper attitude towards Jesus” (\textit{The Gospel of Matthew}, 410); France points out that part of the reason for this motif may be to indicate that Jesus is physical, and not a ghost (\textit{Matthew}, 1102); However, Luz disagrees, pointing out that the main reason the women hold Jesus’ feet is as an act of veneration, and “is not, as in John 20:24-29 or Luke 24:36-43, to emphasize the corporeality of the risen Christ” (\textit{Matthew} 21-28, 607).
\textsuperscript{848} Matt 28:10.
Summary:

This appearance scene in Matthew’s version, then, presents Jesus in a way which would be more recognisable as a disguised god, than a returning hero. Part of the reason for this is that in this particular scene the narrative now focused on the actions of the disciples, and Jesus appears as a character in their story.\(^850\) It is now up to them, and by implication the audience, to continue doing the work of Jesus in the world. Jesus has become a different sort of character, and the disciples, and by implication the audience, are now the main focus of the narrative. The idea of Jesus being a “secondary” character will be more explicit in the apocryphal Acts of the Apostles discussed in Chapter 7. This story points towards another theme which will become more obvious in the next chapter: when Jesus is being recognised for the first time, the recognition resembles a hero-recognition scene, but when he is visiting on subsequent occasions it is more like a divine-visitation scene. In this instance the recognition has already taken place with Jesus in absentia, so his appearance a short time later resembles that of a god, rather than that of a hero. It is not possible to have a hero-recognition scene when it has already been established that the character encountering Jesus is aware of his return.

Luke 24:1-12

Jesus does not actually appear in Luke’s account of the tomb visit, but rather the women are informed that Jesus has risen by two angels, who are described in a manner typical of divine or supernatural visitors.\(^851\) In the absence of Jesus himself, it might seem that there is little to say about this story’s connection to metamorphosis stories, or disguised god or hero stories. On the other hand, although Jesus is not recognised in person, the realisation that he has returned could be seen as a form of

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\(^{850}\) Since 3:13, apart from the interlude about the death of John the Baptist in 14:1-12, the story has followed the actions of Jesus. From the time of his death and the aftermath, from around 27:55 the story has followed the women instead. The women have become the central characters for this portion of the Gospel.

\(^{851}\) Although the visits of angels resemble Greco-Roman gods in many ways, I will use the word “supernatural” to refer to angels, and use the word “divine” to refer only to the one God of monotheism.
recognition. This section will discuss the encounter with the angels first, and then the question of whether Jesus’ return is recognised, despite his absence.

The encounter with the angels resembles a supernatural visitor story in a number of ways: firstly, the description of the angels is typical of supernatural visitors; secondly, they are more glorious than mortals, and inspire fear in those who see them, which is a common feature for encounters with angels in Luke. There is no sense in which the women are being tested, although returning to anoint the body of Jesus could be seen as an act of hospitality. The angels appearing to them to declare Jesus’ resurrection could be seen as the reward for this “hospitable” or at least loyal treatment. However, this is somewhat different from the motif of showing hospitality to a disguised god, as they are not offering food or hospitality to a stranger, but rather respect to a dead friend. The women react with fear and bow down before the angels, an appropriate action before supernatural visitors, and the angels deliver both information and instructions to the women. The women are not, however, given strict instructions, but are left to deduce for themselves the meaning of this event.

Peter, when presented with the same evidence, must also struggle with the meaning of what he is seeing in light of what Jesus said while “he was still in Galilee”.

There is no record of what happened to the angels afterwards. We are not told if they vanish in a miraculous manner. The angels, while not Jesus himself,

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852 The word ἄγγελος is not used in verse 4 when the two men are first mentioned, but when the women are reporting the event in 24:23, they refer to them as angels. Johnson notes a connection (and suggests Luke wanted his readers to see such a connection) between the two angels here and in Acts 1:10 and the appearance of two men (Moses and Elijah) in the Transfiguration (9:30). Johnson, The Gospel of Luke, 387. It seems unlikely that Moses and Elijah are in mind here since Luke does not mention the two men by name, as he does in 9:30, and the men are referred to as “angels” by the women.

853 Cyril of Alexandria states that “For the sake of their love and zeal for Christ, they were counted worthy of seeing holy angels...” (CGSL 615). See Arthur A. Just, ed., Luke, ACCS 3 (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 375; Craig T. McMahan sees this as an important theme in his analysis of Luke 24 in comparison with the recognition scenes in the Odyssey. He states: “In contrast to the disciples, the women are exemplary in demonstrating loyalty, which makes them candidates for recognition.” “More than Meets the ‘I,’” 97.

854 Or as Green says: “The angels address the women as though the latter were persons on a quest”, Green, Luke, 837.


858 As discussed in the previous section, this is not hospitality in as much as they do not provide food or shelter to Jesus, but they do take an action which displays their loyalty and love. Most significantly, they take an action which the other disciples fail to take.

still represent the authority of God (especially for Luke).\textsuperscript{860} The fact that they give the announcement which causes the women to go and tell the disciples shows that this is God’s plan, and that what happens next has divine authorisation. There is little doubt that the men in this story are supernatural visitors, but Jesus himself does not appear among them, so this story demonstrates Luke’s attitude to supernatural visitations, but does not indicate whether the post-resurrection Jesus is to be understood in this category. This story does not therefore indicate that Luke is treating Jesus as a divine or supernatural visitor after his resurrection.

Next we turn to the question of whether Jesus’ return is recognised, despite his absence. This would be analogous to the case of Electra who did not actually need to see Orestes to know that he had returned: she saw signs of his return despite his absence and deduced from this that he was back.\textsuperscript{861} The women too see signs, the rolled away stone and the empty tomb (Luke 24:2-3), \textsuperscript{862} but they fail to recognise them as such. Instead, failing to read the signs, they must be told directly by the angels. This is an instance of cognitive resistance on the part of the women, but one which they do not overcome on their own. They have been provided with the information to deduce what has happened (as the angel points out in 24:6-8) and with a sign which corresponds with this (24:3) but are still confused about what is going on. It is only when these facts are explicitly spelled out to them by the angels that they make the leap and perhaps recognise Jesus’ return.\textsuperscript{863} It is uncertain whether a moment of \textit{peripeteia} takes place here.\textsuperscript{864} All that is said is that the women return,


\textsuperscript{861} Aeschylus, \textit{Cho.} 165-263.

\textsuperscript{862} McMahan sees the empty tomb as a token comparable to Odysseus’ scar (“More than Meets the ‘I,’” 98).

\textsuperscript{863} The angels “invite the women to make a cognitive or hermeneutical leap. They should stop looking among the dead and start looking among the living”. Bovon, \textit{Luke 3}, 350.

\textsuperscript{864} Bovon says that at this point the women understand what is happening (ibid., 349); Bock says that “the women were way ahead of the disciples” in understanding the significance of this event, and recognising that Jesus was alive (\textit{Luke}, BECNT 3 [Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1994], 1896); Evans however suggests that the women did not realise the significance of this event (\textit{Saint Luke}, TPINTC [London: SCM, 1990], 898); Dillon argues that only Jesus’ teaching is remembered by the women, and only a small step on the path to full recognition takes place (\textit{From Eye-Witnesses to Ministers of the}
and tell these things to the disciples, and are not believed, again displaying cognitive resistance. Peter alone goes to investigate and he, too, upon seeing the tokens of Jesus’ return (linen cloths on their own: a token the women did not see) wonders what has happened. This scene then ends without a full recognition or a full moment of peripeteia where the worldview of the disciples is completely reversed. Similarly the lack of Jesus’ appearance means that it cannot be concluded from this story that Luke is treating Jesus like an unrecognised returning hero. However, there are instances where heroes are “recognised” in their absence due to signs left behind, and the recogniser’s memory of the missing person. Understood in this way, the sign of recognition found here relies on both memory of previous events and reasoning (two of Aristotle's categories). The recognition is possible because Jesus has provided the necessary information already. The empty tomb itself acts as the recognition sign. The recognition in this instance is not of someone in disguise, however, but instead a (partial) recognition of Jesus’ identity, and an indication that Jesus is no longer dead. Given Jesus’ absence there is no place for an emotional euphoric reunion.

The women arrive at the tomb in order to anoint the corpse of

Word: Tradition and Composition in Luke 24, Analecta Biblica [Rome: Biblical Institute, 1978], 51; Marshall simply says that “we are not told whether the women believed that Jesus was risen” (Luke, 887).


866 The fact that the linen cloths are here acts as a strong sign that Jesus has in fact risen from the dead, since it seems unlikely that someone stealing the body (as suggested in Matt 28:11-15) would unwrap it from the grave cloths first! See Nolland, Luke 18, 1192.


868 Evans points out that the reason the disciples do not believe the women could be because they thought they were hallucinating (or mistaken in some other way), or it could be that they accept the facts of the story, but do not accept the implications for belief in the resurrection. He adds “Nor is it clear whether the women themselves accepted these implications of their own story.” Evans, Saint Luke, 898.

869 The clearest example, as mentioned above, is the recognition of Orestes by Electra: Aeschylus, Cho. 165-263.

870 See Aristotle Poet. 1454b-1455a. The various ways that recognition could come about according to Aristotle was discussed in Section 4.4.

871 Luke 24:25-27. In Luke 9:22-27, Jesus gives a similar explanation to his disciples. Whether the two on the road were present at this earlier time is impossible to know. It says only that his disciples (μαθηταὶ) were with him, and does not mention who it was specifically. See also Luke 18:31-33. Jesus has provided his disciples with the knowledge needed to understand these signs.

872 Such as that found in John’s account (see below).
their dead leader. They leave the tomb to report to the disciples that they have been
told Jesus has risen. There is no strong indication that they have undergone a sharp
change in their worldview.\textsuperscript{873} McMahan argues otherwise, pointing out that the
women “come as mourners; they leave as witnesses.”\textsuperscript{874} “There is, however, no
indication in the text that they are not still mourning at the end of the story, and the
author does not make the recognition known in either the women’s statements, or in
the narrator’s voice. As such the realisation that society is now structured in a
different manner, and the true healing of the relationships broken at Jesus’
abandonment, have not yet taken place.

**Summary:**

In the case of the angels, they did not appear in disguise at all. They passed on
information to the women, rather than the women gaining knowledge from merely
recognising who they were, and it is unclear that the encounter with the angels brings
about a *peripeteia* moment. In the case of Jesus, there is a partial recognition, despite
Jesus’ absence, brought about by signs of recognition. From these signs, the women
should have been able to deduce that Jesus had in fact returned, which would have led
to a huge shift in their understanding of their relationship with Jesus. The women
however fail to make this cognitive leap on their own, and at the end of this story, it is
still unclear that they have understood the significance of what has happened.

**John 20:11-18**

As with Luke’s account, John also reports two white-clad men this time explicitly
identified as angels, and in John’s story, Mary also encounters Jesus. John, like the
synoptic accounts, mentions angels outside the tomb, and presumably the moved
stone is evidence of them having been there before Mary’s initial arrival. However,
these angels in white do not so obviously recall the Transfiguration, as it does not

\textsuperscript{873} For Luke the most complete moment of *peripeteia* occurs on the road to Emmaus, and what happens
in the present scene is a partial recognition leading up to the full and emotional recognition in the next
section.

\textsuperscript{874} McMahan, “More than Meets the ‘I,’” 99.
occur in John's Gospel. The Jesus in John’s account is not angelic looking, as I have argued he was intended to be in Matthew, but rather he appears sufficiently unexceptional so as to be mistaken for a gardener.

As in other post-resurrection appearances, Mary does not immediately recognise someone she knows well. Verse 20:14 states that she did not know it was Jesus, and verse 15 partially explains this by saying she thought he was the gardener. The reason for this is left unstated. Since Jesus has not been away for long enough for his close friends to have forgotten what he looks like, or for his appearance to have changed through aging, the most obvious explanation for Mary not recognizing her friend is that Jesus was in some form of disguise. It seems most likely that, as with the other accounts discussed in this chapter, there is a supernatural cause of this disguise. If there has been a metamorphosis of Jesus, then it is not into a glorious angelic form, as in the Transfiguration accounts or, as I have argued, in the post-resurrection account of Jesus in Matthew 28:9, but into the form of a humble man. For the purpose of the narrative, all that is needed for a recognition scene to take place is that Jesus is not recognised for whatever reason.

The appearance to Mary outside the tomb does not bear much in common with an unrecognised god story. There is no fear of the divine (even in the presence of the angels). Jesus does not reveal himself to be something other than what he first appears to be, there is no divine transformation, or god hidden under the plain exterior which could be mistaken for a gardener. The theme of showing hospitality to strangers, who later turn out to be gods, is common in disguised god stories, and this theme is, in some sense, present here, as in the other accounts of the women visiting

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876 Morris states that “Perhaps it was the only logical thing. Who else would be in the garden so early, and who else would question her as to what she was doing?” (Morris, The Gospel According to John, 740); Moloney says that it is “perhaps the earliest literary evidence of a Jewish response to the Christian story of the resurrection” (Moloney, The Gospel of John, 528). Haenchen says only that it “is designed to show that the risen Jesus is not accessible like once he was.” Haenchen, John, 2:209.
the tomb. In John’s story, Mary initially visits the tomb alone and is the only one who remains to mourn Jesus after the others leave. The reason why she came is not given: unlike in Luke 24:1 and Mark 16:1 it is not to anoint the body, as this action has already been performed in John 19:40. It is implied that she has come there, then, specifically to grieve and be with Jesus, which also displays a deep love and a form of hospitality. As in the other accounts, Mary displays a level of loyalty which is lacking in the other disciples. However, this is a long way from the entertaining of a stranger who later reveals himself to be a god. And when Mary recognises Jesus, he appears to be in a normal human form. Jesus mentions his imminent ascension to the Father (20:17), and so the idea of the visitor vanishing in a spectacular manner is contained in the story. There is, however, no actual account of any ascension although perhaps it is implied that Jesus did vanish in some miraculous manner, and this is supported by the fact that he did return in a miraculous manner when he visits his disciples in 20:19.

Another similarity to a divine visitor story is Jesus issuing instructions to Mary to deliver a message to his brothers [and sisters] (πρὸς τοὺς ἀδελφοὺς μου). Jesus’ words to Mary seem final – as though they were to be Jesus’ last announcement. Mary is sent to report to the disciples that Jesus is ascending to God, but no other instruction (or information) about what they are to do is forthcoming. This is not a problem since the Johannine Jesus gave a rather lengthy farewell discourse before his death. This scene acts as a confirmation of what has already been said, and so gives divine support to what comes next in the plot. Although John’s account does have some similarities to a divine visit, these similarities are not unique to divine visitation stories, so as a whole this story does not resemble a divine visitation story. There is a hint that Jesus departs in a manner reminiscent of divine visitors, but even this is not explicitly described. None of the other motifs of a divine visitation, such as fear and awe, a testing and reward or punishment, or a god revealing their true nature are present.

877 “The recognition of Jesus is, for the primitive Church, a means of expressing the deeply significant fact that the same Jesus encounters the disciples as the one with whom they lived before his passion.” Schnackenburg, John Vol. 3, 323.
878 Although giving instructions is not the unique domain of the divine.
879 John 13-17.
Hence, Mary’s encounter with Jesus is much closer to a hero recognition scene, as will now be demonstrated: Jesus initially appears in disguise, but then is recognised by a sign. It is only when Jesus calls Mary by her name that she realises who he is.

The stone rolled away, the missing body, the angelic visitors, and Jesus’ words before he died present Mary with enough information to work out that Jesus had returned, and that the person next to the tomb was in fact none other than Jesus. The beloved disciple has already left believing, yet Mary remains outside the tomb looking for Jesus’ corpse. This cognitive resistance to recognising Jesus standing before her, fully alive, is typical of hero recognition scenes. This time the sign is Jesus saying her name, and thus identifying something that he, and not a stranger, would know. Jesus warns Mary not to touch him, suggesting that seeking to embrace him was her instant reaction. This is a typical feature of euphoric recognition scenes between reunited family or lovers. Tears are also typical of euphoric recognition scenes, and are mentioned, although they are Mary’s tears of grief before the recognition. As

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880 Stibbe states that anagnorisis is fundamental to the emplotment of John’s Gospel, and that all of the scenes examined in this chapter of the thesis involve the recognition of Jesus, with the result that they see who Jesus really is (John, 203). Schnackenburg states that “Jesus’ appearance to Mary Magdalene is thus presented in the form of a recognition scene. Since the Lukan Emmaus narrative also belongs to the same type and in the story in Jn 21 this motif at least plays a part (cf. 21:7, 12), we come up against a form of story-telling which was widely current in the primitive Church for the appearances of the risen one” (John Vol. 3, 316).

881 Larsen describes this as the “move of displaying the token”, with Jesus’ voice acting as a recognition token (Recognizing the Stranger, 199).

882 Larsen describes verse 15b in which Mary mistakes Jesus for the gardener as the “move of cognitive resistance” (ibid.).

883 The name Jesus calls Mary (Μαρία) is a Greek transliteration of the Aramaic name. Moloney suggests that this displays a level of intimacy (see Moloney, The Gospel of John, 528). This strengthens the idea that this name is being used as a recognition sign. The intimacy of the name is maintained to make it clear that this word allowed Mary to recognise Jesus.

884 Schnackenburg states that “[t]he recognition takes place as Jesus calls Mary by her name” and goes on to say that this scene has the narrative structure of a recognition scene (John Vol. 3, 317).

885 Haenchen suggests that “the Evangelist proposes a demythized concept of the resurrection, in which Jesus returns as a spirit.” John, 2:210. What is important is not why Jesus told Mary not to hold onto him. What is important is that she did try to embrace him, showing her joy at seeing him again.

886 For instance, Chariton Chaer. 8.1.8; Longus, Daph. 3. For a comparison of Mary’s recognition with romantic recognitions in Greek literature see Amy L. Huprich, “John 20:11-18 : The Recognition/reunion Scene and Its Parallels in Greek Romance,” Proceedings (Grand Rapids, Mich.) 15 (1995): 15–22. Stibbe detects “intertextual echoes” with Song 3:1-3 in the portrayal of Mary, in particular in her wanting to hold onto Jesus and not let go (John, 205). A romantic embracing of a long lost lover would be very fitting as a response to a recognition. Larsen, noting the similarity, states that “Jesus and Mary are not portrayed as reunited lovers, but as joint members of the familia Dei, i.e., as brother and sister on a symbolic level.” (Recognizing the Stranger, 198). He goes on to say that although Mary thinks this is where the story ends (i.e. with a reuniting with her beloved master), by telling her to let go, Jesus is letting her know that this recognition and reunion is much more significant: “this is where the scene leaves its literary parallels behind” (204).
well as resembling a recognition scene in its elements, this scene also serves the thematic purpose of a recognition scene. Before Mary recognises Jesus she is distraught and weeping, and searching for a dead body, but after the recognition she proclaims to the disciples that she has “seen the Lord.” 887 Although her attitude is not described, in as much as we are not told she is rejoicing, it can be assumed that her grief has been replaced with joy. This is a turning point in the plot, and a time when her worldview is turned upside down, and thus an instance of *peripeteia*. The theme of a healing of relationships comes through strongly. Jesus refers to the very people who abandoned him as his “brothers [and sisters]”, 888 and makes it clear that his father is their father also. 889 This statement completely heals any rift in the family, and heals Jesus’ community of followers. In a similar manner, there is a realisation that a reordering of society has taken place. Mary certainly recognises Jesus, her teacher, but at the same time she recognises that he is more than just her teacher, and is in fact, a holder of great authority. This is a recognition of Jesus’ social status as well as a recognition of his identity. 890 This recognition drives the plot forward, in as much as Mary is sent to inform the disciples of Jesus’ identity and the next stage of the story can begin: the building of Jesus’ community, and putting into place the sort of society he outlined in his farewell discourse.

**Summary:**

John’s account of Jesus’ appearance in front of the tomb is much closer to an unrecognised hero story than Matthew’s account: Jesus is recognised due to a sign, rather than simply by revealing his identity. Mary gains new significant knowledge directly from the recognition event. There is a moment of *peripeteia* in which fortunes drastically shift, and relationships are healed. John’s account differs from Matthew’s in another significant way. The women in Matthew’s account already knew that Jesus had returned from the dead, and so there could be no realisation that

887 John 20:18.
889 The “your” in this verse is plural (θεὸν ὑμῶν), meaning the statement referred to the disciples and not just to Mary.
890 As Larsen notes (*Recognizing the Stranger*, 200). Larsen points out that after Jesus’ death and resurrection, it is now possible for recognition scenes to focus on the identification of Jesus (i.e. “this is Jesus”) rather than recognition of his social or relational role (191).
he was still alive when he appeared before them. This means that for Matthew it was impossible for this scene to be a hero-recognition scene. When John’s account begins, however, Mary is still under the impression that Jesus is dead and she is looking for his body, not for a resurrected man or a god.  

**Mark 16:9**

The longer ending of Mark has a very brief allusion to the tradition of Jesus appearing to Mary in front of the tomb (Mark 16:9). Since this is such a short description of the event, it cannot really be compared to either an unrecognisable hero or an unrecognisable god story. There is not even, in this particular passage, any indication that Jesus’ appearance is unusual in any way. The word ἐφανη, used to describe Jesus’ appearance is the same word used in Matthew to describe the appearance of an angel to Joseph (Matt 1:20 and 2:13), but the word is used with a range of different meanings in the Gospels. So, although the verb *could* imply an angelic visitation, it could also describe a quite ordinary appearance. If the phrase “in another form” (ἐν ἕτερῃ μορφῇ) in verse 12 is making a contrast with the form in which Jesus appeared to Mary (rather than his form in his pre-resurrection life) then this passage may hint at a metamorphosed or disguised tomb-side Jesus appearance, that is Jesus appears in a different form each time he appears. This will be discussed further in Section 6.4.2. There is one further hint that the tradition of a returning hero is in mind in Mark’s account of the appearance to Mary: in verse 11 it is noted that the disciples would not believe her, displaying the theme of cognitive resistance, which is common in hero recognition scenes.

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891 Whereas the beloved disciple has already left, perhaps believing Jesus to have returned (20:8), Mary is still working under the assumption that Jesus is dead and gone.
892 ἐφανη πρώτην Μαρία τῇ Μαγδαληνῇ (he appeared first to Mary Magdalene).
893 Evans, *Mark 1-8*, 547.
894 E.g. in Matt 6:16 the verb describes the hypocrites “appearing” to fast; in Mark 14:68 to ask how a situation “appears” (i.e. what people think about it), cf. Luke 24:11. The verb is used to refer to angelic visitation (cf. Matt 2:13), but also has a range of other uses. BDAG gives a range of meanings: to shine or produce light; to become visible, appear; to become known; to be known by appearance as opposed to underlying reality; to make an impression on the mind. See *BDAG*, 1046–7.
Summary of tomb stories

Luke’s account lacks a personal appearance by Jesus, and thus is of minimal use for this study. Despite this, Luke’s Gospel contains features of both divine visitation and hero-recognition stories. Mark’s account, although containing a report of Jesus’ appearance to Mary, is a very brief summary, and on its own does not fit clearly into either an unrecognised hero or an unrecognised god framework. In contrast, Matthew and John both contain more detailed accounts of Jesus’ appearance outside the tomb, and approach the story using quite different models. For Matthew this scene has more in common with a divine visitation story. The women are already aware that Jesus has returned from the dead, and so the knowledge that Jesus is operative in the world is available to them. For this reason any appearance of Jesus cannot be one which shocks the women as they suddenly realise that Jesus is not dead and has returned. This is already the world in which they are operating. The way the post-resurrection appearances are treated by Matthew reflects this, with Jesus resembling and acting like a divine visitor. The story serves the same narrative purpose as other divine visitor stories.

For John, this scene has much more in common with a hero recognition story. Jesus’ appearance is that of a humble man: a gardener in a graveyard, which mirrors the humble beggar figure Odysseus appears to be. Jesus is recognised by means of a sign after a time of cognitive resistance. Mary’s worldview is drastically changed, as she goes from believing that all is lost and her friend is dead, to knowing that he has returned. There is a healing of relationships which is displayed as she reacts by trying to embrace him. The unrecognised hero story could be used in John’s Gospel because Mary had not yet learned that Jesus was alive and had returned. It could not be used in Matthew’s Gospel because the women had already been informed, and believed that Jesus was back before they encountered him.

6.4.2 Roads

As well as appearing outside the tomb, there are two accounts in the canonical Gospels of Jesus appearing to his disciples travelling in the countryside. The account
in Mark 16:12-13 mirrors that of Luke 24:13-35 in a number of ways. In both instances Jesus meets people, they are both walking in the country, both pairs return, and report what they have seen to another group of people. Given these similarities, and the fact that the ending of Mark was written some time after Luke, it is possible that Mark’s account is based on Luke’s account. Fitzmyer points out, on the other hand, that the section in Mark is “the kind of snippet of pre-Lucan tradition which enables the evangelist to build it into his dramatic story.” That is, it is possible that Mark preserves a short summary of a tradition which Luke built into a much larger narrative.

Despite the similarities between the accounts, there are some important differences. Mark’s account is much briefer, and does not indicate how the recognition came about, nor many details of the impact it had on the two people. Luke and Mark use quite different language to describe the failure of Jesus’ disciples to recognise him when they meet him travelling on a road (if indeed Mark’s account describes a lack of recognition at all). The language used by Luke is not strictly that of metamorphosis, but rather that of disguise or occlusion. In Luke 24:16, the phenomenon is described as oī δὲ ὀφθαλμοὶ αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο τοῦ μὴ ἐπιγνῶναι αὐτῶν, that is the travelers’ eyes were prevented from recognising him. This state of affairs is reversed in Luke 24:31 where: αὐτῶν δὲ διηνόχθησαν οἱ ὀφθαλμοί καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν αὐτῶν. In contrast, in Mark 16:12 this phenomenon, or a very similar one, is described as Jesus coming ἐν ἑτέρᾳ μορφῇ, that is, Jesus appears in a different form, shape, or outward appearance. Each of these expressions will be discussed below. Luke’s account of the road to Emmaus recognition will be discussed first, and then the account in the longer ending of Mark. The two accounts will then be compared with one another and with other unrecognisability stories.

896 δόθεν εἰς αὐτῶν (Luke 24.13); δωσεν ἐς αὐτῶν (Mark 16:12).
897 περιπατοῦντες (Luke 24.17); περιπατοῦσιν (Mark 16:12).
898 ἔρισαν περιεξόμενοι ἐν αὐτῆς τῇ ἡμέρᾳ εἰς κόμμαν (Luke 24:13); περιεξομένους εἰς ἁγρόν (Mark 16:12).
900 καὶ αὐτοῖς ἐξηγοῦντο τὰ ἐν τῇ ὄνω (Luke 24:35); ἀπήγγειλαν τοῖς λοιποῖς (Mark 16:13).
901 See discussion in Section 6.2.2 above.

The road to Emmaus story has strong parallels with the entertaining of both heroes and gods: 903 on the one hand Odysseus being welcomed by Eumaeus, 904 and on the other hand Hermes and Zeus being welcomed by Baucis and Philemon. 905 In both of these cases, there is a test of loyalty, and the hero or god appears in a disguised, and humble, form. All of these similarities with Jesus’ appearance will be examined below. Like these characters, Jesus also appears and is not immediately recognisable. Whether this unrecognisability is due to a shift in Jesus’ appearance, or a shift in the disciples’ perception, the result is the same: they do not recognise Jesus for who he is.

In instances where Jesus is momentarily unrecognised, but recognised very quickly, it might make sense to argue that Jesus was not recognised for some natural reason such as the darkness of the day, the fact that the disciples were overcome with grief and therefore unlikely to recognise someone they thought was dead, or their eyes were clouded with tears and so forth. Some of these explanations might be plausible in other recognition stories, 906 but in the road to Emmaus story they are unconvincing to put it lightly: the disciples walk for a long distance with Jesus, talk at length and pay attention to him, and even talk about Jesus. The idea that they could do this and not recognise Jesus, unless something supernatural is going on, is inconceivable. One (non-supernatural) explanation is that Jesus’ disciples are unable to recognise him because they have failed to understand his teaching. 907 This might explain why they

903 Nolland sees a similarity to Homer, Od. 1.320 (Athene appearing to Telemachus) and to Tob 5:4-5. Luke 18, 1201; Marshall points out that this story has much in common with the folk-legend of the dead man appearing to his friends on a journey to answer questions in a time of need, then afterwards vanishes from sight (Luke, 890).
904 Homer, Od. 14.440.
905 Ovid, Metam. 8. The parallel with Ovid’s tale is particularly significant since Luke demonstrates his awareness of this story in Acts 14:11-12 where Paul and Barnabas are identified with the same two gods whom Baucis and Philemon entertain.
906 This is much more plausible in John 20:14 where it is only moments before recognition takes place. See Section 6.4.1 for a discussion of this account.
907 E.g. Green, Luke, 845. Green makes a comparison with Luke 9:43b-45 where a passive (παρακεκαλυμμένον: was hid from them) is also used. However, in the Emmaus case it is Jesus’ identity which is not recognised (i.e. this man in front of me is “Jesus”), whereas in 9:45 the disciples know that the man in front of them is Jesus, but fail to recognise his relational or social status (i.e. the
do not understand why Jesus has returned, but it again seems implausible that they could talk to someone they knew at length and not realise who it was. The alternative, then, is that something supernatural is implied in the story.

Luke seems to go to some length to make sure that this story is not interpreted as a metamorphosis story. Rather than Jesus being in a different shape, it is specified that the disciples’ eyes were held from recognising Jesus. The motif in action here is disguise rather than metamorphosis, but the question of what sort of character is in disguise, a hero or a divine helper, can be determined by looking in detail at the rest of the story.

Although it is not explicitly stated that Jesus is a beggar or in need, Jesus is presented as appearing in the guise of a humble man in this story. Firstly, Cleopas refers to the man who joins them as a stranger (παροικέω). The LXX usage of πάροικος implies a resident alien, that is a resident alien. Such a person would be vulnerable, and probably without a local family or support network. The man the disciples meet appears to be a stranger and foreigner, rendering him subject to the sort of hostile attack by robbers which was suffered by the man in Jesus’ earlier parable of the “good Samaritan.”

Contrary to the behaviour of the robber in that earlier story, the disciples welcome the stranger by allowing him to travel with them, sharing their story, and, more importantly, offering hospitality to him. The detail in 24:28 that Jesus acted as though he would go on is not an inconsequential detail, but is an essential element for

man who we know is Jesus, is the Messiah). Not understanding Jesus’ teaching is a good explanation for not recognising Jesus’ status, but it is not a good explanation for not being able to identify him at all.

908 The noun form of this verb πάροικος is the same word used in the LXX to refer to strangers. E.g. Gen 15:13; (also Gen 23:24) or Exod 12:45 (ברונ). Muraoka defines παροικός in LXX usage as “2. Being in the status of short term resident alien,” citing Gen 15:13; Exod 2:22; 18:3 12:45; Lev 22:10. He defines παροικέω as “to stay as (short-term) resident alien,” T. Muraoka, A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint, Rev. ed. (Leuven; Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2009), 536; BDAG defines πάροικος as “one who lives in a place which is not his home”, and παροικέω as to “inhabit (a place) as a stranger,” BDAG, 779. See also Philo, Cher. 121; Josephus, Ant. 8, 59.

909 See also Acts 7:6,29; Eph 2:19; 1 Pt 2:11. All of these usages imply a resident alien.


911 Luke Timothy Johnson for example dismisses this verse as “simply a narrative device meant to bring liveliness and humanity to the story” (Johnson, The Gospel of Luke, 396), and does not appreciate that this detail is essential to the whole story; Fitzmyer, on the other hand, says that it is a “literary foil
understanding the significance of the story. It is the disciples’ reaction at this moment upon which the story hinges. Jesus, like Hermes and Zeus, is testing the virtue and worthiness of the disciples by seeing whether they will offer hospitality to the stranger. The low status of the “stranger” is further displayed in two ways. First, he had no place to stay in the town, shown by the fact that he was going to journey onwards. This implies that he was indeed a stranger or foreigner and had no way to get shelter (24:28). This is further highlighted by the second detail, that it was already evening, and the stranger was going to carry on travelling into the night (24:29).

The disciples respond by offering to take the stranger into their own house. This displays both to the reader, and to the Lukan Jesus, that they are worthy of a reward of some kind, are trustworthy enough to undertake any mission assigned to them, and that they are worthy of recognising who Jesus is. However, rather than offering a reward, or passing on some information to the disciples, as soon as he has been recognised, Jesus vanishes.

The vanishing of Jesus is one element of this story which has similarities to disguised god stories. The expression used is αὐτός ἄφαντος ἐγένετο ἀπ᾽ αὐτῶν (24:31), meaning literally that Jesus was made invisible. The word ἄφαντος is used for divine

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for the disciples to urge him to stay with them; they so react out of a motive of hospitality for the stranger.” (Fitzmyer, The Gospel According to Luke I - IX, 1:1567) While this is true, and one of the purposes of Jesus’ action is to make the audience aware that the disciples are good people, this is not the full story. I would go further and say it is not just a literary foil, but an intentional action of Jesus who deliberately sets up a test to see how the disciples would react.

Hospitality to strangers was a religious duty in both the Greco-Roman and the Jewish world. Greco-Roman stories which invoke this theme have already been discussed. For Jewish stories which emphasise the same theme see: Heb 13:2, Josephus, Ant. 1.196, and Philo, Aibre. 107-13. Josephus and Philo stress the importance of this theme in Gen 18. Judg 19:9 also displays both the virtue of hospitality, and (in what follows) the danger to those who do not receive hospitality. See Nolland, Luke 18, 1205-6; See also Andrew E. Arterbury, Entertaining Angels: Early Christian Hospitality in Its Mediterranean Setting, New Testament Monographs 8 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix, 2005).

Although it is not stated, presumably the house belonged to one of the disciples. They had fled Jerusalem in order to return to the safety of their own house. This fits with the possibility that Cleopas’ unnamed companion is in fact his wife. See Fitzmyer, The Gospel according to Luke, 2:1563; James R. Edwards, The Gospel according to Luke, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2015), 717–8; Bovon, Luke 3, 370. It is possible that it is a man and a woman, rather than two men who meet Jesus in this story, but the exact identity of the characters does not impact upon the issues being investigated here.


This action of Jesus leads Marshall to state that “[i]t is as a supernatural visitor that the risen Jesus is portrayed” Luke, 898.
beings withdrawing from human sight in classical literature, and also in 2 Mac 3.34 to describe the vanishing of two angels, in Diod. 4.65, and, in the Acts of Thomas 27 (a youth with a torch vanishes) and 43 (a demon). This scene is very similar to the appearance of Athene to Telemachus, where the god appears in disguise, is offered hospitality, and then vanishes – which prompts recognition. However, in Jesus’ case the recognition takes place before the vanishing and, as will be seen below, fits better with a hero recognition scene.

The next question to address is what thematic role the story plays in the wider narrative, and whether the thematic purpose aligns with a disguised god story. Although Jesus resembles a disguised god in a number of ways in this particular story, most notably in his mysterious disappearance, he both fails to give the disciples any instructions before vanishing, and to reward them in any obvious way for their hospitality. Nevertheless, they do receive a reward for their hospitality, which is to be part of the core group who will help build up Jesus’ movement. Similarly, the lack of instructions does not mean that the disciples do not gain any knowledge from the encounter. Jesus does not need to tell them anything because, in recognising him, knowledge is instantly gained by the disciples. This, however, is a feature associated with recognising heroes rather than with recognising gods.

On the basis of these variations, it would seem that the road to Emmaus story has much more in common with an unrecognisable hero story. When seen in this framework, Jesus is not a god manifesting as a human, but is rather a hero whom the disciples fail to recognise because he is thought to be dead and lost to them. This would make more sense if Jesus had been missing for a significant period of time. Odysseus had been away long enough for the failure to recognise him to be plausible, even without the disguise bestowed upon him. Oedipus had not seen his mother

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916 E.g. Euripides, Orest. 1496 (cf. Euripides, Hel. 606). Elsewhere the same word is used as a cipher for death (e.g Sophocles, Oed. tyr. 560, 832), or for escape (e.g. Homer, Il. 20.303).
917 Homer, Od. 1.105f.
918 This is similar to the reward given to the hospitable family in the Hymn to Demeter: a central role in helping to build up the god’s cult (HH 2 270-274).
919 This theme is made clear from the very start of the Odyssey that Odysseus has not returned home and has been delayed from re-joining his family (Homer, Od. 1.1-15).
since he was an infant, so this separation in time provides a near-perfect disguise. The time-apart disguise, which as seen in Section 4.5 is very common for unrecognisable hero stories, is usually in the order of years if not decades. Jesus, on the other hand, has not been separated from his followers for years. The fact that Jesus has only been away for a period of days makes it seem unlikely at first glance that those close to him would not recognise him. It makes sense that Odysseus’ household would not recognise him, even more that Oedipus’ family would not recognise him – but what is to be made of Jesus’ “family” not recognising him? One simple answer, from a narrative point of view, is that the form of the story necessitates that Jesus is unrecognised initially, because otherwise he would not be able to be recognised later on. However, this answer may have been as unsatisfactory to the original audience as it is to a modern audience, and the search for reasons as to why Jesus was not recognised could have led the original audience to speculation about Jesus having shape-shifting characteristics.

Since the expression “their eyes were stopped from seeing” (οι δὲ ὄφθαλμοι αὐτῶν ἐκρατοῦντο) is in the passive, this could be a divine passive with an unspoken “by God” implied. This would make the setup of Luke’s recognition remarkably similar to Odysseus’, with Jesus’ god playing the role which Athene plays for

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920 And was abandoned and left to die to try to stop prophecies from coming true (Sophocles, Oed. tyr. 1171-1178).
921 Evans notes the lack of time apart and states that “a special reason for non-recognition has to be supplied.” Evans, Saint Luke, 905. Evans goes on to add that since Jesus appears in such a humble form in this scene, the reason for non-recognition could not be in Jesus himself appearing in a glorious form, and so must be a change in the disciples.
922 Seen from a slightly different point of view, Jesus could have decided to appear in disguise so that his disciples would undergo a recognition event. See Marshall, Luke, 893. I have no intention of addressing the question of whether this event is historical, but it is worth pointing out that saying that a story fits in with the narrative conventions of the time is not mutually exclusive with saying the event also in fact took place.
923 Bovon says the author uses the passive to “suggest both human weakness and divine strength” (Luke 3, 372); Evans says that the passive “probably intends to denote a mysterious supernatural action of God (here of the risen Lord himself?), who brings it about that they were precluded from recognizing him throughout the journey” (Saint Luke, 905); Fitzmyer also reads it as divine passive (The Gospel according to Luke, 2:1563); Green, however, says that the disciples fail to recognise Jesus because they have not understood Jesus’ teaching (Luke, 845). This does not, however, explain how they could not recognise someone they knew after walking with him for a long time. They might still not comprehend how Jesus has returned, but would still recognise who it is. It seems that a supernatural disguise of some kind is the only plausible explanation.
924 Nolland suggests another explanation for the passive used here: It is not a divine action, but “a Satanic blinding... which will be overcome by the victorious Jesus (cf. at 18:34)” Nolland, Luke 18, 1201; But as Bock points out, Satan is entirely absent from the resurrection account, so this seems an unlikely explanation, Bock, Luke, 1909–10.
Odysseus. Part of the reason that Athene is involved in Odysseus’ recognition story (when it could have worked with just time being used as the disguise, as is the case in many of the tragedies), is to leave no doubt in the audience’s mind that this story, and its conclusion with Odysseus returned to the head of his household, is not just a mortal tale, but is the will of the goddess. The manner of Jesus’ disguise perhaps fulfils a similar purpose of letting the audience know that this story is part of God’s plan. Thus, Jesus’ disguise in this story serves two purposes. The primary purpose is to make sure that Jesus is disguised in the first place, so that the story works. The second reason is to make it clear that Jesus’ return, and the establishment of his community, is God’s will.

The nature of the disguise is more similar to that of Odysseus than that used in tragedy. The rest of the scene fits a hero recognition scene remarkably well. The recognition is brought about via the use of a sign – in this case the distinctive breaking of the bread which is the trigger which finally allows the disciples to recognise who the stranger is. The breaking of the bread on its own might not be definite “proof.” Without the preconditioning given by Jesus’ words on the road, perhaps breaking bread alone would not have sufficed to proclaim his identity. Breaking bread is not unique to Jesus in the same way that some other recognition signs are: for instance a distinctive ring, or a unique birthmark, or the clothes taken from a baby’s crib. This recognition could even be compared to the false recognition in the Ion, which relied on circumstantial evidence, rather than definitive proof. However, the word usage in Luke 24:30 is so similar to that used in 22:19 (and 9:16), that the audience is left

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925 Bovon briefly notes a similarity to Odysseus in this scene, Bovon, Luke 3, 372.
926 When he explains how it was necessary that the Christ needed to suffer and enter into his glory, and how this fitted in with their scriptures (Luke 24:26-7).
927 Evans for instance points out that the breaking of bread and passing it to others was the common practice in Jewish households. He even suggests that although the breaking of the bread and the recognition co-incide, this does not establish cause and effect. Evans, Saint Luke, 913. This line of argument is, however, contradicted by Luke himself who has the characters themselves link the two actions together (24:35). As well as this, although within the wider world the expression used to describe Jesus’ actions might be a common one, within the narrative world in which this recognition takes place (i.e. Luke’s Gospel) the only person about whom this expression is used is Jesus, and at significant times (see below). As such it is almost certainly intended as a recognition sign.
928 Euripides, Ion 517- 561.
929 Luke 24:30 has: λαβὼν τὸν ἄρτον εὐλόγησεν καὶ κλάσας ἐπεδίδωσεν αὐτοῖς, whereas 22:19 has: καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας ἐκλασεν καὶ ἐδωκεν αὐτοῖς. With the exception of εὐχαριστήσας being used instead of εὐλόγησεν, the same words are used in the exact same order. In 9:16 the same order is found: (took, loaves, blessed (εὐλόγησεν), broke (κατακλάω), gave): καὶ λαβὼν ἄρτον εὐχαριστήσας
in no doubt that this is a distinctive sign of recognition which recalls Jesus’ previous actions. 930 As well as this, in Luke there are several meal scenes which often led to criticism against Jesus for eating with tax collectors and sinners, 931 or to conflict or rejection by the Pharisees. 932 McMahan says that “so dramatic are these meal scenes that they function as Jesus’ signature activity.” 933 This further strengthens the case that Luke is using a meal as a sign of recognition, since within his narrative world it is Jesus who distinctively shares meals. 934

As well as this, the sign itself may not have been the only thing which led to the recognition. As with the disguise, the moment of recognition is described in the passive voice (ἂντών δὲ δυναύρησαν οἱ ὁρθάλμοι καὶ ἐπέγνωσαν ἄντων). This could be interpreted as meaning that the recognition, like the disguise, was directly caused by God, as their eyes were opened (by God?). 935 This may seem to weaken the strength of the recognition scene, as the recognition is not flowing directly from the signs or the scene itself. It could be argued that this recognition scene falls into what Aristotle would have referred to as ἀἱπεποιημέναι ὑπὸ τοῦ ποιητοῦ. 936 However, the sequence of events is quite natural: the disciples could be expected to invite the stranger to stay with them, and this would naturally lead to eating together, which naturally leads to the breaking of the bread. The scene would work perfectly

930 McMahan states that the meal “like the scar of Odysseus, serves as an unmistakable token/sign of Jesus’ identity.” (“More than Meets the ‘I,’” 104).
935 Dane Ortlund sees a strong parallel here with Gen 3:7. In both cases food is offered by a supernatural being who they do not recognise, and the acceptance of the food leads to a drastic change in their relationship with God, and a change in physical location. In the Eden account Adam and Eve relocate away from the place of God’s special residence (Eden), whereas Cleopas and his companion relocate by returning to the place of God’s special residence (Jerusalem), Dane Ortlund, “‘And Their Eyes Were Opened, and They Knew’: An Inter-Canonical Note on Luke 24:31,” JETS 53 (2010): 725.
936 Aristotle, Poet. 1454b30.
without any divine interference. The recognition could result directly from the preconditioning on the road, and the sign of the breaking of the bread. However, the supernatural nature of the recognition would mirror the divine nature of the disguise, and it perhaps seemed more powerful (and more symmetrical) to have the undoing of a divine disguise by a divine unveiling. Of course if the passive is read simply as a (non-divine) event that happened to the disciples, then the passage can be read as the recognition flowing directly from the sign Jesus presents. Certainly when the disciples report this event to those whom they join in Jerusalem they say that Jesus was known to them in the breaking of the bread; the breaking of the bread was the essential sign that allowed them to recognise Jesus.

As mentioned earlier, the road to Emmaus story presents one of the most obvious examples of preconditioning of the disciples so that they are primed for the presentation of the sign. Luke 24:25-27 presents the nature of this preconditioning, and Luke 24:32 drives home its importance. Its importance is twofold: first it prepares the disciples to be receptive to the sign of recognition, and secondly it displays their resistance to the idea that Jesus has returned. Jesus himself berates them for their lack of recognition (24:25). The element of cognitive resistance is thus an essential element of this story. This story also has a strong theme of “testing”. As I have noted, the statement in Luke 24:28, that Jesus acted as though he was going to walk on, tests the disciples’ hospitality and their attitude to those in need. (This story is in fact a real life playing out of the parable found in Matt 25:31-46; especially 37-40.) The disciples in Luke’s story, actually see a stranger and invite him in, and the stranger actually is Jesus. As mentioned, there are strong parallels with the entertaining of both heroes and gods.

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937 Assuming that the passives in 24:16 and 24:31 are best interpreted as divine passives; that is, it was God who stopped the disciples from recognising Jesus, and then intervened again to allow them to recognise him.

938 Recognising Jesus in the breaking of the bread was perhaps meant to recall the experience each believer had in the Eucharist. This is why the writer chose to use the breaking of the bread as the sign which allowed recognition, and the fact that it is a theologically loaded sign does not detract from the fact that it is also a token of recognition. Even if it was not the author's original intention, this interpretation was adopted by Augustine, Letter 149. See also, Just, Luke, 382.


940 Odysseus being welcomed by Eumaeus (Homer, Od. 14.440) or Hermes and Zeus being welcomed by Baucis and Philemon (Ovid, Metam. 8).
The reaction to the recognition is not accompanied with any emotional outburst from the disciples (apart from the remembrance of their hearts burning within them), and there is no time to embrace Jesus as he immediately vanishes from sight. 941

The road to Emmaus story resembles a hero-recognition scene in some ways, then, but it resembles a disguised god scene in other ways. The next question to address is what thematic role the story plays in the wider narrative, and whether the thematic purpose aligns with a hero-recognition story. Certainly the central thematic element of the hero recognition story is here: there is a moment of *peripeteia* which is central to this story. At the beginning of the story all hope has been lost: in 24:17, Jesus observes a sad, defeated pair. Even with the report that the tomb was empty they remain defeated and pessimistic. 942 The leader of their movement has been lost, which is the essential starting point for any hero recognition scene which leads to *peripeteia*. 943 The household, or Kingdom has been destroyed, 944 and usurpers are ruling in the rightful ruler’s stead (24:20). The future looks grim for the followers of the “dead” Jesus. After the recognition of Jesus in 24:31 their attitude has changed completely. This is symbolised spatially by the disciples reversing their physical direction and returning to Jerusalem; the reversal of attitude represented by the reversal of destination. 945 A return to Jerusalem, as the heart of the Kingdom, 946 is symbolic of the restoration of the Kingdom, as is the gathered disciples, and Jesus’

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941 This is the point where the scene differs the most from a hero recognition scene. Jesus “should” stay around, there should be an emotional reunion, and Jesus should remain with them and help in what is to come next – in actual fact he does do this in the next scene, so if the road to Emmaus story is seen as part of a larger block rather than a stand-alone story the parallel to a hero recognition story is a little closer.

942 Bovon points out that there is a “glimmer of hope in the background” since even Cleopas has heard the reports that no-one has seen the dead Jesus. Bovon, *Luke 3*, 373.

943 The parallel with Odysseus is the strongest.

944 Or at least the restoration has not been achieved (24:21). This is exactly the situation when Odysseus returns to his homeland, and if his followers had seen Odysseus die, they would presumably have been just as disheartened and stunned that the restoration did not go as planned. In fact what the disciples seem to be saying is that they expected a parallel to the Odysseus story (a King returning in disguise and successfully reclaiming his Kingdom) but they did not get it. There is then a certain irony that they are telling this story to Jesus.

945 See McMahan, “More than Meets the ‘I,’” 104.

946 Although Jesus was never literally the King of Jerusalem, “Jerusalem remains the center of salvation history, the passion and the resurrection of Jesus” Bovon, *Luke 3*, 376 and so returning to Jerusalem the disciples are acknowledging the reality that Jesus has been victorious. On top of this, in Luke 24:47, Jesus says that the mission of the disciples begins from Jerusalem, in Acts 1:4 Jesus tells them to remain in Jerusalem, and then in Acts 2:1-13 the Holy Spirit descends on the disciples in Jerusalem.
actual return as the head of the household. The disciples have been changed from
downcast and fleeing to optimistically\textsuperscript{947} returning to a very different world – one
where Jesus is in fact alive, and hope of a better future remains.

This leads onto the second thematic element: the recognition signals to the disciples
that a re-ordering of society has taken place.\textsuperscript{948} In Luke 24:20 the disciples are so
defeated as to be referring to the Jewish authorities as “our leaders.” They seem to
have accepted that the hope expressed in 24:21 was a vain hope. They had the
expectation that Jesus was the redeemer, but now, days later, this hope seems to be
lost. The hope of the new societal structure seems to have gone, replaced by one in
which οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ ἀρχοντες ἡμῶν are the true rulers. However, after the
recognition, they immediately return to Jerusalem, and to the eleven disciples, who
represent the core of Jesus’ new society. There has thus been a re-ordering of society,
and since the disciples stop fleeing, and return to their household, there has also been
a healing of relationships. The recognition also drives the next part of the plot. The
disciples return to the community, and the next stage in the plan is put into operation,
spelled out in 24:47.

**Summary:**

Although some of the elements of the story resemble those of a disguised god,\textsuperscript{949}
Jesus’ recognition bears most similarity with that of a disguised hero returning to his
people: the recognition comes about via a sign of recognition, rather than via Jesus
simply declaring or revealing his identity; after being recognised, Jesus says nothing
more to the disciples, and so the knowledge they gain flows from the recognition
itself; and lastly, there is certainly a moment of *peripeteia*, a re-ordering of society,
and a healing of damaged relationships.

\textsuperscript{947} The passage does not actually say that they were optimistic as such, but the impression is that as
soon as they recognise Jesus they rush back to Jerusalem.

\textsuperscript{948} Perhaps it would be better to phrase this as: the disciples had to re-order their own understanding of
the way society was set up.

\textsuperscript{949} The divine nature of the disguise, and particularly the visitor vanishing suddenly at the moment of
recognition.
Mark 16:12-13

Unlike Luke’s account, Mark’s version of this event uses the imagery of metamorphosis rather than disguise. It is not that the perception of the disciples is defective, but rather Jesus is in another shape or form. Since Mark’s account of Jesus appearing on the road is a one line story, the thematic importance of a hero in disguise could not possibly be communicated in this version: a one-line story about a hero in disguise, without an account of anagnorisis or peripeteia serves no purpose, and tells the audience nothing about who Jesus is. A one-line story about a character who can change shape does, on the other hand, serve a stand-alone purpose: it tells the readers that Jesus is a special sort of character, with characteristics which most humans do not possess. This is perhaps true of Luke’s account as well. The fact that Jesus can remain disguised while travelling with friends for hours does, perhaps, say something about his super-human nature, but this is a side effect of the main disguised-hero story, rather than being the central feature of the story. In Mark’s version the hero-recognition story is absent entirely, and what for Luke is a side-effect, or a narrative necessity, is for Mark the main event. The primary feature recorded about Jesus is the fact that he could appear in a different shape.

A central question is that if Jesus appeared ἐν ἑτέρῃ μορφῇ, what shape was it different to? There are several options. It may be that Jesus appears in a different form to the one in which he appeared to Mary in the preceding verse. This would imply that Jesus is imagined to be appearing in multiple forms to different people after his resurrection; that is, Jesus has become a shape-shifter. It could mean that Jesus appeared in a different form to the one in which he appeared to his disciples.

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950 See the start of Section 6.4.2
951 Although in both cases, Jesus’ altered appearance may not be due to Jesus possessing any special powers of his own, or having an unusual body. Odysseus was transformed, but this does not indicate he had any special powers, but that he was the recipient of a god’s powers. The same could be true of Jesus.
952 Or else a narrative necessity to make a recognition scene possible.
953 Of course if the audience of the ending of Mark were familiar with Luke’s story, even with the changed language, they would have recalled the hero-recognition story recounted in Luke. Mark’s “in another form” may simply have been a short hand for the entire road to Emmaus story which he assumed his audience would be familiar with. However, for audiences not familiar with Luke, or audiences operating under a different worldview, Mark’s short description of Jesus in another shape could have been interpreted very differently. This will become clear in the next chapter when we look at the Jesus of the apocryphal writings.
(“those who had been with him” Mark 16:10) before his death, or it could be a combination of both of these.⁹⁵⁴ There is no mention here of Mary not recognizing Jesus, but if the stories in the longer ending of Mark are based on the other Gospels, and if 16:9 is based on John 20:11-17,⁹⁵⁵ then the idea of Jesus being unrecognised by Mary is in the background. This would imply that Jesus appeared in one changed form to Mary, and then subsequently he appeared in yet another form to the two men on the road. This is speculative, and depends on the reader making the link with another Gospel’s account, and if the writer of the long ending of Mark had wished to emphasise a polymorphic Jesus appearing in a different form to each person he appeared to for the first time, then he could have done so more explicitly. So at the very least it can be concluded that Jesus appears in a form different to a form he has been seen in before (either before or after his resurrection), with the possibility that he has appeared in multiple different forms. As was demonstrated in Chapter 5, the idea of a god appearing in another form is a common literary theme, including the idea of meeting a god on the road, or else travelling with a god.⁹⁵⁶ On the other hand, unless the readers were familiar with Luke’s account, there is nothing in Mark’s account to indicate a hero-recognition story.

**Comparison of Luke 24:13-35 and Mark 16:12-13**

What for Luke is a hero recognition story, with some supernatural elements, is for Mark the story of a supernatural visitation. This could be seen as the first stage in a transformation of the way Jesus is viewed or at least presented, a transformation which will be completed in some of the apocryphal stories. Foster claims that the ending of Mark has changed the nature of the event so that “the author of the longer ending [of Mark] replaces the Lucan concept of obscured vision with the notion of polymorphism.”⁹⁵⁷ Such a view raises two questions. The first is whether Foster’s choice represented a meaningful distinction for writers and audiences at this time.

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⁹⁵⁴ Farmer states that it could have either meaning. It could mean that “Jesus appeared in a form different from that in which he appeared to Mary Magdalene... or merely that it was another form from that in which they had seen him last”. *(The Last Twelve Verses of Mark, 91–2).*

⁹⁵⁵ Collins states that the use of πρῶτον in this verse (i.e. Jesus appeared “first” to Mary) indicates a dependency on John 20:1-18. *Mark, 808;* See also France, *The Gospel of Mark, 686.*

⁹⁵⁶ E.g. Priam is guided by Hermes (Homer, *Il.* 24.460-1); Tobias by Raphael (Tob 5:4-5).

⁹⁵⁷ Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 70.
From the viewpoint of the characters involved in the story, an instance of metamorphosis, and an instance of obscured vision are empirically equivalent: that is the characters in each situation would observe the same phenomenon: a person appearing to their eyes to be unfamiliar. In the previous chapters it has been shown that both metamorphosis and disguise stories were widespread before the writing of the Gospels, and although there was some overlap, I have argued that they were distinct story types. The concept of a hero in disguise, and the concept of a god manifesting in human form, were also quite distinct story types, and so the writers and readers of Jesus stories may well have been able to intuit which of these story types a particular post-resurrection story resembled.

The second issue is whether a progression of thought can be traced where one way of thinking about people appearing in a different form (disguise/illusion) is being replaced by another (metamorphosis/polymorphy). There is a long history of metamorphosis and disguise stories existing alongside one another in the same narrative, and being intertwined with metamorphosis being the means used to create the context for a disguise/recognition story. So there is no sense in which metamorphosis stories are inherently newer than disguise stories. Often the two exist side by side, and several stories contain both instances. It is further evidence against Foster’s claim that Luke used a mixture of two sorts of imagery within his Gospel: Luke is aware of metamorphosis language, as well as disguise recognition stories. This does not rule out the idea that there was a shift in emphasis, and that for some reason one way of describing Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances replaced another. However, if Foster is to be believed, Luke changed Mark’s transfiguration story in order to exaggerate the metamorphosis themes, but on the other hand Luke’s account of the road to Emmaus story lacked any metamorphosis themes, and this story was later changed by the composer of the long ending of Mark in order to exaggerate the metamorphosis themes. This discrepancy calls for an explanation. I argued in Section 6.3.1 that Foster’s attempt to characterize Mark as only claiming that Jesus’ clothes and not his body were transformed is unconvincing, so one solution is that

960 This question will be addressed in Chapter 7.
Luke is not emphasizing the bodily metamorphosis in the Transfiguration any more so than is Mark. Even if Foster is right, however, the fact that in one instance Luke changed Mark’s account to increase the metamorphosis imagery (in the Transfiguration account) and in another instance used non-metamorphosis language, is evidence against the idea that metamorphosis/disguise language underwent a transformation as early Christian writing developed. We have instances of disguise without metamorphosis, and metamorphosis as a means of unveiling a disguise existing in the same text. The traditions of metamorphosis and disguise exist alongside one another.

**Summary of road stories**

Both Luke and Mark contain stories about Jesus appearing to two of his disciples in the country, and they both contain the detail that Jesus was unrecognisable, or appeared to look different. They are, however, quite different sorts of stories. In Luke’s account Jesus closely resembles an unrecognised hero. Jesus is assumed to be dead, like many returning heroes, and appears to people who have previously known him but now fail to recognise him. When he is recognised it is via a distinctive sign. Finally, the knowledge the disciples gain, which reverses their fortunes and makes them reassess their worldview, comes directly from the recognition event itself. The fact that Jesus vanishes at the end of the story shows that Jesus is a special sort of hero. Either he has divine powers himself, or else is being aided by a god, but the role he plays in this scene is that of the unrecognised hero, rather than the unrecognised god. Mark’s account, however, has lost the disguised hero theme entirely, and maintains only the detail about Jesus being in another form, and thus being unrecognisable. Since Mark’s account is such a short story, no firm conclusions can really be reached. Possibly the writer of Mark’s long ending was simply reminding readers of the account which Luke relates, but the language used is more reminiscent of metamorphosis than disguise, and hints that Jesus was not being presented as an unrecognised hero, but as an unrecognised god. This is a very tentative conclusion,

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961 That is, the Christian writing contained within the canonical Gospels. A very different conclusion will be drawn when the apocryphal Gospels and Acts are considered.
However, and can only be made in light of the much clearer examples, also written well after the canonical Gospels, which will be presented in Chapter 7.

### 6.4.3 Rooms

Records of Jesus appearing to a group of his disciples who have gathered together occur in both John and the Synoptic gospels. It is only in John that it is explicit that Jesus appeared in a closed room, but Luke relates a similar story, in which Jesus appears to a group, and is (as will be shown) unrecognisable in some way. Both of these “closed rooms” accounts contain motifs of disguise and possibly metamorphosis. The longer ending of Mark contains what may be a reference to the same story (16:14).

**Luke 24:36-53**

Directly following the road to Emmaus story, Jesus appears among the disciples as they are talking. Unlike John’s account there is no mention of a closed or locked door, but the disciples are still shocked at Jesus’ sudden appearance. Given that it is night, and the community is gathered together, it can perhaps be assumed that they are inside and someone appearing in their midst would have been shocking; there is, however, nothing extraordinary in the language used to describe Jesus’ appearance. Luke 24:36 states that αὐτὸς ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἔστη ἐν μέσῳ αὐτῶν (“Jesus himself stood in the midst of them”). While it is true that in the LXX ἔστη is at times used to describe the appearance of heavenly beings, it is also used to refer to quite mundane movements of people. Within Luke’s Gospel the situation is the same.

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962 Luke does not actually make any reference to the location, or the room being locked, but I have grouped these stories together due to other similarities.
964 E.g. Gen 41:46 LXX (Joseph stood before Pharaoh); Exod 32:26 LXX (Moses stands before a gate); Num 16:48 LXX (Aaron stands between the living and the dead); 1 Sam 17:8 (Goliath stands before the people of Israel).
965 While it is true that a compound form of this verb (ἐφίστημι) is used in Luke 24:4 to describe the appearance of the angels (see also Luke 1:11), the un compounded verb (ἔστημι) is used to describe the
However, clearly *something* about Jesus’ appearance is extraordinary. The disciples react with terror and think they have seen a πνεῦμα. The reaction of terror in Luke is the usual response to supernatural beings appearing. Jesus does not, however, respond to the fear with the μὴ φοβοῦ of the angels in Luke 1:13 and 1:30, or the μὴ φοβεῖσθε in Luke 2:10. Rather, the verb ταράσσω, is used by Jesus in 24:38. This verb is used elsewhere by Luke to describe Zechariah’s reaction to the angel in Luke 1:12. There is, then, more than a hint that there is a fear of the supernatural in the disciples’ reaction. The translation of πνεῦμα as “ghost” or even the idea that it is a spirit “of” someone, leads to the idea that the disciples were aware that the apparition was Jesus in some sense, but in a changed form. However, as I will shortly show, throughout Luke, when not used to refer to the Holy Spirit, or as a cipher for a person’s life, πνεῦμα is used to refer to some sort of supernatural entity. The disciples did not therefore think Jesus’ ghost had suddenly appeared, but that a demon or an angel had appeared. Jesus’ reassurances in 24:39 are not telling the disciples mundane actions of mortals. In Luke 6:8 it is used in its imperative form when Jesus commands a man to stand before him, and in 6:17 it describes Jesus standing before a crowd. See also 7:38; 8:20; 8:44; 17:12. In Luke, this verb does not imply an angelic appearance, and most of the times it is used, it is to describe quite ordinary movement.

Jesus does use this expression in Matthew: Matt 14:27 (used by Jesus to reassure the disciples about his identity); In Matt 17:7 Jesus uses the same expression to again assert his identity after the transfiguration. Jesus uses the expression a third time after his resurrection in Matt 28:10, again to assert his identity. See Section 6.4.1.

However, Luke also uses the verb in Acts 15:24; 17:8, 13. In none of these uses in Acts is a fear of the numinous or supernatural in mind.

For arguments that Jesus was mistaken for a “ghost” see Bovon, Luke 3, 385–6, 391–2. Similarly Nolland makes a connection with the practices of mediums and necromancers (e.g. 1 Sam 28:3-19). He does add a second (in his view unlikely) possibility that the “spirit” is a demon mimicking the form of Jesus. Nolland, Luke 18, 1213; Evans notes that πνεῦμα is used nowhere else in the New Testament to mean “ghost”, and notes that Luke does use this word to mean a spiritual being such as an angel (noting Acts 23:8f and 1:12 - where it is used in connection with fear) but then concludes that “It is most likely that pneuma means ‘ghost’ here.” Evans, Saint Luke, 918; See also Sjef van Tilborg and Patrick Chatelion Counet, Jesus’ Appearances and Disappearances in Luke 24, BibInt 45 (Leiden: Brill, 2000), 180–187. Tilborg and Counet suggest that Luke’s understanding of human nature allowed for a separation of body and spirit, and that Jesus’ spirit was in heaven (23:46) while his body was dead for three days. However, when he was resurrected, they argue, spirit and body were reunited.

Matt 14:26 and Mark 6:49 use the word φαντασμα to describe the disciples’ confusion over whom or what they are seeing (cf. John 6:16-21 where the cause of terror is not stated). In these instances too, the disciples were unwilling to believe immediately that the body of Jesus, when acting in a way contrary to nature, was in fact their friend in person. The idea that Jesus’ body after his resurrection had a very different nature to his pre-resurrection body is contradicted by the (pre-resurrection) walking on water account, which also displays Jesus’ body acting contrary to nature. If the gospels had the walking on water accounts after Jesus’ resurrection, I wonder if these too would be seen as evidence that his post-resurrection body was significantly different from his pre-resurrection body.

This is a point which Larsen raises with respect to the appearance of Jesus in John 20:19 (Recognizing the Stranger, 207).
that he is not a “ghost” (i.e. the ghost of Jesus), but rather that he is not a supernatural being but a solid human being. In order to try to understand who or what the disciples thought they were seeing the use of πνεῦμα in Luke and Acts will be examined in some detail:


The word πνεῦμα occurs thirty-six times in Luke, and seventy times in Acts. The usage can be classified into three categories. Firstly, the most common is in conjunction with the qualifier ἅγιος (i.e. the Holy Spirit). There are also a number of times when the ἅγιος which shows it is the Holy Spirit being referred to, is not explicit but is clear from context (e.g. Acts 8:29) or it is used close to another instance of πνεῦμα, where ἅγιος does occur and they have the same referent (e.g. Acts 18:18). Some other usages lack ἅγιος, but have used a similar expression such as πνεῦμα κυρίου (Luke 4:18; Acts 5:9) or πνεῦμα Ἰησοῦ (Acts 16:7). This usage accounts for seventeen uses in Luke\textsuperscript{971} and fifty-five in Acts. The second usage to which Luke puts πνεῦμα is as a cipher for “self,” “me,” “soul,” and so forth. This usage is found in Luke 1:47; 8:55; 23:46 and possibly in Luke 1:17; 1:80. This usage also occurs in Acts 7:59; 17:16, perhaps 18:25 and 23:8 (where it seems to refer to a soul). This usage accounts for five uses in Luke and four uses in Acts, if the tentative cases are included.

The final usage, and the one of primary interest for this study, is when πνεῦμα is used to refer to some sort of supernatural entity. Within Luke, this usage occurs fourteen times, and a further nine times in Acts. Two of the uses in Luke are from the passage of interest, and refer to Jesus (Luke 24:37, 39). These instances occur in the singular and without articles or modifiers. That is, “a spirit” in both cases. The passage itself throws some light on what was

\textsuperscript{971} These may have slightly different meanings, but it is clear they are all referring to the Spirit of God in some sense, and so can be grouped together for the present purpose (which is identifying instances where this is not the case).

meant by πνεῦμα in this instance. Jesus states that a πνεῦμα does not have flesh and bones and cannot be touched, and further illustrates this point by showing them his hands and feet and by eating. He also encourages the disciples to touch him to assure themselves that he is solid. Although it is not stated that any of the disciples took him up on this offer, it seems that they were satisfied that Jesus was indeed solid. Most of the other uses in Luke’s Gospel have an adjective modifying them, and refer to demons which have possessed a living person. There are six instances which are attached to the adjective ἀκάθαρτος (4:33, 4:36; 6:18, 8:29, [9:39]974; 9:42, 11:24, [11:26]975), two to the adjective πονηρός (7:21; 8:2), and one instance attached to ἀσθένεια (13:11), which, while a genitive noun rather than an adjective, performs the same purpose. In each of these cases the πνεῦμα represents a spiritual being or force which has possessed a person. The person themself is not the πνεῦμα. For this reason it seems that this usage was not intended in Luke 24:37, 39. The sort of πνεῦμα in these passages is one a person has rather than one a person is. The disciples are not, however, looking at Jesus and suspecting he is possessed, but that he is a πνεῦμα.

This leaves one instance in the Gospel. In Luke 10:20, Jesus assures the seventy-two disciples that τὰ πνεῦματα will indeed submit to them. This is in reference to τὰ δαιμόνια of verse 17. Again πνεῦμα is being associated with demons, but here Jesus equates them with Satan (vs 18) and implies that these beings can indeed exist when not in the process of possessing a person. Luke 11:24-26 shows that Luke was aware of a tradition in which demons could exist in a transitory state outside of a body, but that their “natural habitat” was in possession of a person. The story in Luke 8:26-34 implies that the spirits – modified by ἀκάθαρτος in this case (8:29) - need some sort of creature to possess if they are to go on existing, and so flee into the bodies of pigs, but nevertheless shows that a “spirit” could exist and act on its own.

973 In this instance (πνεῦμα δαιμόνιον ἀκάθαρτον) the adjective actually modifies the “demon” giving “spirit of an unclean demon” but the meaning seems to be the same as the other cases in this set.
974 Luke 9:39 does not contain the adjective ἀκάθαρτος, but πνεῦμα in this verse is the same as the one in verse 9:42, so this does not count as an example of an unmodified πνεῦμα.
975 The seven πνεῦμα in this verse can be grouped in the same set, as they seem to be of the same sort as the ἀκάθαρτος πνεῦμα in verse 24.
The use of πνεῦμα to refer to supernatural beings occurs in Acts several times, and as in Luke this is usually with an adjective, and with the idea that the people had or were afflicted with the πνεῦμα. There are two instances which are attached to the adjective ἀκάθαρτος (5:16; 8:7), four to the adjective πονηρός (19:12, 13, 15, 16), and one instance πόθωνος (“of divination”) (16:16, [18]). The final use of πνεῦμα in Acts is more relevant. In Acts 23:8-9 a dispute between the Pharisees and the Sadducees is described. The Sadducees, the narrator tells us, believe in μηδὲ ἄγγελον μήτε πνεῦμα (neither angel, nor “spirit”), while the Pharisees believe in both and then say εἰ δὲ πνεῦμα ἐλάλησεν αὐτῷ ἢ ἄγγελος μή θεομαχωμεν (23:9). The implication seems to be that angels and “spirits” are the same sort of entity, and can naturally be grouped together. I thus conclude that, the word πνεῦμα, when it is used by Luke without any modifier, refers to some sort of supernatural being, comparable to an angel. Most importantly, the word πνεῦμα is not used to refer to what we would call a “ghost” anywhere else in Luke or Acts, outside of the verses in question (Luke 24:37, 39).976

What we can conclude from this is that the idea of a “ghost” appearing to the disciples is not what Luke had in mind. Rather the disciples thought they were encountering some sort of supernatural being. This explains why Jesus seeks to reassure the disciples that he is indeed human, by asking them to examine his physical body, and by eating food. Jesus tells the disciples to examine his hands and his feet, but unlike the Gospel of John977 this does not seem to be in order to demonstrate that the wounds of the crucifixion are still on his body, but rather to demonstrate that he is a human being.978 In verse 41, despite having seen that he was solid the disciples are still not...
convinced, and are still in shock. The shock is understandable due to the fact that their friend and teacher was recently dead. The unbelief in this verse could mean that the disciples did not believe it was Jesus at all, or it could mean that they do not believe Jesus is human, and thus bodily resurrected. One explanation is that Jesus’ appearance now resembles that of the angels in Luke 24:4, or has reassumed the form he had at the Transfiguration in 9:29, but is still recognisably Jesus. This would explain the fear, as well as the necessity to prove he was not an angelic being. However, nothing is mentioned to indicate that Jesus is unusual in appearance. The fact that divine beings were depicted in literature as being unable to eat is demonstrated in Tobit where Raphael has to explain how he managed to travel with Tobias for so long without revealing his true identity (Tob 12:19). Although he was seen eating, Raphael assures them that this was an illusion and he did not really eat or drink. Jesus’ demonstration that he did in fact eat is intended as proof that he is not a supernatural being as his disciples at first thought. It is made very specific that Jesus ate in front of his disciples (ἐνώπιον αὐτῶν ἔφαγεν). There is to be no suspicion that Jesus is only pretending that he is eating. Jesus is, then, mistaken for a supernatural being by the people to whom he is returning, in the same way that Odysseus is mistaken for a god by Telemachus. The magnitude of the mistake is the same in both cases, and in both cases the mistaken identity underlines the fact that it is their friend who has returned.

The next question is whether Jesus was unrecognisable to his disciples. Any lack of recognition of Jesus, as in other post-resurrection appearances, could not be explained by a long absence as is the case for many recognition scenes. In order to make it plausible that Jesus was not recognised after such a short absence, some other explanation is required. It is best explained via metamorphosis, or a supernatural intervention like the one in Luke 24:16. Two factors suggest that Jesus is indeed in an unrecognisable form. First, this passage directly follows the road to Emmaus story, where Jesus certainly did appear in an unrecognisable form. Therefore the

than Meets the ‘I,’” 106. However, if Luke was using the motif of a scar as a sign of recognition, then he would surely mention the scar here and the action which caused the scars in Chapter 23. Luke pays no attention to the wounds either in the hands or the side. This differs drastically from John’s account as will be seen in the next section.

979 As Tertullian imaginatively puts it, he asked for food to show them that he even had teeth (Marc. 4.43.8).
980 Homer, Od. 16.172f.
explanation which has an immediate precedent is Jesus appearing in an unrecognised form, and so this is a plausible and readily accessible explanation for the disciples’ confusion in this passage. As well as this, in Luke 24:36-53 the confusion over the identity of the stranger ends when food is shared together (24:41-3). Even after seeing Jesus’ hands and feet - that is, being provided with evidence that he is indeed solid – there is still lack of belief on the disciples’ part (ἀπιστεύω). However, after food is shared, no further mention of confusion over Jesus’ identity occurs. This follows the same pattern as the Emmaus story which immediately proceeds it. In both instances, Jesus is recognised fully after he shares food with his disciples. A meal acted as a sign of recognition in the Emmaus story, and perhaps serves the same purpose here. Although this account lacks the linguistic similarity to Luke 23:40 and 9:16 which the Emmaus account shares, McMahan’s observation that meals acts as a “signature activity” for Jesus still stands. Despite the possibility of the meal being a recognition sign, its main purpose is to display Jesus’ physical nature. Thus, although there are strong hints that Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form in this passage, which required recognition, this cannot be concluded with the same certainty as in the road to Emmaus story. Now that several features of this story have been examined, it is possible to see whether the story resembles a recognition scene of a disguised hero, or a divine visitation story.

The passage bears some similarity to a divine visitation story (although at times Luke attempts to steer the audience away from this interpretation, with the demonstration of physicality and the eating of food). Jesus appears in a possibly disguised form, and the immediate reaction is one of terror, which is the usual reaction when confronted by a divine being. Also, as argued above, the most likely meaning of πνεῦμα is an

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981 One interesting question which this story raises is whether the two disciples from the road are among the disciples who do not believe it is Jesus in 24:41, or whether it is only those who have not yet seen Jesus who are still confused about his identity. If the same people do not recognise him on subsequent occasions this suggests serial polymorphism, where Jesus appears in a different unrecognisable form each time he appears. This is only an issue if this passage is seen as being connected directly to the preceding one. It is most likely that the apparent polymorphism is a side effect of other narrative devices at work. That is, in order for another recognition scene to exist Jesus had to once more be unrecognisable. The theme of polymorphism could, however, be discerned in this passage, even if this was not the original author’s intention. As will be seen in Chapter 7, the idea of polymorphic appearances are much more explicit in the apocryphal works.


angel or similar being. This fits with the fear of the numinous that the disciples experience. As with the road to Emmaus story, food and hospitality is a central theme, although here it is not the obvious test that it is in Luke 24:28. Hospitality is requested and given (Luke 24:41-3), and a reward is given for this display of hospitality. The reward is the inclusion in Jesus’ newly formed community, a divine blessing, and a promise of being clothed with the power from on high. Jesus also provides the disciples with information about his plan, and gives them instructions about their future action, which are common elements of a divine visitation story. Lastly, Jesus’ exit from the scene is that of a divine being (24:51), although the passive used both here and in Acts 1:9-11 suggests the action is not Jesus’ but that of an external agent acting upon him. Coupled with this, Jesus has already been associated with Moses and Elijah, and so this ascension can be explained in terms of a god acting on a hero (Jesus) rather than a god ascending himself.

There are several classical examples which use the verb ἀναφέρω in conjunction with the expression εἰς τὸν οὐρανὸν to describe the ascension of mortals. For instance, Plutarch describes the ascension of Romulus using very similar language: Ῥωμύλον ἰδεῖν εἰς οὐρανὸν σῶν τοίς ὀπλοῖς ἀναφερόμενον. The similarity of Jesus’ ascension with these stories would have meant this disappearance, as McMahan points out, “would have been regarded in the Greco-Roman world as a sure sign of divinity.” McMahan goes on to describe the ascension as the “ultimate recognition token”, as the disciples go on to worship Jesus (προσκυνέω). He is right, but sees this in light of a hero-recognition scene, whereas I would argue that it is a sign that in this scene Jesus is presented as a divine visitor.

984 See also Heb 1:14; 12:9; and particularly Rev 1:4; 5:6.
985 I.e. a promise of the Holy Spirit (cf Acts 2:1f).
986 Cf. Luke 24:16 (ἐκρατοῦντο) and Luke 24:31 (δησομίζησαν) where passives are also used to describe Jesus’ seemingly miraculous appearances and disappearances. Arie Zwiep states that due to the passive which expresses divine action, this event is best described as a “rapture” rather than an “ascension” A. W. Zwiep, The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology, NovTSup 87 (Leiden ; New York: Brill, 1997), 92.
987 Luke 9:30. This is significant since Elijah was also raised into heaven in 2 Kgs 2:11. cf. Enoch in Gen 5:24. Nolland, Luke 18, 1228.
988 Plutarch, Num. 2:3. See also Antoninus Liberalis, Metam. 25:4; Cassius Dio, Rom.Hist. 56.43.3. For a discussion on these and other examples see Zwiep, The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology, 92; Bovon, Luke 3, 412.
Luke is unique among the Gospels in that it has a “sequel” and the story of the disciples and what they did next is not left up to the audience’s imagination; however, there is still a sense in which the message of Luke’s Jesus is a message to the audience as well as the characters, and an instruction to go out and be witnesses. This story therefore performs the purpose of driving the plot forward, and altering and explaining human history. This lets both the characters and the audience know that the actions of the disciples are in fact the will of the god in question. Again this is a characteristic common in divine visitation stories. The story also has some similarities with a cult creation story. Instruction is given about how and where the god is to be worshipped, with an explicit statement that what happens next is the will of the god. Hence, this scene has many features in common with a divine visitor story, where a god appears in human form and is entertained by mortals.

The scene also has features of a hero recognition scene, although there are no unambiguous tokens of recognition in this story. The showing of the hands and feet seems to be to show that Jesus is a human – not a particular human. Likewise, the eating of the fish is also intended to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact not a “spirit”, but a solid person. As discussed above, it cannot be assumed to be a distinctively Jesus-like act which would definitively identify him, despite eating with his disciples being an action which Jesus used to identify himself in the previous passage (24:30). The primary function of the eating of the meal is to demonstrate Jesus’ humanity, and so it is a sign of recognition, if at all, only peripherally. Jesus’ greeting εἰρήνη ὑμῖν (“peace to you”) is the greeting he taught his disciples to use when visiting households (Luke 10:5-6). This could be seen as a token or sign of recognition as Jesus is using a distinctive phrase familiar to the disciples. However the phrase is

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991 I.e., the actions of the disciples which follow in Acts, but also in the community hearing the Gospel.
992 This contrasts with the similar story contained in John as will be seen below.
993 In that case, however, it is a much more distinctive action as he breaks the bread and offers a blessing, using very similar language to both the last supper (22:19), and the feeding of the multitudes (9:16). See Section 6.4.2.
995 Although the expression used in Luke 10:5 is εἰρήνη τοῦ οἴκου τούτῳ, which although similar, is not similar enough to establish a certain connection. It is also not an expression Jesus uses frequently, which would make it an obvious sign of recognition.
traditional enough\textsuperscript{996} that it is not uniquely a Jesus saying, and thus could only hint at, rather than prove, that the visitor was Jesus. Jesus’ recounting of what he said when he was with them before his death does serve the purpose of identifying himself, and when they worship him in verse 52 this is a confirmation that they have recognised both his identity, and his station or position. Even before his arrival the disciples have been preconditioned to expect his arrival. They have just heard that Jesus has appeared to Simon, and to the two travelers on the road (24:34-5). Despite this, as in the road to Emmaus story, there is an element of cognitive resistance where the disciples are unwilling to believe despite the evidence offered up to them (24:41). The reaction of the disciples is one of joy (χαρά), which is a suitable emotion for people who have been reunited with a disguised hero. This story contains both terror in the face of the divine (24:37) and joy at being reunited with their friend (24:41), displaying a mixture of themes which are mirrored by the disciples’ confusion about whether they are encountering a supernatural being, or their friend returned, whom they had thought to be dead.

Unlike the Emmaus story, this one does not have the sharp contrast between the cognitive and emotional state of the disciples before and after recognition, so it is more difficult to clearly identify a moment of peripeteia. Certainly the disciples show joy when they realise who Jesus is (24:41, 52), but this joy is not sharply contrasted with their emotional state before they realised who the person in front of them was. At the start of the story (24:33), at least some of the disciples already know that Jesus is risen. The two men on the road know he is alive because they have just seen him. Jesus has also appeared to Simon (24:34). The rest of the disciples have been told about both of these events, and have also heard the testimony of the women and what they were told by the angels, although this testimony was not believed at all (see 24:11). The disciples, therefore, or at the very least some of them, knew that Jesus was alive before this appearance, and they still know that he is alive after his appearance. This encounter does not have the same life-changing impact as Jesus’

\textsuperscript{996} The Greek εἰρήνη ὑμῖν is the equivalent of the Hebrew מָלָכִי לְךָ which is used as a greeting by God himself (e.g. Judg 6:23 which the LXX translates as καὶ ἐπὶ σὺν ἡμῖν κόσμῳ εἰρήνη σοι). The same expression is used in Dan 10:19 by an angelic figure. However, since it is a standard Jewish greeting, the use of this expression does not imply an angel, or God is speaking. See Nolland, \textit{Luke 18}, 1212. The related expression of “going in peace” as a farewell is also used in the Hebrew Scriptures. See for instance Judg 18:6; 1 Sam 29:7.
first appearance to a given person. It is tautological that a hero can appear to a person for the first time only once, and any subsequent appearances will not change the recogniser’s knowledge about whether the hero is dead, or missing, or alive and present. Jesus’ appearance in this second instance to the same people, cannot logically be a hero recognition scene which brings about a massive change in the disciples’ worldview.

Similarly, there is no restructuring of the disciples’ perception of reality or the way society is structured. In Luke 24:34 the disciples are already confessing “ὅτι ὁντως ἦγέρθη ὁ κύριος.” This does not differ from their beliefs at the end of this particular story: they still believe that the Lord had risen indeed. The moment of peripeteia which took place in the road to Emmaus story (and presumably in Simon’s story mentioned in 24:34) means that the disciples start this story with a different epistemic state. Before the road to Emmaus story, they believed that Jesus was dead and defeated and this changed as the story progressed. In Jesus’ appearance to the disciples in 24:36-49, however, the disciples in question start the story believing that Jesus is alive and victorious, and continue to hold this view throughout the story. Although Jesus is reunited with his disciples in this scene, the nature of the relationship does not change. In 24:34 they are already seeing Jesus as Lord, and as such they accept their positions in his new structure. When Jesus appears this time the issue is not whether he is dead, or whether he has failed, or whether the family and social structure he represented has been destroyed; rather, the issue for the disciples present, who know the answer to all of these questions, is whether the entity appearing before them is in fact Jesus at all, or if it is Jesus, whether he is a divine being or merely human.

Summary:

The appearance of Jesus to the disciples in Luke 24:36-53 lacks many features of a hero recognition story, both in the way the story is structured, and in the purpose it plays in the narrative. This story fits more into the category of a divine visitation: although Jesus does perform some distinctive actions, Jesus declares his own identity

997 These are the concerns of the Emmaus Two.
and is not recognised via signs of recognition; the new knowledge the disciples gain comes from Jesus’ words, rather than flowing from the recognition event itself as Jesus explains the situation and issues them instructions; finally, there is no moment of peripeteia in this scene. The visit fulfils the purpose of setting up and spreading Jesus’ movement, and for explaining what the disciples are to do next. As an unrecognised hero can only return and be recognised once by the same person, any subsequent appearances lean towards using a different model: that of a disguised god. The next appearance of Jesus in Luke’s version of events also resembles that of a divine helper rather than as a returning hero: when Jesus appears in Acts 9:3 his appearance is unambiguously a divine visitor who is commanding and aiding the hero of the story, Paul, in his mission.998

John 20:19-29

John records a very similar event, but with several different features. While there is nothing inherently extraordinary in Luke’s account, where Jesus came and “stood among them”, John, in 20:19 and again in 20:26, hints that there was something more extraordinary about the way in which Jesus appears.999 The locked or closed doors seem to indicate that Jesus mysteriously appeared among his disciples as though he had teleported there. This is not, of course, the only possible interpretation. The closing of the doors could rather have been a cautionary measure taken before Jesus would reveal himself to his disciples, since as John says they had a fear of “the Jews.”1000

Nonetheless, assuming that Jesus did appear suddenly among his disciples, this indicates either that his body is capable of doing things other bodies are not capable

998 See Section 6.3.3, above.
999 Although the reaction of the disciples in Luke 24:37 indicates that there was something unusual about Jesus’ appearance, if not the manner in which he appeared.
1000 This group is a community of people, rather than the Jews as a people group (a group which Jesus and his disciples belonged to). The fear of the Jews in this passage may be indicative of the relationship between Jews and Christians towards the end of the first century CE (Haenchen, John, 2:210). For analysing the structure of the narrative, all that is important is that the “Jews” in this story are enemies and to be feared.
of,\textsuperscript{1001} or that some other agent has temporarily hidden Jesus from sight. Commentators often interpret this passage as indicating that Jesus could either walk through walls, or that he had the ability to materialize at will. Craig S. Keener states that “the closed door may allow John to communicate something about the resurrection body”,\textsuperscript{1002} specifically that it is corporeal (20:20), yet capable of acting in an incorporeal manner (20:19).\textsuperscript{1003} Although Keener does not specify the exact manner in which Jesus enters the room, it is assumed to enter in the way it does because his body has a different nature. J. Ramsey Michaels points out that it is not clear whether the doors were locked, or just closed,\textsuperscript{1004} but the mention of this fact (not once but twice) strongly implies that there was something unusual about the manner in which Jesus arrived. With regard to John’s account of the discovery of the empty tomb, Raymond Brown observes that the rolling away of the stone indicates that at least some traditions considered Jesus’ risen body could not pass through solid objects – but says this may reflect an earlier understanding of Jesus’ body.\textsuperscript{1005} However, he says that the appearance in John 20:19-20, shows that “John seems to envision that the body of Jesus had marvelous, non-physical powers (the ability to pass through closed doors).”\textsuperscript{1006} In contrast, Michaels says that the manner in which Jesus arrived is not the point, merely the fact that he had.\textsuperscript{1007} In Greek thought, some form of phantoms were capable of entering locked rooms. In the Odyssey, a phantom (εἴδωλον) created by Athene enters Penelope’s room by the bolt of the door.\textsuperscript{1008} Hermes, in the Hymn to Hermes, also travels through a small space to pass through a door.\textsuperscript{1009} This may have been one of the images that immediately occurred to the disciples, or was meant to occur to the Gospel’s audience.\textsuperscript{1010} None of these ghosts or

\textsuperscript{1001} Although as noted, just as strong an argument can be made that Jesus’ body was capable of doing things normal bodies could not do before his resurrection (e.g. John 6:19, and perhaps 10:39). There is no need to conclude that Jesus’ resurrected body was different from his pre-resurrection body in order for events such as this one to take place. See Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 207.

\textsuperscript{1002} Keener, The Gospel of John, 2:1196.

\textsuperscript{1003} Ibid., 2:1201.

\textsuperscript{1004} Michaels, The Gospel of John, 1007.

\textsuperscript{1005} Brown, John, 1020.

\textsuperscript{1006} Ibid., 1033. Brown points out that John may not be stressing the point that Jesus’ body has unusual features, but nonetheless does conclude that this is what the passage implies. A similar opinion is held by Haenchen, John, 2:210.

\textsuperscript{1007} Michaels, The Gospel of John, 1008.

\textsuperscript{1008} Homer, Od. 4.795-803, 838-839.

\textsuperscript{1009} HH 4, 145-6.

\textsuperscript{1010} It is explicitly stated in Luke’s account (Luke 24:39) that some sort of “spirit” was suspected, but in John’s account this is only implied.
deities, even in the Greek tradition, are thought to pass through solid objects. More importantly, there is no (other) instance in the New Testament of people (or spirits) being able to walk through solid objects. There are, however, several instances of invisibility, ¹⁰¹¹ which can be seen as an extreme form of disguise, and even as a form of metamorphosis.

The instance pertaining to Jesus which takes place in John will be outlined below, but two other instances will be examined first which have relevance to this situation, as they relate the same sort of event but from the view point of the hidden person rather than from those whose vision is occluded. In Acts 12, when Peter is aided in escaping from jail, he becomes invisible to the guards, and the gates which barred the way opened for him by some supernatural agency. These are the very two phenomena which we encounter in John 20:19, although in this case we are seeing the situation from the opposite point of view. There is one important note to make about the Acts story: there is no suggestion anywhere that Peter’s body had any special properties, in and of itself, although it is possible that his body had changed due to the agency of the angel. If Jesus’ appearance was to be understood as a similar event then there is no reason to assume that Jesus’ body had undergone some fundamental change in order for this event to unfold. ¹⁰¹²

A very similar story, also from the point of view of the hidden one, is related in the Iliad. In order to retrieve the body of his son, Priam makes a journey to Achilles’ hut. But in order to get there he must pass by both guards and a locked gate. In order to achieve this Hermes manifests in the form of a young lord and leads Priam into Achilles’ hut. First he puts the guards to sleep, and unfastens the gate. Priam then approaches Achilles unseen in the closed room and suddenly appears before Achilles, causing astonishment to Achilles and his companion. ¹⁰¹³ Had this story been told from the point of view of Achilles, rather than Priam, the story would look remarkably similar to that of Jesus’ sudden appearance. While I am not suggesting that there is a direct link between Priam’s breaking into a fortress, or Peter’s breaking

¹⁰¹¹ Which could mean either the person becomes impossible to see, or else that those who are in a position to see the person are prevented from doing so.
¹⁰¹² In fact, Luke goes out of his way in his version of the story to point out that this is not the case.
¹⁰¹³ Homer, II. 24.440f.
out of one, with Jesus’ sudden appearance in a closed room, these other stories do demonstrate that the sort of narrative where a character travels unseen by the agency of a god or angel and then appears suddenly is one which was familiar in the period when the gospels were written, while people walking through walls or teleporting were not.

The conclusion of all this is that although Jesus appearing among his disciples seems at first glance to be an instance of Jesus having a fundamentally different sort of body, the motif of disguise or invisibility provides a better explanation of the events. I suggest that Jesus does not walk through walls, teleport, or display any other odd-body behavior. Rather he appears before the disciples with the aid of a divine helper who makes him invisible and unbolts doors for him. This fits well with both the story itself, and its literary context. The disciples are encountering neither a ghost, nor a special sort of body. With a literary precedent for Jesus’ sudden appearance, the idea of a returning hero, with the same sort of body he had before he died, is not ruled out. However, as will be shown below, even after his appearance his disciples do not immediately recognise who it is they are seeing. It should be noted that this scene can still be interpreted as a recognition scene however one interprets Jesus’ sudden and unexpected appearance.

While Luke does not draw attention to the wounds of Jesus as proof of his identity, John goes out of his way to do so. This is not surprising since John also spends a lot more time describing the details of the crucifixion – specifically the piercing of Jesus side. The bodily wounds of Jesus and their exact nature are described by John in order to fit in with his scriptural program. So we get the following details:

Event A: “they did not break his legs” (19:33)
Event B: “they pierced his side” (19:34)

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1014 An objection to this, and a dissimilarity with the other stories examined, is that John does not explicitly state that Jesus was aided by a supernatural/divine helper, whereas the other stories examined do make this explicit. This is true, but it is also true that John does not explicitly mention that Jesus moved through a wall, or teleported. The reader is presented with a mysterious appearance, and has to interpret it with the literary tools extant in his or her own culture.

1015 For Luke (Luke 24:39) the parts of the body were displayed to demonstrate that Jesus was not in fact a πνεῦμα.
Since John has stressed the importance of the physical injuries Jesus has acquired during his crucifixion, it is not surprising that he also uses them as proofs of Jesus’ identity in one of his post-resurrection appearances.

A careful examination of Jesus’ appearance in the room shows that the viewing of the wounds was necessary in order to prove his identity, as the disciples did not immediately recognise who he was. In 20:19 Jesus appears to his disciples and gives his greeting, “peace be with you.” Although a common enough greeting, within John’s Gospel this recalls 14:27 and 16:33 which both promise that Jesus will provide peace to his disciples. Now, a figure arrives proclaiming peace to them, or perhaps even declaring that peace is already among them. Within this context, this acts as a strong indication that the visitor is Jesus, but the recognition does not occur at this point. Unlike in Luke’s account, there is no record of shock on the part of the disciples, and Jesus does not use multiple proofs that he is indeed a physical being. The issue here is not that Jesus may be a non-solid entity, but that the disciples do not know who the stranger who has suddenly arrived is. Their lack of recognition is evidenced by the fact that it is not until after showing the disciples his hands and his side that the disciples rejoice. Brown argues that the disciples greet the offer to

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1019 Moloney argues this due to the lack of a verb in “εἰρήνη ὑμῖν” meaning that the expression should be rendered “Peace to you” (ibid., 534).

1020 But then in general John does not seem to maintain the synoptic idea of terror in the face of the numinous. In John 6:19 the disciples are said to be afraid, but there is no mention of fear of Jesus, or of angels after Jesus’ resurrection (e.g. John 20:12). The synoptic Gospels, particularly Luke, have many instances of people being afraid in the face of supernatural encounters: Matt 9:8; 14:26; 17:6-7; 28:4, 5, 10; Mark (4:40); 5:15, 33; 6:49-50; 16:5-8; Luke 1:12-3, 29-30; 2:9-10; 5:8-10; 7:16; 8:25, 35; 9:34; 24:5, 37. Schnackenburg notes that the motif of fear is lacking in John, indicating that the author was not interested in angelophany (*John Vol. 3*, 315).

1021 Schnackenburg is right that there is no explicit mention that the disciples did not know who Jesus was in this scene (ibid., 322), but the recognition does not take place until after the displaying of the hands and side, showing that the motif of unrecognisability is being used.

1022 Luke’s Jesus indicated his hands and feet – i.e. the parts of any human – but John indicates specifically the wounded hands and side – that is, the parts important specifically to Jesus.
see the wounds with joy because the wounds signify a continuity between the crucifixion and the resurrection, but this misses the point that the disciples do not acknowledge Jesus until they have seen the wounds. The wounds are a recognition token.

Jesus’ subsequent appearance when the formerly absent Thomas is now present backs up this view. When the other disciples report that they have seen Jesus alive, one might expect Thomas to exclaim something like “when I see him with my own eyes I will believe that!” but instead the proof he seeks is specifically to see, and touch, the mark of the nails and the spear wound. This seems odd criteria for the identification of a long-time friend and acquaintance (especially one who has been away for such a short time), unless the usual method of simply looking at the person’s face is no longer a reliable one: that is, Jesus had undergone some form of metamorphosis and now appeared in a different shape. When Thomas finally does see Jesus, rather than saying “My Lord and my God” as soon as he sees him, as with the other disciples, his response is postponed until after he has seen Jesus’ identifying wounds.

In order to understand this sequence of events two things need to be pointed out: first that stories existed where Jesus did in fact appear in a different form at times, and also stories existed in which a metamorphosed character maintained wounds, or other identifying features. The first of these is well established throughout this chapter, where each Gospel contains accounts of Jesus appearing in an unrecognisable form. The second claim also has support from external literature: Odysseus is identified by his servant by his own scar, and there are many instances of metamorphosis in other sources where a character being transformed into something or someone else maintains certain identifying features. In these cases, as in Jesus’ case, the scars

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1023 Brown, John, 1033.
1024 Larsen, Recognizing the Stranger, 206.
1025 As Haenchen points out, it is not explicitly stated that Thomas took advantage of the opportunity he requested (John, 2:211) and so perhaps Thomas did not actually touch Jesus’ wounds. Nevertheless, Jesus’ words in 20:27 make it clear that Thomas has seen the wounds, even if he has not touched them, and they thus act as a sign of recognition. See also Moloney, The Gospel of John, 537.
1026 See Chapter 3. For Ovid, and the other Metamorphoses composers, the reason why the transformed form maintains some of the same characteristics is to facilitate an aetiological tale, but the point remains that even transformed people and objects maintain some of the most distinctive features of the original form (recall also the folk story of the hunter who shoots a wolf in the leg and the next day sees a person walking with a limp (i.e. a werewolf/witch)). There are many examples which back
are necessary in order for the character to be recognised. So we see that, like unrecognisable hero stories, this encounter with Jesus features the use of a sign for recognition.

This story in John has much more in common with an unrecognised hero story than an unrecognised god story. The use of a sign for recognition is more in keeping with a disguised hero than a disguised god, and the story lacks any terror on the part of the disciples. This implies that it is a human-like rather than a god-like being they are encountering. John’s account lacks any sense that he is testing the disciples using hospitality. There is no meal offered to Jesus. The theme of punishment and reward for the way they react to the stranger, a common theme with disguised gods, is also lacking. Jesus does, however, give instructions to the disciples in John 20:22-23, as well as giving them the gift of the Holy Spirit. In this way he is presented as more than a hero returning with the aid of a divine helper. Jesus’ departure is not recorded for either of his visits (after John 20:23 or 20:29). There is perhaps a hint in John 20:30 that Jesus did not immediately depart and stayed with the disciples, and that although the signs just related were sufficient, he demonstrated his return in a number of other ways. It must be assumed that Jesus did depart temporarily after 20:23 since he was presumably not there when the other disciples were talking to Thomas. Similarly, if Chapter 21 is to be seen as chronologically following Chapter 20, Jesus must have departed after 20:29. The nature of the departure is not, however, made clear. Divine visitation stories are often accompanied by miraculous departures, so the lack of this motif here weighs against this story being understood as a disguised

up the intuition that transformed people can be recognised by some continuity with their original/other form.

1027 See footnote 1020.

1028 This depends upon whether the “many other signs” are understood as other post-resurrection appearances (e.g. Edwyn Clement Hoskyns, The Fourth Gospel, ed. Francis Noel Davey [London: Faber and Faber, 1940], 549), or as just pointing out that the entire Gospel is an incomplete record of Jesus’ actions – and that John took a selection of the stories at his disposal (e.g. Bultmann, The Gospel of John, xxxix); See also Brown, John, 1055; C. H. Dodd, The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel (Cambridge: Cambridge U.P, 1968), 429. Keener agrees that it is just stating that the entire Gospel is incomplete and does not imply more future signs and appearances. He does however point out that this phrase provided an “open invitation” to apocryphal writers. (Keener, The Gospel of John, 2:1214); J. Ramsey Michaels argues that the “signs” in verse 30 refer specifically to post-resurrection signs to demonstrate that Jesus is in fact alive (that is, he has returned) (Michaels, The Gospel of John, 1008). In this case Chapter 21 is added (by the same author?) as one more example. One issue with this theory is that in Chapter 21 (as will be seen) Jesus is once more unrecognised by his disciples, and those who have already recognised him must see through his disguise once more.

1029 However, as I will argue below, Chapter 21 is best understood as an alternative returning hero story, rather than a sequence of events which follows on directly from Chapter 20.
god story. However, as with the lack of terror of the disciples, the reason for this may be more due to John’s writing style than due to a deliberate omission. What can be said is that John did not make it clear that it was understood as a divine visitation story by relating an obvious miraculous departure. Jesus passes on authority to the disciples (20:21-23) but he does not spell out what the disciples are to do next. They are not told to go to any particular place, or worship in any particular way. The important fact is that Jesus has returned, and that this alone is enough of a message. Such a lack of direction sets this story apart from divine visitation stories, where the purpose of the god’s visit is to pass on information, or issue commands. The appearance of Jesus does, on the other hand, make it clear that the actions of the disciples are sanctioned by a divine agent, and the future of human history is being steered by divine powers. So while the appearance of Jesus in the closed room does have some similarities with a disguised god story, it does not fulfil most of the criteria.

Rather, John 20:19-29 has much more in common with a hero-recognition story, which we turn to now. As in the *Odyssey*, this story makes it clear why Jesus would appear in a disguised form. Just as Odysseus had to return in disguise because the suitors had taken over his kingdom, and those who were loyal to Odysseus were at risk, Jesus returns in disguise because his enemies are still occupying a position of power, as evidenced by the disciples locking themselves away from danger (20:19). Jesus appears in disguise, and is recognised via the sign of his distinctive wounds. It is only after seeing his wounds that the disciples recognise him (20:20), and Thomas, having been told about these signs (20:25), demands to see the wounds as well before he will recognise Jesus (20:28). For Luke the showing of the hands and feet was to display the fact that he was a mortal, as was the eating of food. For John however, there is no need to demonstrate this as the disciples do not express confusion over his nature but only over his identity. It is the signs of recognition which lead directly to Jesus’ recognition. Further to this, John 20:30-31 stresses the importance of signs in order for believers to come to faith. Although the disciples

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1030 For example, the attempted assassination of his son (Homer, *Od.* 4.842-7).
1031 As argues Larsen, *Recognising the Stranger*, 209.
1032 Although as noted above it is ambiguous as to whether the “signs” referred to here are all of Jesus’ actions, or specifically those which proved his identity after his resurrection. See Brown, *John*, 1051.
do not immediately recognise who Jesus is, the idea of cognitive resistance to the idea that Jesus has returned is displayed most clearly by Thomas. He had been provided with some evidence in the form of his friend’s eyewitness testimony, but still found himself unable to believe that it could be true. The disciples are said to rejoice when they recognise Jesus, but other than this nothing of their reaction is recorded. There are no tears, embracing and so on. This again may be due to John’s largely unemotional rendering of all the post-resurrection events.1033

I conclude, then, that the account of Jesus visiting a group of disciples in John serves the thematic purpose of a hero recognition story. There is certainly a moment of *peripeteia* in this recognition event. John points out at the start of this story that the disciples were afraid of the Jews, and were cowering behind locked doors. This displays the same attitude as that held by the two people on the road in Luke 24:20-21: the disciples considered themselves, their movement, and their leader to be defeated. By the end of the story, on the other hand, the disciples have been told that far from being defeated their movement in fact possesses great power (John 20:22-23), their leader also has not been defeated but is in fact the victor (20:28). There is thus a complete shift in the worldview of the disciples which comes about due to their recognition of Jesus. This is displayed most vividly in Thomas’ experience. It can be seen that as well as a change in the perceptions of the disciples, there is also a re-ordering of society presented in this passage, and a healing of relationships where the disciples are reunited with the man they have presumed dead, and have in some sense betrayed. As well as recognising the identity of Jesus in this story, his social position is also recognised. Although the other disciples have of course recognised Jesus’ identity, the full recognition of his social standing is left to Thomas (20:28). Finally, the recognition scene drives the plot forward, in as much as the disciples have a mission to perform in the world and the work of building Jesus’ movement can begin. The continuation of the plot is partly the work of the characters, but also partly that of the audience who are likewise expected to recognise Jesus, and to continue to help build his movement.1034

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1033 E.g. the lack of terror in the face of the divine.
Summary:

The appearing of Jesus in the locked room in John is very much like a story of a hero returning in disguise, and then being recognised, both in terms of the structure, and the thematic purpose. There are recognition signs in the form of Jesus’ wounds, a moment of *peripeteia*, and the recognition itself brings about new significant knowledge. Additionally, this recognition leads to a shift in the disciples’ understanding of the world, a healing of relationships, and a reordering of society.

Mark 16:14

The long ending of Mark may contain a brief mention of the same event. Jesus appears to the “eleven” as they are sitting at the table (Mark 16:14). Collins suggests that verse 14 echoes Matthew 28:16-20, whereas France sees it as an echo of Luke 24:36-49 and John 20:19-23. There are no indications of metamorphosis or disguise themes in this passage, apart from a statement that the disciples have not believed those who had said Jesus was risen. This displays the recurring theme of cognitive resistance on the disciples’ part. This brief appearance account directly follows the short account of Jesus appearing in a different shape or form to the disciples on the road.

Summary of “room” stories

There are significant differences between Luke’s account and John’s account of Jesus’ appearance to a group of his disciples after his resurrection. Within Luke’s Gospel the scene in which Jesus appears to the disciples is more akin to a divine visitation story. For John, the story is much closer to a hero recognition story.

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1036 Since both mention the eleven disciples (οἱ ἑνδεκά), both recount an appearance of Jesus, and both contain an account of Jesus’ commission to proclaim and baptize. See Collins, *Mark*, 808.
6.4.4 Shores

**John 21:4-14**

In the final chapter of John, Jesus appears once more. As with the other stories looked at in this section, Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form to his disciples. The audience is told who Jesus is at the start of the story, as is the case with all of the unrecognisability stories containing Jesus examined so far, but the disciples do not know that it is Jesus (21:4). As will be seen, it is not until he performs a distinctive action that they are able to penetrate his disguise. However, in its present placement this story is unusual since Jesus had been fully recognised in Chapter 20, and the disciples’ relationships with him have been healed; they should now have a new understanding about the nature of the world and their role in it. When Chapter 21 starts, it is as though the appearances in Chapter 20 had never happened. The epistemic states of the disciples have been reset to the state they were in, in 20:19. Chapter 21, therefore, cannot be read as a continuation of the story told in Chapter 20, but rather it can only be understood as an alternative ending to the story.

Powell presents several plausible reasons why John 21 may have originally been intended to be the ending of the incomplete[1038] Mark. He argues that an ending of Mark should have several features in order to be consistent with the foreshadowing of the resurrection presented in the rest of the Gospel: the first resurrection appearance will be in Galilee, Peter and Jesus will be reconciled during the first appearance, and when Jesus appears, the disciples will have been unaware of the empty tomb, because, as Mark recounts it, the women said nothing to anyone.[1039] The last point in particular makes any potential recognition scene attached to Mark significantly different from those contained in other Gospels. If John 21 were to follow Mark 16:8 then the disciples have gone out fishing not knowing that Jesus has risen from the dead. This makes more sense than the passage directly following from John 20.

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[1038] For Powell’s arguments concerning why Mark is not intended to end at verse 16:8, and why a missing ending most likely did exist see Evan Powell, *The Unfinished Gospel: Notes on the Quest for the Historical Jesus*, 1st ed (Westlake Village, CA: Symposium, 1994), 89–102.

[1039] Ibid., 102–107.
Haenchen claims that 21:1 does not connect up with 20:30-31, and sees John 21 as a section added by a later redactor, and states that “with respect to content, it is surprising that the disciples return to their old vocation as fishermen in chapter 21, as though such decisive events as the outpouring of the spirit and the mission charge had not preceded.” Bultmann suggests that Jesus’ appearance by the sea was the first resurrection story to be told. There is, then, good reason to suspect that John 21 did not originally belong with John 20, and as such it makes sense to examine it as a story independent of its canonical placement.

If the account contained in John 21 is a hero recognition scene, which will be investigated below, then it does not follow naturally from John 20 for two reasons. First, any potential hero recognition story is predicated upon the understanding that the disciples do not yet know that Jesus has returned. Second, Jesus is in some sense in “disguise” and this is the norm for the first appearance to a particular person or group. In John 20:14 Jesus appears in disguise to Mary, he appears in disguise to the disciples in 20:19 and finally he is disguised to Thomas in 20:26. However, he never has to be recognised twice by the same people, which is what happens if we read John 21 as following on from John 20. I will look at the story in two ways. First I will examine how this story functions in its present placement at the end of John’s Gospel, following the recognition scene in 20:11-18. Then I will see how this story functions as a stand-alone story.

When seen as a continuation of the story in John 20, John 21 presents a Jesus who appears multiple times to the same people in a disguised (or different) form. Verse 1040 Haenchen, John, 2:221–2.
1041 Ibid., 2:222.
1043 See also Moloney, The Gospel of John, 545–6. Moloney lists several criteria which support the hypothesis that the original story ended at 20:21: 20:30-31 reads like a solemn conclusion to a story; there are words and expressions unique to Chapter 21; the sequence of events is confused, for instance it seems odd that the disciples have left Jerusalem and returned to their former occupations in Galilee; the disciples seem “obtuse” with a lack of reaction to the joy, mission, and gift of the Spirit of 20:19-35; the count of the “third time” (21:14) neglects the appearance to Mary in 20:10-18; the final words in 21:25 form a literary conclusion (which is redundant after the conclusion in 20:30-31). Stibbe points out that John 21 also bears many similarities with the rest of the Gospel such as the use of distinctive names, words, and writing techniques (see Stibbe, John, 207–8). But he concludes that these are due to another writer utilising John’s imagery and style. Schnackenburg also concludes that John 21 was not the work of the author of the rest of John (John Vol. 3, 350–1).
1044 That he is disguised and then recognised in these instances is argued above.
21:12 in particular makes it clear that the disciples are seeing a different person before them although they know that it is Jesus. Although the form of the story is very close to a recognition scene, the placing of it directly after another recognition scene means that, in its final form, it presents a polymorphic Jesus, as Jesus appears in at least two different unrecognisable forms. If this is not the first time that Jesus has appeared, but rather an indication of his further activity, then it is more in line with the sort of appearances which occur in the apocryphal gospels. In its present placement Jesus has already been recognised, and yet returns to visit his disciples in order to further promote his movement and give them instructions. John 21:14 states that it was the third time he had appeared. If this story is seen as a continuation of John, and therefore events which take place after Jesus has already been recognised by his disciples, then it makes sense to see this story as a divine visitation story with a polymorphous Jesus being recognised as a god returning to aid his disciples. The theme of a test in the form of hospitality is also present – but in a slightly modified form. Jesus has already prepared food and asks the disciples to join him, and to contribute food to the meal. The disciples pass this test and recognise Jesus. As with the other recognition stories in John, there is no indication of fear being experienced by the disciples. Jesus then gives both information and instructions to his followers. If this event is seen as a reappearance of Jesus, then it serves the purpose of driving the plot in a new direction. In this case the disciples have stalled in their efforts to spread Jesus’ message. By the end of the story, however, the disciples are (again) following Jesus. The appearance of Jesus in person makes it clear that the characters who are heading up the church are doing so with the support of the divine visitor. Instructions are given about what Jesus’ movement’s function is to be (21:15-17), and it is made clear that it is the divine movement’s founder himself who wishes this to be the way the movement operates. The story certainly does display some of the attributes of a divine visitation, but as will be demonstrated, it is much closer to a hero recognition scene.

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1045 Polymorphic in a serial, rather than a parallel sense. That is he appears in a different form at different times, rather than appearing in different forms at the same time.

1046 In as much as they are going back to their old way of life, although Keener points out that even those who were out proclaiming the gospel would still need to eat and support themselves: Keener, *The Gospel of John*, 2:1227; Beasley-Murray, *John*, 399.
In order to read this passage as a hero recognition scene, it must be seen as the first appearance of Jesus to his disciples. The idea that Jesus would need to be recognised every time he appears, as though he dons a different disguise each time, does not correspond to a hero recognition story. However, the idea of Jesus taking on multiple forms does fit with many later depictions of Jesus, where he is presented as a disguised god, as will be seen in Chapter 7. The appearance of Jesus by the shore could be seen as Jesus’ first appearance to the disciples by reading John 21 as though 20:19-31 did not intervene. Then John 21 is an alternative recognition scene. Another possibility raised by Evan Powell (see above) is that John 21 follows on from Mark 16:8. Whichever of these hypotheses is accepted, the important feature is that, at the beginning of the story, the disciples have yet to see Jesus raised from the dead, and still believe that he is gone.

In a post-resurrection miracle of sorts, Jesus provides the fishermen with an abundance of fish in their net. This event recalls the accounts of the disciples’ call in the synoptic Gospels (Mark 1:16-20; Mt 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11). Luke’s account in particular contains the theme of a surprising abundance of fish being caught. In Luke’s story, Peter falls down at Jesus’ knees and declares himself unworthy (Luke 5:8). In the present story, the same abundance of fish causes Jesus to be recognised. Haenchen notes the similarity with Luke 5:1-11. His hypothesis is that the author is combining two stories, one of a meal by the shore, and the other of an abundant catch of fish. He notes that Luke 5:6 and John 21:6, eight use the word ἦχθος (fish), whereas another word (ὀψάριον) is used in 21:9, 10, 13. Another similarity between the stories is a comment about the strength of the nets: in Luke 5:6 the number of fish causes the nets (δίκτυον) to break (διαρρήσσω), whereas in John 21:11 there is a comment that the net (δίκτυον) was not broken (σχίζω). Thus the miracle in Luke 5:1-11 is repeated, but outdone with this additional detail. It is therefore possible to read this passage alongside Luke 5:1-11, and thus see the abundant haul of fish, as a very strong reference to Jesus’ previous actions. John’s Gospel,

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1047 Culpepper states that “the great catch of fish is the only resurrection appearance in the gospels which also contains a miracle.” (Culpepper, “Cognition in John: The Johannine Signs as Recognition Scenes,” 258). Certainly a miracle does occur here, but Jesus’ unexpected appearance and disappearance, and the ascension could perhaps be classified as miraculous as well.

1048 Mark 1:16-20 contains a version of the calling of fishermen, but lacks the detail of the large haul.


1050 See also Moloney, The Gospel of John, 552.
however, does not contain these fishing-disciple-calling stories, suggesting that whoever wrote the last chapter of John was aware of and referencing the synoptic Gospel accounts. The huge catch of fish causes the Beloved Disciple to realise that the man none of them could recognise was in fact “the Lord.” (21:6-7). The catch of fish recalls a similar event that Jesus has performed, and so acts as a sign of recognition. The shore appearance has the same structure as an unrecognised hero story. Jesus is unrecognisable, and is first recognised (by the Beloved Disciple) by the distinctive action of providing the place to throw their nets to acquire a large haul.

It is after this sign that the disciple whom Jesus loved recognises who the stranger is. Peter believes the Beloved Disciple, and immediately, as ever, jumps into action, both impatiently swimming ashore, and then being the one to obey Jesus and haul the fish ashore for breakfast. It seems as if Peter’s belief is based on the testimony of the Beloved Disciple, as it is not mentioned that he recognised Jesus himself, but rather that he heard that it was the Lord. Peter’s reaction is the opposite of Thomas’ in Chapter 20. First of all he “heard” that it was Jesus, so is clearly still not recognising him, and secondly he is trusting the testimony of the Beloved Disciple rather than relying on his own insight and reason. Thomas does not rely on the testimony of his friends, and instead relies on his own observation and reason. The rest of the disciples are not as quick to react as Peter, and it is not until Jesus asks them to join him that their opinion of the shore-side stranger is mentioned. Even at this stage not all of the disciples have recognised Jesus, however. It is Peter who obeys Jesus by (single-handedly?) dragging the heavy net ashore (21:11) while the other disciples ignore Jesus, or at least are not recorded as having recognised him until verse 12.

In verse 12 another sign is presented: the sharing of food with the disciples. Asking them to eat and share a meal with him is another sign given to reveal his identity. In most stories merely presenting food could not be seen as a distinctive sign of

1051 Larsen sees the fishing miracle as the recognition token in this scene (Recognizing the Stranger, 212).
1052 Although it is possible that the disciples do not recognise Jesus because he is a long way away on the shore, the purpose of this is to indicate a failure of recognition which can then lead to anagnorisis, as is pointed out by Stibbe, John, 210.
1053 Peter’s impulsiveness is displayed within John’s Gospel in 6:67-69; 13:8-9; 18:10-1.
recognition, but within the Gospels the sharing of food plays such a central role\textsuperscript{1054} that the sharing and passing out of food can act as a recognition sign for Jesus’ identity. Haenchen even suggests that this recognition, which occurs at a meal, may have originally ended with Jesus being recognised in the breaking of the bread, with Jesus then vanishing as in Luke 24:31.\textsuperscript{1055} The account of the Last Supper in the Gospel of John lacks the breaking of the bread contained in Luke 22:19, but John’s audience can still perhaps be expected to be aware of this tradition, particularly since (as argued above) the scene in John 21 relies upon a familiarity with the synoptic disciple-calling scenes. If this passage is read as an ending of Mark, then it can be read directly in light of the Last Supper tradition (Mark 14:12-31 especially vs. 22-24). This act would have recalled the last time the disciples were at peace and feeling confident. The two signs used thus span the entirety of Jesus’ ministry. The first sign recalls the calling of the disciples, and the last his farewell. Even if traditions outside of John’s Gospel are discounted, John 6:11 contains an account of Jesus distributing a miraculous number of fish (and loaves)\textsuperscript{1056} using similar language,\textsuperscript{1057} and there may be echoes of 6:51, which would link this passage directly to Jesus being “the living bread.”\textsuperscript{1058} Thus, this action acts as a sign which recalls Jesus’ previous actions even without assuming a knowledge of the other Gospels. One further detail about the shared meal recalls Jesus’ past. The ἄνθρακτα (coal fire) which Jesus has prepared (21:9) recalls the fire which Peter warmed himself on (18:18), and remained by when he denied Jesus (18:25-27).\textsuperscript{1059}

\textsuperscript{1054} Within John’s Gospel see 2:1-11; 6:5-14; 13:26-27; See also 6:34-35, 51.
\textsuperscript{1055} Haenchen, John, 2:223.
\textsuperscript{1056} Stibbe says the meal has “powerful eucharistic overtones” (John, 212); Culpepper states that the recognition sign used here, as in the Emmaus account in Luke 24 “is to pose for the reader the challenge of recognizing Jesus in the Eucharistic meal” (“Cognition in John: The Johannine Signs as Recognition Scenes,” 258); See also Moloney, The Gospel of John, 553; Schnackenburg, John Vol. 3, 343.
\textsuperscript{1057} Comparing 6:11 to 21:13: both use λαμβάνω with respect to ἄρτος; 6:11 uses διαδίδωμι vs δίδομι in 21:13; both verses then add the detail that fish is also given/distributed: ὁμοίως, ὑψάριον. Both passages take place with a group sitting with Jesus after he has miraculously provided a large number of fish. 6:11: ἔλαβεν δὲ τοὺς ἄρτους ὦ θεοῦς καὶ εὐχαριστήσας διάδωκεν τοῖς μαθηταῖς, οἱ δὲ μαθηταὶ τοῖς ἀνακειμένοις ὁμοίως καὶ ἐκ τῶν ὕπαρσιν ὦσιν ἠθέλον. 21:13: ἔρχεται οὖν ὦ θεοῦς καὶ λαμβάνει τὸν ἄρτον καὶ δίδασκεν αὐτοῖς καὶ τὸ ὑψάριον ὁμοίως).
\textsuperscript{1058} The wedding at Cana also demonstrates the centrality of meal fellowship in John’s representation of Jesus (John 2:1-11).
\textsuperscript{1059} Haenchen, John, 2:224; Stibbe, John, 211-2.
Now that the disciples are sitting down and eating with Jesus, if the reason they did not recognise him initially was that he was a long way away or that the light was bad in the early morning, all such doubts should have vanished after reaching the shore and sitting down to eat in close proximity. However, this is not the case. Instead, we are told that now none of the disciples dared to ask him “who are you” because they knew it was the Lord. The implication is that the question would have occurred to them to ask, since he did not look like the Lord, but due to the signs he had offered they nevertheless knew that it was the Lord. In other words, the disciples were under the assumption that Jesus was dead, he then returned in an unrecognisable form, and was recognised by his disciples when he displayed signs of recognition.

It is only after the disciples have accepted his offer of hospitality and recognised him that Jesus addresses the disciples, singling out the one who acknowledged him and reacted to him physically (jumping into the sea; dragging the net) as the one to talk to. The Beloved Disciple recognises Jesus first, but fails to act upon this in the manner Peter does. The singling out of Peter serves the purpose of redeeming him from his former betrayal but it is also of note that the one who obeys Jesus is the one who is singled out for special treatment. This, coupled with Jesus not identifying himself openly, means that he is testing the disciples to see if they are loyal to him. After they have shown themselves as loyal they are taken with him on his continuing mission.

The disciples display a degree of cognitive resistance which is characteristic of recognition scenes. Even when the evidence has been provided which should lead to his recognition, the majority of the disciples are still unwilling to accept the conclusion towards which the evidence points. However, Peter’s reaction to Jesus is

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1060 Haenchen acknowledges that Jesus is still unrecognised at this point in the story (John, 2:223).
1061 Haenchen argues to the contrary, that the disciples still do not know that it was Jesus and were seeking conformation (ibid., 2:225). This reading seems to go against the text, however, which states that the disciples did know who Jesus was. The apparent contradiction is solved if Jesus is in a disguised form, as the disciples know it is Jesus, and yet there is still the impetus to ask who he is for absolute confirmation.
1062 In order for a recognition scene to take place, by necessity Jesus must appear in disguise. As with the other accounts of Jesus being recognised, time spent apart cannot be an adequate explanation for the initial lack of recognition.
1064 The Beloved Disciple is also singled out (John 21:22) and he is the only other disciple who responds to Jesus, although only in word and not in the very physical way Peter does.
1065 John ends not with an ascension, but with Jesus still with his disciples, and moving off to continue his work with them. The final chapter is missing – and to be fulfilled by the readers of the Gospel. Cf. final chapter of the Odyssey.
very physical in nature, and, though lacking the tears and embracing which Mary exhibits, is still typical of a euphoric recognition scene.

The appearance by the sea also serves the same thematic purpose as a hero recognition scene. This story contains a moment of *peripeteia*, and a shift in the way the disciples view the world and society. At the start of the story the disciples have returned to their previous livelihood and are not following Jesus.\(^{1066}\) As soon as he recognises Jesus, Peter leaps into the water. Peter was the one who said that the disciples should abandon their master’s mission and go back to fishing,\(^{1067}\) displaying pessimism about the future. As soon as he recognises and acknowledges Jesus’ identity, he leaps out of the boat – both literally and symbolically rejecting what it represents: the end of Jesus’ reign, and the return to his old life. This is very similar to the reaction of the disciples on the road in Luke 24:32-33 when they have a dramatic shift in their worldview. They also respond in a physical way: Peter jumps out of the boat and swims towards Jesus, while the disciples on the road change direction and rush back to their community in Jerusalem. This sudden and dramatic turnaround is a moment of *peripeteia*. The pessimism has vanished, the King has returned to his Kingdom. The worldview of Peter has changed dramatically at this point, and there is going to be a reordering of society (which Jesus spells out in 21:15-19). McDowell suggests that in verse 15 Jesus is asking Peter whether he loves him more than these things, meaning the nets and the boat.\(^{1068}\) In this case he is asking Peter to reject the old life, and accept the new.

The other option is that the τούτων (in ἀγαπᾷς με πλεῖόν τούτων) refers to Peter’s companions, and either means that Peter is being asked if he loves Jesus more than he loves his friends, or else if he loves Jesus more than his friends love Jesus.\(^{1069}\)

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\(^{1066}\) Brown, *John*, 1069, 1078.


\(^{1068}\) Ibid., 422–41.

\(^{1069}\) Morris points out that Peter had denied Jesus, and yet remained with his companions, so it would make sense for Jesus to ask whether Peter still loved Jesus more than (Peter loved) these other people. (*The Gospel According to John*, 767–8); See also Moloney, *The Gospel of John*, 559; Schnackenburg points out that interpreting it as: do you love me more than these others love me (Jesus)? would make sense, since this is the claim Peter made before the crucifixion. *John Vol. 3*, 361–2; Brown reaches a similar conclusion (*John*, 1104).
Whichever of these options is chosen, Peter says only that he does love Jesus, leaving comparison with others aside. He pledges his loyalty to Jesus, saying in words what he has already demonstrated in action, that he accepts Jesus has returned as the rightful ruler. There is therefore a healing of a relationship broken by Peter’s earlier denial of Jesus (John 13:36-38; 18:13-27), which is shown to be continuing in 21:3. Peter’s confession “It is the Lord!” and his subsequent actions display not just that he has recognised the identity of Jesus, but that he has also recognised Jesus’ social status as Lord and leader. However, even after the recognition there remains work to be done, and so the recognition drives the plot forward. Just as in the end of the *Odyssey*, where Odysseus sets out with his loyal supporters to secure the Kingdom from usurpers, so in a similar manner, after recognising Jesus, work still needs to be done, both by the characters and the audience. John 21 ends without this work being described, but the plot is moved forward into a new phase by the recognition scene. The final words of Chapter 21 (21:25), that there are many other things which Jesus did, could refer to the things he did next with his disciples, rather than to things he did in the past which have not been recorded. There is no ascension in John, as there is in Luke/Acts and no glorious figure on a mountain as there is in Matthew. The appearance in Chapter 21 of John has one feature that separates it from many of the other post-resurrection appearances: Jesus does not vanish at the end of the appearance but rather seems set to remain on earth with the disciples. The final scene in John 21 is one of a very human Jesus walking off with two of his disciples. The post-resurrection Jesus in John 21 is a human hero returning to his followers in an unrecognisable form. At the start of John’s Gospel it is stated that the “the Word became flesh and lived among us.” The version of the ending of John’s Gospel found in Chapter 21 maintains this strong statement of the very physical presence of Jesus. Jesus remains as flesh, and continues to live among the disciples right up until the end of the story and beyond, unmitigated by angel-like descriptions or an ascension which removes him from the world, both of which fall short of the full and continuing presence of Jesus described by John.

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1070 Moloney argues that John 21:25 presents a scenario in which Jesus continues to be present to his community (*The Gospel of John*, 564–5).
1071 Morris sees this statement as hyperbole, stating that what is contained in the Gospel as a whole is merely a subset of all that the author knows about Jesus (*The Gospel According to John*, 777); see also Beasley-Murray, *John*, 416; Bultmann, *The Gospel of John*, 718.
1073 John 1:14.
Summary:

In John 21:4-14, Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form, and is subsequently recognised by his disciples. The scene most closely resembles a disguised hero recognition scene, rather than a disguised god visitation scene. The recognition, as with the other stories in John, comes about via signs of recognition, rather than via Jesus declaring or revealing his own identity. There is a moment of *peripeteia*, and the recognition results in the healing of relationships, most notably with Peter.

6.5: Summary

This chapter has demonstrated that post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the canonical Gospels have much in common with Greco-Roman disguised character stories, both in their structure and their thematic purpose. The first part of this chapter demonstrated that the Gospels were written in a context where Greco-Roman narrative plots and character types would be understood. It was also shown that the internal narrative world of each of the Gospels is the sort of world where metamorphosis and disguise of returning characters is not out of place as an explanation for Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, since these themes occur within the Gospels prior to the post-resurrection appearances. In the rest of the chapter it has been demonstrated that Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances do fulfil the criteria of a disguised character story, with Jesus appearing as either an unrecognisable hero or an unrecognisable god. When Jesus is being encountered for the *first* time by a person or group of people, and those people are unaware that Jesus is in fact alive, Jesus’ appearance resembles that of a disguised hero with the resultant change in worldview and dramatic plot turn. When Jesus has already been encountered by a person or group of people, or if those people are convinced, for some other reason (such as the announcement of an angel), that Jesus has returned, then Jesus’ appearance resembles that of a disguised god, and the story does not contain a dramatic change in the worldview of the characters.
In Section 6.4, in order to compare the different ways in which similar underlying stories could be written, the stories were grouped by event rather than by Gospel. In this section the Gospels will be summarised separately to see how each particular author presented Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances.

In Matthew’s account, Jesus first appears outside the tomb to the women. By the time Jesus arrives, the women already know that he has returned because this has been announced to them by the angels, and they believe this message. The appearance of Jesus could not, therefore, be that of a returning hero whom the women still thought to be dead. Rather, Matthew’s account uses the imagery of a divine visitor appearing to his adherents and commanding them to spread his movement. Similarly, when Jesus appears to his disciples on the mountain, he appears as a divine being and issues commands to his disciples. There is no explicit ascension in Matthew, and neither is there any account of a humble human appearing to the disciples.

In Luke’s account Jesus himself does not appear at the tomb at all, but despite this the scene works as a hero-recognition scene, although the women do not recognise Jesus via the sign of the empty tomb. Rather, the women are informed by angels that Jesus has risen. The disciples do not believe them, and so this account acts as the basis for Luke’s powerful hero recognition scene on the road to Emmaus. The pair on the road have heard rumours that Jesus has returned, but are still working under the assumption that he is dead and gone. The road to Emmaus story has all of the features of a disguised hero recognition scene. Jesus’ final appearance in Luke, on the other hand, is to a group who already know that Jesus has returned. This account is, consequentially, that of a divine visitor appearing to his followers and giving them instructions, rather than a disguised hero story. Luke uses a range of different imagery to present the story of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, which fit into the categories of both disguised hero and disguised god stories.

John, on the other hand, has a sequence of hero recognition stories. In each case, the characters involved consider Jesus still to be dead and the recognition is based upon this premise. In the first instance, Mary is grieving outside the tomb, and the subsequent recognition strongly resembles a disguised and returning hero recognition scene. The account of Jesus’ second appearance in the locked room is also based on
the premise that the disciples do not know that Jesus is alive and are in a state of defeat. This also leads to a hero-recognition scene, most perfectly exhibited in the interaction with Thomas. John’s final appearance story, in John 21, is also based on the premise that the disciples are defeated and consider Jesus to be gone. John uses the imagery of the returning hero throughout his post-resurrection appearance stories. At the end of both Chapter 20 and 21 Jesus remains with his disciples. John truly maintains the concept of the word becoming flesh right until the end of his Gospel. Rather than ascending or being presented as a divine visitor, Jesus, even after his resurrection, remains a returning hero in John’s accounts of the post-resurrection appearances.

Mark’s account (the longer ending) consists of a short summary, and as such it is impossible to classify each story into a particular category. Jesus first appears to Mary, but there is no clue as to whether he is unrecognisable. At this point the disciples still consider Jesus to be missing, and it could be conjectured that Mary also encountered someone she thought was still dead, but the text goes into no details. Mark also outlines an account of Jesus appearing to two disciples in the country, and in this case the detail that he appeared in a different form is added, hinting at a metamorphic Jesus. Both of these encounters were told to “the eleven” but they refused to believe and continue to mourn. Mark’s stories are too short to give a clear account of how Jesus was to be viewed, but indicate that the author of the long ending was aware of various stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances, including the tradition that when he appeared after his resurrection, Jesus was unrecognisable even to those who knew him well.

Throughout this chapter the Gospel accounts have been compared to the story types of the unrecognisable hero, and the unrecognisable god which were discussed and defined in Chapters 4 and 5. Luke’s Gospel contains stories which fit into both of these models. John contains only the former, and Matthew only the latter. The long ending of Mark presents only summary versions of Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. The following table summarises the findings of this chapter:
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Recognised/recogniser</th>
<th>Signs/tokens/manner of recognition</th>
<th>Result of recognition</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>John 20:11-18</td>
<td>Jesus/Mary Magdalene</td>
<td>The knowledge of Mary’s name.</td>
<td>Attempts to embrace Jesus. Issued instructions and given information. Returns to the disciples to tell them her news.</td>
<td>(A-C) 0-0-0/1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 20:19f</td>
<td>Jesus/disciples Jesus/Thomas</td>
<td>Scars on Jesus body.</td>
<td>Change of world view, and reversal of fortunes for the disciples. Instructions given to disciples.</td>
<td>(A) 0-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John 21:4-14</td>
<td>Jesus/disciples</td>
<td>Haul of fish. Sharing of food.</td>
<td>Change in world view, healing of relationships, reversal of fortunes.</td>
<td>(A) 0-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 24:1-11</td>
<td>Jesus/some women</td>
<td>Empty tomb.</td>
<td>They are perplexed and in the process of recognition perhaps, when the angels arrive and a new story type takes over. This is a truncated recognition scene.</td>
<td>(A) 0-0-0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Luke 24:1-35</td>
<td>Angels/Some women</td>
<td>None used.</td>
<td>Given information and instructions by angels.</td>
<td>(H) 1-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Jesus/the eleven and their companions</td>
<td>Hands and feet (?). Familiar expression “peace be with you.”</td>
<td>Provides them with knowledge. Blesses them. Gives instructions for what they are to do next.</td>
<td>(D-H) 1-1/0-1</td>
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<td>--------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<tr>
<td>Luke 24:36-53</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 16:12-13</td>
<td>Jesus/two disciples</td>
<td>None given.</td>
<td>They return and report to the rest.</td>
<td>2-2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 16:14</td>
<td>Jesus/The eleven</td>
<td>None given.</td>
<td>NA.</td>
<td>2-2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark 16:9</td>
<td>Jesus/Mary Magdalene</td>
<td>None given.</td>
<td>She goes to tell “those who had been with him.”</td>
<td>2-2-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matt 28:1-10</td>
<td>Jesus/Mary Magdalene and the other Mary</td>
<td>None used.</td>
<td>Command given for their immediate mission.</td>
<td>(H) 1-1-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter Seven: Apocryphal Jesus Stories

7.1: Introduction

In the canonical Gospels, there is a recurring theme of Jesus appearing to his disciples after his resurrection in an unrecognisable, disguised, or metamorphosed form. This chapter will investigate a selection of apocryphal stories which contain one or more of the same themes. It will follow a similar sequence to Chapter 6. Each of the events in which Jesus appears in a changed or unrecognised form will be compared to the unrecognisable god, and unrecognisable hero story types defined in this study. As with Chapter 6, the instances where Jesus appears in an unrecognisable form after his resurrection, will be the main focus in this chapter. However, in order to place these stories in their context, a number of stories where Jesus appears in a transformed or disguised form before the resurrection will also be examined, as well as descriptions of the disguise and metamorphosis of other characters and objects.

7.2: Apocryphal Gospels

7.2.1 Gospel of Peter

The Gospel of Peter was mentioned by both Origen and Eusebius, but no text of the document was discovered until 1886. It was discovered in the grave of a monk, and was first published in 1892. It is generally considered that the account found in the Gospel of Peter is dependent on the canonical gospels at a number of points: the

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1074 U. Bouriant, Fragments du texte grec du livre d’Enoch et de quelques écrits attribués à Saint Pierre, Mémoires de la mission archéologique française au Caire (Paris, 1892); As well as this, two additional fragments of the Gospel of Peter have been found among the Oxyrhynchus papyri. See Andrew Bernhard, Other Early Christian Gospels: A Critical Edition of the Surviving Greek Manuscripts, Library of New Testament Studies 315 (London ; New York: T & T Clark, 2006), 49–52. These sections do not alter the post-resurrection account discussed in this section.

washing of hands; the sealing of the tomb; the bribing of the soldiers; the dating of the death; the shattering of the legs; Jesus’ appearance by the sea; the criminals crucified alongside Jesus; the involvement of Herod. It was probably composed in the second half of the second century or earlier. The Gospel serves an apologetic purpose, and lays the blame for Jesus’ death on the Jews and largely exonerates Pilate.

However, of central importance for this study, the Gospel of Peter contains a description of the aftermath of the resurrection. Although it comes closer than the canonical Gospels to describing the moment of the resurrection itself, even the Gospel of Peter shies away from describing the actual moment and takes up the story just outside the tomb.

This account contains an extreme case of metamorphosis. Three figures emerge from the tomb, the central figure clearly being the newly resurrected Jesus. The figure of Jesus has undergone some form of metamorphosis as his head now “surpassed the heavens”:

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1076 Matt 27:24; Gos. Pet 1:1; cf. 11:46
1079 John 19:31; Gos. Pet. 2.5.
1081 John 21; Gos. Pet 14:59-60.
1084 Foster concludes that the date of composition cannot be narrowed further or pushed earlier than 150-190 CE (The Gospel of Peter: Introduction, Critical Edition and Commentary, TENTS 4 [Leiden; Boston: Brill, 2010], 172); John Dominic Crossan argues that the final form of the Gospel of Peter consists of a section independent of the canonical Gospels, and later redactions which are reliant upon the canonical works. He dates the earlier section to the first century CE The Cross That Spoke: The Origins of the Passion Narrative (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2008), 16–30. As Foster points out, however, just because the Gospel of Peter contains a source from the 1st century, does not mean that it was composed at this time, any more that “arguing Matthew should be dated to around 70 CE because it incorporates Mark’s account,” Foster, The Gospel of Peter, 169.
1086 It could be argued that the Gospel of Peter describes the resurrection event itself. E.g. “In marked contrast [to the canonical Gospels], GP goes into great detail in depicting exactly what the resurrection looked like.” (Timothy P. Henderson, The Gospel of Peter and Early Christian Apologetics: Rewriting the Story of Jesus’ Death, Burial, and Resurrection, WUNT 2.301 [Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011], 166). I think that Henderson overstates this however, as what happened to Jesus’ body at the moment of his resurrection still remains a mystery.
While they were reporting what they had seen, again they saw coming out from the tomb three men, and the two were supporting the one, and a cross was following them. And the head of the two reached as far as heaven, but that of the one being led by them surpassed the heavens.

Whether this indicates that Jesus had become a (normally proportioned) giant, which seems the natural assumption, or that his head in particular has been enlarged, a dramatic change has taken place that gives an indication of the way the resurrected Jesus was viewed by the writers of the Gospel of Peter. Foster states that “bodily metamorphosis is used to stress that the raised figure no longer belongs exclusively to the earthly realm,” and that the theme of metamorphosis is being used to show that Jesus is no longer limited by the forces of death. Although Lalleman suggests this may be an instance of an “angel Christology,” the conclusion that Jesus is to be seen as an angel is avoided by the detail that Jesus’ height surpassed the other two figures (and surpassed the heavens), demonstrating his superiority to them.

The resurrection scene in the Gospel of Peter may be conflating the Resurrection and Transfiguration scenes from the canonical Gospels, since it shares similarities with both. Both the resurrection account of the Gospel of Peter and the canonical Transfiguration accounts contain three figures, a physical metamorphosis, and connection with heaven. Jesus is transformed into a much more impressive form, has two companions, and in the Gospel of Peter is lifted up above those who watch, mirroring the closeness to heaven that the mountain represents in the synoptic Gospels. It could also be a compression of the Resurrection and the Ascension into one scene, with the two figures forming a “victorious procession” returning to heaven with the ascending Jesus.

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1087 Paul Foster’s translation, see Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 79.
1088 Foster suggests that it is the heads themselves which are enlarged in ibid.; However, in his later commentary he concludes that “it is uncertain whether this means that from the shoulders down their bodies remained normal size and only their heads underwent the enlargement, or if the entire physical form was proportionately increased”, Foster, The Gospel of Peter, 2010, 419.
1089 Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 79.
1090 Ibid., 80.
1091 Lalleman, “Polymorphy of Christ,” 114.
1093 Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 79.
As Foster notes, this event has some similarities to the canonical post-resurrection encounters, but there are also several fundamental differences. First, the figure that Jesus metamorphoses into is a much more impressive figure than the more human Jesus found in the canonical accounts. In the accounts of John and Luke, the opposite is the case: the figure that Jesus has disguised himself as, or else actually changed into, is a very humble figure, a vagrant on the road with no place to stay, a gardener around a tomb, or a stranger on the shore. The idea of a humble resurrected Jesus, which is found in John and Luke, seems to have vanished entirely in the Gospel of Peter, replaced instead with an incredibly extravagant, giant Jesus. The second difference is related to the first: the motif of disguise or unrecognisability has vanished in the metamorphosis account in the Gospel of Peter. There is no doubt that the figure is the resurrected Jesus, and no doubt on behalf of the viewers, and there is no need for a recognition scene. The idea of disguise is maintained only in as much as the witnesses voluntarily decide to keep what they have seen secret for self-interested reasons. This is a very different sort of hiddenness from the sort found in the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus in the canonical Gospels, particularly Luke and John. Another difference is that it is not just Jesus who undergoes metamorphosis in this scene, but also the two heavenly escorts. Jesus is also accompanied by a cross (σταυρός), which speaks in reply to a voice from heaven. This cross could be literally a walking, talking, inanimate object, or it could be a

1094 In particular Foster draws attention to the similarities with Luke 24:16, and Mark 16:12, as well as the Transfiguration accounts (Matt 17:2; Mark 9:2-3; Luke 9.29). Each of these events contains the theme of Jesus being perceived as existing in an altered state (Foster, The Gospel of Peter, 2010, 421–2). These events are all discussed in Chapter 6.
1095 Foster does suggest that the indirect reference to Jesus as “the one being led” might be intended to shroud the identity of the third person, but that on the other hand it might be avoiding Jesus’ name as an act of piety. Ibid., 420. This hint is, however, a long way from the explicit statements in the canonical Gospels that the onlookers did not know that it was Jesus (e.g. Luke 24:16, John 20:14). The explicit statements that Jesus is not recognised are missing in the Gospel of Peter.
1096 Gos. Pet. 11.47-48. “Then everybody came and begged him, and they urged him to order the centurion and the soldiers not to say anything about what they had seen. ‘For it is better for us’ they said, ‘to be guilty of a most grievous sin before God than to fall into the hands of the Jewish people and be stoned.”’
1097 As will be seen, the metamorphosis of angel companions also occurs in the Acts of Andrew and Matthias.
1098 Gos. Pet. 10:39, 41-2. A voice from heaven asks “did you preach to those who sleep” to which the cross, which follows Jesus and his companions, answers “yes.”
1099 See Foster, The Gospel of Peter, 2010, 417. Foster states that “the narrative does seem to reflect an increasing trend towards certain forms of ‘cross-piety’ that emerged maybe at some stage in the second century.”
symbol for Jesus. Crossan suggests that the cross “represents the holy ones of Israel who, in 10:39, follow Jesus out of Sheol.” The talking cross, although a unique feature of the Gospel of Peter, is not an instance of a metamorphosis of Jesus, and so will not be further investigated.

At first glance this story bears little similarity to a disguised god story simply because if Jesus is a god in this scene then his disguise is not very subtle. He is, if anything, an undisguised god. However, taken in the context of the entire gospel, this could perhaps be seen as the final scene in a disguised god story, when the one thought to be a man, reveals himself as a divine being. What remains of the Gospel of Peter, however, does not contain a long account of Jesus’ earthly life, so it cannot be assumed that the Gospel of Peter did in fact present a human Jesus, as the canonical Gospels did. In 3.6 the crowds say “Let us drag the Son of God along now that we have got power over him.” This statement has two interesting aspects. First, the Christological title, and second the crowd’s awareness that now they have power over him. The term “Son of God” is used by Mark in a confessional sense, but on the other hand (in Matthew) it is used as a term of mockery, so this statement could be just a statement of mockery, or it could mean that in the Gospel of Peter Jesus was viewed as more than a man by the crowds even before his death. The latter interpretation is supported by their boast that they now have power over Jesus, an odd boast unless they believe Jesus to be something more than a rebellious man. This suggests that Jesus was presented in the Gospel of Peter as much more than human even before his death. Further to this, in 4.10 Jesus is said to have felt no pain upon the cross, further suggesting a much more than human Jesus even before his death.

The first question, then, is whether Jesus was disguised at all in the Gospel of Peter. Certainly he is not in disguise after his resurrection. The question of how disguised Jesus was before his death remains open, but he was certainly not in the same form as the mighty being in Gos. Pet. 10.39-40. In both forms, however, his identity is known

1100 A suggestion raised, but then rejected by Crossan, The Cross That Spoke, 385–6.
1101 Ibid., 387.
1102 That is, if Jesus has been travelling with his companions in the form of a man, in the way Raphael travelled with Tobias, or Athene travelled with Telemachus.
to the observers. The main theme in this story is metamorphosis rather than disguise/recognition.

In this case, it would be expected that the story does not bear much in common with a disguised god story, to which we now turn: the idea of testing mortals is absent in this account of Jesus’ appearance, as is the related idea of rewarding or punishing them for their behaviour. Those who observe his appearance are mere spectators, and Jesus and the other divine characters do not communicate with them in any way. The discussion which follows in Gos. Pet. 11.43-49 shows that the characters themselves are aware of a punishment and reward system. Pilate states that he is clean from the blood of the Son of God, but “they” acknowledge that they have committed a great crime before God. The fact that the Jewish leaders consider this of less importance than the fear that they might enrage the crowds so much that the crowds stone them, acts as a strong rhetorical attack on the Jewish leaders. That is, they fear the crowd’s retaliation more than God’s punishment. There is little of the terror in the presence of the divine, which is a common theme in Luke’s Gospel. The emotional reaction of the witnesses to the two descending angels who then ascend with the transformed Jesus is not recorded. When they relate the story to Pilate, there is a hint of this fear. They rushed to Pilate (σπεύδω) and were distressed (ἀγωνία), which might indicate some terror resulting from being in the presence of the transformed Jesus. The fact that they left the tomb at all may indicate fear. As Foster notes, in the Matthean version of events the fear (φόβος) of the soldiers takes place at the tomb itself, and they are (presumably) more composed when they report the events later. The reaction is reversed here and the fear takes place in front of Pilate. Despite this reversal, Foster maintains that the fear is due not to the appearance before Pilate, but to the events at the tomb. However, if seen as fear in the presence of Pilate, then this is mirrored by the statement in 11:48 where the fear of

1105 Foster interprets this to mean the Jewish leadership – which makes sense since they are the only other group involved in the story other than the soldiers. Ibid., 450.
1106 Ibid., 451.
1107 See footnote 1096.
1108 E.g. Luke 1:12, 29; 2:9; 24:5.
1109 Gos. Pet. 11:45.
1111 Ibid., 445.
1112 Ibid.
worldly authority is also placed above the fear of divinity.\footnote{See also the fear in 5:15 when the eclipse blackens the sky. The anxiety of those crucifying Jesus is not that some supernatural event has occurred, but rather that the sun may have already set, and they may have therefore broken the law that “the sun should not set on one that has been murdered.” Again their fear is towards the human authorities, and is oblivious to the supernatural plot taking place around them.} This seems a more likely reading. The fact that they \textit{should} have been terrified in the face of the divine, and the fact that all of the fear is directed towards human authorities, underlines the failure of the witnesses to understand the significance of what they have seen.

The story strongly resembles a divine visitation story in the way in which Jesus departs. The passage does not actually recount how Jesus leaves, but since the skies open in 9:36, and again in 11:44 to describe how the angels arrive, and since the angels are leading Jesus away in 10:40, it seems likely that they depart in the same way as they arrived. Ascending and descending from heaven is reminiscent of gods ascending when they are recognised. Thus, this story shares only a small number of features in common with a divine visitation story. It also does not serve the thematic purpose of one. Jesus makes no effort to communicate with the witnesses when he exits the tomb, passing on no information or instructions as to what they are to do. These witnesses are not part of Jesus’ group, and will not (directly) be involved in building up his movement, so Jesus’ lack of interest in them makes sense in this context. There is no information passed on about how this new movement should be run or what the style of worship should be. Instead this appearance of Jesus emphasises his high status (as reaching beyond the heavens).\footnote{Gos. Pet. 10:40.} The story tells the reader about the nature of Jesus, rather than addressing his relationship with his followers.

\textit{The Gospel of Peter’s} post-resurrection appearance bears even less resemblance to a recognised hero story. Jesus, as a towering giant, and emerging directly from the tomb, leaves no room for ambiguity about his more-than-human status. There are no tokens or signs of recognition. There is no resistance on the part of the recognisers to accepting Jesus’ identity,\footnote{“The testimony of belief is replaced by apparently direct proof of truth.” E. Hennecke, \textit{New Testament Apocrypha}, ed. W. Schneemelcher and R. McL. Wilson, vol. 1, (Cambridge: Louisville: J. Clarke & Co.; Westminster/John Knox, 1990), 181.} and there is no testing or deception on Jesus’ part; rather
he appears immediately in a completely undisguised form. Lastly, the recognition is not by anyone close to Jesus (either his enemies or friends) but by strangers with nothing obviously at stake. There is no emotional reunion, no embracing or tears. The story also fails to perform the thematic purpose of a hero recognition story. There is no moment of peripeteia, or a change of worldview on the part of the witnesses. The guards do make the theologically charged statement that “ἄληθῶς υἱὸς ἔνθεοῦ”, but this statement is also made before Jesus’ death and resurrection in 3.6, weakening its power as an indicator of a large shift in understanding, although the use of ἄληθῶς here does strengthen the case slightly. Pilate at least seems to indicate that he knew all along with whom he was dealing, but even he is more concerned with maintaining secular order than acting upon this understanding.

On a related note there is a marked absence of any change brought about in the society from the point of view of the characters. The author seems to go out of his way to highlight this fact, perhaps using the lack of change to indicate the failure of the Jewish people to see the significance of what they had witnessed. But even such a change, had it happened, would come about due to a recognition of Jesus’ ontological nature, rather than a recognition of his identity (since Jesus is not hiding his identity in this scene). This contrasts with the meeting with the men on the road to Emmaus who recognise Jesus’ identity first, and then realise the significance of this. In the present case, Jesus’ identity is never in question. The encounter also fails to heal the relationships between any characters. The characters are Jesus’ enemies at the start of the story, and remain his enemies at the end. Again there may be an acknowledgement that they should have changed their minds but did not, showing this as a failed recognition which was possibly followed by a successful recognition on the part of the disciples following the end of the preserved narrative in

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1116 Which is close to that found in both Matt 27.54 and Mark 15.39.
1118 In Gos. Pet. 11:49 Pilate orders the centurions and soldiers to not say anything about what they have seen after having been told that the Jewish people would become violent otherwise.
1119 See Gos. Pet 11:48, where maintaining personal safety is more important than assessing the changed relationship with God. Later in the story, the theme of the disciples’ healing of relationships is raised (see Gos. Pet. 14:59 which describes them in grief) but the end of this story is lost. The encounter with the transformative Jesus, which is the focus of this section, does not play a role in the disciples’ story.
1121 Since they acknowledge that Jesus really was the Son of God. In accepting this fact, however, they do not change their actions at all, or their relationship with Jesus.
verse 14.60 – but this can be no more than speculation. Hence, this recognition does not serve the purpose of driving the plot forward, or explaining how the Jesus movement got started, but rather serves other purposes. It is a polemic against the Jewish authorities (and the Jewish people in general) pointing out that they had great evidence of the truth of Christian claims, but despite this continued to deny them. It also serves to show that Jesus was a divine being and much more than human.

This story, lacking the explicit theme of disguise, bears little in common with an unrecognisable hero story, or an unrecognisable god story. The theme of disguise, which in the canonical Gospel may have been accomplished via metamorphosis, has been replaced entirely with a metamorphosis story. Metamorphosis has become the focus of the story rather than the means for a disguise, in this particular post-resurrection appearance story. Thus, rather than addressing the issue of broken relationships being healed (as an unrecognised hero story would), or the question of what the people who encounter Jesus are to do next (as an unrecognised god story would), both of which are relationship-centred questions, the encounter in the Gospel of Peter is intended to tell the readers primarily about the nature of Jesus. Relational questions have been replaced by ontological questions, which the Gospel of Peter answers by showing that Jesus has transcended death, which is illustrated by an extreme instance of metamorphosis.

### 7.2.2 Gospel of Judas

The Gospel of Judas was composed around the middle of the second century. While the surviving Coptic translation can be dated to the second or third century CE, its mention by Irenaeus in Against Heresies\(^\text{1122}\) which was written around 180CE, places its composition before this date.\(^\text{1123}\)

\(^{1122}\) Irenaeus, Haer. 1.31.1.

The *Gospel of Judas* contains a reference to Jesus appearing to his disciples in the form of a child. This metamorphic appearance occurs before Jesus’ death and resurrection, but is of interest because it is a clear example of metamorphosis:

And he began to speak with them about the mysteries above the world and what will happen up to the end. On a number of occasions he did not show himself to his disciples, but rather as a child they would find him in their midst.\(^{1124}\)

In appearing as a child,\(^{1125}\) Jesus was appearing in a form which was not his usual form, and the *Gospel of Judas* goes further, implying that every shape in which Jesus appeared was a disguise of sorts. Jesus, when praising Judas, says: “But you will exceed all of them. For you will sacrifice the man that clothes me.”\(^{1126}\) The implication here is that whoever is talking to Judas, it is not the shell which is Jesus, but rather the spirit within. The body is a vehicle which bears the soul.\(^{1127}\) The fact that he appears in a different form, as a child, further highlights the impermanence and relative unimportance of the physical body. Paul Foster claims that “here polymorphic power is not used to illustrate transcendence over death, as in the post-resurrection examples of this phenomenon; rather it declares the possessor’s transcendence over the material world.”\(^{1128}\) This conclusion is based upon the Gnostic background of the *Gospel of Judas* where a major concern is drawing a distinction between the material and spiritual worlds. Jesus’ ability to appear in a different physical form prior to his death indicates that he was never confined to or controlled by the physical world.\(^{1129}\)

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\(^{1125}\) Although the Gospel of Judas is written in Sahidic Coptic, the word for “child” is drawn from Bohairic Coptic. However, as Foster points out, “such interpenetration of the various forms of Coptic is not uncommon” (“Polymorphic Christology,” 81). Jesus also appears as a child in a number of other writings: Secret book of John (Nag Hammadi Codex II), 2; Revelation of Paul 18; Hippolytus of Rome, *Refutation of All Heresies* 6.42.2 (the word appears to Valentinus as a child); the Gospel of Thomas 4.


\(^{1127}\) Jenott, *The Gospel of Judas*. 218. Jenott says that the Christology implied here need not be docetic, but does present the idea that only Jesus’ human body suffered, and not his soul.

\(^{1128}\) Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 83.

\(^{1129}\) Ibid., 82.
This story is much more obviously and explicitly a metamorphosis story than any of the accounts in the canonical Gospels. Like Periclymenus, Jesus can also appear in multiple forms. Periclymenus could be said to have a form which is distinctly his own, but this is more ambiguous with the god Proteus. Jesus, in the Gospel of Judas, has more similarity with the god, Proteus. He does not have a form of his own; any form he takes is merely a physical manifestation of a non-physical entity. In the Gospel of Judas, Jesus thus acts in the manner of a god revealing himself in a physical form to mortals, as Athene does in her multiple appearances, in multiple forms, in the Iliad and Odyssey. Athene, like Jesus, has a habitual form, but again, like Jesus, appears in other forms as well. She appears to Odysseus as a young man, but also in a form more recognisably that of a goddess.

So too, in the Gospel of Judas, Jesus has a form by which he is recognised by his disciples (although as Judas knows, this is just an outer appearance), and yet he can appear in another form as well. There are several statements that indicate that Jesus is to be understood as a disguised divine being: “You are from the immortal realm of Barbelo”; “you will sacrifice the man that clothes me”; “Often he did not appear to his disciples as himself, but he was found among them as a child.” Each of these indicate that the being with whom the disciples, and Judas in particular, are talking is not a human but a divine being. Judas is the only one who realises this fully, by realising that Jesus is not a child of the false god the other disciples follow, but rather he holds a position which is much higher than the god of the Old Testament.

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1130 Ovid, Metam. 12.556-8.
1131 Homer, Od. 4.455f.
1132 Homer, Od. 13.221-2.
1133 Homer, Od. 13.287f.
1134 Gos. Jud. 35:17-18. Barbelo is the name given to the “central figure who initiates the salvation” in the theology of the Barbelo-Gnostics. See John D. Turner, “The Gnostic Threefold Path to Enlightenment: The Ascent of Mind and the Descent of Wisdom,” NovT 22 (1980): 325–32; The disciples, other than Judas, are still worshipping the demiurge, but Judas realises that Jesus comes from a place outside of the physical realm, indicating that he is a divine being. See Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 82.
Clearly then this Jesus is a god in disguise, but does the story fit the pattern of a disguised god story as defined in the previous chapters? Jesus does appear in the disguise of a human being. The Gospel of Judas relates that he appears in at least two human forms, neither of which are his habitual form. These forms are taken before the death and resurrection, so Jesus has this ability to shift shape, or appear in disguise in his earthly life. There is also a sense that Jesus is testing the mortals he meets, and as Judas is the only one who lives up to his requirements, Judas is the one who is rewarded. This case differs from the testing stories discussed in Chapters 4 and 5, however, because it is not virtue, and in particular not hospitality, which is being rewarded, but rather knowledge and understanding. No emotional reaction is recorded towards Jesus, either fear, which would indicate being in the presence of a god, or tears and embracing, which would indicate a reunion with a lost companion. When Judas realises Jesus’ true identity, Jesus gives Judas a great deal of information about who he is, and issues Judas with instructions about what he is to do. Jesus’ final departure is not recorded. Judas arranges to hand him over to the authorities (thus fulfilling Jesus’ command) but what happens next is not related. The appearance of Jesus, therefore, has much in common with the structure of a disguised god story.

The next question is whether it serves the same purpose as a disguised god story. The reason Jesus is mentioned as appearing in disguised form is to indicate that he is not really human, and can take on any form he desires. The fact that Judas recognises who he is means that Jesus’ plan, his own death and release from this world, can be put into operation. It is made clear that Jesus is not a victim of forces beyond his control, but is rather the instigator of this plot. Judas’ recognition of Jesus makes this clear to both Judas, and the audience. Judas is elevated above the other disciples, informed by Jesus that he has been told everything, and enters into the luminous clouds. The instructions which were issued to Judas indicate the way in which Jesus is to be worshipped: not as the son of Yahweh resurrected from the dead, but as

1137 The resurrection is not a feature of the theology of the Gospel of Judas.
1139 Gos. Jud. 35:21f.
a being far above the god of the Jews who has escaped this world through his death. Hence, Jesus, as presented by the *Gospel of Judas*, fits the idea of a god in disguise.

In contrast, the recognition of Jesus in the *Gospel of Judas* does not contain any of the characteristic features of a disguised hero recognition story. There are no tokens or signs used in Jesus’ recognition. There could not be, since Jesus is not a character who has been met in the past, and after a period of time missing has appeared again. There is also no cognitive resistance where there is a reluctance to believe Jesus is who he is. There is no physical manifestation of the recognition, which would in any case undermine the more-than—physical nature of Jesus. Furthermore, the story lacks a moment of *peripeteia* in as much as there is no moment when Judas recognises Jesus and his world is turned upside down. Judas is presented as having known who Jesus is from the beginning of the story, and the other disciples remain in ignorance from beginning to end. There is no reordering of society, and no healing of relationships. To the contrary the disciples are left in the same state as they were at the start of the story, and the instance of metamorphosis mentioned does little to drive the plot forward – its mention is to indicate something about Jesus’ nature.

Hence, the disguised appearance of Jesus in the *Gospel of Judas* has some features in common with a disguised god story, but bears very little in common with a returning hero story. The main purpose of the metamorphic Jesus in this account, however, is not for the purpose of disguise, but rather to describe the true nature of Jesus.

### 7.2.3 Gospel of Philip

The *Gospel of Philip* was probably composed in the second half of the third century in Greek, but the only existing copy was written in Coptic in c. 350 CE, and discovered among the Nag Hammadi texts.\(^{1142}\) While not a Gospel like the canonical Gospels with one continuous narrative,\(^{1143}\) it does contains a summary of the many different ways in which Jesus appeared in his earthly mission. Behind this account is the

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\(^{1143}\) Isenberg, “Nag Hammadi Library,” 139.
underlying idea that there was a sharp divide between the physical and spiritual worlds, and that the Jesus who died on the cross was merely a shell from which the Christ had already left, meaning that Jesus only appeared to be human. Thus, the Gospel of Philip presents a dualistic worldview, and a docetic Christology.

Gos. Phil. 57.28-58.10 describes Jesus not appearing as he really was, but rather appearing in a manner which would be comprehensible to his viewers:

Jesus took them by stealth, for he did not appear as he was, but in the manner in which [they would] be able to see him. He appeared to [them all. He appeared] to the great as great. He [appeared] to the small as small. He [appeared to the] angels as an angel, and to men as a man. Because of this his word hid itself from everyone. Some indeed saw him, thinking they were seeing themselves, but when he appeared to his disciples in glory on the mount he was not small. He became great, but he made his disciples great, that they might be able to see him in his greatness.

While this is a case of Jesus appearing in a metamorphosed form, there is a sense in which there is no “real” form of Jesus, or at least not a real form which can ever be perceived, since each group sees Jesus in a different form. Men saw him as a man, but were in fact mistaken, since Jesus did not appear as he was. There is no disguised Jesus, such that there can be a moment of recognition and the real Jesus can then be seen (as in the canonical accounts) – but rather the hidden Jesus is always hidden and unknowable.

In some ways this story has similarities with an unrecognisable god story, since Jesus appears in different forms to different people; this is a characteristic shared with the gods of the Greek tradition, and the angels of the Jewish tradition. Since only a summary statement appears in the Gospel of Philip it is not possible to compare this

1144 Gos. Phil. 68:26-9 states that when Jesus said “My God, my God, why O lord, have you forsaken me” (cf. Matt 27:46; Mark 15:34) Jesus had departed from that place.” This means that the divine Christ has left behind the human shell left on the cross. See Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 83–4.

1145 Taken from the translation by Wesley W. Isenberg: Isenberg, “Nag Hammadi Library,” 144–5.

1146 See Chapter 5. For disguised supernatural beings in the Jewish tradition see Section 5.4.
event to the narrative stories which occur in the canonical Gospels and elsewhere.\textsuperscript{1147} However, it can be seen that the sort of being described here would best fit into a disguised god rather than a disguised and returning hero narrative. Foster is right that the transformations in this passage are a way to demonstrate that the physical body of Jesus was “not the ultimate reality of the being that was veiled in this enfleshed form.”\textsuperscript{1148} This means that the focus of this metamorphosis description is to inform the reader about the ontological nature of Jesus, rather than to say anything about the relationship between Jesus and his followers. Although the theme of disguise does exist in the \textit{Gospel of Philip} it does so for a very different reason from the canonical Gospel accounts.

\subsection*{7.2.4 Summary}

In the apocryphal Gospels examined, some patterns can be seen. The theme of Jesus appearing in different forms exists outside of the canonical Gospel accounts. There is, in the apocryphal Gospels, much more emphasis on the metamorphosis, rather than on the lack of recognition, followed by a recognition scene. The purpose of the metamorphosis is to communicate something about the nature of Jesus, rather than to explore the changing relationship between Jesus and other characters, as is the case in the post-resurrection appearances examined in the Chapter 6.

\section*{7.3: Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles}

The apocryphal Gospels, like the canonical Gospels, tend to describe events which take place during Jesus’ lifetime, with Jesus playing the role of the central character. The Acts, which are examined in this section, have one or more of the apostles as the major characters, and in some instances concentrate upon events which take place after Jesus’ death and resurrection. In this manner, they resemble the canonical post-


\textsuperscript{1148} Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 84.
resurrection appearances. On the other hand, as will be seen, when Jesus appears, he does so in the capacity of a divine helper, rather than in the role of the hero.

### 7.3.1 Acts of John

There are no early surviving copies of the *Acts of John*, but large blocks are preserved in a fifth century work: *Acts of John by Prochorus*, although the first unambiguous reference to the *Acts of John* was in Eusebius who condemned it as heretical. Even the fifth-century work does not contain the sections of the *Acts of John* which contains several instances of metamorphosis (87-105); these are contained in a manuscript which dates to 1319 CE.

Although set chronologically after Jesus’ death and resurrection, the *Acts of John* contains several “flash backs” to Jesus’ earthly life. The story, however, starts off with the presumption that Jesus is Lord and Christ. When John is trying to discuss Jesus with some potential converts they express confusion over some of the attributes of Jesus:

> Then those who were present inquired about the cause, and were especially perplexed because Drusiana had said, “The Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John and of a youth.”

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1152 Because this section only exists in isolation, without the rest of the text, it is not certain exactly where it belongs in the rest of the text. For a discussion on this issue see Lalleman, *The Acts of John*, 26–30. In this chapter all of the instances of interest occur within this section, so this issue is not of primary concern as the section will be treated as a self-contained unit. Lalleman goes on to point out that this section does not “deal with John and his activities in Asia Minor, but reflect John’s experiences with the Lord Christ.” (42)
1153 Ibid., 8.
1154 See Acts John 22.
In order to discuss this, John says that these people have not seen anything “strange or incredible in [their] perception of the Lord,” and then relates his own encounters with Jesus (before Jesus’ death).

The Acts of John contains several instances that are not only metamorphic, but polymorphic in the specific sense defined by Lalleman, where Jesus is seen differently by different people at the same time. One instance relates the calling of the disciples James and John. Whereas John sees a man, James sees a child on the shore. Later when they are following Jesus, John sees Jesus as an old man with a bald head and a beard, whereas James sees a youth whose beard is just starting. As well as appearing differently to different people at the same time (polymorphism), Jesus also appears in different forms to the same person at different times (metamorphosis). He appears to John sometimes small and unattractive, and at other times as one reaching the heavens. In none of these instances is there any confusion about who Jesus is. His metamorphosis or polymorphy does not serve the purpose of disguise, but rather informs the reader about the attributes of Jesus.

Most instances of metamorphosis are described in visual language. However, in Acts John 89:10-15 a form of tactile metamorphosis is described. Jesus’ chest is sometimes soft, but at other times hard, like stone. This may be to clarify that the events described are truly metamorphosis in the objective world, rather than being

1156 I.e., it is not strange for Jesus to appear this way.
1157 E.g., Lalleman, “Polymorphy of Christ,” 103.
1158 From the first person perspective of John.
1160 Schneider suggests that John seeing an older form of Jesus represents that he has a more mature faith than James (Paul G. Schneider, The Mystery of the Acts of John: An Interpretation of the Hymn and the Dance in Light of the Acts’ Theology, Distinguished Dissertations Series 10 [San Francisco: Mellen, 1991], 57–66); Lalleman argues against this, however, by pointing out that John saw Christ’s stature vary greatly over time (Lalleman, The Acts of John, 170).
1161 Acts John 80:1-6. Another odd observation is that Jesus’ eyes are never closed – this is a sign that Jesus is other-worldly in some way, but is not really an instance of metamorphosis or polymorphy, although Junod and Kaestli list this as an instance of polymorphy. See E. Junod and J. D. Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, CCSA 2 (Brepols: Turnhout, 1983), 474–5.
1163 Junod states that with polymorphy, rather than hiding the fact that there has been a change in form, the change is made evident to the witness (“Polymorphie du Dieu Sauveur,” in Gnosticisme et monde hellénistique, ed. J. Ries [Louvain-La-Neuve: Universite Catholique de Louvain, 1982], 39–40); The fact that Jesus appears as a young man and an old man may be to display that Jesus exists throughout all time. See Gedaliahu G. Stroumsa, “Polymorphie divine et transformations d’un mythologème: L’ ‘Apocryphon de Jean’ et ses sources,” VC 35 (1981): 412–34.
merely the effects of a deluded visionary experience. This latter is hinted at in the previous “disciple calling” event where John implies that James’ different perception is caused not by objective reality, but rather by the fatigue caused by being too long at sea. The idea that the use of tactile stimuli is more reliable is a familiar one in the canonical Gospel accounts of Jesus’ resurrection.\textsuperscript{1164} This happens when Thomas reaches out to touch the wounds of Jesus (although this is for more than merely verifying solidity), and in Luke’s account of Jesus’ appearance when he shows his hands and feet and eats;\textsuperscript{1165} this tactile data is seen by the Gospel writers as failsafe proof, where the visual data is seen as potentially unreliable. In the \textit{Acts of John}, unlike in the canonical Gospels, this tactile verification takes place \textit{before} the resurrection of Jesus.

The \textit{Acts of John} presents Jesus as being metamorphic or polymorphous even before he died and was raised from the dead. This fits with a docetic Christology in as much as Jesus was not really human.\textsuperscript{1166} On the other hand the tactile metamorphosis indicates that it is very much a physical being who is in mind here, not a spiritual being which merely appears to be there. The tugging of John’s beard, by Jesus,\textsuperscript{1167} backs up both of these ideas, but the account of Jesus’ immateriality, and not leaving footprints\textsuperscript{1168} indicate that although Jesus could manifest as solid, this was not a necessary part of his being.

The \textit{Acts of John} contains two transfiguration accounts.\textsuperscript{1169} The first short account\textsuperscript{1170} does not contain any metamorphosis, but just mentions the great light shining upon

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\item \textsuperscript{1164} Specifically John 20:25, 27. Haenchen points out that touching was the surest way to check the reality of phenomenon (\textit{John}, 2:212). The greater reliability of touch is demonstrated, for instance when Macbeth hallucinates a dagger - but it is his inability to touch it which convinces him that it is not real (Shakespeare, \textit{Macbeth} 2.1). The tactile stimuli trumps the visual. This seems to be common intuition, where if we think our vision may be clouded we reach out to touch the object as verification.
\item \textsuperscript{1166} Lalleman states that the description of Jesus never closing his eyes, and his not leaving footprints both give a docetic view of Christ (\textit{The Acts of John}, 172).
\item \textsuperscript{1167} Acts John 90:7-11.
\item \textsuperscript{1168} Acts John 93:11-13. Foster says that the detail that Jesus did not leave foot prints, when elsewhere he physically interacts with people, indicates that Jesus has the “ability to switch between solid and ethereal forms” (“Polymorphic Christology,” 88).
\item \textsuperscript{1169} Or alternatively two accounts of the Transfiguration, although in the \textit{Acts of John} the encounters are narrated as two separate events.
\item \textsuperscript{1170} Acts John 90:1-4.
\end{itemize}
The second transfiguration account contains a more in-depth description which differs from the canonical accounts in several ways. Jesus is not clothed whereas the synoptic Gospels mention the transformation of Jesus’ clothes. The fact of Jesus’ nakedness allows for two points to be made. First, it was his being and not just the clothing that was altered in the transfiguration, which is a possible reading in the synoptic gospels (i.e. Jesus was transfigured in as much as his clothing changed). Second, it means that the point can be made that his body did not look like that of a man. So while the synoptic gospels mention that Jesus’ face was altered, the lack of a robe in the Acts of John allows the description to be extended to the rest of his body. Rather than saying that Jesus looked like another man (as in many of the post-resurrection canonical gospel encounters), the Acts of John alters this to say that he did not look like a man at all. His feet glowed white so as to light up the ground, whilst in the canonical Gospels it is Jesus’ face and robes which are said to glow.

There is a metamorphosis of size where Jesus’ head reached to heaven, but then he became a man of small stature when John cried out. When disturbed by John’s cry, Jesus turned to him and pulled on his (John’s) beard. This “playful tug” caused intense pain for thirty days prompting John to question what would have happened had Jesus given him a beating! Although not an example of metamorphosis, this detail, like the detail about the unblinking eyes, indicates that Jesus is other-worldly, and beyond being human.

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1171 Although as Paul Foster points out this does recall the canonical Gospel accounts: Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 87. In the canonical Gospel accounts of the Transfiguration, the metamorphosis is accompanied by consisting partially of a bright light, so there is at least an allusion to a metamorphosis story.

1172 Acts John 91.


1174 Attention is again drawn to Jesus’ feet in the section which follows the Transfiguration accounts. See below.

1175 Acts John 89:1-6. The idea of Jesus’ head reaching the heavens also occurs in the Gospel of Peter (10:40) as we have seen, but in the context of the resurrection rather than the Transfiguration. The Gospel of Philip (58:10) alludes to the Transfiguration saying that when Jesus appeared to his disciples on the mount "he was not small". The idea of metamorphosis of size is well established in the apocryphal gospels, and is also a theme which occurred in the folk literature examined in Chapter Two.


In Acts John 92:1-8 a curious event happens where Jesus, thinking everyone else is asleep, is visited by a character with whom he discusses the progress of his own earthly mission. The identity of the visitor is indicated only through the use of the word ὅμοιος: that is John saw “another like him.” There are several possible interpretations for who this visitor was. The first relies upon arguing that ὅμοιος is a Christological term, and that this indicates that another part of the Trinity was visiting Jesus. Alternatively, the term could be being used in a non-Christological sense simply meaning another being who resembled Jesus in some way. An extreme version of this would be to argue that the being resembles Jesus in every way, and so it is a doppelgänger with whom Jesus converses. However, a simpler reading would be to argue that a being who resembled Jesus in some way visited him; that is, a being who also glowed white, changed shape, or was other-worldly in the other ways described. Both the canonical Gospels, and the apocryphal works describe angels in similar language to that used to describe the transfigured or resurrected Jesus, so this conclusion seems to correspond well with the data. As such perhaps this example should not be considered an example of either metamorphosis or polymorphy.

The final section which has metamorphic themes lists a series of John’s observations about Jesus’ activities. The first is that Jesus was sometimes a material body which could be touched, but at other times immaterial and bodiless. Again this is a metamorphosis not in the visual sphere, but a metamorphosis accessible to the sense of touch. John is not saying that Jesus only seemed to be solid, while his true nature was an immaterial spirit; rather, he is affirming that Jesus, as a metamorphic entity, could take on both solid and immaterial forms. However, when he was solid this was not a mere appearance, or the perception of the observer, but rather, at these times, Jesus really was solid and material. Jesus is presented as being much more than human and in appearance, he seems to be the supernatural being that he is, as he shifts form, changes size, displays supernatural strength, floats above the ground, and

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1178 John pretends to be asleep in order to spy on his master, thus providing an explanation of the genesis of this story.
1179 Paul Foster argues against this view: Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 88.
1180 Ibid. See also: Junod and Kaestli, Acta Iohannis, 486.
1182 As argues Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 87.
never blinks. At the end of this section John says that the reason he has related these things is to “encourage you in faith towards him” but that at present “we” must keep silent about these things. There is a hiddenness theme here, but the disciples, and John in particular, are fully aware of Jesus’ non-human nature, and in the case of John (and possibly James) have been since they first encountered Jesus. The metamorphosis in the Acts of John is not used by Jesus to hide his identity from the disciples, but rather to reveal his nature to them. The Acts of John, in comparison to theCanonical Gospels which contain a mixture of metamorphosis and disguise/recognition stories, has just the metamorphosis aspect of the story, which serves a very different purpose. The disguise/recognition theme is missing entirely. The other actions of Jesus which John relates are not metamorphic in themselves, but again hint at Jesus being other-worldly: Jesus multiplied food routinely, and his feet left no imprint, as he levitated above the ground.

All of the pre-resurrection stories above are described in order to answer the question about the Lord appearing in the form of John in the tomb – that is, they are background to the disguised post-resurrection story, which is the story of main interest for this study. The discussion in Acts of John 87-93 takes the following form: John’s conversation partners say they have heard a story about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances where he appeared in different forms, specifically as John, and as a youth. The implied question is “Is this not unusual? What is going on?” The answer the Acts of John provides is “No. Jesus was always like that – even before his death and resurrection.” This makes the question of why Jesus appeared in a strange manner after his death the wrong question, since he always appeared in this manner. One response to the post-resurrection appearances in the canonical Gospels is to hypothesise that Jesus’ post-resurrection body was significantly different from his pre-resurrection body. The response of the Acts of John is the exact opposite, saying rather that Jesus’ body was always very unusual.

1183 Acts John 93.
1186 “The Lord appeared to me in the tomb in the form of John and of a youth.” (Acts John 87).
1187 Recall the discussion on John 20:11-18, for instance, where Keener states that “the closed door may allow John to communicate something about the resurrection body.” Keener, The Gospel of John,
There is very little in common with an unrecognisable hero story in these stories in the *Acts of John*: there is scant detail of the post-resurrection encounter, and no evidence that there are any tokens of recognition, resistance to recognition, physical manifestations of recognition, or any of the other typical features of a recognition scene. The story also fails to perform the thematic purpose of a hero recognition story. There is not enough detail provided to be able to say there is a moment of *peripeteia*, and no sense of a reordering of worldviews, relationships, or society. The mention of Jesus’ unrecognisability at the tomb serves the purpose of relating who or what Jesus is, rather than exploring the relational issues which a hero-recognition scene addresses. The explanation that he was a hero returning in disguise is not applicable, since in the *Acts of John* Jesus’ nature was to be always unrecognisable and shifting in form.

This event does have a little more in common with an unrecognisable god story. Jesus appears in disguise in the form of John, and in the form of an unknown youth. This is very similar to Athene appearing to Telemachus as Mentes1188 (a known person) but also to Odysseus as an unknown youth.1189 However, beyond this the scene does not have much in common with a disguised god scene. There is no indication of what Jesus said, or any explanation provided for why he appeared in the tomb. There is no hint of other divine visitor themes such as testing, hospitality being offered, a reward for hospitality, instructions given to the people who saw Jesus, or a miraculous departure.

What is described here is a different sort of being altogether, a metamorphic (and polymorphic) god who had this characteristic from his first appearance. The appearance also has little in common with either of the two types this thesis concentrates on thematically, or structurally. The purpose of this scene is also very different. The scene’s purpose is to allow the question of Jesus’ nature to be

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2:1201; similarly Brown says that “John seems to envision that the body of Jesus had marvelous, non-physical powers (the ability to pass through closed doors).” Brown, *John*, 1020. See Section 6.4.3, above.

1188 Homer, *Od*. 1.105f.
explored, and does not address any issues of movement building, nor does it drive the plot in a new direction.

The central question addressed in the Acts of John is, not what the relationship of Jesus to other people is, either as a returning hero or a divine visitor, but much more specifically what Jesus’ nature is. Jesus was beyond any particular shape, and in particular was not the one on the cross, something which was “vile and not worthy of [him]”. What is in doubt, in the Acts of John, is exactly who or what Jesus is, and so this passage answers this question rather than the relationship question with which the canonical Gospels are more concerned. In the post-resurrection appearance in the Acts of John, Jesus is presented as neither a returning hero, nor as a god visiting in disguise, according to existing literary conventions, but rather as a polymorphic entity.

Acts of John 97 contains another instance which could be interpreted as a case of metamorphosis. When Jesus is being crucified, John flees and hides in a cave. Jesus appears to him, lighting the cave presumably because he glows as he does in the Transfiguration accounts, and reveals that although to the multitudes below he is being crucified, to John he is speaking and telling him the things a disciple must know. The fact that Jesus glows, a sign that often accompanies metamorphic appearances, may indicate that in this case too, Jesus appears in an unusual form. The appearance of Jesus to John highlights the fact that Jesus dying on the cross is not the end of the story, and minimises the importance of Jesus’ suffering. Given the polymorphous nature of Jesus, it would be possible that Jesus was both suffering and talking to John at the same time, but in what follows Jesus makes it very clear that this is not the case. The speech of Jesus which follows this final encounter indicates Jesus’ self-understanding according to the writer of the Acts of John. As with the other instances in the Acts of John, there are metamorphosis themes in this passage, but the theme of disguise and recognition is absent. As such it does not

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1190 See Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 89–90. Foster concludes that “polymorphism, as a description of the pre-resurrected Christ, was a particularly helpful means of promoting the docetic Christology of the Acts of John.” (90).
1192 E.g. Matt 17:2; Mark 9:3; Luke 9:29; Homer, Il. 18:204-6 (Achilles); Od. 6.230 (Odysseus); 18:195-6 (Penelope).
1193 Acts John 97.
fit into the definition of either a disguised god, or a disguised hero story. The metamorphosis says something about the nature of Jesus, that he is a divine creature capable of interacting in a supernatural manner, but it cannot be seen as a disguised god story. Jesus does not appear to be in disguise in this story at all. John knows who he is meeting. John does not seem to be being rewarded for his behaviour, as he has, like the other disciples, abandoned Jesus on the cross, but neither is he punished for his lack of hospitality or recognition. There is no mention of John fearing Jesus’ appearance. In this way the appearance lacks many features of an account of a god’s appearance. On the other hand, Jesus gives John a great deal of information about himself, teaching about his true nature. Jesus also vanishes in a miraculous manner which is characteristic of divine visitations. Jesus does not actually give any instructions to John, either about what he is to do immediately, or how Jesus is to be worshipped or served in the future. This differs from the canonical accounts where Jesus gives instructions to his disciples.  

There are also no instructions about movement building. John, rather than leaving his encounter with Jesus to go and tell the others about it, is scornful of the misapprehension of those who think Jesus died on the cross and believe incorrect things about him. The purpose of this story, like the previous ones which contained metamorphosis in the Acts of John, is to tell the reader about the nature of Jesus.

This scene also lacks the distinctive features of a hero recognition story, both in the way it is described and in the thematic role it plays. Jesus is instantly recognised by John, and has not really vanished from the world when he appears to John. There is in a sense a moment of peripeteia, and a changing of the worldview, but it is much underplayed compared to the canonical accounts. By John’s account, even before the resurrection, Jesus appears in a metamorphic manner and is not really human. So Jesus displaying the same sort of behaviour when he appears to John is no great

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1194 E.g. In Matthew 28:18-20, Jesus gives explicit instructions about how to build his movement, as well as an assurance that he remains as a part of this process. In Mark 16:6 the women are instructed to deliver a message to Peter and the disciples (by an Angel rather than Jesus himself) and in the longer ending (verses 15-18) he gives explicit instructions to the disciples about how they are to continue to build his movement. See also Luke 21:49 where Jesus instructs the disciples to stay in the city until Pentecost, and at least implicitly to preach repentance for the forgiveness of sins. John 20:17, 21: 15-19.

1195 Acts John 102.

1196 Acts John 88-93.
change, and does not obviously create a great shift in John’s understanding of who Jesus is, such as the dramatic shift in understanding experienced by the pair on the road to Emmaus. John also does not suffer the defeat which Jesus’ death brings about, as Jesus appears to John as he is simultaneously being crucified. There is not therefore ever a point where Jesus has been lost, and the relationship between himself and John has been entirely shattered. It is true that John had fled weeping,\textsuperscript{1197} and there was a darkness over all of the earth;\textsuperscript{1198} however, this situation is reversed with Jesus’ manifestation which brings light. So a reversal of sorts takes place, but it does not have the same emotional impact as the canonical accounts. Since there are no explicit instructions given to John, and since other followers of Jesus are left in ignorance about Jesus’ identity, it cannot be said that there has been a re-ordering of society. With the possible exception of John, there has been no healing of broken relationships (John laughs at the ignorance of those who think Jesus was still on the cross),\textsuperscript{1199} and since John encountered Jesus in the cave even before his “death” with no shattering of ties, no healing of John’s relationship was even needed.

Jesus continues to interact with John in the same manner he did before his (supposed) crucifixion. Jesus’ appearance bears some similarity to that of a disguised god, and the purpose of this passage bears some similarity to that of a recognised hero story. However, it does not really fall into either category, mostly because the motifs of disguise and recognition are missing. The metamorphic language is used to describe the sort of being Jesus is, rather than to explore the sort of relationship he has with John and the other disciples, and how this relationship changes over time.

The *Acts of John* thus differs from the canonical accounts in two significant ways. First, the theme of disguise has vanished and been replaced entirely with the theme of metamorphosis, and second the purpose of the different form is to explore the nature of who Jesus is, rather than to explore the nature and change of the relationship between Jesus and his disciples.

\textsuperscript{1197} Although even this was orchestrated by Jesus in order to get John alone to give him secret teaching. As such the fear and separation which John experiences is not set up for *peripeteia* or despair to be transformed into joy, but is rather set up so that Jesus’ identity can be clarified.

\textsuperscript{1198} Acts John 97.

\textsuperscript{1199} Acts John 102.
7.3.2 Acts of Peter

The first unambiguous mention of the Acts of Peter is found in Eusebius. Elliot states that Rome or Asia Minor is the most likely place of origin, and dates the original Greek Acts to the late second century CE. Unlike in the Acts of John, the metamorphic accounts of major interest in the Acts of Peter occur after the resurrection of Jesus, and in this sense have more in common with the post-resurrection appearances in the canonical Gospels.

The narrative world of the Acts of Peter is one in which metamorphosis and disguise are common, and involve the metamorphosis of people and objects other than Jesus. Many of the metamorphosis stories are reminiscent of folkloric instances. Although the metamorphosis of people – and specifically Jesus – is the focus of this investigation, there are several other events in the Acts of Peter which could in the broadest sense be seen as metamorphic, and so deserve some mention, since they indicate the wider context of transformation within which the human transformations sit. For instance, a smashed statue of Caesar is put back together through the sprinkling of water and prayers of Marcellus, Peter brings a smoked fish back to life so that it swims around, Peter looses a large dog from its chains, and it immediately becomes able to speak. The dog delivers a message to Simon by standing on its hind legs and speaking in a very loud voice. This could be understood as an example of metamorphosis, since the dog takes on unusual features. However, the theme of the talking animal was a genre in its own right, and so this is the weakest of the pieces of evidence for a metamorphosis theme. After its brief period as a

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1201 Ibid., 392.
1203 The word used “sarda” is a loan word from Greek, and referred to a sardine or small herring. Ibid., 2:319.; See also D’Arcy Wentworth Thompson, A Glossary of Greek Fishes (London: Oxford University Press, 1947), 229.
1206 For a study on the genre of talking animals, and how this genre is used in the apocryphal Acts, see Christopher R. Matthews, “Articulate Animals: A Multivalent Motif in the Apocryphal Acts of the
prophet the dog dies at Peter’s feet. In a later instance a baby (held by its mother) is also made to speak to Simon with a man’s voice, again displaying an unusual change from a baby’s normal state.

The first case of the metamorphosis of a person in the Acts of Peter does not involve Jesus, but Simon. This is significant because people within the Roman community are suspecting that Simon might be the Christ due to his feats of power. These he claims to be the power of God, a claim which begins to cause the people to doubt the Christ whom Paul has revealed and taught to them. The particular feat narrated is Simon flying through the air in the form of a glowing dust cloud, and then transforming back into human form (the same form he appeared to them the previous day), and appearing standing in the midst of the people. The people are then said to know that it is the same person they had spoken to the day before. The importance of this encounter is not only that flying through the air provided evidence to his audience that Simon was the Christ, but that metamorphosis was also part of the evidence. The ability to change shape was seen as a power which came from God, and one which the Christ should possess. This encounter, since it does not involve Jesus himself, does not have anything to say about either Jesus’ identity or his relationship with the disciples. However, it does provide some background for the events which are to come: the world in which the Acts of Peter is set is one where metamorphosis is used to display divinity. It is for this reason, in part, that Simon was thought to be a god. Later, Marcellus confesses to Peter that he has erected a statue of Simon with the inscription “To Simon, The young god.” This is a sign that in this story Simon’s

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1207 Acts Pet. 12. The reason for the animal’s death may be related to the theme “preserved in the traditions concerning the fate of Balaam’s ass. According to Numbers Rabbah 20:4, ‘as soon as she [Balaam’s talking ass] finished speaking, she died so that people should not say, ‘This is the animal that spoke,’ and so make of her an object of reverence.’” Ibid., 224.
1208 Acts Pet. 15.
1212 A rich benefactor, first of the Christian community, but later of Simon.
metamorphosis and levitation did convince the people that he was a god living among them.

The second occasion in which metamorphosis or disguise is hinted at, is when the captain of the ship on which Peter is travelling to Rome approaches the apostle, after hearing a voice in his sleep, and confesses that he is not certain whether Peter is a god or a man (although he thinks most likely he is a servant of God). This reflects a continued belief, or at least awareness, of the tradition of gods appearing disguised as mortals among the people. This story bears some similarity to the story related in the canonical Acts, where Paul and Barnabas are mistaken for gods. Interestingly, before this discussion with Peter, the captain provided Peter with hospitality, citing the virtue and honour of receiving a man in difficult circumstances, so also showing an awareness of the theme that hospitality should be shown to strangers, who might later turn out to be gods in disguise. Another instance of disguise occurs when Simon enters the house of a rich woman with two companions, intending to steal her gold. While Simon is seen, the two others “like him” are not.

In a dream Marcellus sees a duplicate version of Peter. This doppelgänger appears after Peter calls for Jesus’ help to defeat a demon, and is interpreted by the dreamer as a sign of Christ. Although this is in a dream, it still represents the idea that Jesus could appear in other forms, and specifically in the form of a known individual. This event is similar to the one in which Athene takes on the form of Mentor, but the real Mentor is seen as well, compromising Athene’s disguise. In both instances a god takes on the form of a known person.

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1214 Acts Pet. 5.
1215 Which is found in both Jewish and Greco-Roman stories. See Chapter 5.
1218 This invisibility account has similarities to Peter’s escape from jail (Acts 12:6-10), Jesus’ appearance in the locked room (John 20:19) and Jesus’ escape from crowds by being hidden (e.g. Luke 4:29-30; John 8:59; 10:39). In Simon’s case the vanishing (of the other two people) is brought about by a magical spell. This event is an extreme instance of disguise, rather than metamorphosis.
1219 Acts Pet. 22.
1220 Homer, Od. 4.653f.
As with the *Acts of John*, Jesus displays metamorphic attributes even before his death and resurrection. Jesus’ earthly life is described as the “Lord” appearing in “another form” and the “image of god”, and that “the Lord was moved by compassion to show himself in another form and to appear in the image of man.”¹²²¹ This is indicative of a docetic Christology and even here the language of metamorphosis is being used. The expression “each of us saw him as his capacity permitted” is also indicative of pre-resurrection metamorphosis, or even polymorphy.¹²²² An account of the Transfiguration follows the comments about the nature of the incarnate Jesus. There are several similarities with the synoptic accounts, including the brightness surrounding Jesus, and Jesus appearing in a changed form. However, the changed form in the *Acts of Peter* is one which it is not possible to comprehend, as Jesus is described as having several dual opposing attributes: “this Great and Small One, this Beautiful and Ugly one, this Young Man and Old Man, appearing in time, yet utterly invisible in eternity.”¹²²³ In light of the Transfiguration account which precedes this list, these attributes could be viewed in metamorphic or even polymorphous terms.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus continues to be active in the world. He makes an appearance in order to speak to the disciples (and others) and give them instructions on a number of occasions where no metamorphosis takes place, and possibly where there was no bodily manifestation either. Jesus speaks to Peter by means of a vision, telling him to return to Rome.¹²²⁴ In this instance there is no physical appearance of Jesus, but it shows that Jesus is still operative in the world, and taking action to further his movement.¹²²⁵ Jesus also appears in an anthropomorphic (but not disguised) form to Peter at night (and Peter was still awake – a note added to prevent the idea that it was a dream perhaps).¹²²⁶ There is no indication in this case that Jesus is disguised in such a way that Peter did not instantly recognise him. However, the shining clothing is reminiscent of the Transfiguration accounts. In the appearance to Peter there is no lack of recognition, and Jesus is

¹²²¹ Acts Pet. 20 contains a flashback to the pre-resurrection Transfiguration event.
¹²²² The phrase also expresses a similar idea to the *Gospel of Philip*, which also indicates that Jesus appeared in a manner appropriate to his viewers. See Gos. Phil. 57.28-58.10.
¹²²⁴ Acts Pet. 5.
¹²²⁶ Acts Pet. 16.
brilliant in shining robes, which is vastly different from the humble and disguised Jesus on the road to Emmaus.\textsuperscript{1227} The encounter in the \textit{Acts of Peter} shows that Jesus was active in the world, directing the growth of his movement after his death and resurrection.

None of the above events involve unrecognisability, but there are some post-resurrection appearances where Jesus does appear in a different unrecognisable form in the \textit{Acts of Peter}. After the baptism of a ship’s captain by Peter, a young man appears who is “radiant in splendour”.\textsuperscript{1228} The fact that the young man says “peace be with you”\textsuperscript{1229} is an indication that this is not an angelophany, but rather a manifestation of Jesus himself.\textsuperscript{1230} After this visitation, Peter both identifies the visitor as Jesus Christ, and offers hospitality in the form of sharing the Eucharist with Theon (the captain). It is not made clear when the young man (Jesus) leaves, but it seems as though he vanished after giving his greeting, and before the two men went inside to share a meal. Jesus appears here in a transformed or disguised form. He is described as a “young man”. However, unlike the canonical accounts of post-resurrection disguised appearances, rather than a humble figure, Jesus is radiant. Yet, this story is, at first sight, quite close to the post-resurrection appearances found in the canonical Gospels. As such it will be particularly useful to compare it to the two categories of disguised god, and disguised hero stories.

Jesus bears much in common with a disguised god in this encounter. When Jesus appears, he appears in a disguised form, as a young man. It is not a specific person,\textsuperscript{1231} but a generic, and unrecognised young man. He emerges from the place where Theon was baptised, in the middle of the waters of the sea, so it is a miraculous appearance out of nowhere.\textsuperscript{1232} Jesus seems to appear in response to the baptism, so he comes in a sense to reward the two men for their behaviour by both blessing them, and creating a wind to get them out of the calm.\textsuperscript{1233} This wind follows on from a

\textsuperscript{1228} Acts. Pet 5.
\textsuperscript{1230} See Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 91.
\textsuperscript{1231} Such as Jesus appearing as John (Acts John 87).
\textsuperscript{1232} It is also very symbolic of Christian conversion. At the moment of baptism, Jesus enters Theon’s life, and then Peter, his new brother in Christ invites him to join in the Eucharist.
\textsuperscript{1233} A feat which Athene performs when disguised as Mentor to help Telemachus and his crew (Od. \textit{Il.} 2.422).
display of hospitality shown by Theon to Peter, and by Peter and Theon to the Lord as a reward which arises as they are rejoicing in the Lord. This wind is presumably the help which Theon was told about in a dream, when a voice from heaven (presumably Jesus) tells him that Peter will help him to escape from an unexpected event (the calm seas). There is no display of fear in the face of this divine visitation, and after saying “peace be with you” nothing more is said. Jesus does not offer instructions or give the disciples any information, as he does elsewhere in the Acts of Peter (see below). There is a miraculous appearance, but how Jesus departs is not described: he is not mentioned after his one line and presumably he vanished as quickly as he appeared. Taken on its own this appearance does not drive the plot forward, or alter the character’s future. However, it is one of a series of Jesus’ interventions in the plot where he appears in person, in dreams, or as a voice to direct the characters. He appears to Paul to tell him to travel to Spain, to Peter to tell him to go to Rome, to Theon to tell him to be welcoming to Peter, to Theon and Peter in person, to Peter at night in person to command him to duel with Simon, to Chryse in a dream telling her to take gold to Peter, and to Peter in person to persuade him not to flee Rome out of fear of persecution. In the last case Jesus ascends into heaven after talking to Peter. The world of the Acts of Peter can therefore be seen to be one in which Jesus regularly intervenes, in dreams, in a light and a loud voice, and in person by descending to earth and then ascending back to heaven. The ascension is not to be thought of as a “one way ticket” where Jesus ascends never to be seen again, but rather as Jesus taking up residence in heaven, but still able, and willing, to intervene in worldly affairs. In light of this range of interventions, it can be seen that Jesus’ appearance to Peter and Theon in the form of a young man in the sea does serve

1235 Acts Pet. 5.
1236 Acts Pet. 5.
1237 Acts Pet. 5.
1238 Acts Pet. 16.
1240 Acts Pet. 35.
1241 Similarly, in Acts Pet. 6, Ariston sees a vision of Paul telling him to flee the city. Although this is not an appearance of Jesus, it fits with the overall theme of supernatural guidance of the characters in the Acts of Peter.
1242 In like manner, Ares ascends after being struck in battle, but with the understanding that he can descend back to earth to interact with humans at a future time (Homer, Il. 5.865-9). Cf. Homer, Od. 3.372-3.
1243 Acts Pet. 5.
the purpose of driving the plot forward, as Jesus is involved at each stage of the plot, that is Paul leaving Rome, Peter returning there, the people being there to meet Peter, Peter’s conflict and defeat of Simon, and finally Peter’s martyrdom. Jesus’ appearances thus drive the plot, and alter human history, making sure that his movement, rather than the cult which Simon wishes to set up, is the one which is established and secured in Rome. 1244 This story therefore has much in common with a disguised god story – sharing much of the structure and the purpose of this sort of story.

On the other hand, this story has less in common with a disguised hero story. In fact, there is a crucial difference between this story and the canonical Gospel post-resurrection appearances, and other hero recognition stories. When Jesus appears in the canonical Gospels, he is still missing or presumed dead at this point in the story. Similarly, when Odysseus is recognised by his household they are under the assumption that he is still missing and possibly dead. In the Acts of Peter, however, Peter is already convinced that Jesus is alive and has returned to his people. This is the very reason why Peter is doing the work of an evangelist. The Acts of Peter itself contains instances which make it clear that Jesus is known to be alive and active in the world. As already noted, Jesus appears to several people with specific instructions. These events occur before his appearance to Peter and Theon in disguise, so, unlike in the canonical Gospel accounts, the characters are not expected to think that Jesus is dead and gone. There can, therefore, be no surprise or shock in discovering that Jesus is alive, as there is in the canonical Gospels. This means that the overall narrative does not easily allow this story to be a disguised hero recognition story, since there is no missing hero at this point in the narrative, and so no hero who can be recognised in a manner which brings about peripeteia.

However, it will be worthwhile to confirm this intuition with a closer examination of the story. The elements of the story also lack similarity with hero recognition stories: Jesus does appear in disguise, but the disguise is not one which is likely to be

1244 “Whoever receives the vision [of a Jesus appearance]... the Christian community is the main beneficiary, whether directly or indirectly. The visionary is the medium through which God provides for or protects his own”. Magda Misset-Van de Weg, “‘For the Lord Always Takes Care of His Own’. The Purpose of the Wondrous Works and Deeds in the Acts of Peter,” in The Apocryphal Acts of Peter: Magic, Miracles, and Gnosticism, ed. Jan N. Bremmer, SAAA 3 (Leuven: Peeters, 1998), 101–2.
mistaken for a humble stranger, or even a mortal stranger, as is the case in hero recognition scenes. Rather Jesus appears miraculously, and in radiant splendour. The fact that the text states that “a young man” came up out of the water, rather than just saying it was Jesus, implies that Jesus was in a different form, and so in need of recognition. The recognition takes place, however, without any physical signs of recognition, but the use of the words “peace be with you”, the same words used in John 20:19, could serve as a recognition sign of sorts, since, as is the case in John 20, they recall an expression which though not unique to Jesus, is characteristic of him. The Eucharist meal which follows is reminiscent of the recognition scene in the road to Emmaus story, although in the Lucan incident the recognition takes place after Jesus breaks the bread, whereas in this case Peter breaks the bread after the recognition has taken place. There is no cognitive resistance on the part of the people Jesus visits. Jesus appearing is not a surprise, and so no doubt is displayed by the apostle. Jesus has appeared before, and so this appearance is just one more instance of an established pattern. There is also no physical manifestation of the recognition in terms of tears or embracing. They do rejoice, but in the fact that Jesus is their Lord, rather than because someone thought to be dead or forever lost has returned. Hence, the scene does not contain many of the expected elements of a disguised hero recognition scene, and nor does it serve the thematic purpose of one. Most importantly, there is no moment of peripeteia. Before the event Peter knows that Jesus has returned, and that he interacts with his disciples in the world. After the event Peter still knows that Jesus has returned, and that he interacts with his disciples in the world. No new understanding of who Jesus is, or his relationship with Jesus, is gained. There is no healing of the relationship, and there is no change in the way society is set up. All of this has already taken place for Peter. The description of Peter’s recognition and moment of peripeteia occurs in the canonical Gospels, and is alluded to in the Acts of Peter. Therefore, this disguise event bears little in common with an unrecognised hero recognition scene, either in the elements of the plot, or the way it is used in the overall narrative.

1245 Acts Pet. 5.
1247 Acts Pet. 7 describes Peter’s lack of faith, and his change in direction, but this is an historical fact for the Acts of Peter, rather than a theme of the present story.
There is a final post-resurrection story, in which Jesus is seen by a group of initially blind widows.\textsuperscript{1248} A bright light illuminates the dining hall where Peter and his companions are sitting, along with a company of blind widows. The light, which stops the other people from seeing anything, allows the blind people to regain their sight and to see Jesus. When asked what they saw, the women give different accounts. Some saw an old man (whose appearance they cannot describe), some saw a young man, and still others a boy. Jesus appears in multiple forms, to different people, at the same time. This is an instance of parallel polymorphy, and the only one which occurs in the \textit{Acts of Peter}.\textsuperscript{1249} The message of this passage is that “god is greater than our thoughts.”\textsuperscript{1250} The passage highlights the fact that Jesus is indeed (a) god, and that he continues to visit his people. It also highlights the fact that like other gods, his real form is unknowable to mortal minds. Jesus is beyond comprehension and appears in multiple ways to different people. This post-resurrection appearance serves the purpose of telling what sort of being Jesus is. There is nothing in this encounter which addresses the relationship between Jesus and those who encounter him. Apart from the changed form of Jesus, the appearance to the blind widows lacks the features of either an unrecognised god, or an unrecognised hero story. Jesus is not appearing in \textit{disguise} as such, since there is no confusion about who he is. Peter has just prayed for Jesus to reveal himself, and to show himself to the blind widows. Jesus obliges in a polymorphic manner. Unlike the encounter where Jesus appears as a young man on the sea, there is no confusion about who is being seen. A distinction can be made between Jesus appearing in disguise and appearing in a different form, or forms. So this scene lacks most features of a disguised god story: a \textit{disguise} in any real sense; any display of testing or hospitality; rewards, punishments, or indeed any result from the experience. Jesus says nothing, gives no instructions, and this event does not seem to drive the plot forward in the way other Jesus appearances in the \textit{Acts of Peter} do.

The scene has even less in common with a hero recognition scene. The recognition is instantaneous (and expected), takes place without any tokens or signs, and with no resistance or doubt on the part of those who see Jesus. There is also no \textit{peripeteia}, or

\textsuperscript{1248} Acts Pet. 21.  
\textsuperscript{1249} This is an instance of parallel polymorphy, rather than sequential polymorphy.  
\textsuperscript{1250} Acts Pet. 21.
shift in understanding associated with the encounter. It is true that it displays something about Jesus and about God, but there is no change in a whole worldview. This encounter shows Jesus in different forms, rather than in disguise, and has little in common with the post-resurrection appearances in the canonical Gospels, and little in common with disguised god stories, or disguised hero recognition stories.

In conclusion, the Acts of Peter does not have any stories which resemble a disguised and returning hero story, but does present the concept of a disguised god. There is one scene, when Jesus appears on the boat, which fits the form of a disguised god story. The theme of disguise is not, however, as important as the theme of metamorphosis.

7.3.3 Acts of Thomas

The Acts of Thomas is an early 3rd-century text, likely originating in Edessa, making it the “oldest non-Biblical monument of the Syrian Church’s literature.” It relates the work of Thomas in India, and tells the story of Jesus continuing to guide his movement by directing and interacting with his followers in various ways.

Like the other apocryphal Acts of the Apostles, the encounters with Jesus take place in a narrative world where disguise and metamorphosis are possible. Thomas himself, after finishing a song, changes shape. There is some confusion about whether

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Thomas is a god, or an apostle of God after a curse he makes is effective, and the man who struck him is killed and has his hand dragged off by dogs. This presents the same idea that gods appear in the form of men which is preserved in the canonical Acts of the Apostles. There is also a brief mention of Thomas being a man who can take on two different forms. There are also instances of talking animals which are creatures in a sense transformed into an unusual state (although they do not take on another shape).

The *Acts of Thomas* uses the word “polymorphous” (πολύμορφος) to refer to a demon. The demon appears in the form of a young man and an old man at the same time, and later appears visible to some, and invisible to others. These themes, of shape-shifting creatures and talking animals are reminiscent of folk-tales, and the Hymn of the Pearl, which contains the motif of eating the food of the fairy country causing one to forget one’s own land, may “like the Acts into which it has been incorporated, [be] seen more as representative of popular piety and folkloristic story-telling.” There are, therefore, many elements in this story which recall folklore motifs, and the use of metamorphosis within folk literature.

As well as referring to the demon as πολύμορφος, the *Acts of Thomas* also uses the same word to describe Jesus. “Polymorphous” is included among a list of other titles for Jesus, and has become so acceptable to the author of the *Acts of Thomas* that he lists it alongside other “orthodox” titles for Jesus such as, “only begotten”, “first born

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1255 Acts Thom. 9:3.
1256 Acts Thom. 6:2, and it is fulfilled in 8:10.
1257 Acts 14:11-12. This instance also follows a miracle in which Paul heals a man (14:8-10). The action in the *Acts of Thomas* is similar, but rather than healing a man, the miracle is instead causing a man’s death.
1258 Acts Thom. 34.
1259 Acts Thom. 39:1-41:7 tells the story of an ass who talks and carries Thomas, which, like the dog in the Acts of Peter (Acts Pet. 12) also dies after it has served its purpose. Another beast is made to talk but this one survives and is sent back to its field (Acts Thom. 74:1-10; 78:2-81:7).
1260 See footnote 1207.
1265 Acts Thom. 48:3.
among brethren”, and “God from God Most High.” The concept of polymorphy is also used as part of a doxology in the mouth of Thomas: “glory to you polymorphous Jesus!” The word πολύμορφος in this context does not imply the technical usage of this word employed by Lalleman, where the polymorph is required to appear in multiple forms simultaneously (at least there are no descriptions of Jesus appearing in multiple forms at the same time in the Acts of Thomas). This does not mean that the distinction that Lalleman makes is not a useful one, but rather that a further distinction needs to be made between parallel polymorphism and serial polymorphism. At various points in the Acts of Thomas Jesus appears in the form of Thomas, causing some confusion since Jesus is also presented as being physically similar to Thomas.

Jesus appears after his death and resurrection in order to guide his disciples and help build his movement. He appears very near the start of the Acts of Thomas to encourage Thomas to go to India to spread his message. In a scene reminiscent of Jonah, Thomas refuses to go, and Jesus, presumably in a physical form, talks to a slave buyer and tells him to purchase Thomas and take him back to his king in India. Both the slave driver and Thomas talk to Jesus (at the same time) to finalise the deal. Jesus’ first appearance in the Acts of Thomas fits well into the category of a commission narrative: the scene is set (Thomas is gathered with the other disciples in Jerusalem), Thomas is commissioned to go to India (first by lot, but later by Jesus’ personal command), at which Thomas protests his unsuitability or unworthiness, and then is reassured by Jesus and told the details of the task: “fear not”, “go to India and preach the word there.” Thomas, echoing Jonah, still refuses to go to India, and it is only by appearing personally, and bodily, that Jesus is able to force Thomas to go to

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1266 Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 94.
1269 As Paul Foster argues: Foster, “Polymorphic Christology,” 94. Why would an author in an ancient text choosing to use one particular word over another mean that a technical distinction created in the 21st century using the same word is not a useful one?
1270 As I have outlined in the introductory section.
1271 E.g. Acts Thom. 11:5; 34:2; 55:2. 151:5.
1272 Acts Thom. 1.
1273 Acts Thom. 2.
1274 See Czachesz, Commission Narratives, 2.
India (by selling him as a slave to an Indian merchant). The sequence of commission-protest-reassurance is similar to the call of prophets and kings in the Hebrew Scriptures, for example in the commission stories of Moses, Gideon, Saul, and Jeremiah. This event establishes at the very start of the story that firstly, Jesus is still operative in the world, in a way which at least resembles a living person, and secondly that Thomas knows that Jesus is alive, and does not consider him to be dead or missing. The second of these points means that a hero recognition scene in which Thomas is surprised to discover that Jesus is still alive later on in the story is impossible. There is no mention of Jesus appearing in disguise, and when he sells Thomas (his slave) he writes on the sale agreement that he is Jesus, son of the carpenter Joseph. The implication is that Jesus appears here as himself, the way he did before his crucifixion. The next day, however, Thomas prays to Jesus, treating him as a god, and it seems that Jesus is not present in his physical form to hear the prayers. In the world of the Acts of Thomas, Jesus appears in person, can be prayed to at a distance, and is known by the hero of the story to be interacting with and guiding the world and his actions. This makes Jesus very similar to the gods in Greco-Roman literature, as the following examples illustrate: late in the story, Jesus appears a number of times in a disguised or metamorphic form. He appears, in the form of Thomas, to a young couple who have just received a blessing from Thomas. In Acts Thom. 29, Jesus stands at Thomas’ head as he sleeps and instructs him on what he is to do next to gain disciples for Jesus. Jesus is not, however, obviously in disguise in this appearance. He appears to Thomas at night, and although the “fear not” spoken by Jesus is a sign of a divine visitation, there is no indication that Thomas does not recognise Jesus, or that Jesus must do something to make his identity clear. The idea seems to be that Jesus is known to be a visiting god, and that, although this is still a reason for fear, it is not an unprecedented event.

1276 Exod 3-4, Judg 6:11-24, 1 Sam 9-11, Jer 1.1-10. See Czachesz, Commission Narratives, 125. The Judges example also provides an instance where a commission story is combined with a disguised god story. It is only after Gideon has been given the commission (vs. 14), protested (vs. 15) and been reassured (vs. 16) that in verse 22 he realises who he has been talking to all along, and reacts with the fear typical of those who encounter the divine.
1277 Acts Thom. 3:1.
1278 Acts Thom. 11:3.
In his first appearance in the *Acts of Thomas*, Jesus does nothing at all to disguise his identity, declaring himself to be “Jesus son of the carpenter Joseph.” Jesus has returned, and has already been accepted as the rightful owner of Thomas as his Lord. This event then, though it sets the scene, is not an example of Jesus appearing in disguise.

The scene in which Jesus *does* appear in disguise occurs in Acts Thom. 151-2. Specifically, he appears in the disguise of a character known to those to whom he appears: Thomas. In Acts Thom. 151:1 some new disciples meet Thomas in his prison cell, and are confused since Jesus, in the form of Thomas, sent them to meet him (Thomas). How much this scene has in common with the category of an unrecognisable god story is now addressed. There is no testing (with reward or punishment) of the people he appears to, and no reaction of fear to the divine being. They do not even recognise that it was Jesus until they talk to Thomas long after the event. Jesus gives instructions to the people he appears to, telling them to go to the prison to find their companions, showing that this event is Jesus influencing the actions of his followers. It also includes a hint of a miraculous vanishing. Jesus disappears after he has led the people to the prison where their companions (including Thomas) are being held. Because Jesus was mistaken for Thomas, this causes the others to think that Thomas has sneaked ahead of them into the cell. The purpose of Jesus’ appearance is that it allows Thomas to escape from prison with Siphor and Vazan, which leads onto their baptism, and, after Thomas’ martyrdom, their continuation of Jesus’ work in India. Jesus’ involvement in this scene makes it clear that the continuation of the Church in India is indeed Jesus’ will. Jesus is acting in this scene as a divine helper to allow Thomas to succeed in his mission, but also to guarantee the continuation of his movement in India. Throughout the *Acts of Thomas*, Jesus serves as a guide and helper to the hero, sometimes, but not always, in a disguised form.

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1280 In Acts Thom. 2 Jesus sells the disciple as his slave in order to force him to travel to India.
1281 “Didn’t you open the doors for us and tell us to enter the prison…” Acts Thom. 151:5.
1283 At the end of the Acts of Thomas there is an indication that Jesus will continue to act and appear, with Siphor and Vazan now the heroes who receive the aid of the divine helper Jesus (Acts Thom. 169:8).
None of the scenes in the *Acts of Thomas* resemble a hero-recognition scene. This is expected since there is no missing hero at the start of the story. Jesus is known to be active and has an established relationship with Thomas, who accepts him as his master. As such, Jesus is not recognised using any tokens or signs. There is no emotional reuniting, and there is no resistance to the idea that the person encountered really is Jesus. He has appeared in person multiple times to help, and a new appearance is one more instance of an established pattern. The scene also does not serve the thematic purpose of a hero-recognition scene. There is no moment of *peripeteia* which emerges from the recognition. Thomas’ worldview does not change, and nor does the way he relates to Jesus, and there is no new understanding gained about relationships or the ordering of society.

There is nothing in this story which resembles a recognised-hero story. Rather, Jesus in the *Acts of Thomas* is a god (sometimes in disguise) who manifests himself in order to help his chosen heroes. The theme of metamorphosis or disguise is attached to Jesus, but in this instance it does not serve the purpose of setting up a hero recognition scene, but instead serves a different purpose: to show that Jesus is a divine helper, and continues to act in the world, and to assist his followers.

### 7.3.4 Acts of Andrew and Matthias

The final Acts to be examined is the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias*. The *Acts of Andrew* were composed sometime between 200 CE and the second half of the third century. MacDonald considers the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* to be an integral part of the *Acts of Andrew*, contradicting Flamion and Prieur who both consider the *Acts of Andrew and Matthias* to be a later addition. Hilhorst and

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1284 MacDonald argues for this early date, noting that the *Acts of Thomas* were reliant upon the *Acts of Andrew*. See ibid., 9.
1286 For an initial discussion see MacDonald, *Acts of Andrew*, 1–2.
Lalleman also conclude that “the AAM was not part of the original AA.”\textsuperscript{1290} The \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias} takes place in Myrmidonia,\textsuperscript{1291} and like the \textit{Acts of Thomas} it starts with the casting of lots to see who will be sent where to evangelise.\textsuperscript{1292} Matthias is sent to the “city of the cannibals”, and when he has his eyes destroyed,\textsuperscript{1293} and is due to be eaten, Jesus appears to Andrew to send him to the rescue.\textsuperscript{1294}

There are several events which show that the theme of metamorphosis and disguise is one which is a part of the world of the \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias}. In one instance the other disciples, while in a deep sleep, see the twelve apostles, and behind each apostle is an angel who looks like the apostle.\textsuperscript{1295} The Devil comes in the disguise of an old man,\textsuperscript{1296} and two angels are transformed to look like sailors.\textsuperscript{1297} These are all instances of supernatural beings taking on the likeness of mortals. As well as the metamorphosis of people, the \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias} contains several instances of the metamorphosis of objects: a fig tree which provides an infinite amount of food,\textsuperscript{1298} the hands of some executioners are turned to stone, and later their swords are melted.\textsuperscript{1299} Some statues are transformed into living sphinxes, in a miracle caused by Jesus before his death.\textsuperscript{1300} All of these transformations are brought about by Jesus, either with Jesus present, or through prayer to Jesus. Lastly, when Andrew is tortured, and again having prayed to Jesus, his blood and hair are transformed into fruit-bearing trees.\textsuperscript{1301} These instances demonstrate the themes of disguise and metamorphosis were used in the \textit{Acts of Andrew and Matthias} for characters and objects other than Jesus.


\textsuperscript{1291} Also variously called Mermidona, Mirmidona, Mirmydona, and many other variants. See MacDonald, \textit{Acts of Andrew}, 3.

\textsuperscript{1292} Acts Andr. Mth. 1:1-3.

\textsuperscript{1293} Acts Andr. Mth. 2:1.

\textsuperscript{1294} Acts Andr. Mth. 4:1-2.

\textsuperscript{1295} Acts Andr. Mth. 17.12.

\textsuperscript{1296} Acts Andr. Mth. 24.2.

\textsuperscript{1297} Acts Andr. Mth. 5.2.

\textsuperscript{1298} Acts Andr. Mth. 21:3-5. I have included this as an example of metamorphosis of an object since the tree will bear more fruit no matter how much people eat because of the Lord’s command. The tree has thus been changed in some sense.

\textsuperscript{1299} Acts Andr. Mth. 22.13-14; 23:13. In both instances the metamorphosis of the hands and the swords take place after Andrew has prayed to Jesus.


\textsuperscript{1301} Acts Andr. Mth. 28.2-11.
More importantly, Jesus also appears a number of times in different forms. In response to Andrew’s request to show himself, Jesus appears as a small child and states that “I can do anything and appear to each person in any form I wish.”

Jesus again appears as a child after Andrew has ignored children seeking his help. He is also represented as being active in the world, and intervenes in order to help his chosen heroes. For example, Jesus speaks to Matthias out of a light, curing his blindness, before saying “peace be with you” and returning to heaven. Subsequently, Jesus appears in Archæa, 27 days after Matthias is captured, to commission Andrew to go and save Matthias. Although Andrew says this will be impossible, as it is too far away to get there in time to save Matthias, Jesus tells him to obey, and to go to the sea where he and his disciples will find a boat. Jesus then returns back to heaven.

As with other commission narratives, Andrew declares his inability and unsuitability for the task, but is reassured by Jesus. In fact almost all of the elements of a commission narrative are present. Thus, at the start of Andrew’s involvement, Jesus is established as a god commissioning the hero Andrew to go on a quest. Jesus is taking the role of the divine helper, rather than the hero in this story. MacDonald notes that this scene is reminiscent of Athene providing Telemachus with a ship to go on his quest, further displaying that Jesus is to be understood as a divine helper, rather than the hero in these stories. As Athene does with Telemachus, Jesus travels with Andrew as his companion for a long time in disguise. It is on this
boat that the main scene of interest occurs: Jesus appears to Andrew in a disguised form, as the ship’s captain along with two angels disguised as sailors.\textsuperscript{1310} Andrew does not recognise Jesus because he is hiding his divinity by appearing as a human captain.\textsuperscript{1311} After being miraculously transported to their destination while sleeping, Andrew recognises the fact that it was Jesus to whom he had been talking in the boat.\textsuperscript{1312}

This story fits well into the “disguised god” framework. As already noted, Jesus appears in disguise, and has with him two angels, also disguised as sailors. There are echoes of the three visitors to Abraham here.\textsuperscript{1313} The story also shares themes with Jonah, in particular the reluctance of Andrew to undertake his commissioned task, followed by a sea journey to a foreboding city.\textsuperscript{1314} The theme of hospitality for the gods is present, but there is a humorous role-reversal when Andrew enters the boat. Andrew appears as poverty stricken, and seeking hospitality (whereas in such stories it is usually the disguised god who is cast in this role). Jesus, in disguise, offers hospitality. As a result Andrew offers Jesus a blessing, in the name of the Lord, thus rewarding Jesus for his hospitality!\textsuperscript{1315} The irony of this passage relies upon an awareness of the usual shape of such narratives, where it should have been Andrew who was offering hospitality to the disguised god, and then the disguised god offering the reward to Andrew.

Although this passage seems to conflict with the usual story, therefore, it in fact fits into the schema of a testing (using hospitality) followed by a reward. It is after Andrew tells Jesus that the reason they have nothing to offer is that (in the past) Jesus commanded them to take nothing with them, that Jesus welcomes them on board. Andrew has proved himself to be a loyal follower of Jesus.\textsuperscript{1316} Following this initial exchange, Jesus does test Andrew, asking him about Jesus, and the things he did to

\textsuperscript{1310} Acts Andr. Mth. 5.2.
\textsuperscript{1311} Acts Andr. Mth. 5.5.
\textsuperscript{1312} Acts Andr. Mth. 16:5-17:6.
\textsuperscript{1313} Gen 18:2.
\textsuperscript{1314} Jonah 1:1–4.
\textsuperscript{1315} Acts Andr. Mth. 6.10. Jesus then quips that he considers himself worthy to receive an apostle of the Lord onto his boat.
\textsuperscript{1316} Acts Andr. Mth. 6.6-8.
show his divinity to the disciples, the Jews, and the high priests. This scene, in which Jesus is told stories about himself while in disguise, is reminiscent of both the road to Emmaus story where Jesus also asks and is told about his pre-resurrection life while in disguise, and Odysseus being told of his own exploits at Troy in disguise among the Phaiacians. When Andrew recognises who Jesus is, when he has transported them to the entrance of the city of Myrmidonia, he explicitly states that Jesus humbled himself, and appeared as a mortal, in order to test the disciples. This leaves no doubt as to how Jesus is meant to be viewed: as a god visiting, testing, and helping his chosen hero.

Shortly after arriving at their destination, Jesus appears to him again, in a metamorphic form, this time that of a beautiful child. Andrew falls upon the ground and worships him, reacting as mortals do when they encounter gods. Jesus gives instructions to Andrew, telling him how he is to complete his mission, and thereby help Jesus’ movement to spread to a new location. His instructions are broad at first, to bring Matthias out of Myrmidonia, but then they are more specific, telling Andrew to go to the sea where he will find a boat. The story later includes an explanation for why Jesus’ temple in Myrmidonia is located where it is: it is built around the pillar where the prison he was in once stood.

The purpose of this story is to show that Jesus was involved in the spreading of his movement. The theme of the god vanishing miraculously is also present. As well as Jesus vanishing in a mysterious fashion (once more returning to heaven), Andrew and his disciples also vanish mysteriously from the boat: Jesus commands that the disciples and Andrew are carried off the boat to the city as they sleep. This recalls

1319 Homer, Od. 8.75f, 8.499f.
1321 Acts Andr. Mth. 18:2. Elsewhere in the Acts of Andrew and Matthias Andrew’s response to Jesus’ appearances is less dramatic. In Acts Andr. Mth. 4 Andrew’s response is not recorded; in Acts Andr. Mth. 29:3 Andrew falls down and worships; but in Acts Andr. Mth. 33 no response is mentioned. In the Acts of Andrew and Matthias the appearance of a divine helper to save the day is a common occurrence.
the miraculous transportation of Peter in the canonical Acts.\textsuperscript{1324} The irony of Andrew acting like the entertained god which is seen at the start of this narrative, where Jesus provides hospitality, and Andrew rewards Jesus with a blessing, is continued in the final segment. Andrew miraculously vanishes, rather than Jesus, as might have been expected. Hence, this story presents a theoxeny, and an unrecognised god visitation story, using all of the expected structure of such a story, albeit in an interesting, humorous, and perhaps even ironic manner.\textsuperscript{1325}

This story also performs the thematic role of a disguised god story. Jesus appears in order to drive the plot forward and alter human history and to make it known, to both the characters and the reader, that the present plan of the heroes is supported by a divine agent. Without Jesus’ direct intervention Andrew would never have gone to the city of the cannibals, and would never have rescued Matthias. More importantly, however, without Jesus’ direct intervention, the Jesus movement would never have been established in the city, and multiple new adherents would not have been converted. This is therefore a cult formation story as much as an adventure story. We are told how Jesus is to be worshipped, and how the cultic centre came to be where it is now located (in the world of the Acts of Andrew and Matthias if not in the actual world). Hence, this story looks very much like a disguised god story, both in the way the events unfold, and their purpose in the plot as a whole. Such an assessment is backed up by Jesus’ other actions in the Acts of Andrew and Matthias, where he appears multiple times in the role of the helper. The story is best understood as a disguised god story which takes place in a folklore-influenced world where metamorphosis of both people and objects is part of the way the world works.

In contrast, this story has little in common with a hero recognition story. There are no tokens or signs used and Andrew recognises that he has been dealing with a god due to the miraculous vanishing, in the same way in which Telemachus recognises that he has been talking to Athene when she vanishes miraculously.\textsuperscript{1326} Andrew states that he

\textsuperscript{1325} E.g. Andrew boasts that he is a disciple of Jesus, hinting strongly that he should therefore be entertained as though he were a god himself. Jesus plays along with this game, even accepting a blessing from his own disciple. To anyone familiar with this sort of story the humour would have been apparent.
\textsuperscript{1326} Homer, \textit{Od.} 3.372–7.
did not initially recognise Jesus, because Jesus chose not to reveal himself. When Jesus’ identity becomes clear, there is no resistance to accepting who the disguised one was on Andrew’s part. As in the other apocryphal Acts, he knows that Jesus appears to help his disciples, so one more return is not exceptional. The recognition takes place after Jesus has gone, and so there is no place for a euphoric manifestation of the recognition, in terms of embracing or tears. As with the *Acts of Thomas* there is no moment of peripeteia, change in the worldview of the recognisers, re-ordering of society, or healing of relationships. Andrew was Jesus’ disciple, and Jesus Andrew’s god at the start of the story, and this relationship remains unchanged at the end of the story. It is not the recognition itself which drives the plot forward, but rather the instructions and actions of Jesus. Thus, this scene does not look like a disguised hero recognition scene, nor does it serve the purpose of one.

In conclusion, Jesus is operating as a disguised god, visiting the hero in order to help the hero spread the following of the god to a new area. Jesus resembles a disguised god in both the way the story is described, and the way it helps the plot move forward. Jesus in this story does not have the characteristics of a recognised hero. Rather than appearing to elicit a moment of *anagnorisis* Jesus seems to be appearing to manage the growth of his movement. Although there is a recognition scene of sorts, nothing new of any substance is learned by the people to whom he appears. There is certainly no moment where their worldview is turned upside down as there is in the canonical road to Emmaus story.

### 7.3.5 Summary

In the apocryphal Acts examined in this section the theme of metamorphosis is widely used to apply to both a range of people and to other objects. Sometimes the metamorphosis also results in the disguise of one of the characters, culminating in them not being recognised by people who know them. In the cases where Jesus does appear in disguise, both the structure of the events, and the purpose the events serve in the wider narrative, have more in common with unrecognised god scenes which occur in other literature, and little in common with unrecognised hero scenes. A central

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reason for this is that in the apocryphal Acts, Jesus is already known to be alive and known to have returned when the story begins. This makes it very unlikely that any scene containing an unrecognised returning hero could take place.\textsuperscript{1328} This almost necessitates, if recognisable literary themes are being used, that if the motif of a metamorphic Jesus is to appear in the stories alongside the theme of disguise, Jesus must be presented as a god rather than a hero. In summary, Jesus is not the hero of these stories, but rather appears as a character who is helping the hero of the story. Jesus’ recognition comes about as a result of his own choice, rather than due to a sign or token, as in hero recognition stories. The knowledge which the characters gain comes from Jesus passing on the knowledge directly, rather than through the recognition itself, and there is no great shift in the worldview of the characters. In other instances, the metamorphosis does not serve the purpose of disguise at all, but rather it is used to reveal the attributes of Jesus.

7.4: Tabulation and Summary

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Recognised/reco gniser</th>
<th>Signs/tokens/manner of recognition</th>
<th>Result of recognition</th>
<th>Code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Pet. 10.39-40</td>
<td>Jesus/guards</td>
<td>Identity known although in polymorphic form.</td>
<td>Jesus’ godlike characteristics become known.</td>
<td>(F-H) 1-1-NA \textsuperscript{1329} (metamorphosis focussed story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gos. Jud. 33:15-21</td>
<td>Jesus/Judas</td>
<td>Identity known although in polymorphic form.</td>
<td>Displays that Jesus is not the physical body, and that he is transcendent over the physical world.</td>
<td>(F-H) 1-1-NA (metamorphosis focussed story)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{1328} This contrasts with the canonical Gospels, which contain a number of characters who believe Jesus to be dead, and thus make a returning hero story possible.  
\textsuperscript{1329} The “NA” indicates that the metamorphosis in this story is not used for the purpose of disguise, and as such there is no need for the character to either reveal their identity, or for their identity to be discovered.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gos.Phil. 57.28-58.10</th>
<th>Jesus/many others</th>
<th>Identity known although in polymorphic form.</th>
<th>Displays that Jesus is not the physical body, and that he is transcendent over the physical world.</th>
<th>(F-H) 1-1-NA (metamorphosis focussed story)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Acts John 87</td>
<td>Jesus/Drusiana</td>
<td>Identity known although in polymorphic form.</td>
<td>Displays Jesus’ transcendence over the physical world.</td>
<td>(F-H) 1-1-NA (metamorphosis focussed story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts John 88.9-20</td>
<td>Jesus/James and John</td>
<td>Identity known although in polymorphic form.</td>
<td>Displays Jesus’ transcendence over the physical world.</td>
<td>(F-H) 1-1-NA (metamorphosis focussed story)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts Pet.</td>
<td>Jesus/Peter</td>
<td>Reveals his identity.</td>
<td>Aids Peter in his mission.</td>
<td>(H) 1-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts Thom.</td>
<td>Jesus/Thomas</td>
<td>Reveals his identity.</td>
<td>Gives instructions and aids Thomas in his mission.</td>
<td>(H) 1-1-1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Acts And. Matt. 5</td>
<td>Jesus(and angels)/Andrew</td>
<td>Reveals his identity.</td>
<td>Gives aid and instructions.</td>
<td>(H) 1-1-1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Whilst within the accounts presented in the canonical Gospels there is a mixture of imagery which could fit with both an unrecognisable hero story and an unrecognisable god story, in contrast, as the above table illustrates, the later Christian writings presented in this chapter fit only into the latter of these two categories, or else are stories where the metamorphosis, rather than unrecognisability has become the central theme of the story. The understanding of Jesus in these stories is never that of a returning hero, but is rather that of a divine helper who appears in disguise, or as an undisguised and metamorphic or polymorphic entity. Within the divine helper stories Jesus acts as a god forming or building his own religious following, and as a divine helper who appears in order to help the hero of the story to achieve his goals. These are both functions performed by disguised gods in the Greco-Roman tradition.
The presentation of Jesus as a divine being, rather than a disguised hero may reflect a different Christology, with Jesus presented as fully divine rather than (at least partially) human. This is undoubtedly the case in some of the stories, particularly the ones in which Jesus also appears before his death in a metamorphic or disguised form. This indicates a very high Christology where Jesus is more than a human. In these stories Jesus is never cast in the role of a disguised and returning hero, but only ever appears in the role of a metamorphic godlike figure. In other stories, however, where Jesus appears in a disguised form only after his resurrection, his presentation as a divine helper may have narrative rather than Christological reasons. That is, Jesus is playing the narrative role of the divine helper (god), and so his actions are presented following the literary conventions of a divine helper story.
Chapter Eight: Conclusions

The first part of this chapter will review the structure of the thesis. The second part will summarise the findings of the thesis in terms of the tools for categorisation introduced in Chapter 1. The final section will present some overall conclusions, and indicate areas for further research.

8.1: Explanation and Review of the Journey

The first chapter introduced the key claim that the way Jesus is presented in an unrecognisable state in post-resurrection stories is determined in part by the literary conventions of unrecognisability stories. It discussed the methodology and the key concepts which are important for this study: metamorphosis; disguise and recognition stories; the concept of cognitive plots and peripeteia; and the character roles of the hero and the helper. It also outlined the two main types of stories into which the Jesus stories were categorised, as well as the tools which were used to perform this categorisation. The two types were the unrecognisable hero story, and the unrecognisable god story.

Folklore stories, and how the key concepts introduced in Chapter 1 exist in folklore, were the subject of Chapter 2. A number of folklore motifs were explored, including, metamorphosis, recognition, disguise, and returning heroes. The characters common to folklore and the roles they perform were also considered. Finally the chapter discussed how, and confirmed that, folklore themes continued to be relevant at the time stories about Jesus were written.

Similarly, metamorphosis stories, as discussed in Chapter 3, continued to be a theme throughout Greco-Roman literature until, and after, the time when stories were being written about Jesus; this chapter showed how these themes are also used in Jewish literature.
The next two chapters concentrated on Greco-Roman literature which contained similar stories to the disguise and recognition stories found in both the canonical and apocryphal Gospels and Acts. Chapter 4 analysed Greco-Roman stories which contain disguised gods, and identified the distinctive features of these stories, while Chapter 5 reworked the same inquiry with regards to disguised heroes; each chapter, again, showed how the same themes were used in Jewish literature.

The final two chapters dealt specifically with stories which contained Jesus. Chapter 6 looked at the canonical Gospels and discussed how the themes of metamorphosis and disguise were used in Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. In particular it investigated whether the stories are best understood as unrecognisable hero stories or unrecognisable god stories. The conclusion was that the canonical Gospels used both disguised god and disguised hero stories to relate Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. The Gospels of Luke and John contained the most well-developed versions of the hero-recognition scene. A strong feature of these particular canonical accounts is that Jesus, after his resurrection, appears in a very humble form. Luke also contains an account which is more reminiscent of a disguised god story. John, on the other hand contains a series of disguised hero stories. Matthew’s accounts are disguised god stories, rather than disguised hero stories.

These Gospels demonstrate a concern about two separate, albeit related, questions:

1. Is Jesus still with us?
2. Does Jesus still intervene and help us?

The answer to the first question is given in the canonical Gospel by disguised hero stories, whereas the second is answered by disguised god stories as well, since the answer to the first question is presupposed in order for the second to be posited.

Finally, Chapter 7 looked at a selection of apocryphal Gospels and Acts and discussed how the themes of metamorphosis and disguise were used in Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances. As in Chapter 6, the key question was whether the stories are best understood as disguised hero stories or disguised god stories. There was a marked difference in the way Jesus’ post-resurrection accounts were presented compared to the Canonical Gospel accounts. The disguised hero characteristics were no longer
present in the apocryphal Acts and Gospel accounts, in either the structure or the purpose of the story. The metamorphosis in the apocryphal Gospels was often not for the sake of disguise, but was rather to demonstrate something about the nature of Jesus, either that he had conquered death, or that he transcended physical reality. These instances were written to explain the nature of Jesus, rather than to say anything about the relationship between Jesus and his followers. In the apocryphal Acts, in those instances where Jesus is disguised and unrecognised, he is cast in the role of a disguised god and divine helper. No longer the hero of the story, Jesus acts as a god coming to help his devotees who are well aware that he remains active in the world.

There is, therefore, a difference in the way Jesus is presented in his post-resurrection appearances. In the Canonical Gospels, Jesus appears as both a disguised hero, and a disguised God. In the apocryphal Gospels and Acts, he appears as either a disguised god, or an undisguised, but metamorphic being.

**8.2: Tabulations and Patterns Discovered**

This thesis has looked at a large range of stories, both those which contain Jesus as a character, and those which involve other characters. The following table summarises the stories in which a character appears in a disguised or metamorphosed form which have been examined in this study. As can be seen, stories which contain both unrecognisable heroes (0-0-0), and unrecognisable gods (1-1-1) appear in Greco-Roman, Jewish, and Jesus-specific narratives:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Story Set</th>
<th>Reference</th>
<th>Code1330</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Greco-Roman Stories</td>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 16.172f</td>
<td>E (0-1-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 19.380f</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 21.221f</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 23.190f</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Homer, <em>Od.</em> 1.105f</td>
<td>H (1-1-1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Euripides, <em>Iph. taur.</em> 808f</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Aeschylus, <em>Cho.</em> 165-263</td>
<td>A (0-0-0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1330 The meaning of these codes is explained in the table found on page 148.
| Euripides, *El.* | A (0-0-0) |
| Sophocles, *El.* | A (0-0-0) |
| Sophocles, *Oed. tyr.* | A (0-0-0) |
| Seneca, *Her. fur.* | A (0-0-0) |
| Seneca, *Oed.* 811-2, 857. | A (0-0-0) |
| Longus, *Daphn.* 4.16f. | A (0-0-0) |
| Euripides, *Bacch.* 1284 | E (0-1-0) |
| Euripides, *Ion* 1397-1401 | A (0-0-0) |
| Menander, *Perik.* 774-825 | A (0-0-0) |
| Plautus, *Poen.* 5.2. | C (0-0-1) |
| Plautus, *Poen.* 5.3-4 | A (0-0-0) |
| *HH 7* 6-54 | D (1-0-1) |
| Ovid, *Metam.* 8.631-720 | H (1-1-1) |
| Homer, *Od.* 13.221f | H (1-1-1) |
| *HH 5* 180f | H (1-1-1) |
| Homer, *Il.* 24.460 | H (1-1-1) |
| Homer, *Il.* 3.385f | H(1-1-1) |
| *HH 2* | H (1-1-1) |
| Gen 16:7-14 | H(1-1-1) |
| Gen 18:1-15 | H (1-1-1) |
| Gen 38:12-26 | A (0-0-0) |
| Gen 42-45 (esp. 45:1-4) | A (0-0-0) |
| Gen 42-46 (esp. 45:26-28; 46:29) | E (0-1-0) |
| Judg 13:3-23 | H (1-1-1) |
| Judg 6:11-24 | D (1-0-1) |
| Tob 5-12, 12:6-22 | H (1-1-1) |
| John 20:11-18 | (A-C) 0-0-0/1 |
| John 20:19f | (A) 0-0-0 |
| John 21:4-14 | (A) 0-0-0 |
| Luke 24:1-11 | (A) 0-0-0 |
| Luke 24:1-11 | (H) 1-1-1 |
| Luke 24:13-35 | (A) 0-0-0 |
| Luke 24:36-53 | (D-H) 1-1/0-1 |
| Mark 16:12-13 | ?-?-? (summary statement with too little information) |
| Mark 16:14 | ?-?-? (summary statement with too little information) |
| Mark 16:9 | ?-?-? (summary statement with too little information) |
The common link between all of the stories has been that one (or more) of the characters appears in an altered form. In some cases this altered form caused the other participants to not recognise the altered character, in which case disguise was also present. In some of these instances of disguise the other people subsequently recognised who the character was. This subset of stories was the main focus of this study.

There were, however, other stories which contained the theme of metamorphosis, or an altered form, without any disguise being present. This means that although the character took on a different form, nevertheless, the other characters still knew who they were. Metamorphosis stories and disguise stories were thus seen to be overlapping but non-identical story types.

Stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances fit into many of these categories. There are some Jesus stories which contain metamorphosis without any disguise. There are stories where Jesus’ altered form acts as a disguise, and stories where, though originally unrecognisable, he is recognised later in the story. These last stories can be sorted into two story types: ones in which Jesus acts as a disguised hero returning to his people, and ones where Jesus acts as a disguised god, acting as a helper character, to aid the heroes of the story. The following diagram displays the

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1331 The “NA” indicates that the metamorphosis in this story is not used for the purpose of disguise, and as such there is no need for the character to either reveal their identity, or for their identity to be discovered.
way disguise and metamorphosis stories relate to each other, with a number of examples:

Three distinguishing characteristics were identified, which were used to classify the disguise stories in which a recognition took place into one of two groups: disguised hero, or disguised god stories. The first was simply whether Jesus appeared as the main character in the story, or whether he appeared instead as a character aiding, or interacting with the other characters. The other two characteristics proved to be more useful. The first was whether Jesus was recognised due to the use of some sign or token, or whether he revealed himself. The second was how the knowledge was passed on to the other characters: was it as a result of the recognition itself, or was the recognition tangential to the information, which was passed on in some other manner. The stories tended to cluster into one of two groups:

1. Jesus is the hero of the story, he is recognised through the use of tokens, and the other characters gain knowledge through the act of recognising him.

2. Jesus is a helper in the story, he reveals his identity, and the other characters gain knowledge not through the recognition, but via some other means.

In terms of the codes used throughout this thesis, the groupings are:
In arriving at these criteria, two aspects of the stories were examined. First, what was the structure of the story, and second, the purpose of the story in the wider narrative. As well as these story types, there are other metamorphosis stories which do not contain the element of disguise at all. These stories form a set of their own.

When Jesus appears in a disguised hero story, it is not only his identity which is recognised, but also his position within society, and his relationships with other characters. It is recognition that, yes, this is their friend Jesus, but as well as this, that Jesus is not who they assumed him to be. There are two questions which are answered in the recognition, and they both have different answers before and after the recognition event.

The first question which might be asked of the characters is: “Who is this man in front of you?” which would be answered before the recognition as “a stranger,” “the gardener,” or “a fisherman.” The same question would be answered after the recognition as “It is my friend Jesus!” This is a recognition of the identity of the character. The other question which might be posed is “Who is Jesus?” Before the recognition the answer would be “my dead friend who was a failed Messiah”. After the recognition this question would be answered “My living and successful and conquering Lord”. The answer to both questions has changed due to the recognition event.

Hence, there is an instance of replacement recognition: this is not the gardener, it is in fact Jesus. At the same time there is also an instance of addition recognition: It is Jesus whom we know, but in addition to this he is the rightful leader to whom we should dedicate our lives, and whom we should follow. Thus, there are two questions which are answered when Jesus appears as a disguised hero. First, “Who is this person in front of me?”, and second, “Who is Jesus, and how do I relate to him?” There is an identity question, and a relationship question.
In contrast, when Jesus appears as a disguised god, it is just his identity which is recognised. The answer to the question “Who is this person in front of me?” would, as in the hero recognition story, be different after the recognition had taken place. However, the answer to the question “who is Jesus?” would be the same before and after the recognition event: Jesus is a divine helper who instructs his followers, and aids them in their quests.

The only question which is posed when Jesus appears in disguised god stories is: “Who is this person in front of me?” The answer “It is Jesus” lets the character, and audience know that Jesus is still involved in the world, but this was already assumed at the start of the story, so it does not change the understanding of who Jesus is, and there is no need to reassess relationships, or Jesus’ place in the world.

Both disguised hero and disguised god stories deal with relationships, but in different ways. In the disguised hero story, the very nature of the relationship with Jesus is explored, and the nature of the relationship is radically reassessed. In the disguised god story, the nature of the relationship with Jesus is already established, but it is emphasised that Jesus continues to be active in the world by assisting his followers.

Both story types tell the characters that Jesus is still very much active in the world, and that his involvement did not end at the point of his death. In the disguised god stories a further point is emphasised: Jesus’ involvement also did not stop at the point of his ascension. Jesus is now an actor in the world in the form of a divine helper. In disguised god stories, the ascension is not seen as a one-way trip which results in the end of Jesus’ involvement in worldly affairs.

The chart below summarises the different ways in which Jesus appears, and the questions posed and answered in each case:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Narrative</th>
<th>Answer to question</th>
<th>Focus</th>
<th>Appearing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Is Jesus still with us?</td>
<td>Disguised hero story.</td>
<td>Yes, Jesus has returned, and is</td>
<td>Relationships.</td>
<td>In canonical works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Type of Story</td>
<td>Relationship</td>
<td>Type of Works</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the metaphysical nature of Jesus?</td>
<td>Undisguised metamorphosis story.</td>
<td>Various: he is transcendent to physical reality.</td>
<td>Metaphysics/ontology. In apocryphal works.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 8.3: Final Conclusions

The title of this thesis posed the question: Does Jesus more closely resemble Athene or Odysseus in his post-resurrection appearances? In other words, is he presented as a disguised god or a disguised hero?

I have shown that the stories in which characters appear in an unrecognisable form can be grouped into stories with distinct character roles identified for disguised hero and undisguised metamorphosis story. Various: he is transcendent to physical reality. This grouping works on a range of stories written before Jesus’ post-resurrection accounts were composed. Athena and Odysseus served as typical instances of these character types. It is unlikely that the educated writers involved in the creation of stories about Jesus’ post-resurrection appearances would have been unaffected by either the folklore heritage or, more importantly, the Greco-Roman collections of stories. They, therefore, used a range of narrative tools to present Jesus in distinct roles.

There are two possible interpretations for Jesus’ altered post-resurrection appearances. The disguise or metamorphosis story may have been written in order to display something about the nature of Jesus’ body, in order to inform the reader about Jesus’
nature. Such stories address a set of related questions: what sort of being is Jesus, what was his body like, did he transcend reality, and was he a man or a god? The central concern of such passages is Christological and metaphysical. The instances where Jesus appears in a metamorphic but undisguised manner fall into this category. However, in the cases where Jesus is disguised and later recognised, the stories serve a very different purpose, and the central concern is not the metaphysical nature of Jesus and his body, but rather Jesus’ relationship with his followers. He is presented in a different manner in different stories because he is playing a different role, and the different roles inform the reader about different aspects of the relationship Jesus has with his followers.

In the canonical Gospels, Jesus is presented as both a disguised hero, and a disguised god. In the apocryphal Gospels and Acts there is a marked difference in the way Jesus’ post-resurrection accounts are presented. Jesus is no longer presented as a disguised hero, and the plot is no longer that of a returning hero story. The metamorphosis in the apocryphal Gospels was often not for the sake of disguise, but was rather to demonstrate something about the nature of Jesus, either that he had conquered death, or that he transcended physical reality. These instances were written to say something about Jesus’ body and nature, rather than about the relationship between Jesus and his followers. When metamorphosis is used for the purpose of disguise in the apocryphal Acts, Jesus takes the role of a disguised god.

In the disguised hero stories, which are prevalent in the canonical Gospels, the important relationship question was whether Jesus was still alive, and whether the broken relationships could be healed. These are themes which are best addressed by a returning disguised hero story. In contrast, in disguised god stories, which are prevalent in the apocryphal Acts, there is no doubt at the start of the story that Jesus is still active in the world, and there is no doubt that his disciples are in a restored relationship with him. The relationship question which the disguised god stories address is whether Jesus continues to be active in the world helping and commanding his disciples.

Hence, in answer to the question: “Is Jesus Athene or Odysseus?” Jesus is portrayed as Odysseus at times, and Athene at other times. This depends upon the role he is
playing in the narrative at that point. When he is the hero of the story, he is portrayed
more like Odysseus, and the scenes where he appears in disguise are more akin to
hero recognition scenes. This is to establish that Jesus is still active after his death,
and to show that the relationship between Jesus and his followers has been healed and
reassessed. When he is the divine helper in the story, and another character is the
hero, he is portrayed more like Athene, and the scenes where he appears in disguise
are disguised god scenes. This is to establish that Jesus is still active in the world
even after his ascension. He continues to appear in person to aid his disciples in their
quests, as they become the new heroes of the story.
Bibliography:


