WHAT WOULD JESUS WEAR?
DRESS IN THE SYNOPTIC GOSPELS

by

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ABSTRACT

For early followers of Jesus, the body was not a “fixed” entity, yet bodily fixity was a constant concern. The primary way to “fix” the body, or to negotiate and locate identity, was through dress. Dress in the ancient Mediterranean context enabled a different kind of embodied knowledge than contemporary conventions of dress, and in order to understand passages in the synoptic gospels that use items of dress in the flow of their narrative, these garments must be examined in context. The first chapter of this dissertation outlines a methodology of dressed bodies that integrates bodily experience with social practice. This methodology provides the framework for subsequent discussion. The second chapter examines the preponderance of cloaks in the gospels, particularly the gospel of Mark, from a material perspective, arguing that cloaks are not symbolic of inner or other meanings, but are constitutive of meaning in and of themselves. The third chapter focuses on absent clothes and naked bodies, specifically the absent clothes of the disciples according to Jesus’ instructions for their travel and work. Jesus commands the disciples to go naked in a dressed society, to identify with a typically rejected state. Finally, chapter four focuses on Mark 14:51-52 and the mysterious flight of the naked man into the night, arguing that it not so mysterious after all: the young man, losing his cloak at the violent scene of Jesus’ arrest, leaves it behind in order to flee, joining many other ancient
men and women who lost their cloaks in similar situations. When the realities of ancient dress are taken into account, occurrences of dress in the gospels make new sense. The gospel writers use dress as the material means to concretize the identity and qualities of Jesus and his followers.
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INTRODUCTION

The show ran for ten years, so it must have been popular. The Learning Channel’s *What Not to Wear* was a “reality” television show airing in the United States and Canada from 2003 – 2013, based on a UK series of the same name.\(^1\) *What Not to Wear* pulled in ratings for a decade, yet every single episode was the same. Two cranky New York City fashion stylists, working alongside a team of glamorous hairdressers and makeup artists, transform a hapless, drab participant, usually nominated for the show without their knowledge or consent, from ugly, sad duckling into graceful, happy swan according to the stylists’ “rules” of fashion (detail at the narrowest part of the body to draw attention and emphasize narrowness; v-shaped necklines elongate the neck; one can work with the shape of the body through dress instead of just accepting it). No one leaves unhappy, untransformed; no one leaves with frumpy sweatpants still in tow.

Makeover participants boast the same delighted refrain: “I finally feel like my outside matches my inside,” or some variation of, “Now my appearance fits my self, matches *me.*” As *What Not to Wear*’s fundamental theme, this sentiment has resonated with audiences. The “makeover” as a genre appears in countless iterations, but the premise seems to remain the same: appearance should match personality, should match “self.” The outside should “look like” the inside.

This equivalence of outside and inside as expressed on TLC’s *What Not to Wear* is relatively harmless compared to what Joanne Entwistle and Elizabeth Wissinger call the “aesthetic labour” of fashion models. Aesthetic labour, defined as “particular

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\(^1\) The US show also aired in Spain under the title ¡No te lo pongas! (“Don’t put it on!”); in Portugal and Brazil it was titled *Esquadrão da Moda* (“Fashion Police”).

‘embodied capacities and attributes’ … that enable employees to ‘look good and sound right’ for the job,” involves the cultivation of embodied dispositions that allow one to be accepted into and succeed in a workplace.² This labour could involve a relatively simple action such as a woman learning how to walk in high-heeled shoes or hiring a personal stylist, or become extreme, as in the case of fashion modeling.³ Models must actively turn their bodies into commercial products, products that must be sold in five minutes or less, that present an entire commodified “package” of body plus image, or body plus an interesting, sellable “self.” Entwistle and Wissinger write, “[t]he aesthetic worker does not merely manufacture an aesthetic surface, but projects and produces a particular ‘self,’ in the form of ‘personality,’ as part of their aesthetic labour and… the implications of this labour are physical and emotional.”⁴ The maintenance of body as self and product is constant, as models could run into potential employers at any time: “the freelance aesthetic labourer cannot walk away from the product, which is their entire embodied self.”⁵ This embodied self includes dress as a vital component, dress which includes items of clothing as well as hairdressing, skin (tattoos, piercings), cosmetics, nails, etc.

Despite the silliness of the television program and the extremity of the fashion industry, the examples draw attention to a current focus of research on dress: dress as embodied practice. Dress is not simply communicative or representative of identity, but is constitutive of identity. Far from being superficial or frivolous, dress is a key element in

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⁴ Entwistle and Wissinger, “Keeping up appearances,” 777.

⁵ Entwistle and Wissinger, “Keeping up appearances,” 791.
the negotiation of self and social world. Defined as any modification or supplementation of the body used in social interaction and the orientation of identity, dress is significant across social and historical contexts; every known human culture structures and is structured by certain conventions of dress. Dress is something that individuals choose to express personality or even passing whims, though this choice is limited within a prescribed range of agency. Social, political and economic norms influence individual behaviour, and dress is also partly the expression, through repeated practice, of these norms. Joanne Entwistle states: “dress is an embodied practice, a situated bodily practice that is embedded within the social world and fundamental to microsocial order…. individuals/subjects are active in their engagement with the social and …dress is thus actively produced through routine practices directed towards the body.” Dress is so essential to our bodily experience of being-in-the-world that we do not often think about why we get dressed in the way that we do every morning. Everyone knows that a CEO should not wear a Speedo in the boardroom; that would be “wrong.” I should not wear a wedding dress to my dissertation defense; that would be “weird.”

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6 I here define dress in contrast to “fashion,” which connotes ephemeral trend or a commodified, elite lifestyle; “clothing,” which is too specific; or “costume,” which connotes theatre or non-normative performance. Ronald A. Schwarz emphasizes the human aspect of dress: while some chimpanzees have been known to “decorate” their bodies with rags or paint, he asserts that there is no evidence for regular or recognizably “stylistic” use of dress among primates. R.A. Schwarz, “Uncovering the Secret Vice: Toward an Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment,” 23 – 45 in The Fabrics of Culture: The Anthropology of Clothing and Adornment, ed. Justine M. Cordwell and Ronald A. Schwarz (World Anthropology; The Hague: Mouton, 1979), 24. I realize that “identity,” used in this definition of dress and throughout my dissertation, is a complicated, contested term, a term that is “necessary” yet “impossible” (Stuart Hall, “Introduction: Who Needs ‘Identity’?” 1 – 18 in Questions of Cultural Identity, ed. Stuart Hall and Paul du Gay [London and Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 1996], 16). I will break down what I mean by “identity” in the ancient Mediterranean context further in chapter one.

The theory of dress as embodied practice draws on a long history of study from disciplines ranging across the humanities and social sciences. Chapter one of this dissertation will draw this theorizing out in more detail, creating a framework for the interpretation of dress in the gospel narratives of Mark, Matthew and Luke, the three “synoptic” gospels. Dress in these narratives, I will argue, is best understood through

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9 Mark, Matthew and Luke are called the “synoptic” gospels because they have so much material shared in common, sometimes even word-for-word parallels, that they should be read or “seen” together (syn-optic meaning “see together”). The prevalence of shared material (agreements in wording, agreements in order or sequence, even agreements in parenthetical material) indicates that the three gospels exist in some sort of literary relationship, though scholars disagree about the nature of this relationship (which gospel was written first, which gospel used another as a source, etc.). I take the most commonly held view regarding the “synoptic problem,” the study of the similarities and differences between the three gospels in order to explain their literary relationship, known as the two-document hypothesis: Mark was the earliest gospel of the three, and Matthew and Luke used both Mark as a source and another, lost source now known as Q (Quelle), a sayings gospel.
this embodiment paradigm as dress in the ancient Mediterranean (the lands bordering the Mediterranean Sea in the centuries surrounding the turn of the common era) was a fundamentally “fleshy” thing. Entwistle states that the body and dress “operate dialectically: dress works on the body, imbuing it with social meaning, while the body is a dynamic field that gives life and fullness to dress…. the dressed body is a fleshy, phenomenological entity that is so much a part of our experience of the social world, so thoroughly embedded within the micro-dynamics of the social order, as to be entirely taken for granted.”\textsuperscript{10} The Greco-Roman body was a social/biological complex; the body was not only expressive of morals and social positioning, but played an active role in structuring, maintaining or challenging this positioning. These bodies were dressed bodies, and dress was the primary means of doing all of this social work.

Dress, bodily practice and social activity combine in the ancient Mediterranean in sometimes explicit, unequivocally embodied ways. Clement of Alexandria writes scathingly of prostitutes who let their shoes find their work for them, using the nails on the soles of their shoes to entice clients, “thus stamping the lustfulness of their own feelings onto the earth.”\textsuperscript{11} Archaeologists have discovered a ceramic sandal, presumably an imitation of an actual sandal, with the Greek word \textit{akolouthi} (“follow me”) written on the sole.\textsuperscript{12} The sole of the shoe was advertisement of gender, sexual status, occupation.

On the opposite end of the spectrum are tunics from fourth- to eighth-century Egypt that display representations of scenes from the life of Jesus in roundels and stripes

\textsuperscript{10} Entwistle, “Fashion,” 327.
\textsuperscript{11} Clement of Alexandria, \textit{Paed.} 2.11.116).
\textsuperscript{12} Sue Blundell, “Clutching at Clothes,” 143 – 69 in \textit{Women’s Dress in the Ancient Greek World}, ed. Lloyd Llewellyn-Jones (London: Duckworth, 2002), here 150. Shoes were found in a shipwreck with a trident-shape nailed into the sole; if the hope of the wearer was for protection at sea, the shoes were unfortunately ineffective.
running vertically from the shoulders (clavi). These tunics offer a radically different perspective on embodied dress: Stephen Davis argues that, used in ritual activities, these tunics could have constructed, for their wearers, a literal “putting on” of Christ. A common metaphor in early Christian writings (Galatians 3:27; Romans 13:14; Colossians 3:9b-10; Athanasius, Ep. fest. 4.3; 7.10; Cyril of Alexandria, John 91e-92a), the putting on of Christ with a tunic raises the possibility that this metaphor was actualized through material dress: “such tunics became means by which Christological realities were performed and im-personated.”

Davis suggests that the tunics had both apotropaic and mimetic functions, allowing the wearer to participate mimetically in the divinized body of the incarnate Christ. While Davis does not discuss clavi in his article, stripes on the tunic in the Greco-Roman world were emblems of elevated status; portraying the gospel scenes along clavi could be a re-orientation of status around Christian identity.

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13 Stephen J. Davis, “Fashioning a Divine Body: Coptic Christology and Ritualized Dress,” HTR 98.3 (2005): 335 – 62, here 359. Davis draws his evidence not just from the tunics themselves but from texts that discuss dress as well; Shenoute of Atripe, for example, uses embroidered images on linen garments to identify and correct errors in Christology among monks (fifth century CE; Shenoute, And It Happened One Day; ed. L.Th. Lefort, Catéchès chrétienne de Chenoute; “Zeitschrift für ägyptische Sprache und Altertumskunde” 80 (1955) 40-45; Davis, “Fashioning,” 353. Asterius of Amaseia complains that people have not only been wearing images of living things on their bodies, lions, bears, forests, hunters and the like, but “the more religious among rich men and women, having picked out the story of the Gospels, have handed it over to the weavers – I mean our Christ together with all His disciples, and each one of the miracles the way it is related. You may see the wedding of Galilee with the water jars, the paralytic carrying his bed on his shoulders, the blind man healed by means of clay, the woman with an issue of blood seizing [Christ’s] hem, the sinful woman falling at the feet of Jesus, Lazarus coming back to life from his tomb. In doing this they consider themselves to be religious and to be wearing clothes that are agreeable to God (ιµάτα κεχαρισµένα τοῦ Θεοῦ). If they accepted my advice, they would sell those clothes and honor instead the living images of God. Do not depict Christ (for that one act of humility, the incarnation … is sufficient unto Him, ἵνα γίνητο ἡµᾶς ἐν τῷ ἐνσώματι τοῦ Λόγου)`. Davis suggests that people in Asterius’ community are treating the scenes of Jesus as acts of incarnation: “that one act of humility, the incarnation… is sufficient unto Him.” Asterius of Amaseia, Homily 1 (PG 40:165C-168B); trans. Cyril Mango, The Art of the Byzantine Empire, 312-1453: Sources and Documents (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1972), 50-51; in Davis, “Fashioning,” 353-54.

14 “Christian” is a term that applies to the context under discussion in Davis’ article, but not to the discussion of at least Mark and Matthew’s gospels. The author of Luke-Acts uses the term Χριστιανούς in Acts 11:26, stating that the disciples were called “Christians” for the first time in Antioch, probably derisively (cf. Acts 26:28; 1 Peter 4:16). Acts was likely composed around 80 – 85 CE, as were Luke and Matthew. Mark was likely composed around 65 – 70 CE. “Christian” is not a term that applies to the
Dress in the writings of the early Jesus movement is not generally as literal as we find in these two very obviously embodied examples. Dress is used in metaphor (“No one sews a piece of unshrunken cloth on an old cloak; if he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made,” Mark 2:21; Ὑδεις ἐπιβλημα ράκους ἁγνάφου ἐπιράπτει ἐπὶ ἰμάτιον παλαιόν· εἰ δὲ μή, αἱρεῖ τὸ πλήρωμα ἀπ’ αὐτοῦ τὸ καινὸν τοῦ παλαιοῦ καὶ χέρων σχίσμα γίνεται); in vivid imagery in the Book of Revelation (1:13; 3:4, 17; 4:4; 6:11; 7:9, 13; 12:1; 15:5; 16:15; 17:4; 18:16; 19:7, 13; 21:2-9; 22:14); and in discussion of communal behaviour and boundaries (1 Corinthians 11:2-16; 1 Peter 3:1-6; 1 Timothy 2:9-15). Scholarships on dress in New Testament texts have focused on either the symbolism of clothing or clothing as imagery (the “putting on” of Christ, for example), or on instances where dress, specifically women’s dress, has caused enough tension in the community to warrant some kind of authoritative response, some attempt at regimentation.

More recently, scholars have turned to social and economic realities of ancient dress in the interpretation of 1 Timothy and 1 Peter. Alicia Batten has argued...
persuasively that women in early Christian communities were likely using the only means they had available to them – their objects of adornment – in competitions for honour. While male writers tend to criticize women’s adornment, women seem to have treated objects such as jewellery, luxury garments and elaborate hairstyling as valued economic and social capital. Female competition for status was seen as a threat to male honour and status and therefore, in the context of 1 Timothy and 1 Peter, a threat to public perception.17

As Batten notes, despite texts like 1 Timothy and 1 Peter, women seem to have kept adorning themselves, and early Church writers spend a substantial amount of time on women’s dress. Tertullian has an entire treatise devoted to the apparel of women (De cultu feminarum). On Christian women’s hairdressing, Tertullian contemptuously writes,

Some women prefer to tie up [their hair] in little curls … some of you affix to your heads I know not what monstrosities of sewn and woven wigs … [in] open defiance of the Lord’s precepts, one of which declares that no one can add anything to his/her stature (ad mensuram neminem sibi adicere posse pronunitatum est). Yet you do add something to your weight by piling some kind of rolls or shield-bosses upon your necks!18

According to Tertullian, Jesus himself forbids elaborate hairdressing.

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17 Alicia J. Batten, “Neither Gold nor Braided Hair (1 Timothy 2.9; 1 Peter 3.3): Adornment, Gender and Honour in Antiquity,” NTS 55 (2009): 484 – 501; 501: “Adornment could have functioned as an expression and enhancement of female honour while it was simultaneously jeopardizing the honour of men.”

Contributions to the study of dress in New Testament and early non-biblical texts have focused on either the symbolism of clothing more generally or on explicit discussion of women’s dress in the policing of identity boundaries in the early church. New Testament research has concentrated on epistles and the Book of Revelation. The work of this dissertation is to address instances of dress in the synoptic literature – instances where dress is not a topic for discussion, but appears as narrative detail. My argument is that dress in the synoptics functions on the body of Jesus and off the bodies of Jesus’ disciples materially, as literal material stuff. Appearing almost peripherally, on the edge of our vision, dress in the gospels is determinant of behaviour and identity. Dress situates, habituates, motivates and incites. Interpreted through a framework of dress as embodied practice, dress in the synoptic gospels transforms into an essential material field for the negotiation of identity.

Given that we have so few material remains from the Greco-Roman world, a “material” approach to dress in the synoptic gospels might seem like an odd choice. Even with material remains, material does not equate to practice, just as text cannot be read as practice. I use as many diverse elements as I can in my analysis from a limited time frame – early Christian writings, literary texts, rhetorical texts, inscriptions, art and image – to try to flesh out ancient Mediterranean dress as much as possible. I rely heavily on documentary papyri for their evidence regarding dress; documentary papyri are “everyday” texts, usually recording personal correspondence, local business, small petitions or complaints, that do not have a particular agenda the way a rhetorical text might, and are also not literary productions. While limited in geographical context, documentary papyri are about as close as we can get to the lives of real people.
I first frame my analysis within a theory of dress that integrates bodily experience with social practice. The second chapter examines the preponderance of cloaks in the gospels, particularly the gospel of Mark, from a material perspective, arguing that cloaks are not symbolic of inner or other meanings, but are constitutive of meaning in and of themselves. The third chapter focuses on absent clothes and naked bodies, specifically the absent clothes of the disciples according to Jesus’ instructions for their travel and work. Jesus commands the disciples to go naked in a dressed society, to identify with a typically rejected state. Finally, chapter four focuses on Mark 14:51-52 and the mysterious flight of the naked man into the night, arguing that it not so mysterious after all: the young man, losing his cloak at the violent scene of Jesus’ arrest, leaves it behind in order to flee, joining many other ancient men and women who lost their cloaks in similar situations. When the realities of ancient dress are taken into account, occurrences of dress in the gospels make new sense. The gospel writers use dress as the material means to concretize the identity and qualities of Jesus and his followers.
1 Introduction

Jesus’ advice to his disciples in Matthew 6:25-34 and Luke 12:22-31 that they free themselves of anxiety is adapted from the evangelists’ reading of Q:

διὰ τούτων λέγω ὑμῖν· μὴ μεριμνάτε τῇ ὑπηργίᾳ τῆς φάγησις, μηδὲ τῷ σῶματι τί ἐνδύσησθε. οὐχὶ ἡ ψυχὴ πλεῖόν ἐστιν τῆς τροφῆς καὶ τὸ σῶμα τοῦ ἐνδύματος;

Therefore I tell you: Do not be anxious about your life, what you are to eat, nor about your body, with what you are to clothe yourself. Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing (Q 12:22b-23)?

The basic pairings in Q (and in Matthew and Luke) are “soul” or “life” (ψυχή) with food, and “body” (σῶμα) with clothing. The sayings collection aims to subvert these pairings: life is about more than eating, and the body is about or worth more than dressing.

However, in attempting to subvert the pairings, Q 12 in effect highlights their essential connections. The connections between “life” and “food” and “body” and “clothing,” are

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significant and immediate, though the significance is more complex, for the contemporary reader, in the case of body and clothing than in the case of life and food. In the highly visual society of the ancient eastern Mediterranean, a society in which people “gazed” at others and were gazed upon, what you could see of someone else – his or her clothed or unclothed body – formed your perception of that person’s identity: his or her kinship group, honour status, occupation, age, gender, religious affiliation, etc.

The body was intelligible through dress. Dressed bodies encoded specific sets of meanings, as did undressed bodies. Instruction to “be free” of concerns of dress (and consequently of the body) seems impossible. “Do not worry about the body” – what could be more difficult?

For early Jesus-followers, the body required constant “fixing,” ongoing, repeated attempts at stabilization. The primary way to “fix” the body was through dress, as the dressed body was one’s offering to the social world, and the enactment of the social

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2 For more on “the gaze,” see, for example, the volume edited by David Fredrick, The Roman Gaze: Vision, Power, and the Body (Baltimore and London: Johns Hopkins University, 2002). See also Pamela Klassen’s statement about religious identity: “religious identity is embedded in a material world in which identities of all kinds are profoundly shaped by what we can see of each other, and how we fit such visions into our own assumptions and categories.” Pamela Klassen, “The Robes of Womanhood: Dress and Authenticity Among African American Methodist Women in the Nineteenth Century” Religion and American Culture 14.1 (2004): 39-82, here 71.

3 Scholars have persuasively demonstrated that Q was framed by “middling” figures, figures for whom the securing of “daily bread” was not an issue, as opposed to smallholders and peasants. Even if food was not a concern, dress would have been. As I will show, the presentation of the body through dress was a constant anxiety in the Greco-Roman world, no matter what one’s status or position. The anxiety saying in Q does indeed function on the level of metaphor, but the connection between body and dress and the accompanying concern for the correct display of body through dress is also literal. On the framing of Q, see William E. Arnal, Jesus and the Village Scribes: Galilean Conflicts and the Setting of Q (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2001); Giovanni Battista Bazzana, “Village Scribes Behind Q: The Social and Political Profile of the Sayings Gospel in Light of Documentary Papyri,” in Auf Fels oder Sand Gebaut? Die Q-Forschung: Rückblicke – Einblicke – Ausblincke, ed. Christoph Heil (BETL; Leuven: Peeters, 2014); Giovanni Battista Bazzana, Kingdom and Bureaucracy: The Political Theology of Galilean Village Scribes (BETL; Leuven: Peeters, 2014); Giovanni Battista Bazzana, “Basileia and Debt Relief: The Forgiveness of Debts in the Lord’s Prayer in the Light of Documentary Papyri,” CBQ 73.3 (2011): 511-25; John S. Kloppenborg, “Literary Convention, Self-Evidence, and the Social History of the Q People,” 77 – 102 in Early Christianity. Q and Jesus, ed. John S. Kloppenborg, in collaboration with Leif E. Vaage (Semeia 55; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); Sarah Rollens, “Framing Social Criticism in the Jesus Movement: The Ideological Project in the Sayings Gospel Q,” Ph.D. diss., Department for the Study of Religion (University of Toronto, 2013).
world upon the body. This chapter explores theories of the body in relation to dress, offering a new interpretative paradigm for synoptic material relating to the dress of both major and minor narrative players. This paradigm will act as the foundation for a discussion of dress in the gospels that takes the material reality of items of dress as the baseline for analysis. The contextualized materiality of dress makes new space possible in our interpretation of how Jesus, according to the gospel writers, was understood and how Jesus negotiated the identities of his followers, petitioners or fans.

We cannot understand synoptics references to dress based on contemporary approaches to dress and the body. Dress meant something different in the ancient Mediterranean than in the North America (my current context) of 2014. Translations of biblical texts often hide these differences; it makes no sense, for example, for Jesus in Matthew to say that if sued, one should give away both coat and cloak, because people did not wear “coats” (Matt 5:40). The connection between dress and body will be built gradually throughout this chapter: I will situate the discussion in its Mediterranean context, describing ancient theories of the body; next, I will move to an exploration of how bodies come to mean and have meaning more broadly; finally, I will make explicit the connection between body and dress. The goal of the chapter is to weave various threads of thought about the body together with an understanding of dress; this “seamless garment” will offer a new foundation for a social-scientific interpretation of dress within the synoptic gospels. This foundation will highlight the very different social world of the synoptic texts and, in highlighting this “strangeness,” render these ancient references to dress intelligible within this bodily, performative framework.
Bodily practice is constitutive of knowledge about the world and of social location in the world. Dress plays an essential role in this embodied knowledge and representation, shaping our (un)conscious presentation of self and our experience and interpretation of other(s). Examined within this theoretical perspective, dress in the synoptic gospels becomes a rich source of interpretative capital, working to bound, negotiate and reframe identity.

2 In whose/what image? Conceptualizing the ancient Mediterranean body

I have used the same technique several times now, in several different classes: when I begin discussion about Jesus, either in the context of a course on the gospels or a general introduction to Christian religious traditions, I lead this discussion with an interview. Students arrange themselves into groups of three and assign starting roles: interviewer (reporter), interviewee, and recorder. The interviewer asks the interviewee the following questions about Jesus:

What was Jesus like as a person? What was his character or personality like?

What did Jesus look like? Be as specific as possible (height, weight, hair colour, build, skin colour, clothing, facial features, etc.).

For people who lived at the time of Jesus and encountered him, or heard of him, what were some common reactions?

If you had lived during Jesus’ lifetime, how do you think you would have reacted to him?

What sources have been most important in shaping your views about who Jesus was and what he did?
The recorder writes the first set of responses down on an interview sheet. This process is repeated twice more, so that each member of the group has played each role. The activity is a recognized collaborative learning technique, the “Three-Step Interview.”

The results of these interviews reveal portraits of Jesus that look very much like the individual students themselves, or that reflect in some way the concerns or situations of the students. “My partner said that Jesus was an outsider, a loner. He was different than everyone else,” remarks a student about a member of her group, a quiet student who has not yet spoken aloud in class and looks away when I attempt eye contact. “Jesus was a jock,” a student in university athletic gear asserts definitively. “Jesus wasn’t white the way people say he was,” says a student representing a visible minority group in the classroom, shaking her head. “He was, like, almost black.” The same dynamics that shaped the quest for the historical Jesus – each scholar producing a Jesus that reflected his (or rarely her) own scholarly perspective or concerns – shape classroom discussion about Jesus. The goal of the exercise is to introduce students to the idea that, much as they have their own different portraits of Jesus, we also find different portraits of Jesus within the New Testament itself, within the canonical gospels. The discussion helps create a sense of comfort with the contradictions or diversity within the New Testament texts. Jesus is continually created in the individual’s own image.

The contemporary imagination of Jesus in each student’s own image is not a new phenomenon. The relevance of this exercise here is its connection to discourse on the body, particularly idealized bodies, “perfect” bodies. The athlete’s comment that Jesus was a jock, for example, resonates with a current concern to fit Jesus into contemporary

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4 See the description in Elizabeth F. Barkley, K. Patricia Cross and Claire Howell Major, Collaborative learning techniques: a handbook for college faculty (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass [John Wiley & Sons], 2005), 121-25.
ideals of masculinity. Jesus accrues more cultural capital if he can beat Ganesh in a fistfight, if he is “not a wimp” – if he represents an ideal construction of masculinity.⁵

The continual invention of Jesus offers a parallel example of the continual invention of the body, or parallels this invention of the body.⁶ As Caroline Walker Bynum asserts, “the body has a history.”⁷ This history is one of surprise and imagination, a history of such change in terms of conceptualizations of the body that Bynum is able to state that the body did new things in the Middle Ages: “[t]he body, and in particular the female body, seems to have begun to behave in new ways at a particular moment in the European past.”⁸ Even the bodies of the gods, linked to human understandings of body, are contextualized: “[t]he Ethiopians claim that their gods are flat-nosed and black-skinned; the Thracians, that they are blue-eyed and have red hair….; if oxen, horses and lions had hands with which to draw and make works like men, horses would represent the gods in the likeness of a horse, oxen in that of an ox, and each one would make for them a body like the one he himself possessed.”⁹ All bodies are historically contingent

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⁸ Bynum, Fragmentation, 195.

⁹ Xenophanes, frag. 16: Stromata 7.22.1, Kirk and Raven, Presocratic Philosophers, 171; Xenophanes, frag. 15: Stromata 5.109.1, Kirk and Raven, Presocratic Philosophers, 172; quoted in Jean-Pierre Vernant,
categories, created through human discourse and ways of knowing, and creating human discourse and ways of knowing at the same time.

The changing behaviour, constitution and experience of the body is not limited to medieval women or ancient conceptualizations of the gods, however; what “matters” about the body and how it matters is dynamic, ever shifting, situational to arguments about power, gender and sex. In this sense, bodies “do and do not seem to matter;” they govern experience, yet are constructed by or through experience as well.

Understanding ancient Mediterranean conceptualizations of the body is an essential step in the examination of the ancient Mediterranean clothed body as what was on the surface or boundary of the body was not at all superficial, but was rather the site of reality, or the place where self was constructed and where it confronted the other.

“Conceptualizations” of the body in the ancient Mediterranean is a necessary plural, as there was no singular idea or experience of the body. The ancient body cannot be discussed in terms of hard and fast ontological categories or as something stable or solid. Dale Martin describes the ancient body as a “confused commingling of substances… of a piece with its environment. The self was a precarious, temporary state of affairs, constituted by forces surrounding and pervading the body.” These forces are difficult to dichotomize, difficult to separate into distinct headings such as “gender,”

11 Laqueur, Making Sex, 24.
“nature,” “culture,” etc. The way contemporary minds lean towards categorization – even basic Cartesian categorization of self and body, thinking and being, immaterial and material – cannot work in the ancient Mediterranean. “Nature,” “culture,” “gender” are interwoven factors. Take, for example the Latin word usually translated as “man,” *vir*. Meanings for *vir* include man (as opposed to or related to “woman”), husband, man (as opposed to “boy”), a male who is courageous or worthy of honour, and soldier or foot soldier. Boys and male slaves, even though male, cannot be men; Jonathan Walters notes that slaves and freedmen are not usually called *viri*, but *pueri* (boys) or *hombres* (human beings, men). Man/woman, man/boy, man as husband, man as virtuous, man as soldier: a *vir* is gendered, socialized, moralized and appropriately occupied. Walters states,

> [v]ir … does not simply denote an adult male; it refers specifically to those adult males who are freeborn Roman citizens in good standing, those at the top of the Roman social hierarchy. A term that at first appears to refer to biological sex in fact is a description of gender-as-social-status, and the gender term itself is intimately interwoven with other factors of social status (birth and citizenship status, and respectability in general) that to us might not seem relevant to gender…. Not all males are men.

Walters here highlights the most important difference between ancient and contemporary bodies: the ancient body was not just or even primarily biological, but profoundly social. Sex and gender are embedded in the social status of the body, a status that was always violable and dynamic.

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15 Walters, “Invading,” 32.
This fundamental differentiation between the ancient and modern body is expressed in the ancient Mediterranean paradigm of penetrator/penetrated. The body performed one of these two functions: one was either penetrator or penetrated. The penetrator was normatively the adult male (starting at about the age of twenty), who was expected to penetrate (and to desire to penetrate) both women and boys between the ages of twelve to eighteen. Richlin writes, “the current impasse in choosing a model to describe ancient sexual systems might be resolved by describing ancient cultures as having had three gender roles: man, woman, and boy. Each of these genders has an appropriate role, either insertive or receptive.” Penetrator/penetrated, insertive/receptive, active/passive; contra Laqueur, genitals matter very much in this paradigm, as being “active” has “a single precise meaning. The one normative action is the penetration of a bodily orifice by a penis.”

Biology certainly matters here, but it is bundled together with other qualities or potentialities as well, including gender, social status, porosity and power. The body was socially constructed and interpreted: “[t]he boundary between the penetrable and the

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\[
\text{BOY penetrates ADULT MALE penetrates ADULT FEMALE penetrates TRIBAS} \\
\Rightarrow\text{CINAEDUS}
\]

impenetrable is as much a matter of social status in general as it is of “gender.” A person might have a penis, but the penis does not make him a “man.” To make this point clear, Richlin cites an excerpt from Aristophanes’ play *Thesmophoriazusae* (lines 136 – 43) in which men spy on a women’s festival. Ridiculing Agathon, a tragic playwright known to be both masculine and feminine in his behaviour, Mnesilochos jokes,

ποδαπὸς ὁ γυννις; τίς πάτρα; τίς ἡ στολή;
tiς ἡ τάραξις τοῦ βίου; τί βάρβιτος
λαλεὶ κροκωτῷ; τί δὲ λύρα κεκρυφάλῳ;
tί λήκυθος καὶ στρόφιον; ὦς σὲ ξύμφωρον.
tίς δαὶ κατόπτρω και ξίφους κοινωνίᾳ;
tίς δ᾽ αὐτὸς ὃ παὶ; πότερον ὃς ἀνήρ τρέφει;
καὶ ποῦ πέος; ποῦ χλαῖνα; ποῦ Λακωνικαί;
ἀλλ᾽ ὡς γυνὴ δήτ&eacute; : εἴτα ποὺ τὰ τιτθία;

Whence hails this woman-man? What his fatherland, what his frock (στολή)?
What be the confusion of his life? Why does the lyre babble in a saffron robe? Why a lyre in a hairnet?
Why a gym-bag (*lěkythos*, lit. ‘oil-jar’) and a bra [*strophion*]?
These things don’t go together.
What, prithee, does a sword have in common with a hand-mirror?
Who are you, boy? You call yourself a man?
And where’s your dick [*peos*]? Where’s your lumberjack [*chlaina*, lit. ‘cloak’]? Where’s your hunting boots [*Lakônikai*]?
Hmm, maybe you call yourself a woman? Then where’s your tits [*titthia*]?

Gender, sex and social status all come into play in the interpretation of Agathon; his body is made up of biological parts as well as “socially-marked appurtenances,” social configurations of dress and activity.

If the male is inviolable penetrator, the female is the easily violable opposite. The *vir*, the man/husband/soldier, protected body, household and empire from threats to boundaries: “the Roman sexual protocol that defined men as impenetrable penetrators can

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19 Walters, “Invading,” 32.
21 Richlin, “Body History,” 31-32. Richlin’s translation of χλαῖνα as “lumberjacket” is entertaining, but not entirely accurate; the χλαῖνα was a light cloak which was only worn by men, but it had a wide range of uses.
most usefully be seen in the context of a wider conceptual pattern that characterized those of high social status as being able to defend the boundaries of their body from invasive assaults of all kinds…. Social status was characterized on the basis of perceived bodily integrity and freedom, or the lack of it, from invasion from the outside.”

Men defended boundaries, while women continually violated them, moving from one household to another, characterized by leakiness and wetness. Anne Carson writes, “woman’s boundaries are pliant, porous, mutable. Her power to control them is inadequate, her concern for them unreliable. Deformation attends her. She swells, she shrinks, she leaks, she is penetrated, she suffers metamorphoses. The women of mythology regularly lose their form to monstrosity.”

Women must be bounded and kept private, in the private sphere; the most common word for the feminine veil, κρήδεμνον, refers also to city battlements or bottle-stoppers: “[a] corked bottle, a fortified city, a veiled woman are vessels whose contents are sealed against dirt and loss.”

Woman as penetrated is the opposite of man as penetrator, the excluded other or constitutive outside of man, but the categories of male/female are by no means fixed by anatomy; masculinity was something the man had to continuously work to achieve, maintain and protect. The male body itself was the norm, but not “natural”; it was “not an absolute or a given but a hill to climb, a goal to be achieved, and a prize to be won.”

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24 Carson, “Putting her in her place,” 161.
25 Andrew Stewart, Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 11. Stewart highlights the public, civic nature of masculinity: “The centrality of the polis to Greek gender construction can hardly be overstated. Being restricted to adult males, citizenship was a sexual and gendered concept as well as a political and social one…. Recognizing only the (adule male) citizen as a
hill, it was certainly a Sisyphean one, as masculinity was socially temporal, requiring repeated acts and stylization in order to maintain the illusion of fixity. This stylization began at birth, when the nurse swaddled the infant according to specific ideals; the body was to be physically molded, manipulated to take on desirable hot, dry, hard (masculine) characteristics. The nurse should hollow out the male buttocks with her thumb, shape the nose into an aquiline form, stretch out the genitals to a “normal” length, massage the spine into the correct curves.26 Care of the body continues through childhood and adolescence into adulthood and old age through food, massage, bathing, exercise and anointing.27 As Martin affirms, “[c]learly, ‘natural’ here has nothing to do with the way the body might grow if left to nature. What is “natural” is the body that conforms to the esthetic expectations of the upper class. One must, therefore, gently coerce the body into its “natural” form.”28 Jesus’ swaddling in Luke’s gospel (Luke 2:7) would help Jesus take on a “natural” masculine form.

As biological/social, natural/constructed complexes, bodies were not superficial, material casings for an inner, deeper, immaterial soul; rather, bodies were the enactment of social location (including gender as social location) and morality. Polemon declares, “when you see deep blue eyes that stand still, you may take it that their owner is remote from other men, aloof from his neighbours, and extremely eager to amass wealth. You should avoid him with the greatest caution, even if he be a member of your own family, nor should you ever make a journey in his company or accept his advice. For he delights

whole and bounded subject, and only his body to be sovereign, autonomous, and inviolable, the Greeks soon came to see the latter as the city’s microcosm and metathesis as well as its manager.” Stewart, Art, 8.

26 Soranus, Gynecology 2.16.32-34 [36.101-103]. Even before birth, at the moment of conception, the woman should be thinking of the formation of her offspring, making sure to think about proper things so that her child does not imprint with her “strange fantasies.” Soranus, Gyn. 1.10.39.

27 See Galen’s De sanitate tuenda.

28 Martin, Corinthian Body, 27.
The man with unmoving blue eyes is the ultimate evil, keen to gain wealth in a limited good society (i.e. at the expense of others), a threat even to his own kin. Observing others was not done for entertainment, but was rather “an essential survival skill…. Everyone who had to choose a son-in-law or a traveling companion, deposit valuables before a journey, buy slaves, or make a business loan became performe an amateur physiognomist: he made risky inferences from human surfaces to human depths.”

People had to watch others and watch themselves at the same time, acting in awareness of the other’s gaze. Physical and social space align, bodily experience rooted in socialized practice.

The body was the ultimate site of identity. The body did not simply express identity, but enacted it. Being “male” was something that was just as much social as it was biological, structured according to historically contingent discourses of gender, status and power. As a social construction, identity was never a totality, never complete; it was a conditional, strategic process. This process was not one of continual self-development, of growth or change according to formative experiences across time; a person’s character was thought to remain fairly constant throughout that person’s life. Alexander the Great did not become great, but simply was great. Identity was a process in terms of the ongoing negotiation of the body, as the body was the primary means through which character was made manifest.

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29 Phys. 1.112; quoted in Maud W. Gleason, Making Men: Sophists and Self-Presentation in Ancient Rome (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1995), 55. Polemon articulates the opposite of the blue-eyed man in Phys. 1.1.154-56F: “Where you have noticed dampness in gently smiling eyes, and you observe that the whole face is open and that eyelids and forehead are smooth and relaxed, the possessor of such eyes tends more toward good than bad. You will find in consequence that his character is attractive and benevolent, and in that person you will find fairness, leniency, piety, and hospitality. You will find further that he is intelligent, prudent, quick to learn, and strongly sexed.” Quoted in Gleason, Making Men, 56.

30 Gleason, Making Men, 55.

31 The paradigmatic articulation of the expression of character through the body comes from Plutarch’s
not change their eye colour, but perhaps they could practice looking around more; facial expression, bodily gesture and dress were all used for purposes of identification, both the identification of others and in self-identification, in the construction of “I am this” through the exclusion of “I am not that.” Identifications could be won or lost, sustained or abandoned, through the body. While personality traits were held to be essential or reasonably stable, identity as a more encompassing social positioning, a basic “cultural belongingness,” to use a term from Stuart Hall, involved ongoing negotiation of boundaries according to historically contingent discursive norms and practices, practices including expression, bodily movement and dress. A convincing impression of a stable “self” required constant attention to the body.

Ancient bodies were porous, in constant danger of sliding back and forth on an axis of female – male (the telos being male). It is not surprising that the apostle Paul uses the masculine εἷς in his assertion, “you are all one (εἷς) in Christ Jesus” (Galatians 3:28). There may be no male or female, but the perfect unified body, the “one,” is still male. Bodies therefore required constant attention and structuring. Integral to this structuring,
an essential method of identification, was dress, from the swaddling of infants to the elaborate draping of the (adult male) citizen. Proper display of the body was not a superficial matter, but was embodied of honour and morality. Unlike contemporary diet commercials, there was no “after” photograph of the body, no suggestion that the body was ever complete. The body required constant work and practiced presentation. Care of the body was not about happiness or personal fulfillment but about the embodiment of social norms; this embodiment was how the ancient body “mattered.”

3 Practice and performance: how bodies “matter”

We cannot “know” without the body. Meaning is created in and through the body, even the meaning of abstract concepts; Mark Johnson writes, “[t]he centrality of human embodiment directly influences what and how things can be meaningful for use, the ways in which these meanings can be developed and articulated, the ways we are able to comprehend and reason about our experiences, and the actions we take.” The world is comprehensible through our bodies, in terms of bodily capacities or techniques, but also in terms of attitudes, morals and values. Johnson describes the concept of “balance” as one learned and evaluated through bodily experience. We value an even temperature, a satisfied appetite and a solid posture: “[b]alancing is an activity we learn with our bodies and not by grasping a set of rules or concepts.” The values and actions learned through the body are not universal “knowns,” however; the body is natural and unnatural. The way in which a Maori girl learns to walk is different and has a different range of

34 See Joanne Entwistle, *The Fashioned Body: Fashion, Dress and Modern Social Theory* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2000), 19: “The care of the body is not simply about health, but about feeling good: increasingly, our happiness and personal fulfillment is pinned on the degree to which our bodies conform to contemporary standards of health and beauty.”


meanings than the gait of any other girl; a British infantryman cannot march to the sound of a French bugler.\textsuperscript{37}

The intimate structured-structuring relationship between body and what I hesitate to call “mind,” in fear of Cartesian dichotomy – between body and knowledge perhaps, body and knowing – has led Linda Martin Alcoff to emphasize the knowing or “mindful” body: “it makes more sense to think of the body as, oddly enough, a mind, but one with a physical appearance, location, and specific instantiation… We perceive and process and incorporate and reason and are intellectually trained in the body itself.”\textsuperscript{38} This “training” is not usually self-conscious, only coming to our attention when regular bodily behaviours are disrupted, such as when, to use Alcoff’s example, one travels to a country that requires one to drive on the unaccustomed side of the road. These situations “bring us face-to-face with the wealth of knowledge we take entirely for granted, knowledge lodged in our bodies and manifest in its smooth mannerisms and easy movements.”\textsuperscript{39} Perhaps the British soldiers replacing French troops on the trench lines during World War I felt this sort of “disruption”; Marcel Mauss observed that when British soldiers replaced a French division, the soldiers also had to replace the French spades, over 8,000 of them, because the British could not dig properly, or dig in the accustomed “British” manner, with French shovels.\textsuperscript{40}

Jennifer Glancy, developing Alcoff’s theory of the mindful body, presents Cicero’s representation of “decorum” as an example of the blurry intentional/unintentional,

\textsuperscript{37} Marcel Mauss, “Techniques of the Body,” *Economy and Society* 2.1 (1973): 70-88, here 74 (the reference to the onioni walk of Maori women) and 72 (buglers).
\textsuperscript{39} Alcoff, *Visible Identities*, 108.
\textsuperscript{40} Marcel Mauss, “Techniques,” 71.
structured/structuring challenge of the body. Cicero’s treatise *On Duties (De officiis)* offers advice to his son on correct public bodily behaviours or techniques. Every bodily technique must be considered as reflective of moral propriety: “In standing, walking, sitting or reclining, in our countenance, our eyes, or the gestures of our hands, let us master that *decorum*, in which matters two (extremes) are mainly to be avoided: nothing should be effeminate or soft, on the one hand, nor rough or rude, on the other.” These carefully considered techniques are at the same time unconsidered, in a way, as they stem from Nature’s own design for the human body:

First of all, Nature seems to have had a wonderful plan in the construction of our bodies. Our face and our figure generally, in so far as it has a comely appearance, she has placed in sight; but the parts of the body that are given us only to serve the needs of Nature and that would present an unsightly and unpleasant appearance she has covered up and concealed from view. Man’s modesty has followed this careful contrivance of Nature’s; all right-minded people keep out of sight what Nature has hidden and take pains to respond to Nature’s demands as privately as possible; and in the case of those parts of the body which only serve Nature’s needs, neither the parts nor the functions are called by their real names. To perform these functions – if only it be done in private – is nothing immoral; but to speak of them is indecent.

Responding to this passage, Glancy writes, “for Cicero, proper gait is simultaneously natural and a matter to which a young man should give deliberate attention. He admits no contradiction between nature and cultivation.” The body requires constant mindfulness, yet the body has already been given a natural “mind” that is proper (good) to think with.

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41 Cicero, *On Duties (De officiis)*, 1.35.128 – 129: Status, incessus, sessio, accubitio, vultus, oculi, manuum motus, teneant illud decorum. Quibus in rebus duo maxime sunt fugienda; ne quid effeminatum aut molle, et ne quid durum aut rusticum sit. This translation is my own.
The “mindful body” is a term that is best known through the anthropological work of Nancy Scheper-Hughes and Margaret M. Lock. Scheper-Hughes and Lock begin with the assumption that the body as pure “biology” is a fallacy: the body is rather “a physical and symbolic artifact… both naturally and culturally produced, and… securely anchored in a particular historical moment.” This key assumption allows the authors to develop their consideration of “the three bodies”: the embodied self, the social body, and the body politic. The embodied self refers to the individual body, a body which is variable within itself and in its relations to other bodies, a body that exists apart from all other individual bodies and experiences itself as “self.” The social body is understood through Mary Douglas, as a symbol or model of social meaning. The body is analogical to society, reflecting or reproducing elements of social structure on and under the skin, struggling to maintain an internal structure with problematically porous boundaries or margins. Third, Scheper-Hughes and Lock offer the body politic, “referring to the regulation, surveillance, and control of bodies (individual and collective) in reproduction and sexuality, in work and in leisure, in sickness and other forms of deviance and human

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47 “The body is a model which can stand for any kind of bounded system…we cannot possibly interpret rituals concerning excreta, breast milk, saliva and the rest unless we are prepared to see in the body a symbol of society, and to see the powers and dangers credited to social structure reproduced in small on the human body.” Douglas, *Purity*, 115.
The body politic dominates the relationship between the embodied self and
the social body in such a way that “societies regularly reproduce and socialize the kind of
bodies that they need.” My interest here is mainly in this “body politic” and the ways in
which power works to structure or re-structure embodied being, though in the ancient
context, “social body” “body politic” and “embodied self” are part of a single paradigm.
Here I follow in the footsteps of Glancy, who also emphasizes the “body politic” in order
to argue that early Christian communities, living in a society structured according to
corporal knowledge, largely reproduced these structures and social/moral distinctions:

….in the Roman Empire social identity was a kind of bodily knowledge, a
knowledge that affected an individual’s experience of being in the world and
shaped his or her interactions with other people. In shaping their communities,
Christians did not subject this knowledge to critique … despite lessons that were
occasionally taken from the body of Jesus or the body of Paul, Christian
communities were far more likely to reproduce than challenge social distinctions,
distinctions that often carried moral connotations.”

The embodied self, the social body and the body politic were not separate categories or
bodies in the ancient Mediterranean, but part of a single paradigm that reproduced and
shaped power structures on and through the body. This paradigm of the body is essential
to study of early Christian text and community as it shows up repeatedly as metaphor,
model, communal challenge, communal meeting-point and narrative or descriptive
reality.

We all have bodies, but we seem to know and learn to know and use them in
different, societally and historically contingent ways. Bodies are both individual and
collective property. We also seem to have or experience different bodies. Douglas defines
two bodies, the physical and the social, one reflecting the other. Scheper-Hughes and

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48 Scheper-Hughes and Lock, “Mindful Body,” 7 – 8. Here the authors draw, of course, on Foucault.
50 Glancy, Corporal Knowledge, 11-12.
Lock mark out three. Andrew J. Strathern notes that bodies may be infinitely multiplied, moving in any chosen direction: medical bodies, consumer bodies, sexual, aging, prosthetic or suffering bodies, this multiplication taking place “without much theoretical advancement beyond seeing how many aspects of human experience can be powerfully conveyed by concentrating on the body.”51 The physical body acts as some kind of baseline – “a silent, unmarked category”52 – for the communication or articulation of other meanings, though these meanings are all dependent upon the unmarked category. The category is both abstract and concrete.

Strathern offers an approach to embodiment as an analytical concept focused on performance. Embodiment is a discursive field that lies between being and action, stasis and movement, the space for territorial negotiation.53 While Strathern does not provide a concrete “embodiment is…” statement, the term can be defined as the historically and culturally located performance of being: “the stress is thus on action and performance, on doing rather than being, or on the being that resides in doing, that issues from and is expressed only in doing.”54

Bodies, it seems, come to matter through practice or performance. The matter of the body is invested with meaning through the body’s techniques of being matter, of being material. Embodiment is the space in which we can move from “noun” to “verb,” from self to other, from knowing to doing and back again. It can act as a bridge, I would suggest, between knowledge and practice, or practice and knowledge (directionality places unhelpful linearity between concepts). Understood in this way, it becomes

52 Strathern, *Body Thoughts*, 197.
impossible to distinguish embodiment from *habitus*, that touchstone of practice theory as imagined by Pierre Bourdieu. For Bourdieu, the key opposition is between subjectivism and objectivism. Taken as separate, exclusive, theoretical modes of knowledge, subjectivism and objectivism create an unbridgeable gap between knowledge and practice.55

Bourdieu builds on Nietzsche to begin to close this gap. Nietzsche reverses subjectivity and objectivity in a critique of ‘pure’ knowledge: “There is only a perspective seeing, only a perspective ‘knowing’ and the more affects we allow to speak about one thing, the more eyes, different eyes, we use to observe one thing, the more complete will our “concept” of this thing, our “objectivity”, be.”56 This statement turns objectivity on its head, as Nietzsche ascribes true objectivity to the multiplication of subjective valuations. ‘Pure’ objectivism, Bourdieu asserts, “constitutes the social world as a spectacle offered to an observer who takes up a ‘point of view’ on the action and who, putting into the object the principles of his relation to the object, proceeds as if it were intended solely for knowledge and as if all the interactions within it were purely symbolic exchanges.”57 By making oneself “objective,” one essentially voids any practical knowing, and confuses roles of agent and observer.

Bourdieu’s solution to the problem of subjectivism and objectivism is his construction of *habitus*: “the objects of knowledge are constructed, not passively recorded, and, contrary to intellectualist idealism… the principle of this construction is

55 Bourdieu writes, “To move beyond the antagonism between these two modes of knowledge, while preserving the gains from each of them… it is necessary to make explicit the presuppositions that they have in common as theoretical modes of knowledge, both equally opposed to the practical mode of knowledge which is the basis of ordinary experience of the social world.” Pierre Bourdieu, *The Logic of Practice* (Trans. Richard Nice; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1990 [1980]), 25.
57 Bourdieu, *Logic*, 52.
the system of structured, structuring dispositions, the *habitus*, which is constituted in practice and is always oriented towards practical functions.*\(^{58}\) This idea of “structured, structuring” is familiar after our encounters with Johnson, Alcoff and Strathern, though the language is of subjectivity and objectivity: subject/object, person/body, being/practice confront one another, absorb one another, continually act upon and change one another. The “natural” cannot be separated from the practiced or “unnatural.” The orientation is towards practice. Drawing on Strathern and (primarily) Bourdieu’s *habitus*, I offer the following definition of embodied practice: embodiment refers to performed techniques and actions that articulate or situate particular experiences of self in society (subjectivism), experiences that are themselves mediated through societal structures and norms that reproduce the social in the self (objectivism).

While Judith Butler only references Bourdieu in passing in her 1993 work *Bodies that Matter*, her theory of the matter and meaning of bodies relies greatly on this “structured, structuring” dialectic.\(^{59}\) Butler works with the categories of “materiality” and “matter” in order to demonstrate the boundaries of body and meaning. Matter and meaning are fundamentally linked. The body is always a constructed materiality, bounded through signifying discourse, specifically, for Butler, the regulatory discourse of

\(^{58}\) Bourdieu, *Logic*, 52. In his 1994 “Structures, Habitus and Practices,” Bourdieu similarly defines *habitus* as “a system of durable, transposable dispositions” that are located geographically, historically, but most importantly, socially, particularly in terms of status or class. Pierre Bourdieu, “Structures, Habitus and Practices,” 95 – 110 in *The Polity Reader in Social Theory*, ed. Polity Press (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994). See also Mauss’ initial concern to define *habitus*: “I have had this notion of the social nature of the *habitus* for many years. Please note that I use the Latin word – it should be understood in France – *habitus*. The word translates infinitely better than *habitude* (habit or custom), the ‘exis’ (sp.), the ‘acquired ability’ and ‘faculty’ of Aristotle (who was a psychologist). It does not designate those metaphysical habits, that mysterious ‘memory.’” Mauss, *Sociology*, 101.

“sex.” Similarly, the identification and comprehension of meaning cannot be separated from materiality, existing in relation to materiality (the matter of the body) only.

Butler examines the “matter” of bodies in terms of a process she defines as materialization, the process that “stabilizes over time to produce the effect of boundary, fixity and surface we call matter.”60 The body comes to “matter”, or to have socio-cultural meaning, through a normative discourse of sex dependent not upon artificial unities of biology, anatomy and physiology, but rather on historically conditioned rhetorical exigencies. The body, specifically the sexed body, is a situated cultural construct.

Matter as both potentiality and actuality supplies the principle of material intelligibility, or the ability to read the material, to interpret and situate the matter: “to know the significance of something is to know how and why it matters, where ‘to matter’ means at once ‘to materialize’ and ‘to mean.’”61 Matter is a site of origination, causality and significance which presents the subject with certain established criteria of intelligibility, or a normative discourse for meaning construction. The subject, therefore, is enabled through this discourse; Butler describes agency as “a reiterative or rearticulatory practice, immanent to power, and not a relation of external opposition to power.”62 Agency is enabled only as it is constrained: “Where there is an ‘I’ who utters or speaks and thereby produces an effect in discourse, there is first a discourse which precedes and enables that ‘I’ and forms in language the constraining trajectory of its will… the ‘I’ only comes into being through being called, named, interpellated…. and

60 Judith Butler, Bodies, 9.
61 Butler, Bodies, 32.
62 Butler, Bodies, 15.
this discursive constitution takes place prior to the ‘I’.”\textsuperscript{63} Regulatory norms of materialization and sex work performatively through repetition and reiteration to lend intelligibility to substance and self through repeated practice.

Butler does not reference Mauss, but her emphasis on the repeated performance of “authorized” or regulated actions in the materialization of the body recalls Mauss’ discussion of permitted and prohibited bodily action (the arrangement, display and use of the body). Mauss describes action as primarily imitative:

The child, the adult, imitates actions which have succeeded and which he has seen successfully performed by people in whom he has confidence and who have authority over him. The action is imposed from without, from above, even if it is an exclusively biological action, involving his body. The individual borrows the series of movements which constitute it from the action executed in front of him with or by others.\textsuperscript{64}

Imitative or repeated action is based on authorized or authoritative action on the understanding that certain action is “successful,” while a different action will be unsuccessful. Authority plays a key role in the performance and performative possibilities of being. Butler does draw on Foucault, again in ways that echo Mauss: “[t]here is no power that acts, but only a reiterated acting that is power in its persistence and instability.”\textsuperscript{65} Repeated, stylized bodily actions structure a culturally coded, historically and geographically contingent “self”, an illusory core identity.

While fixed identity is an illusion, Butler maintains that there is room for a “self,” or for authentic agency: “there is an “outside” to what is constructed by discourse, but this is not an absolute “outside,” an ontological thereness that exceeds the boundaries of discourse; as a constitutive “outside,” it is that which can only be thought – when it can –

\textsuperscript{63} Butler, \textit{Bodies}, 225.
\textsuperscript{64} Mauss, “Techniques,” 73.
in relation to that discourse, at and as its most tenuous borders.”66 One opportunity for agency lies in the casting off of the abject. Abjection, in its primary meaning of casting off or out, “presupposes and produces a domain of agency from which it is differentiated.”67 The foreclosure or exclusion of the abject thus works to found the tenuous subject; “I am not that” works to a certain degree to establish, “I am that.” The boundaries of self exist in the negotiation of included and excluded identifications.

How do bodies “matter,” and why do they matter here? Our interactions with the world are framed through embodied experience. We structure categories of knowledge according to our experience as bodies: gods are red-haired and blue-eyed, black-skinned or perhaps, if you are a horse, they are long-maned and smooth-coated. This bodily knowledge comes from the repeated performance of stylized techniques of the body that locate our experience of subjective self and objective self-in-society. We can only structure those categories within limits, however, limits that are themselves created through bodily practice. We are embodied according to defined norms, cultural codes that change across time and space. Cicero’s son has a body that has “natural” techniques that are imperative for the understanding and enactment of essential morality, “natural” actions which must, at the same time, be constantly practiced and maintained. Successful social identity depends upon his ability to reproduce these structured, structuring techniques on an ongoing basis: the boundaries of the body are not fixed. Repeated performance is required for the continual construction of identity.

Cicero’s son is just one example of many of the ways in which ancient Mediterranean bodies rubbed up against social structures of power and identity. Gesture has become an

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important area of classical research, as has ethnicity, physiognomy and even the
importance of the viewer, of seeing or gazing upon the bodies of others. A “full history”
of the body, according to Amy Richlin, would include sex, gender, food, excrement, race,
care of the self, clothing, hair, gesture, and death. Early Christian texts are full of
“body language”; Glancy presents the gospel of Mark as an example of a Christian text
operating within a “corporal vernacular,” using presentation, posture, gesture and
movement in the negotiation, within the text, of power and status. Petitioners fall at
Jesus’ feet; Jesus moves between public and private space; people run to Jesus; miracles
are performed using bodily gestures and fluids; a woman “knows in her body” that she is
healed; Jesus is crowned, saluted, spit upon, mocked, crucified.

Bodies in these instances are not significant as representation; when contact with
Jesus’ cloak effects an instantaneous bodily cure, the two bodies in question, Jesus’ body
and the body of the anonymous woman, are not representative of purity and pollution, of
social ostracism and restoration. The texts indicate that bodies are doing something here.
At issue is the formation of the body, not the representation of the body or the body as
representative of something else. The body is, as Mauss puts it, “man’s first and most

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70 Glancy, Corporal Knowledge, 30ff.
natural technical object, and at the same time technical means.”

Building on Mauss, Talal Asad calls for an “anthropology of practical reason”:

The human body is not to be viewed simply as the passive recipient of ‘cultural imprints,’ still less as the active source of ‘natural expressions’ that are ‘clothed in local history and culture,’ but as the self-developable means for achieving a range of human objects – from styles of physical movement (for example, walking), through modes of emotional being (for example, composure), to kinds of spiritual experience (for example, mystical states).

The body is a complex, a Venn diagram-esque assembly of embodied values, abilities and potentials. This complex that contemporary scholars are working so hard to find appears to be a return to the ancient Mediterranean body in all of its ultimate embodied glory: the ancient body was formed through an ongoing interaction of “nature” and “culture,” of “world,” “society” and “self,” that was negotiated quite self-consciously in daily practice and performance.

Bodily performance, the performative nature of the body, offers particularly rich possibilities for the interpretation of ancient Christian literary bodies. These bodies, however, are intelligible primarily when dressed. Dress is an ultimate example of embodied practice, self-conscious in some ways but mainly a function of habitus, fundamental to subject/agent and social correlation. Dress is a performance of the socio-political body, communicating specific programs or systems of normative meaning. These systems may be sexual, social (group identity, group membership or non-membership), occupational, indicative of deviance or difference, etc. As part of the body

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4 Bodies, dress and identity

Human beings exist in and experience the world not just as bodies, but as dressed bodies. Every known human culture is dressed, “dress” again being defined as any modification or supplementation of the body, from outer coverings to markings, piercings or designs on the skin, that is used the negotiation of self and other, subjective and objective, “person” and “society.” The body is rarely fully “naked”; dress or conventions of dress structure and present the body as a recognizable, meaningful entity. If the body is a microcosm of social processes or a symbol of the social, it is the dressed body more specifically. If the gods look like Thracians or Ethiopians or whoever is doing the talking, the gods must dress like Thracians or Ethiopians, also: “men believe that, like themselves, the gods have clothing, language and a body.” Xenophanes’ order here is fascinating: not body first, not language, but clothing. Dress is the primary signifier.

Similarly, in the Cicero quotation included above, dress and the body seem “naturally” bonded. Nature has made visible the good or attractive parts of the body, “but the parts of the body that are given us only to serve the needs of Nature and that would present an unsightly and unpleasant appearance she has covered up and concealed from view. Man’s modesty has followed this careful contrivance of Nature’s; all right-minded people keep out of sight what Nature has hidden...” How can Nature have concealed parts of the body from the body itself? Dress is presented as part of Nature; only the immoral or insane would expose what Nature has meant to keep hidden. When

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74 Cicero, Off. 1.35.127.
Eve and Adam arrive at knowledge in Genesis 3, their very first realization, as knowing beings, is that they are naked, and they respond by covering themselves. Their awareness of their undress signals their primal transgression and, of course, their Fall.

The story of the anonymous woman with the hemorrhage or flow of blood in the gospel of Mark (5:25-34) could not be more explicit about the dressed body as a single unit. While I discuss this narrative in more detail in chapter two, it will make the connection between body and dress absolutely clear. The woman, having suffered from her boundary-transgressive illness for twelve years, had heard reports about Jesus, and she approaches him from behind in a crowd. The woman touches his cloak, thinking, the gospel writer tells the reader, “If I touch even his cloak, I will be made well” (ἐὰν ἄψωμαι κἂν τὸν ἰματίων αὐτοῦ σωθῆσομαι, 5:28). Immediately she is cured. The reader is told that the woman “knew in her body” (literally “she knew in the body,” 5:29b) that she was healed. Jesus, knowing that power had left his body (ἐπιγνοὶς ἐν ἑαυτῷ τὴν ἔξοδυν ἐξελθοῦσαν, 5:30a), turned about in the crowd, demanding, “Who touched my cloak?” (τίς μου ἤψατο τὸν ἰματίων; 5:30b). The woman confesses, but Jesus lets her off the hook: “your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease” (5:34). Later, in chapter six, the reader learns that many others were also healed in this manner: “And wherever he came, in villages, cities, or country, they laid the sick in the market places, and besought him that they might touch even the fringe of his cloak; and as many as touched it were made well” (6:56). Here the fringe or tassel of the cloak (κράσπεδον) is specified; indeed, when Matthew and Luke tell the story of the woman with the flow of blood, the woman touches the “fringe of his cloak” as well.
Glancy draws attention to this strange (to a modern reader) Markan phrase, “she knew in her body.” Jesus also “knows in himself,” in his body, that power has left his body. Neither the woman nor Jesus felt a change in their bodies, though translators tend to substitute “feel” for “know” in these instances. Glancy comments, “Bodies feel. Minds know. Mark, however, implies that bodies know, that we are capable of corporal knowledge.”

Here we stumble upon the mindful body, a consciousness that is inseparable from practice.

This mindful body is also a dressed body; Jesus’ body in this story is dressed, and he “knows” he has been touched, in his body, though all that was touched was the hem of his cloak. His body includes his dress. Candida Moss proposes that the woman touches Jesus’ cloak simply because she cannot touch Jesus himself: “[b]eing unable to reach Jesus she clutches the hem of his garment.”

The touching of the cloak is, however, the climax of the narrative, every detail building to the specific contact. After a string of seven participles, “she touched” is the first finite verb, giving the verb an “extraordinary intensity”:

καὶ γυνὴ ὁδάσα ἐν ῥύσει αἵματος δώδεκα ἐτη καὶ πολλὰ παθοῦσα ύπό πολλῶν ἱστρῶν καὶ διαπανήσασα τὰ παρ’ αὐτῆς πάντα καὶ μηδὲν ὄφεληθείσα ἄλλα μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ χείρον ἐλθοῦσα, ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλθοῦσα ἐν τῷ ὄχλῳ ὀπίσθεν ἡματο τοῦ ἴματίου αὐτοῦ.

And there was a woman who, having had a flow of blood for twelve years, and having suffered much under many physicians, and having spent all that she had, becoming no better but rather growing worse, having heard reports about Jesus, coming up behind him in the crowd, she touched his cloak” (5:25-27).

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75 Glancy, Corporal Knowledge, 3.
She touches his cloak, and Jesus knows “in himself” that power has left his body. The woman knows “in her body” that she is healed. The cloak rests along the boundary of Jesus’ body, but is not separate from his body. The materiality of Jesus’ cloak is part of the materiality of Jesus’ person, Jesus embodied.

The interaction between Jesus and the unnamed woman might be interpreted largely as social, especially as her healing would have social as well as physical implications. However, the interaction is also profoundly material, with a literal negotiation of material: the cloak. The touching of Jesus’ cloak is not representative of a physical and/or social change, but facilitates that change, structures or enables that change. Webb Keane, lamenting the conceptualization of dress as mere sign or signifier, proclaims,

> At issue here is not just the expression of “identities.” For instance, clothing cannot be understood without the experience of comfort and discomfort, both physical…and social… And these have little to do with meaning, expression, identity, nor even… with some universal phenomenology of bodily experience. We drape ourselves in habit, competence, and constraint – with what clothing makes possible.\(^78\)

The suggestion that clothing has agency might be a bit excessive, as dress exists in relationship to the human body, and garments do not weave themselves. Dress makes certain behaviours, gestures and practices possible or impossible, constructing a particular habitus. “Dress” is dependent the action of dressing.\(^79\) Materiality and sociality are mutually embedded.

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\(^79\) See Entwistle, *Fashioned Body*, 11: “bodies are socially constituted, always situated in culture and the outcome of individual practices directed towards the body: in other words, ‘dress’ is the result of ‘dressing’ or ‘getting dressed.’”
Daniel Miller offers a wonderful parallel to the material interaction in Mark 5 in his presentation of the sari. Miller’s overall point is that “there is no simple boundary or distinction between persons and their environment.”

Miller discusses the sari as standing at the place of this unclear boundary and negotiating this boundary space, focusing particularly on the *pallu*, what might be called the “hem” of the sari. The *pallu* is more elaborately decorated than the rest of the cloth and is highly visible, draped loosely over the shoulder. As a draped garment, it has the potential for constant motion, slipping, covering and uncovering, tightening and loosening. It has functional uses: protection from the sun, handling hot dishes, wiping chairs; Miller refers to the *pallu* in these cases as a “sort of third hand.” It conveys social positioning or attitude, “tucked in to the waist to make one authoritative, held between the teeth to indicate modesty and veiling, it can be used to flirt or to demonstrate confidence as a ‘power sari’ in an office.”

It aids the development of bodily “techniques” or praxis, infants holding onto the mother’s *pallu* while sleeping or while learning to walk. It is profoundly gendered; touching a *pallu* is interpreted as an intimate act, brides tying the *pallu* to their new husband’s *dhoti* (the rectangular cloth generally tied around the waist) on their wedding night.

The sari can be kept on the body with pins, but Banerjee and Miller report that most women do not pin their saris. Consequently, the sari “will be constantly on the

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81 For more detail, see Miller’s extended study with Banerjee: M. Banerjee and D. Miller, *The Sari* (Oxford: Berg, 2003).
84 Banerjee and Miller, *Sari*, 37; the authors also report the comment of a sex worker in Kolkata, who stated that “she did not like her clients to touch the pallu because she felt it should be reserved for her relationship with her husband.” Banerjee and Miller, *Sari*, 37.
move. As a result, its role in mediating the relationship between a person’s sense of themselves and the outside world is not something that can be taken for granted and forgotten about during the course of the day. Instead, the sari is like a fellow actor, constantly on stage, whose presence must always be remembered. The body and the body’s dress co-exist as a kind of hybrid, negotiating between self and world.

The dynamism of the sari is not limited to draped clothing, but draped clothing likely leaves more room for ambiguity and social negotiation. It is a fitting comparison to Jesus’ cloak, also a draped garment. The ἱμάτιον (cloak) required constant attention to keep properly arranged about the body and was manipulated for a wide variety of purposes from sleeping to tying up an adversary (described in detail in chapter two). Emperors are described as “good” or “bad” using anecdotes about their ability to control their drapery, in these cases the toga. Jesus is not paying attention when the woman touches the hem of his garment, but this touch at the boundary of his body enables the flow of power from one body to the other.

The cloak, like the sari, enabled or impeded gesture and movement as well, movement which was held to be constitutive of character as well as used to manipulate social circumstances. In his examination of the interrelationship between physical movement and political ideology, Anthony Corbeill argues that physical movements, “when properly orchestrated, are able to influence and manipulate the more-than-human world.” This manipulation could refer to the gesture of throwing water under a table when someone mentions fire at a banquet, for example, or to movements of orators in

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negotiating social or political boundaries. Gesture expressed embodied disposition, influencing thinking and feeling. A powerful example of the combination of body, dress and gesture in effective bodily performance comes from Quintilian, *Institutio oratoria* 11.3.137 – 49. Quintilian discusses voice and stride, then moves to dress. He asserts,

> With regard to dress, there is no special garb peculiar to the orator, but his dress comes more under the public eye than that of other men. It should, therefore, be distinguished and manly, as, indeed, it ought to be with all men of position. For excessive care with regard to the cut of the toga, the style of the shoes, or the arrangement of the hair, is just as reprehensible as excessive carelessness.…

While fashion changes details of dress somewhat, some elements remain the same: only women should wear the tunic below the middle of the shin, and only centurions above. The folds of the toga as they go under the right shoulder and over the left should not be too tight or too loose. If the folds are too tight, or if the toga covers too much of the shoulder and throat, the body will appear too narrow, the chest too slight and unimpressive. A manuscript held in the hand should not become too much of an accessory, else it appear as though the orator does not trust his memory, and it will hinder the use of gestures.

> The toga should fall to the heels, like the Greek cloak. Quintilian here makes a fascinating connection between image and practice when he expresses surprise that another writer mentioned that Cicero wore his toga to his heels because he wanted to hide his varicose veins, “despite the fact that this fashion is to be seen in the statues of persons who lived after Cicero’s day” (11.3.143). The statue here is discussed in correlation with actual practice (despite our modern avowal that image, text and practice cannot match).

As the speech develops, Quintilian continues, dress should reflect the nature of the argument and the orator’s temperament in proceeding:
…. as the pleading develops . . . the fold will slip down from the shoulder quite naturally and as it were of its own accord, while when we come to arguments and commonplaces, it will be found convenient to throw back the toga from the left shoulder, and even to throw down the fold if it should stick. The left hand may be employed to pluck the toga from the throat and the upper portion of the chest, for by now the whole body will be hot. And just as at this point the voice becomes more vehement and more varied in its utterance, so the clothing begins to assume something of a combative pose. Consequently, although to wrap the toga round the left hand or to pull it about us as a girdle would be almost a symptom of madness, while to throw back the fold from its bottom over the right shoulder would be a foppish and effeminate gesture, and there are yet worse effects than these, there is, at any rate, no reason why we should not place the looser portions of the fold under the left arm, since it gives an air of vigour and freedom not ill-suited to the warmth and energy of our action. When, however, our speech draws near its close, more especially if fortune shows herself kind, practically everything is becoming; we may stream with sweat, show signs of fatigue, and let our dress fall in careless disorder and the toga slip loose from us on every side. This fact makes me all the more surprised that Pliny should think it worth while to enjoin the orator to dry his brow with a handkerchief in such a way as not to disorder the hair, although a little later he most properly, and with a certain gravity and sternness of language, forbids us to rearrange it. For my own part, I feel that the dishevelled locks make an additional appeal to the emotions, and that neglect of such precautions creates a pleasing impression. On the other hand, if the toga falls down at the beginning of our speech, or when we have only proceeded but a little way, the failure to replace it is a sign of indifference, or sloth, or sheer ignorance of the way in which clothes should be worn.87

Forgiving the length of the quotation, it is hoped, the substance of the quotation shows that the body, here the body of the orator, is the thing that the orator is. The body is not something that is ever left alone, but is manipulated and negotiated, in fear of shame or failure, a thing of nature and of culture at the same time.88 Dress is used as part of the body to achieve specific results.

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87 Translations of Quintilian, Inst. 11.3.137-49 by H.E. Butler (Loeb Classical Library; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1920). For similar texts, see Pseudo Aristotle, Athenian Constitution 28; Plutarch, Nic. 8.3 and Ti. C. Gracch. 2.2.

88 See Gleason, Making Men, 80: “Perhaps the taut suspension required of the ideal man’s physical carriage is emblematic of the constant strain involved in maintaining a truly masculine profile in the face of such exacting standards, where an appropriate level of masculine tension in gaze, walk, and gesture must be cultivated by continuous exertion but must never be allowed to appear put on. The failures, which made the effort behind the act appear too obvious, were stigmatized as the clumsy efforts of overcompensating imposters – perhaps because they threatened to reveal the deportment of masculinity for the construct of conventions that it really was.” Corbeill argues that Julius Caesar avoided attention to deportment on
Materiality and sociality are mutually embedded. In the ancient context, *dress* and sociality are particularly intertwined, constructing basic relationships and conveying states of being. People know a “good” situation based on availability or excess of clothing: the soldier Gaius Iulius Apollinarius (*P.Mich.* 8 465, Bostra, February 20, 108 CE) writes to his mother Tasoucharion to reassure her of his well-being, for example, as follows:

Recto

1

[Ἀπολινάριος Ῥωμαίος Tασουχαρίῳ τῇ κυρίᾳ
μου μητρὶ πλείστα χαίρειν.
[πρὸ μὲν πάντων εὐχομαί σε ἔρροθάσαι, ὦ μοι
[ἐκταῖν ἐστιν [πρὸσκυνήσαι σε ἐρρωμένην

5

[ - ca. 10 - ] μοι π[ . . . ] π... καί βίος, σὺ γάρ μου
[ - ca. 11 - ] . . . . . . . . . . . . [ . . . . . . . . ] . σε ἐάν εἰδὼ ἐν τοῖς
[ - ca. 11 - ] . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . [ . . . . . . . . ] . μεταί οὕσπω γάρ
[ - ca. 10 - ] . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . τὸν γονέων, μάλιστα δέ
[ἐστὶ μοι δ᾽ έγιγκέ, ὡσάκι γάρ ἐάν μνησ-

10

[θῶ ύμων] οὐτε ἔσθω οὔτε πίνω ἄλλα κλαίω
[. . . . . . ] νηση . . [ . ] σο . . ίου[ν] ἐμοί μόνω
[. . . . . . ] εβη[ - ca. 11 - ] μενος ὅτι [ . ]
[. . . . . . ] εἰμι καί εἰς τοῦτο [ . . . . . . ] νομαι. εὐχαρισ-
[τὸ δὲ] τῷ Σαράπιδι καὶ [Αγαθῇ] Τύχη ὅτι πάν-

15

[τοις κοιπίωντον δὴν [τὴν ἡμί]έραν κοπτόν—
tον λίθους ἐγὼ ὡς πριγκὶ[πάλις διακινδ
μηθὲν ποιόν. καὶ χαλκὸν [ὑ]πέσχουν, καὶ ἡ—
θέλησα ύμῖν πέμψαι θαλλόν ἐκ τῶν Τυ-
ρίων, κα[ί] διὰ τὸ μη ἀντιγράψαν ύμᾶς οὐ πε—

20

πίστευκα οὐθενὶ διὰ τὸ μέγεθος τῇ ἡς
όδοι, ὡς γὰρ ἰμάτια καλὰ καὶ ἐβ[ε]νος καὶ
πινάρια καὶ μύρα ἄν[ἀγετα]ι [εὐ]πόρος(*). διὸ
ἐροτῶ [σε τῇ]ν κυρίαν μου . . . ] . χως καὶ ὑλαρὸς
eφθαὶ[ν]εσθάν. καὶ γάρ ὁδῇ καλῶς ἐστιν.

(the papyrus continues to line 47)

Apparatus

r. 2 [μητρὶ]

r. 22 εὐπόρος

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purpose precisely to demonstrate this construct of masculinity: “By not avoiding behaviour specifically marked in his society as feminine, Caesar could be perceived as transgressing normal modes of male, aristocratic behavior. In violating the accepted relationship between appearance and reality, Caesar fashions himself as a proponent of political change.” Corbeill, *Nature*, 137.
Translation:

[Apollinarius] to Tasoucharion, [my] lady mother, many greetings. Before all else, I pray for your good health, as it is [my prayer] to make obeisance to you (and find you) in good health ... and life. You ... me ... if I know in the ... for ... not yet ... of (my) parents, and it is most of all my prayer. For each time I reminisce about you, neither do I eat nor do I drink but rather I cry ... to me alone ... I give thanks to Sarapis and Good Fortune that, while everyone else works all day at cutting stones, I as an officer barely move, doing nothing. And I received some money, and I wanted to send to you a gift of Tyrian objects, and because you did not reply I have not entrusted it to anyone because of the length of the journey. For fine garments and ebony and pearls and perfumes (unguents) are brought here plentifully. Wherefore I ask you, oh my lady, to be ... and to be exceedingly joyful. For this is a good place.

Apollinarius writes to his mother that he is in a good place, defined as a place where good things are brought, mostly, here, things relating to dress (garments, pearls, perfumes or ointments). The materiality of the place should reassure Tasoucharion that Apollinarius will be fine.

Conversely, lack of clothing characterizes a “bad” situation or place:

_P.Mich._ 1 90, Recto:

1 [ . . ] [ . ] ... [ . . ] λω, ἀλ-λὰ καὶ γυμνός εἰμι καὶ ὑπαθροὶ γεινόμεθα. καλὸς ὁ ἐν ποίησις
5 συντάξας δοῦναι μοι (δραχμάς) δ, ἵνα πρώμαι κ[α]ί ρά-κο[ζ . . κ]ομισον[ - ca.? - ]

Verso:

Πετοσίρις.

Translation:

[ - - - ] but also I am naked and we are living in the open. Therefore could you please order them to give me four drachmai, in order that I might at least buy a ragged garment. From Petosiris.
This papyrus, dating to the third century BCE (Philadelphia), indicates that an utterly abject life situation is one without clothes.

Thinking about the body necessitates thinking about dress. The dressed body allows or prohibits bodily techniques – the arrangement, display and use of the body – and allows or prohibits ways of thinking, self-consciously or not. Umberto Eco relates his experiment with blue jeans in “Lumbar Thought,” an experiment that re-oriented his thought patterns. After losing some weight, Eco bought some “almost normal jeans” that changed his bodily sensations: “I sensed a kind of sheath around the lower half of my body. Even if I had wished, I couldn’t turn or wiggle my belly inside my pants; if anything, I had to turn it or wiggle it together with my pants.”89 His movements – his ways of walking turning, sitting, hurrying (his techniques of the body) – changed. His jeans imposed a new demeanor, a new etiquette, as he began to “live for” his jeans: “As a rule I am boisterous, I sprawl in a chair, I slump wherever I please, with no claim to elegance: my blue jeans checked these actions, made me more polite and mature.”90 In focusing his attention on his demeanor, his “interior-ness” was reduced, and he began to think about the relationship between himself, his pants, and his society. Eco was obliged “to live towards the exterior world… I had achieved heteroconsciousness, that is to say, an epidermic self-awareness.”91 Awareness of clothing on his body redirected his attention, necessitating an exterior life: “Thought abhors tights.”92

90 Eco, “Lumbar Thought,” 316.
Eco’s essay is amusing (“A garment that squeezes the testicles makes a man think differently”), but its significance for the present study is serious. Jeans (the material) structure demeanor (the social), and even interior/exterior life. Dress gives the body its social meaning and identity. As an embodied practice, dress operates according to learned, repeated norms (tying a shoelace is a learned skill). Bodies which do not conform to dressed norms are subversive or shameful. As Joanne Entwistle argues, “dress is both an intimate experience of the body and a public presentation of it,” the dynamic boundary between self and other. The body, in turn, structures “dress,” as a garment separate from the body yields only incomplete information: “the gown or suit once cast off seems lifeless, inanimate and alienated from the wearer… Without a body, dress lacks fullness and movement; it is incomplete.” Dress is materiality and activity, requiring both a body and, consequently, attention (conscious or unconscious) to this body and bodily practice. In the context of *habitus*, dress is an embodied, experiential practice that establishes, structures and maintains the social self.

5 Undressed bodies, absent clothes

Bodies in the synoptic gospels are both dressed and undressed. Naked bodies, even those that exist only or purely in literary form, have more to contribute to readings of identities, actions and social structures beyond their relevant and important work as symbolic placeholders. Dress is now firmly established as integral to the creation,

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93 Eco, “Lumbar Thought,” 316. Eco comments that his experiment with jeans, though an experiment undertaken “via the groin,” was undertaken seriously, in order to practically demonstrate the semiotic connections between dress and social structure or worldview.
maintenance, negotiation, representation and contestation of social identity.\textsuperscript{96} Undress, however, as Adeline Masquelier points out, remains under-theorized in its contributions to identity: “considerably less attention has been paid to the varied processes of undressing through which people engender difference, create spaces of resistance, or confront moral hegemonies.”\textsuperscript{97}

In a 2010 feature article, Harper’s Bazaar published photos of three celebrities – reality television “star” Kim Kardashian, actress Joy Bryant and photographer Amanda de Cadenet – without clothing and un-retouched. The stated purpose of the article was to give these celebrities the opportunity to talk about body image. De Cadenet, who shot the photos of Kardashian and Bryant and took her own self-portrait, was hesitant about the photo shoot but pleased with the results, stating “This is really about women and girls accepting their bodies… If we’re more comfortable with our naked bodies, we might be more comfortable with our clothed selves.”\textsuperscript{98} For de Cadenet, the issue was not “how to look good naked,” but how to look good clothed; comfort with the naked body was a step towards the goal of comfort when clothed.

\textsuperscript{97} Masquelier, “Dirt,” 8.

50
Philippa Levine places this relation of dressed/undressed bodies in a scholarly context in her examination of nakedness and nudity in the Victorian colonial imagination. Levine argues that the body of the colonized subject, the “native,” was “knowable” only when contrasted to the Victorian colonizer, a contrast essentially articulated through naked and dressed states. T.H. Huxley’s request to the Colonial Office in 1869 for photographs of naked native locals, while met with varying degrees of acceptance or hesitance, was understood in terms of the European quest for knowledge, specifically “scientific” knowledge. This knowledge was an assertion of power over the other: “[n]akedness symbolized readability and legibility… The naked native captured on canvas or film was not only authentic (because in a state of undress) but knowable… Only by laying the native bare could she be fully known, studied, and understood.”

There is a reason, Levine implies, that the gospel references to the healed demoniac being “clothed and in his right mind” (Mark 5:15; Luke 8:35) struck such a chord with Christian missionaries: “[t]o be sexual, to be savage, to be primitive was more frequently than not illustrated, signified, and marked by a state of undress.” Nakedness was conceptualized as a lack, a problematic absence: an absence of morals, of sexual propriety, of civilization. This lack was something that should be overcome – something, rather, that the native should desire to overcome.

Levine differentiates between the Victorian interest in “naked” natives and the “nude” of high art. “Nudity” has a cultural, aesthetic valence that “nakedness” does not. Levine writes, “[t]he literary cliché of the naked wretch… has no nude counterpart. Nudes

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100 Levine, “States of Undress,” 199.
recline, nudes stretch, nudes beckon: they don’t shiver and they are seldom abject.”

Looking at a naked photograph and contemplating a painted nude were completely different sensual and intellectual experiences. As Kenneth Clark articulates in his classic work on nudes, “[i]t is widely supposed that the naked human body is in itself an object upon which the eye dwells with pleasure and which we are glad to see depicted. But anyone who has frequented art schools and seen the shapeless, pitiful model which the students are industriously drawing will know that this is an illusion.” The naked body is imperfect, raw, “pitiful,” incomplete; the nude body is perfected, ideal, complete.

On a recent trip to the Art Gallery of Ontario, I was struck by the clothed state of painted and sculpted nudes: I noticed that women getting into a bath were seated on some sort of clothing or towel; reclining nudes relaxed under drapery; standing bodies clutched fabric or dress that perhaps had just been removed. Naked bodies were never fully naked. The same clinging to fabric occurs mentally, in our perception of naked bodies; whether naked or nude, the body is still never totally undressed. As Ruth Barcan asserts, “[t]here is no simple opposition between being clothed and being naked.”

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104 Michael Squire names Praxiteles’s statue of Aphrodite of Knidos (mid-fourth-century BCE) as the “prototypical example” of a female nude; Aphrodite is almost fully naked, but wears an armband and holds a garment in her left hand. Squire, Art of the Body, 72; image of the Venus Colonna, a Roman copy of Praxiteles’s original, 89.

experience of dress and being dressed mediates our experience of undress. Literally, nudes are never totally without some form of dress, whether it be long hair, carefully placed drapery, even a transparent veil. Every human society we know of is a dressed society, whether it be paint, beads, or blue jeans. Dress is an absolute; undress can only be understood in relation to dress. We are never truly the naked ape. As Mario Perniola states, “[c]lothing gives human beings their anthropological, social and religious identity, in a word – their being. From this perspective, nudity is a negative state, a privation, loss, dispossession. The adjectives denuded, stripped and divested describe a person who is deprived of something he or she ought to have.”

Dress is primary; undress is not secondary, but something like the negative of the true or real image.

The nude body does not communicate a fixed ideal, despite Clark’s insistence; the ideal body changes dramatically over time. In her work Seeing Through Clothes, Anne Hollander argues that dress is so fundamental to the social presentation of the body and by extension to social order that dress governs our ways of seeing the undressed body. The significance or signification of a naked or nude body does not have a universal or perpetual resonance; Hollander writes, “nakedness is not universally experienced and perceived any more than clothes are. At any time, the unadorned self has more kinship with its own usual dressed aspect than it has with any undressed human selves in other times and places, who have learned a different visual sense of the clothed body.”

Hollander’s analysis of depictions of artistic nudes demonstrates that the nude body is never actually without clothes, but rather clothed by contemporary conventions of dress.

Similarly, Larissa Bonfante maintains that nudity functions as a *costume* in classical art, juxtaposing athletic or “civic” nudity with the nakedness of barbarians.\(^{108}\) Bodies, in other words, can never be totally without clothes – if, that is, the body is to be located and understood.

The undressed body is an unstable category, a fluid interpretative problem, but a problem that is localized in time and space. What counts as dress or undress in one historical context may not apply in another. Even within specific temporal and spatial circumstances, undressed bodies may have different valences. Anyone, for example, may purchase admission to an art gallery and view, within the gallery, artistic representations of naked bodies, artistically called “nudes”; pornography, however, is illicit, and the purchase of these naked images is subject to age restrictions. In the ancient context, not all ancient Greek athletic nudes were heroic or desirable; age was a determining factor in the honour of the nakedness. The poet Tyrtaios provides the following contrast:

For this is shameful, for an older man fallen in battle among the front line fighters to line before the young men, an older man with his hair white and beard silvery, breathing his virulent life into the dust, his bloody genitals in his hands and with his skin all bare. This sight is shameful for the eyes to behold and reprehensible. But in contrast among young men all these things are proper as long as he shines in the bloom of lovely youth manhood. They are admirable for men to see and wonderfully attractive for women while he is alive – and he looks also honorable and beautiful fallen in the front line.\(^{109}\)

The naked body of the young Greek athlete, living or dead, and the naked body of the old Greek warrior as well, were very different than the naked body of an unpaid day labourer. The ultimate wage complaint to an employer was that the labourer had not received his clothing allowance, and was therefore forced to go about naked. The labourer’s body is

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109  Tyrtaios, fr. 7 (11.15-31); quoted in Bonfante, “Nudity,” 548.
indicative of a lack, demonstrative of poverty. Similarly, the prodigal son expresses his abject state through nakedness:

Antonis Longus to Nilous his mother, very many greetings. I pray always for your health; every day I make supplication for you before the Lord Sarapis. I would have you know that I did not expect that you were going up to the metropolis; for that reason I did not come to the city myself. I was ashamed to come to Karanis, because I go about in filth. I wrote to you that I am naked. I beg you, mother, be reconciled to me. Well, I know what I have brought upon myself. I have received a fitting lesson. I know that I have sinned…

This nakedness may be characterized as “unintentional,” perhaps, an undesired result, but it is still constitutive of the body’s social semiotics. The viewer would interpret the labourer’s body or the body of the prodigal very differently than the naked body of the athlete. Naked bodies therefore can be considered as having different valences, or social registers of meaning, acceptability/honour or unacceptability/shame.

Negative interpretations of nakedness extend beyond shame. Quoting Exodus 20:26, Jonathan Z. Smith describes the “horror of nakedness” evident in ancient Jewish traditions: being stripped or having clothing removed in texts of the Hebrew Bible are actions indicating degradation, defeat or death; the Community Rule of the Qumran community penalizes those who go naked before others (1QS VII, 12); rabbis prohibit naked prayer. Michael L. Satlow notes that rabbis made fun of Greek and Roman customs of nudity, particularly the custom of erecting statues of gods and goddesses in places like gymnasia, places where nakedness was acceptable; for the rabbis, nakedness was an affront to God. Eric Silverman declares decisively, “male nudity was a sordid,

110 Select Papyri 1.316-19 (second century CE); from A.S. Hunt and C.C. Edgar, Select Papyri, with an English Translation (Loeb Classical Library; London: Heinemann; New York: G.P Putnam’s, 1932-).
112 Michael L. Satlow, “Jewish Constructions of Nakedness in Late Antiquity,” JBL 116 (1997): 429 – 54, here 434-35. See also Eric Silverman, A Cultural History of Jewish Dress (Dress, Body, Culture; London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 37. Interestingly, Silverman writes that according to the rabbis, “no Jewish man… even when naked, truly lacks clothing.” Circumcision was viewed as “an indelible, mystical garment of
non-Jewish custom that violated the boundaries between man and God, Jew and non-Jew, humanity and nature, and social categories.”\textsuperscript{113} Nakedness exists in different “categories,” but is, at the same time, responsible for the delineation of categories – categories or valences of social action, identity and exclusion. Nakedness can even signal the absence of all categories entirely; according to Turner, naked bodies are liminal bodies, bodies in transition: “[t]hey have no status, property, insignia, secular clothing, rank, kinship position, nothing to demarcate them structurally from their fellows… In the words of King Lear they represent ‘naked unaccommodated man’.\textsuperscript{114}” Naked bodies define, are defined by, or extinguish categories necessary to socio-cultural intelligibility.

Smith’s reference to the “horror of nakedness” occurs in the context of his argument about the context of nakedness in logion 37 of the \textit{Gospel of Thomas}. The Coptic performance of the logion reads:

\begin{quote}
His disciples said: When will you be revealed to us and when will we see you? Jesus said: When you unclothe yourselves without being ashamed and take off your clothes and put them under your feet as little children and tread on them, then [shall you see] the Son of the Living One and you shall not fear…\textsuperscript{115}
\end{quote}

Smith discusses the four elements of undressing, being naked and unashamed, treading upon garments and being as little children in the context of Christian baptismal practice, specifically Christian homiletical traditions surrounding baptism, and the attendant symbolism of rebirth or new life. Concerning the element of being naked and unashamed, for example, Smith writes, “[b]eing naked and without shame is both a holiness,” a perfecting of the male body and a protection against the “elements” – base human nature. Again the naked body is never truly naked. Silverman, \textit{Cultural History}, 37.

\textsuperscript{113} Silverman, \textit{Cultural History}, 38.


\textsuperscript{115} Smith, “Garments,” 218; original from P.Labib, \textit{Coptic Gnostic Papyri} [Cairo, 1956], I, pl. 87, 27 – 88, 1. The shorter Greek performance in \textit{P.Oxy}. 655 (frag. Ib) reads: “You? Who can add to your age? He himself will give you your garment. His disciples say to him: When will you be revealed to us and when shall we see you? He says: When you undress and are not ashamed…”
practical requirement stemming from the minister’s anointing of nude women in a public ceremony and a typological return to the state of Adam and Eve before the Fall.”\textsuperscript{116}

Dress imagery in early Christian texts is frequently interpreted symbolically, items or actions of dress pointing to implicit, higher spiritual or theological meanings. Baptismal ritual in particular has become a popular rallying point for the interpretation of references to clothing within the gospels, particularly the gospel of Mark.

The body is never truly naked. It is always interpreted, whether in art or in “nature,” with reference to dress. Even the great detective Sherlock Holmes can only understand bodies through their dressed aspects: in “A Scandal in Belgravia,” the first episode of the second season of the BBC television series \textit{Sherlock}, the detective is able to deduce the occupation, employers, personal habits and histories and hopes for the future of individuals he encounters based on his observations of their dress (or items stuck to their dress – corgi fur on a trouser leg suggests employment in Buckingham Palace).\textsuperscript{117} Irene Adler (“The Woman”), after Sherlock’s arrival at her home, prepares to meet him by undressing, and walks into her living room totally naked (a state she describes as her “battle dress”). Sherlock, unable to read Irene based on her naked body, uncomfortably shifts his gaze to Watson, analyzing his appearance – his trousers indicate his plans for a romantic evening, his shirt is two-days old. Moving back to Irene, Sherlock only has question marks, and Irene teases him for “not knowing where to look.”\textsuperscript{118} As it turns out, Sherlock does know where to look, and is able to open Irene’s

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\textsuperscript{116} Smith, “Garments,” 237.
\textsuperscript{117} \textit{Sherlock; Season 2} [videorecording]; a Hartswood Films production for BBC; written by Mark Gatiss, Steven Moffat and Steve Thompson; produced by Sue Vertue and Elaine Cameron (Burbank, CA: BBC Worldwide, distributed by Warner Home Video Inc., 2012).
\textsuperscript{118} Irene’s “battle dress” recalls Maskwell’s line from the William Congreve play \textit{The Double-Dealer} (1694): “No mask like open truth to cover lies, As to go naked is the best disguise” (V.i.89-90). Quoted in Barcan, \textit{Nudity}, 88.
\end{flushright}
safe as a result. The combination for her safe is 32-24-34 – her measurements. Her naked body communicated this one essential piece of information to Sherlock, information still based on clothing.

Irene’s intentional undress is interpreted with reference to dress: here, her clothing measurements. Irene herself names her naked body her “battle dress.” The absence of dress forces Sherlock to contend with her body in an unexpected way, or to figure out “where to look.” He therefore fixes his gaze on the dressed or intelligible aspect of her body, her measurements. The absent things, the absent clothes, focus attention partly on what is missing, but more importantly, why the clothes are missing; Irene wants Sherlock to figure out the safe code.

Absent dress plays important and surprising roles in the synoptic gospels, roles similar to Irene’s intentional undress in *Sherlock*; absent dress has consequences for signification and identification in specific gospel contexts. The interpretation of absent things, especially when related to present things, therefore becomes an imperative. There are a number of highly significant absences in the gospel texts, or negative significations. As Fowles notes of the empty tomb, “Mary Magdalene did not go to Christ’s tomb, find it empty, and say, “Ah well, there’s nothing here; we can all go home now and worry ourselves with other matters.” The emptiness, of course, was constitutive of Christ’s divinity.”

Fowles’ point here is largely theological, but its intent is the emphasis on absence: the interpretation of Jesus’ body as “not there,” an absent body, becomes the heart of subsequent Christian debate, identity, practice, etc. Absent dress may be interpreted theologically or symbolically, but it matters much more on the material level. Items of dress become conspicuous in their absence; absent cloaks can cause new

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119 Fowles, “People Without Things,” 28; emphasis original.
possibilities of identity to exist or present challenges to identity. Identity is negotiated through the presence or absence of a cloak. Dress might be absent materially, yet in its absence, it has a critical impact on material experience just the same.

An intentional “act” of absence, or absence as an agentive, performative “presence” in and of itself, demands response; as social relations are “an imbricated collective of people and things,” they are also a collective of people and non-things or absent things. As Kevin Hetherington states, “[t]he absent can have just as much of an effect upon relations as recognisable forms of presence can have. Social relations are performed not only around what is there but sometimes around the presence of what is not… absence can have a significant presence in social relations and in material culture.” When a thing is unexpectedly absent, absent when it should be present, it can only be interpreted in relation to the present thing. It demands reconciliation. It must be rendered intelligible. Absent things intrude and disrupt; Fowles asserts, “[a]bsences push back and resist. They prompt us into action. And like present things, absences also have their distinctive affordances and material consequences that… can, of their own accord, direct the process of signification.”

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122 Fowles, “People Without Things,” 118. Fowles here refers to the archaeological work of Douglass W. Bailey (2007), whose work with faceless Neolithic figurines stresses the importance of the absent face: “The missing face… is not a text to be read so much as it is an inscrutable thing that demands the construction of a text.” Fowles, “People Without Things,” 118. Douglass W. Bailey, “The anti-rhetorical power of representational absence: incomplete figurines from the Balkan Neolithic,” 117 – 26 in Material
something, anything, on, Irene replies, “Why? Are you feeling exposed?” The absence of dress acquires its own kind of unstable power, forcing a response from the viewer.

The interrelation between present and absent dress creates powerful potential for the conceptualization of meaning and identity. Meaning is not from “absence” as such but from the confrontation between present and absent, the difference between present and absent where one person, for example, wears a cloak, and another does not. These meanings are local, specific to socio-historical contexts and micro-contexts; contemporary interpreters do not read missing cloaks in the gospels the same way, I will argue, that followers of Jesus would have. The observer of the undressed body plays a key role in the interpretation of that undressed body. The contemporary observer is very different than the ancient observer; different observers offer different “ways of seeing.”

Absent dress, as an absent thing, becomes a “full participant in the social,” creating a confrontation between self and world. Undressed bodies are significant as they disrupt the normative dressed body and demand a response. They might not exist without

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123 Gaze is, for example, gendered; Masquelier notes, “the meaning of nakedness, nudity, and modesty shifts concomitantly with the identity of the observer – a male gaze producing distinctions and definitions of female forms that contrast radically with what a female onlooker would see.” Masquelier, “Dirt,” 15–16. Recall the importance of the identity of the observer in the 2013 protest concerning Russian President Vladimir Putin’s state visit to Germany. Women likely belonging to the women’s rights group Femen ran towards Putin topless, with slogans written in black on their bare skin. Their message was aggressive, but their naked approach met with a variety of reactions from surprise to contempt to a smiling “two-thumbs-up” from Putin. See, for example, Jeevan Vasagar, “Vladimir Putin topless protest: Femen activist speaks out,” The Telegraph; internet; available online from http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/vladimir-putin/9981146/Vladimir-Putin-topless-protest-Femen-activist-speaks-out.html, accessed 25 February 2014. Masquelier discusses other gendered examples of protest, such as the Central Park demonstration against military action in Iraq in 2003, where women lay naked in the snow (Masquelier, “Dirt,” 16; see also Misty L. Bastian, “The Naked and the Nude: Historically Multiple Meanings of Oto (Undress) in Southeastern Nigeria,” 34 – 60 in Dirt, Undress, and Difference: Critical Perspectives on the Body’s Surface,” ed. Adeline Masquelier [Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 2005]).
124 Fowles, “People Without Things,” 27: “When absences become object-like, when they seem to exist not merely as an afterthought of perception but rather as self-standing presences out there in the world, they begin to acquire powers and potentialities similar to things. Object-like absences… in this sense become full participants in the social characterized by their own particular politics and, at times, their own particular emotional and semiotic charge.”
reference to the dressed body, but they create unique potential for contextualized negotiation of identity.

6 Conclusions

This chapter has sought to frame an approach to dress as an embodied practice in the world of the ancient Mediterranean. Recall the excerpt from Aristophanes’ *Thesmophoriazusae* (lines 136 – 43) from earlier in this chapter:

> Whence hails this woman-man? What his fatherland, what his frock (στολή)?
> What be the confusion of his life? Why does the lyre babble in a saffron robe? Why a lyre in a hairnet?
> Why a gym-bag [lēkythos, lit. ‘oil-jar’] and a bra [strophion]?
> These things don’t go together.
> What, prithee, does a sword have in common with a hand-mirror?
> Who are you, boy? You call yourself a man?
> And where’s your dick [peos]? Where’s your lumberjacket [chlaina, lit. ‘cloak’]?
> Where’s your hunting boots [Lakônikai]?
> Hmm, maybe you call yourself a woman? Then where’s your tits [titthia]? \(^{125}\)

The ancient body was underdetermined biologically, constructed largely through social practice and behaviour that rendered physical and social realms as equivalences. Or, to put it more bluntly, “the cloak is just another version of the prick.”\(^ {126}\) Embodiment refers to performed techniques and actions that articulate or situate particular experiences of self in society, experiences that are themselves mediated through societal structures and norms that reproduce the social in the self. This notion of embodiment fits exactly with ancient discussions of the body. The ancient body was an ongoing construction, the illusion of stable identity configured through appearance, bodily movement and dress.\(^ {127}\)

\(^ {125}\) Translation from Richlin, “Body History,” 31.
\(^ {126}\) Gunderson, *Staging Masculinity*, 158.
\(^ {127}\) See Judith Butler’s presentation of gender here: “gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceede (sic); rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts…. Gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.” Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and
Dress matters not in its symbolic references, though certainly it could have those as well, but primarily in material self-presentation, in the presentation of body-bound being in all its social complexity.

We do not receive any detail about the elements of dress mentioned in the synoptic gospels, but discussion of the critical importance of dress to bodily being and practice, of the relationship between dress and the ancient Mediterranean body, draws our gaze, calls us to scrutinize the mentions of dress in the narratives with new awareness. The dressed body could manipulate its surroundings. When the gospels mention dress and explicit or potential reactions to dress, we need to have access to the cultural norms or knowledge of dress in order to fully understand what is going on. The purpose of this chapter has been to outline these norms, to demonstrate the mutuality of dress and the body. This framework will be drawn out further in subsequent chapters, chapters which focus first on the dressed body, specifically on the ancient cloak in the gospels, and second on the undressed body and the significance of absent dress.

MEANING “UNCLOAKED”: THE HIMATION IN THE GOSPELS

Chapter 2

1 Introduction

In November 2013 the Department for the Study of Religion at the University of Toronto ran a professionalization seminar for graduate students called “Crafting your Teaching Persona.” The goal of the seminar was to encourage graduate students who will take on teaching roles in the department to begin thinking about their teaching identities well before they step in front of a class for the first time as a teaching assistant or course instructor. The most popular issue for participants was appearance. How might your students perceive you, based on what they can see of you when you set foot in the classroom? What does your appearance communicate to your students? Age, gender, ethnicity, and body type are all important categories in this context, but the general discussion focused on dress. If I dress casually, can I be that laid-back seminar prof who sits casually on a desk, hair unbrushed, no cosmetics, caring only about ideas? Surely I can’t do that if I wear a suit – if I wear a suit, can I be the fiery orator, stunning my students with my brilliance, overwhelming in my confidence?

According to the writers of the synoptic gospels, Jesus is also interested in “Crafting a Teaching Persona” – not his own, but that of his disciples – and this teaching persona focuses on dress, on what others could see of his followers. The teaching persona of the disciples is the subject of chapter three. Jesus, too, is “known” through dress, particularly though his use or disuse of the cloak (ἱµατιον). Identity must be conveyed through signs that others are able to read, and dress is perhaps the most important of these signs; what is worn on the body is the most direct medium of expression, and the most personal or
intimate as well, existing in a more intimate relationship to the person than any other material object. Dress is personal, but also public; G.P. Stone in “Appearance and the Self” maintains, “[i]n appearances … selves are established and mobilized. As the self is dressed, it is simultaneously addressed, for, whenever we clothe ourselves, we dress ‘toward’ or address some audience whose validating responses are essential to the establishment of our self.” Dress conveys a multiplicity of messages about the wearer to the viewer, messages which are interpreted and “sent back” to the wearer as validation or challenge. If the response is a challenge, a new program of self or identity may be aroused.

This dressing and addressing of “self” is made most explicit in the Gospel of Mark. Jesus’ interactions with others in Mark are frequently mediated though cloaks in both teaching and miracle or healing contexts, and he constructs the bodies of his disciples around the rejection of the cloak. As Virgil, for example, describes Romans as “the race that wears the toga,” Jesus is the “man who wears the cloak;” distinct from his disciples, who appear to be without. The toga, the distinctive dress of the Roman citizen is,

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2 In the climactic passage of the opening book of Virgil’s Aeneid, Jupiter forecasts the future success of Rome for Venus, a success that Jupiter describes in terms of Roman dress:

his ego nec metas rerum nec tempora pono;
imperium sine fine dedi. quin aspera Juno
quae mare nunc terrasque metu caelumque fatigat,
consilia in melius referet, mecumque fovebit
Romanos, rerum dominos gentemque togatam (Aen. 1.282-86).

For [the Romans] I set neither physical nor temporal bounds on their possessions; dominion without limit I have bestowed. Furthermore, even harsh Juno, who right now terrorizes and harries sea, lands and heaven, will eventually return to better plans of action, and at my side she will nurture the Romans, masters of the world and the race that wears the toga.

according to Virgil’s Jupiter, definitive of Roman greatness. A simple rectangle of cloth with a curved bottom edge, the toga both identifies the Roman and represents Roman strength and triumph. Essentially, it is what makes the Roman Roman: clothes make the man, and the toga makes the Ro-man.³

A different cloth rectangle plays a similar role in the synoptic gospels, especially the gospel of Mark, though this time we find the simple cloak. Jesus is “known” in Mark in particular through his use or disuse of items of dress, particularly this outer garment, the cloak. His interactions with others are frequently mediated through cloaks in both teaching and miracle or healing contexts, and he constructs the bodies of his disciples through the rejection of the cloak. If the toga “makes” the Roman, the ἰμάτιον in the synoptics “makes” Jesus.

Indeed, the author of Mark’s gospel is quite the clotheshorse. Mark’s narrative of the life of Jesus begins and ends with clothes: at the beginning of the gospel, the reader encounters John the Baptist, “clothed with camel’s hair, with a leather girdle around his waist (καὶ Ἰωάννης ἐνδεδυμένος τρίχας καμήλου καὶ ζώνην δερματίνην περὶ τὴν ὀσφὺν αὐτοῦ) preaching, “after me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie” (ἔρχεται ὁ ἰσχυρότερός μου ὁπίσω μου, οὐκ εἰμί ἱκανὸς κύψας λῦσαι τὸν ἰμάντα τῶν ὑποδημάτων αὐτοῦ, 1:6-7). The gospel

concludes with the women entering the empty tomb and encountering “a young man sitting on the right side, dressed in a white robe; and they were amazed” (νεανίσκον καθήμενον ἐν τοῖς δεξιοῖς περιβεβλημένον στολήν λευκήν, καὶ ἐξεθαυμήθησαν, 16:5).

In Mark’s text alone, a mere sixteen short chapters, there are twenty-three possible references to clothing, in all different kinds of circumstances and frameworks. Jesus teaches about fasting with a metaphor about patching an old cloak (2:21); the transformation of a demoniac from a state of social death to renewed life is demonstrated through his sitting at Jesus’ side, “clothed and in his right mind” (ἰματισμένον καὶ σωφρονοῦντα, 5:15); the blind man Bartimaeus leaps up to come to Jesus, throwing off his cloak behind him (10:50); Jesus warns his followers to “beware of the scribes, who like to go about in long robes” (βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων τῶν θελόντων ἐν στολαῖς περιπατεῖν, 12:38); at his crucifixion, Mark points to the fulfillment of prophecy in the soldiers’ dividing of Jesus’ clothes and the casting of lots for their ownership (15:25).  

Clothing is ubiquitous in Mark’s text, marking definitive moments in the teaching, ministry and death of Jesus.

Clothing is particularly significant in the gospels because it does not point outside of itself as a kind of literary metaphor, representational language, or as a kind of symbolic index; clothing matters in its very materiality. There is specific socio-historical

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4 Other mentions of clothing, dress or fabrics include 5:27-28, the healing of the woman with the flow of blood; 6:8-12, the missionary instructions to the disciples; 6:56, healings accomplished through contact with the hem of Jesus’ cloak, 9:3, the transfiguration; 11:1-10, the spreading of cloaks at the triumphal entry into Jerusalem; 13:16, instructions regarding the coming of the desolating sacrilege; 14:51-52, the flight of the naked young man from the scene of Jesus’ arrest; 14:63, the high priest’s tearing of his garments; 15:16-20a, the mocking of Jesus through dressing him up; and 15:46, the wrapping of Jesus’ body in a linen garment. Some potential references include 10:25, the teaching about the rich man entering heaven (the mention of a camel going through the eye of a needle); 14:3-9, the anointing of Jesus (not technically clothing, but anointing does relate to the care and presentation of the body); and 15:38, the tearing of the “curtain” of the Temple.

meaning inherent to clothing in the synoptic texts in its materiality. Dress is not a semantic placeholder, a bit of material reality that represents meaning on some kind of discursive, hyper-real plane. Clothing in Mark in particular is a kind of agentive presence in the world. The tendency to read clothing in the gospels as a vehicle for meaning, not as meaning in and of itself, creates a dichotomy between material and meaning, between the tangible and intangible, which assumes that the social is an exclusively human phenomenon, rather than what Severin Fowles calls “an imbricated collective of people and things.” Cloaks in the gospels, especially in Mark, in their presence and absence, matter because they embody identity; people and cloaks are mutually constitutive. By paying attention to cloaks in and of themselves, we stand in a much better position to understand people in the gospels in and of themselves.

2 Cloth, clothing and material culture

Cloth and clothing are significant across social and historical contexts; every known human culture constructs and is structured by certain conventions of dress, defined as any modification or supplementation of the body used in social communication and the orientation of identity. As Kaori O’Connor states,

Once viewed simply as mere artefacts, it is now recognized that cloth and clothing are culturally constructed commodities with complex symbolic properties, transmitting purity and pollution, linking past and present, transforming through belief, carrying fundamental values…. a substantial anthropological record speaks eloquently of the ways in which cloth and clothing materialize social and political statuses, convey and consolidate identity, mediate social relations and not only reflect social change but also create it, acting as … an agent of history by giving cultural form to innovative dynamic movements.

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Cloth and clothing carry weighty significance in diverse areas of social and cultural life. This significance is not uniform, however, and the clothed body meant something very different in the ancient Mediterranean than it does to contemporary North Americans.\(^8\) When the significance of clothing in this context of the ancient Mediterranean is taken into account in the reading of Mark’s gospel, when the materiality of the clothing in Mark is no longer subordinated to its symbolic potential, new space for interpretation, its material potential, is created. This interpretive potential centers around the identity of Jesus in Mark, as the impressive number of references to clothing in Mark’s presentation of this identity serve to make Jesus “known” to the audience or reader. Clothing configures the borders of Jesus’ identity and the identificatory possibilities of his followers.

Much of the contextualizing work of this chapter draws from recent work in material culture. The overall argument of this dissertation concerns the significance of who wears what and why, and who does not wear what, and why. Ancient forms of dress were embedded in specific social and ontological structures that worked to create, reproduce or challenge forms of social existence and meaning. Clothing did and does not matter because it represents social values or structures on a symbolic or semiotic level; as Daniel Miller writes of material culture more generally, the “things” of material culture are not “merely the semiotic representation of some bedrock of social relations.”\(^9\) Dress is

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\(^8\) This difference refers not only to design and styles of dress, but right down to the basics: fabric itself is a rapidly changing commodity. The majority of garments in the ancient Mediterranean were made of wool; only two and a half percent of contemporary world fibre production is wool (forty percent is cotton, point two percent is silk; the rest of today’s fabrics are human-produced, such as polyester and spandex, not to mention the development of new “smart” fibres and fabrics with advanced technological capabilities. O’Connor, “The Other Half,” 45; see also Susanne Küchler, “Materiality and Cognition: The Changing Face of Things,” 206 – 30 in Materiality, ed. Daniel Miller (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

its own socio-cultural force, part of the complex of the body (humans being dressed bodies, not simply bodies) that acts in and is acted upon by society: “[i]n an older social anthropology, clothes are commonly signs of social relations. Anything else would be a fetishism of them as objects. But … if you strip away the clothing, you find no such ‘thing’ as society or social relations lurking inside. The clothing did not stand for the person; rather, there was an integral phenomenon which was the clothing/person.”

This is not to go so far as to assert that “clothes have no emperor,” as opposed to the emperor having no (new) clothes; clothing on its own is limp, vacant, disconcerting in its emptiness, reminiscent of death. Dress and the body are conceptualized together, bundled together (whether one is actually wearing anything or not; see chapter three), together creating and expressing meanings and consequences that do not lie elsewhere, but are part of and made possible by the material/bodily complex itself. Clothing on its own signifies nothing but absence. As Glenys Davies writes of the toga, “what makes the garment virilis [manly] is not so much the toga itself as how it is worn, and the behaviour

10 Miller, “Materiality,” 32.
11 See Joanne Entwistle: “Just as the discarded shell of any creature appears dead and empty, the gown or suit once cast off seems lifeless, inanimate and alienated from the wearer. The sense of alienation from the body is all the more profound when the garment or the shoes still bear the marks of the body, when the shape of the arms or the form of the feet are clearly visible.” Entwistle, Fashioned Body, 10. This sense of profound alienation, isolation and even intense distress is felt, for example, when one encounters the 4,000 shoes of victims of the Holocaust at the United States Holocaust Memorial Museum in Washington, DC. According to the museum website, visitors most frequently report that the site and smell of the empty shoes is “the most searing memory from their time in the Permanent Exhibition.” Permanent Exhibition: Shoes, United States Holocaust Memorial Museum; internet, available from http://www.ushmm.org/information/exhibitions/permanent/shoes; accessed 22 June 2014. Elizabeth Wilson describes her experience of walking through a costume museum as haunting: “The living observer moves with a sense of mounting panic, through a world of the dead…. We experience a sense of the uncanny when we gaze at garments that had an intimate relationship with human beings long since gone to their graves. For clothes are so much a part of our living, moving selves that, frozen on display in the mausoleums of culture, they hint at something only half understood, sinister, threatening, the atrophy of the body, and the evanescence of life.” Elizabeth Wilson, Adorned in Dreams: Fashion and Modernity (London: Virago, 1985), 1.
of the wearer.” The things we wear impact the things we think and do, and the things others think about and do to us.

The impact of dress in social relations can be highly visible and explicit, as in the case of Gandhi’s use of the khadi, for example, in challenging colonial authority. It can also be practically invisible, however: not the dress itself, of course, but the function of dress. Though often peripheral to vision, dress determines behaviour. Miller writes, “objects are important not because they are evident and physically constrain or enable, but often precisely because we do not ‘see’ them. The less we are aware of them, the more powerfully they can determine our expectations by setting the scene and ensuring normative behavior, without being open to challenge. They determine what takes place to the extent that we are unconscious of their capacity to do so.” Things are often so obvious that we lose sight of them, that we forget the ways in which they might be structuring our behavior and interactions. While clothes may in fact physically constrain and enable (recall Eco’s jeans from chapter one), their “agency” – in as much as they are part of the complex of the body, structured and structured by embodied habitus – tends to sit just outside our field of vision.

Whether or not we can see its effects, dress impacts our being in the world, our thought and practice. Peter Stallybrass provides an excellent example of this seemingly peripheral yet essential function of dress in his essay “Marx’s Coat” in his outline of the

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12 Davies, “Roman Toga,” 121.
14 Miller, “Materiality,” 5.
effect of Marx’s overcoat on his life and work. Marx uses coats as illustrations of his points, as signifiers of major ideas, in works such as *Capital: A Critique of Political Economy*: a coat is a commodity, a thing empty of thing-ness, expressed in capitalist equivalency (one coat equals twenty yards of linen equals ten pounds of tea equals forty pounds of coffee etc.). The coat as a product of capitalism disappears. Extended to labour theory, the coat moves even further away from thing-ness as the maker of the coat, the worker, is alienated from the product of his or her own labour; the industrial worker cannot see him or herself in industrial output.

Marx’s relationship to his own coat offers insight into his articulation of commodity fetishism. As a commodity, the coat became a non-thing; to fetishize a commodity is, absurdly, to fetishize a non-thing, the immaterial. As a thing, a tangible object, Marx’s coat enabled his work, as he needed “suitable dress” in order to get in to the British Museum; allowed for his family’s survival, as frequent pawning (and reclaiming) of the coat was often the only way to keep food on the table, and the family inside a home; retained a hold on family history and memory; and, Stallybrass suggests, shaped his thinking about capitalism and commodity through his frequent trips to the pawnbroker’s shop. Stallybrass maintains, “the actual coats of workers, as of Marx himself, were anything but abstractions. What little wealth they had was stored not as *money in banks* but as *things in the house*. Well-being could be measured by the coming and going of those things. To be out of pocket was to be forced to strip the body. To be in

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17 Stallybrass calls this “one of Marx’s least-understood jokes,” that the fetishization of commodities is actually the reverse of the whole history of fetishism. Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” 184.
pocket was to reclothe the body.”

The intimate quality of Marx’s coat as object, not commodity, the essentialness of his coat as a tangible thing in his household, is a fascinating background for the reading of his presentation of the commodity, particularly his use of a coat as paradigmatic example.

Marx’s coat, travelling in and out of pawnshops for over a decade, “directly determined what work he could or could not do. If his overcoat was at the pawnshop during the winter, he could not go to the British Museum. If he could not go to the British Museum, he could not undertake the research for Capital. What clothes Marx wore thus shaped what he wrote.”

Stallybrass continues, “There is a level of vulgar determination here that is hard even to contemplate. And yet vulgar determinations were precisely what Marx contemplated….“ On a straightforward, fundamental, “vulgar” level, Marx’s coat matters because it is matter. It means something because it is a thing, a particular thing, a coat. Marx uses the abstract coat to make points about commodities, industrial labour and capitalism, but his own coat is functioning not as an idea, but as a coat. The coat is not cloaking meaning, but transmits, creates and enables meaning all on its own. It has its own “social life.”

An early response to my work on cloaks in the gospels was, “Is pointing out that the cloak is conspicuous in the gospels enough, or does your task get harder because it is conspicuous? Like thinking that the mention of jeans is significant in some modern context… if the cloak is used eleven times, for example, is that noteworthy if the cloak

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20 Stallybrass, “Marx’s Coat,” 188.
was the most common form of clothing at the time?"\textsuperscript{21} Is the cloak not too obvious? Of course it is mentioned a lot… why would it not be? My response is an emphatic yes, the cloak is extremely obvious! The cloak is so obvious in the synoptic gospels, its significance as a cloak has disappeared from interpretation. Clothing in the gospels is so apparent, so visible, that it has paradoxically become invisible. Clothing has become “the garb of meaning,” rather than meaning in and of itself.\textsuperscript{22} The importance of clothing, cloaks in particular, in the gospels is that, as cloaks, they have the capacity to transmit a prescribed realm of interpretative possibilities based upon the ancient Mediterranean potential for meaning inherent in the cloak. Here cloaks are very different from jeans, which have their own contemporary web of significations (how and where were they made? Were they made in a sweatshop, for example? How much do they cost? What style of jean are they – loose, or impeding the wiggling of the belly, as in Eco’s case?). When cloaks in the gospels are placed within their own realm of possibility and consequence, their own ancient Mediterranean context, their material significance becomes clear.

The forms and qualities of items of dress allow, sustain, or inhibit intention and practice. Dress makes certain practical meanings possible. Building on the work of Nicholas Thomas, Keane notes that when Polynesian Christians put on the “so-called


\textsuperscript{22} Keane, “Signs.”
poncho,” this poncho did not simply express the newly inculcated value of “modesty,” but “in practical terms, by offering new ways of covering themselves, it made it possible.” Covering the body did not only express modesty, but allowed for “modesty” to become an embodied concept. Keane describes in detail his experience of Sumbanese cloth as follows:

Sumbanese cloth allows the comforting gesture of draping it protectively around oneself, as they say, like a hen huddled against the rain. The man’s waistcloth leaves legs free to straddle a horse; his headcloth is good for everything from wiping sweat off the neck to transmitting magical power to asserting his individuality…. Men and women’s clothing has no pockets. But special objects can be hidden in their folds. And the very insecurity of this draping can be played to advantage. One man told me how he got rid of a powerful talisman that, while useful, was becoming dangerous. Knowing it would be even more dangerous if he intentionally disposed of it, he folded it into his waistcloth and started on a long cross-country trip. Somewhere, perhaps in crossing a river, the talisman was lost, as it were, accidentally on purpose. We could say he thereby elicits the very agency of the thing.

Sumbanese dress exists in relationship to the Sumbanese body, a relationship that is not a simple subject/object dichotomy. Dress in its object-ness works alongside the borders of subject-ness. Dress gives the subject the opportunity to internalize habit or practice, and then to render these practices normative through externalization. Miller encapsulates the subject/object relationship well when he declares, “[i]t is not just that objects can be agents; it is that practices and their relationships create the appearance of both subjects and objects through the dialectics of objectification.” In the case of dress, which literally exists at the borders of subject-ness on the surface of the body, dress holds “in its folds” a set of possibilities for self-actualization and understanding.

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Objects contain a degree of latent possibility, potentialities for use and meaning that rely on their appropriation by and relationship to historically situated agents. Too much potential can lead to restriction; Keane discusses the reaction to multifunctional dress in colonial southern Africa: “[a]ccustomed to one set of clothes for dining and another for gardening, one kind of textile to cover tables and another beds, Europeans were scandalized when Tswana used the same blankets as garments, ground cover, market bundles, and baby carries. In time, a successful hegemony would restrict such potential uses, constraining which iconic possibilities would be recognized in practice.”

Some of this potential also always remains part of an unrealized future.

Most importantly, this potential of dress is socio-historically contingent; dress taken alone, the discarded, empty garment, asserts nothing. Material things are inherently contextual, part of time and place. The use of cloaks in the gospels is not the same as the use of jeans might be in a contemporary circumstance, because the ancient cloak had its own inherent historicity, its own set of possibilities for action and reaction, for intention and consequence. Dress in the gospel narratives, cloaks in particular, is indeed an obvious choice for the construction and revelation of identity. What makes it so obvious, however, is not immediately apparent to the contemporary reader, who must understand the complex of meanings inherent in ancient dress in its materiality, in its thing-ness as dress in order to grasp its frequent use in the gospels. An exploration of these common items of dress is therefore the logical next step in the argument.

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27 Keane, “Signs,” 193-94; Keane’s example of the orientation of objects towards unrealized futures, the futurity of objects, is George Herbert Mead’s definition of the chair: “The chair is what it is in terms of its invitation to sit down,” George Herbert Mead, Mind, Self, and Society from the Standpoint of a Social Behaviorist (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1934), 279; quoted in Keane, “Signs,” 193-94.
3 The ancient Mediterranean wardrobe

Understanding the function of clothing in the gospels requires some knowledge of what this clothing would have looked like and how it would have been worn. The author of Mark’s gospel uses an extensive vocabulary regarding clothing. Items of dress include the cloak or mantle (ἱμάτιον: 2:21; 5:27, 28, 30; 6:56; 9:3; 10:50; 11:7, 8; 13:16; 15:20); the robe (στολή: 12:38; 16:5); the tunic (χιτών: 6:9; 14:63); a more expensive garment or cloak called the σινδών (twice in 14:51-52, and twice in 15:46); belts (6:8; a leather belt in 1:6); footwear (1:7 mentions the “thong,” ἴμας, of the sandal, ὑπόδημα; 6:9, σανδάλια); a purse (πήρα, 6:8); the hem of the cloak (κράσπεδον, 6:56; also translated as “fringe”); a purple garment (πορφύρα, 15:17); and a crown (of thorns: ἀκάνθινος στέφανος, 15:17). The author also mentions a launderer or fuller (9:3, γναφεύς) and a sewing needle (ῥαφίς, 10:25). A number of different verbs reference dressing and undressing in the gospel: ἐνδύω (dress, clothe, clothe oneself, 1:6; 15:20); ἵματιζω (dress, clothe, furnish with clothing, 5:15); ὑποδέω (put on, tie, 6:9) ἐκδύω (take off, strip, 15:20); ἐνδιδύσκω (clothe, 15:17); περιτίθημι (put around, place around, 15:17); πλέκω (plait, weave, 15:17); and περιβάλλω (put on, wear, put around, 14:51; 16:5).

Q adds “soft” or “fine” clothing to the wardrobe (Q 7:24-28, ἐν μιαλακοῖς ἰμφεσμένον [ἀμφιέννυμι], “clothed” or “arraying” in soft clothing, the “clothing” here being inferred from the adjective μιαλακός, “soft,” “fine” or “effeminate”; see Matt. 11:7-11; Luke 7:24-28); the verb φορέω (Q 7:25, more commonly used as “to bear” or “carry constantly”); βαλλάντιον (money-bag, purse); σάκκος (sackcloth) and σποδός, ashes (Q 10:13-15; see Matt. 11:21-24; Luke 10:13-15); and ἐνύμα (Q 12:23, a general word for
“clothing;” see Matt. 6:25-33; Luke 12:22b-31, the “why are you anxious about clothing” logion).

Matthew and Luke provide a few more vocabulary references: Matthew mentions a μαργαρίτης (a pearl, 13:45-46); ἔνδυμα γάμου (“clothes for a wedding,” or a wedding garment, 22:1-12); ϕυλακτήρια (phylacteries, 23:5, alongside tassels); μύρον (perfume, ointment, anointing-oil, 26:7-12; cf. Luke 7:37-46); a χλαμύς κόκκινη (scarlet cloak, 27:28); as well as the nakedness/dressed paradigm, γυμνός, καὶ περιεβάλετέ με (“[I was] naked, and you clothed me, 25:36, cf. 25:44). Luke uses the verbs σπαργανόω (“to wrap in swaddling cloths, 2:7, 12) and περιζώννυ (usually translated as “gird yourself,” “gird your loins,” meaning be dressed in readiness, be properly clothed, particularly for work; Luke 12:35, 37; 17:8). Luke also references a δακτύλιος (ring, mentioned along with the “best robe” in the parable of the prodigal son, 15:22); πορφύρα and βύσσος (purple and fine linen, describing the rich man in 16:19) and an ἐσθής λαμπρά (a “shining,” “gorgeous” or “splendid” garment, 23:11).

The most frequently mentioned item of dress in the synoptic gospels is also one of the two most basic, common items of the ancient Mediterranean: the cloak. There were two standard garments, or categories of garment, worn across the expansive region: the tunic (χιτών, tunica) and the cloak (ιμάτιον, which may be identified as the Latin pallium). Both the tunic and cloak were rectangular pieces of cloth made very generally to “fit” the body; clothing was not “made to measure” or tailored, but came off the loom “ready to wear,” fit proportionally to a body, but only in terms of the size of the rectangle. A piece of clothing of any textile (wool, linen, or silk) was “finished” as it left the loom in
rectangular form. Close-fitting clothing was not popular until later in the fourth century CE, and the wearing of “tight” clothing such as trousers was considered a characteristic of “barbarian” identity.

The tunic, either one piece of fabric pinned (with brooches or fibulae), belted or sewn along the sides to create a seam and armholes, or two pieces of fabric fastened together in similar fashion, was next to the body, possibly over an undergarment or inner tunic but generally next to the skin, with the cloak as the outer garment. The tunics found in the Cave of Letters, near En-Gedi in the Judean desert, are of the two-piece variety, joined at the shoulders with an opening for the head and neck. Most of these surviving tunics are decorated with stripes starting at the shoulder joint and moving vertically downwards. These stripes, called clavi in Latin, were usually purple in colour and varied in width: the wider the stripe, the higher the status of the wearer. Moses wears a tunic with fairly

28 Finished clothing is referred to as having been “cut from the loom”; see, for example, the fourth-century papyrus P.Oxy. 59 4001 (Eudaemon sends word to his mother that his sister’s clothing has been cut from the loom) and the undated Philadelphia papyrus PSI 6.599, a memorandum to Zenon from a family of weavers.


30 Pinning, sewing or buttoning the shoulders of the tunic are described in literature in the context of changing fashions; Herodotus (5.87-88) tells a story about the change in pinning the shoulders (the Dorian tunic) to buttons (the Ionian style of tunic) after Athenian women use their tunic pins to kill the only surviving man from Athens’ attack on Aegina (the Dorian tunic comes back into fashion between 480 – 450 BCE).

31 For images of the tunics, consult Yigael Yadin, The Finds from the Bar Kokhba Period in the Cave of Letters (Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1963), 205, pls. 63 – 66, 73 – 79. These tunics are particularly significant as they “are among the only ancient garments found in a dated context known to have been worn by Jews.” Lucille A. Roussin, “Costume in Roman Palestine: Archaeological Remains and the Evidence from the Mishnah,” 182 – 90 in The World of Roman Costume, ed. Judith Lynn Sebesta and Larissa Bonfante (Wisconsin Studies in Classics; Madison, Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1994), here 183. A wide stripe on the tunic, a latus clavus, identified someone of senatorial rank; the angustus clavus, a narrower stripe, identified the equites; the narrower the stripe, the lower the rank. Clavi were a common feature of tunics across the ancient Mediterranean no matter what the individual’s formal rank; the finds from the Cave of Letters support the wearing of clavi, as do later rabbinic texts. Gildas Hamel, for example, refers to p.Meg. 1.72a, the response of a mother to a question from the sages about the good fortune of her sons, who became high priests in one day: “May [evil] befall me if my children saw the hair of my head and the stripes of my tunic.” Gildas Hamel, Poverty and Charity in Roman Palestine, First Three Centuries C.E. (University of California Publications, Near Eastern Studies 23; Berkeley: University
wide clavi in a wall painting from Dura Europos dating to the third century CE, suggestive, perhaps of Moses’ high status. Longer tunics (though not too long) were markers of higher social status; slaves were distinguished through their wearing of a short tunic without a cloak.

Moses’ striped tunic is visible beneath his outer garment, the cloak. The cloak was wrapped or draped around the body, sometimes quite elaborately. While this pairing of garments is not present in Mark’s gospel, we do see both the tunic and cloak in Matthew and Luke, a text they adapted from the sayings gospel Q:

29 [[ὁστις] σε [[ραπίζει]] εἰς τὴν σωγόνα, στρέφων [[αύτὸ]] καὶ τὴν ἄλλην· καὶ [[τὸ θέλοντί σοι κριθήναι καὶ]] τὸν χιτώνα σου [[λαβεῖν τὰς καὶ τὸν χιτῶνα σου]] καὶ τὸ ἰμάτιον.


33 Cloaks and tunics are paired as well in *SHA Pertinax* 8.2-4, a list of luxury garments sold from the emperor Commodus’ estate. The luxurious clothing is used in *SHA* as a characterization of Commodus as a “bad” emperor; unpopular emperors wear luxurious or extravagant clothing, while “good” emperors are known via their frugality.
The NRSV translates χιτών in these verses as coat, possibly to make sense of the inverted order of the garments in Matthew’s rendering of the text (identical to the text of Q): “and if anyone wants to sue you and take your coat, give your cloak as well,” literally “if anyone wants to sue you and take your tunic, give your cloak as well” (compared to Luke’s “from him who takes away your coat, do not withhold even your shirt”). It would be much more reasonable for someone to sue another for a cloak, rather than a tunic, as the cloak was the more valuable of the two. The pairing of “coat” and “cloak” makes no sense in the context of ancient clothing; the pair is “tunic” and “cloak,” or at least “shirt” and “coat.”

The tunic had to be worn as part of the pair, tunic and cloak, in order for the individual to be considered “fully” or completely dressed; a later rabbinic texts refers to proper public dress as being “dressed in a haluq (the Hebrew word for “tunic”) and wrapped in a tallit (cloak).”

Wearing the tunic alone was possible in private contexts, though men had to put on a cloak in order to go out in public. The wearing of the cloak was also a status indicator, as keeping the cloak properly draped around the body was a time-consuming process, one that necessitated (and therefore demonstrated) a freedom from manual labor.

Like the tunic, the cloak could also be worn alone, but this did constitute a complete form of dress. Men could go out in public dressed only in a cloak and be viewed as fully clothed. The cloak as complete dress is reflected in the etymology of

34 t. Tohorot 8.13.
36 Bonfante and Jaunzems, “Clothing and Ornament” 1390.
ἱμάτιον. In its plural form, τὰ ἱμάτια generally means “clothes” or “garments,” while ἱματίζω means “to clothe” or “to furnish with clothing.”

Similarly, other nouns for outer garments stem from verbs describing the action of dress: ἐπιβλήμα from ἐπιβάλλω, “that which is thrown over, covering”; ἐγκυκλόν from ἐγκυκλῶ, “that which encompasses, encircles,” and ἅμπεχον from ἅμπεχω, “that which surrounds, covers, encloses.”

“Clothing” seems to be fairly synonymous with the cloak; to be cloaked was to be clothed.

Because the cloak was so simple in its basic structure – a loose-fitting rectangle, or a number of connected rectangles – it lent itself to a multiplicity of uses and to variations in vocabulary from the principal ἱμάτιον. These variations in vocabulary tend to refer to the quality and type of textiles used in its manufacture, rather than to function, as every “cloak” had multiple functions: the χλαίνα refers to a large square outer garment; τρίβων to a threadbare cloak or worn garment; φάρος to a larger piece of cloth, cloak, mantle, or coverlet; χλανίς to an outer wool garment of finer quality; σινδών to a fine linen mantle.

The cloak was used as a cover for the body when sleeping.


38 Vocabulary is here drawn from the Brauron clothing catalogues, IG II² 1514-1530; Liza Cleland states that outer garments are “often distinguished by terms derived from the action of putting on.” Liza Cleland, The Brauron Clothing Catalogues: Text, Analysis, Glossary and Translation (BAR International Series 1428; Oxford: John and Erica Hedges Ltd., British Archaeological Reports, 2005), 60.

39 See G. Leroux’s article, “PALLIUM, χλαίνα, φάρος, ἱμάτιον, τρίβων, paenula, laena, palla,” Dictionnaire des antiquités grecques et romaines, d’après les textes et les monuments (5 vols. in 10 books; ed. C. Darenberg and E. Saglio; Paris: Hachette, 1877-1919) 4.1 285-93. This more general purpose of clothing demonstrated in vestiary vocabulary is reflected also in Hebrew: the Hebrew term בגד occurs over 200 times in the Hebrew Bible and refers generally to something woven, cloth or clothing, and refers to both the rags of lepers and the vestments of the high priest, the dress of the widow and the adornment of the prostitute. Similarly, πάνθα can mean sheet, garment or any type of covering. See D.R. Edwards, “Dress and Ornamentation,” in Anchor Bible Dictionary (6 vols.; ed. D.N. Freedman; New York and Toronto: Doubleday, c.1992) 2. 232-8. I discuss the σινδών at length in my article “Cloaks, Conflict, and Mark 14:51-52,” CBQ 75 (Fall 2013): 683 – 703.
demonstrated in a wide range of literature from Homer (*Odyssey* 3.349-350) to Lucian (*Amores* 49) to the *Acts of John* 92:

> ἡµῶν πάντων τὸν µαθητῶν αὐτοῦ εἰς Γεννησαρῆτ ἐν ἑνὶ καθευδόντων οἶκῳ ἐγὼ µόνος τὸ ἰµάτιον ἐντυλίξαµενος ἐπετῆρον τί πρᾶσσει

When all of us, his disciples, were alone, sleeping in a house at Gennesaret, having wrapped myself up in my cloak, I observed what he did.

The cloak was often the most expensive household item a person might own. Many households could only afford one cloak, and therefore only one blanket under which all needed to sleep.\(^{40}\) Collins suggests that Bartimaeus’ abandoning of his cloak in Mark 10:50 is a significant act as a cloak “is one of the very few possessions that a beggar would have. His leaving it behind is thus analogous to the widow who contributed “her whole livelihood” to the service of God in the temple (12:44).”\(^{41}\) Bartimaeus’ possession of a cloak is actually surprising; cloaks were expensive, and a lack of clothing was a common marker of poverty and shame.

The primary uses of the ἰµάτιον were its wear as an outer garment and its use as a blanket or covering while sleeping. Hilhorst lists other “alternative” uses of the garment as well, including dividing the cloak, (*Sulpicius Severus, Life of St. Martin* 3.2; Lucian, *Toxaris* 30; *Story of Apollonius, King of Tyre* RA 12);\(^{42}\) dropping one’s cloak (significant for the interpretation of Mark 14:51-52), tearing one’s cloak, slinging, and using the

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\(^{40}\) See Exodus 22:26-27. Hamel (*Poverty and Charity*, 71-2) discusses several interesting rabbinic cases pertaining to cloaks: he refers to a legal discussion in which a man has to borrow a cloak from a neighbour, not owning one himself, in order to travel to visit his sick father, but when his father dies in the meantime, he rents the cloak in mourning (*t. Bava Metzi’a* 8.28; *b. Mo’ed Qatan* 26b). Hamel also describes a recommendation that students of the rabbinic tradition own two cloaks, one for everyday use and one for the Sabbath; the students cry out in protest because of the difficulty of owning two cloaks due to the prohibitive expense (*p. Pe’ah* 8.8.21b). For further examples of cloaks used in sleeping contexts, see Hilhorst, “Alternative Uses” 489-90.


cloak to tie an adversary around the neck for the purpose of dragging him off, Hilhorst’s particular interest (Plutarch, Publicola 5.3). Items could be stored or hidden in the folds of the cloak, similar to the Sumbanese waistcloth (Suetonius, Vitellius 2.5).

Because of their value, cloaks were also often used as items of pledge or guarantee (P.Ryl. 2 128; most famously Exodus 22:25-26, “If you take your neighbour’s cloak in pledge, you must return it to him before the sun sets; it is his only clothing, the only covering for his skin. In what else shall he sleep?”), and were also often the object of theft. Complaints about the theft of clothing show up in numerous literary and documentary contexts, including curse tablets: “Solinus to the goddess Sulis Minerva. I give to your divinity and majesty my bathing garment and [my] cloak. Do not allow sleep or health to the one who has wronged me, whether man or woman, whether slave or free, unless he reveals himself and brings those items to your temple.” The poet Tibullus asserts that Venus protects him as he walks through the streets of Rome at night, ensuring that no one attacks him to “make a prize” of his clothing (1.2.26). The man attacked on the way from Jerusalem to Jericho in Luke’s gospel is stripped of his clothing, beaten and left on the road (Luke 10:30).

Mentions of thefts of clothing are frequent in documentary papyri (BGU 15 2459; P.Cair.Zen. 2 59145; P.Coll.Youtie 1 7; P.Lille 2 35; P.Tebt. 4 1096, for example).

P.Enteux. 83 (= P.Lille 2 42, Magdola, February 26 221 BCE) is particularly dramatic:

44 Tab. Sulis 32: deae Suli Minerv(a)e Solinus dono numina tuo maiestati paxsa(m) ba(ln)earum et (pal)leum (nec p)ermittat(s so)mnum nec san(ita)tem(.)ei qui mihi fr(a)adem (f)ecit si vir si femi(na) si servus s(i) l(ib)er nissi (s)se retegens istas s(p)ecies ad (te)mplum tuum detulerit…. Text and translation (adapted) from Fagan, Bathing, 37 n. 65. Baths were notorious for thefts of clothing, and if they were able, people often brought slaves with them to guard their clothing. See also Tab. Sulis 10; 16; 61; 62; 65.
Translation:

To king Ptolemy from Thamounis, from the Heracleopolite nome, greetings. I have been wronged by Thothortais, an inhabitant of Oxyrhynchus, in the Arsinoite nome. In the first year of Philopater in the month of Hathyr, when I was visiting Oxyrhynchus and had gone to the bath, the accused having arrived also and finding me bathing in a bathing-tub in the women’s chamber wanted me to be thrown out; and because I would not leave, scornful of me because I am a foreign woman, she gave me numerous blows, hitting me haphazardly all over my body,
(line 5) then she took from around my neck my necklace of stones; after these things, I made a complaint on this subject before Petosiris the comarch, and summoned before him, Thothortais said whatever she wanted to him, and the comarch, taking her side, led me off to prison and guarded me for four days, when he stripped me of the cloak in which I was wrapped, worth thirty drachmas, and which now the accused wears; after this I was released. I beseech you therefore, o king, to order Diophanes the strategos to write to Moschion the epistates that he might send Thothortais before him and, if I speak the truth, compel her to give me back my cloak (line 10) or the thirty drachmas which it is worth; as for the acts of violence against me, Diophanes will decide, in order that, thanks to you, o king, I will obtain justice. (vac.) Farewell. (vac.)

Hand 2: To Moschion. First and above all reconcile them; and if you cannot, send therefore to the local judges to get this decided.

Year 1, Gorpiaios 28, Tybi 12.

Verso Year 1, Gorpiaios 28, Tybi 12.

Thamounis against Thothortais, concerning a cloak.

While Thamounis’ petition is full of interesting details, the focus here is on her cloak:

Thamounis is stripped of her cloak, and the cloak is then given to Thothortais, the accused. Thamounis does not grieve the violence against her or her unjust imprisonment, but seeks the return of her cloak; she even titles her complaint, “concerning a cloak.”

The polyvalency of ancient clothing, particularly the ἱμάτιον and variations of the simple rectangular textile of the “cloak,” allows it to perform different functions in different contexts. The cloak was also, as a polyvalent garment, a valuable garment, accepted as pledge or guarantee or targeted in acts of violence or theft. As such a meaningful garment, the cloak, on the body of the wearer, becomes a prime site for the construction, negotiation and maintenance of identity. The examination of cloaks in

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46 Similarly, the Hebrew vocabulary for basic items of dress is equally flexible (or vague, or as Eric Silverman calls it, “linguistically slippery.” Eric Silverman, A Cultural History of Jewish Dress [Dress, Body, Culture; London: Bloomsbury, 2013], 4). Beged appears over two hundred times in the Hebrew Bible and refers generally to something woven, cloth or clothing, and refers to everything from the rags of the leper to the vestments of the high priest, the dress of the widow to the garb of the prostitute. Simlah (also salmah) can mean garment, sheet or any covering of the body (Exodus 12:34; Deuteronomy 22:17); halug means tunic or piece of smooth or fine linen; kesut, a wife’s clothing, warm clothing, or a blanket (Exodus 21:10; Job 24:7; Exodus 22:27).
specific contexts in the gospel of Mark, the text where we find its most frequent mention and one of the main source texts for both Matthew and Luke, will demonstrate the significance of this polyvalency in the gospel’s portrayal of Jesus.

4 Cloaks in context: miracles

In February 2013, the American televangelist and chairman of the Christian Broadcasting Network Pat Robertson advised his viewers that garments purchased from secondhand clothing stores could potentially be infested with demons. Robertson was responding to an e-mail from a certain “Carrie,” who wrote that her mother had expressed concern about Carrie’s bringing of secondhand clothing into their home without first “binding familiar spirits” and blessing the items. Carrie’s question was “can demons attach themselves to material items?”

Robertson’s response included a story about a girl in the Philippines who bought a ring that had belonged to a witch in Thailand, a witch who had asked a spirit to “come into” the ring. After purchasing the ring, “all hell broke loose” for the poor girl before she realized what the problem was. While not every sweater purchased at Goodwill is demon-possessed, Robertson stated that, as evil spirits can attach themselves to inanimate objects, it is better to be “super-cautious” and rebuke any spirits that might have attached themselves to clothing.⁴⁷

This (rather odd) example expresses a concern about the materiality of clothing that is particularly relevant to the study of cloaks in miracle contexts in the gospels, specifically in the gospel of Mark. Jesus’ cloak is not demon-infested (though of course, many people

are demon-infested in the gospel), though it is “infested” – invested – with another kind of being. Jesus himself is embodied in a surprisingly material way in his cloak in Mark’s gospel; the boundaries of Jesus’ “self” are configured around the borders of his hem.

As mentioned above, the most prominent garment in Mark’s gospel is the cloak, referenced eleven times in the course of the narrative. Cloaks envelop Jesus in the text: he teaches using imagery relating to cloaks, the transformation of his body at the scene of the transfiguration is signaled to his disciples through the change in the appearance of his cloak, people throw their cloaks under him and before him, and his humiliation at the crucifixion is marked by his dressing up in a purple cloak and his stripping down when he is hung on the cross. Jesus’ cloak is particularly significant in miracle contexts in Mark, as simply touching the garment is enough to effect healing. People touch Jesus’ cloak and are healed. The outer garment has its own power here, though not a power that is separate from Jesus; it is, rather, representative or demonstrative of Jesus.

The story of the healing of an unnamed woman with a hemorrhage or flow of blood (5:25-34) is an instance of such a clothing-mediated healing (a story first discussed in chapter one): the woman touches Jesus’ cloak, believing that the contact will have healing power (“If I touch even his cloak, I will be made well,” ἐὰν ἄγομαι κἀν τῶν ἱματίων αὐτοῦ σωθῆσομαι, 5:28). As mentioned earlier, Mark 6:56 reports that many others were also healed through contact with Jesus’ cloak, specifically through contact with the fringe or hem of the garment (κρασπέδον).

The hem of the cloak is particularly significant in the ancient Near Eastern context. The hem or border was the most ornate part of the cloak, but it more importantly had a
certain identification with the person him or herself.\(^{48}\) The decoration of the hem expressed the owner’s social status and authority, but beyond this kind of expression “once removed,” beyond communicating this status, the hem actually encapsulated this status in a very tangible kind of capacity. Akkadian texts use the phrase “to cut off the hem” in descriptions of exorcisms: the exorcist would remove the hem from the cloak of the afflicted person and utter an incantation over the hem. Injury could also be perpetrated through the tearing of the hem of an image of a person.\(^{49}\) Mesopotamian divorce was performed through the husband’s removal of the hem of his wife’s robe; conversely, a marriage proposal could be conveyed through “covering” the woman with the edge of a garment (Ezekiel 16:8; Ruth 3:9).\(^{50}\) In the Hebrew Bible, Saul, after disobeying the Lord’s command by not destroying everything in the city of Amalek but keeping the best sheep and oxen for sacrifice, recognizes his transgression and begs for forgiveness of the Lord through Samuel. Samuel responds by telling Saul that the Lord has rejected him as king (1 Samuel 15:26). Saul seizes the hem (Hebrew \textit{kanaph}) of Samuel’s robe as he turns to leave, and it tears. The tearing of the hem seals the transaction; Samuel declares, “The Lord has this day torn the kingship of Israel away

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\(^{48}\) “Hem” can here take in tassels (\textit{tzitzit}) as well, as an extension of the hem. Tasseled garments were not unique to Judeans (Numbers 15:38-39; Deuteronomy 22:12); evidence from Syria, Egypt and Greece suggests that tassels on the hem of garments were quite common. M.E. Vogelzang and W.J. van Bekkum, “Meaning and Symbolism of Clothing in Ancient Near Eastern Texts,” 265 – 84 in \textit{Scripta Signa Voci}s, ed. H.L.J. Vanstiphout (Groningen: E. Forsten, 1986), 276. states that Judeans would not have been identifiable based upon clothing, at least not in the first centuries of the Common Era: “[Jews did not wear distinctive Jewish clothing… the Jews of Palestine in the first and second centuries C.E. wore clothing that was indistinguishable from that of non-Jews].” Shaye J.D. Cohen, ““Those Who Say They Are Jews And Are Not”: How Do You Know a Jew in Antiquity When You See One?” 25 – 68 in \textit{The Beginnings of Jewishness: Boundaries, Varieties, Uncertainties} (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1999), 31; see also Yigael Yadin, \textit{Bar Kokhba: the Rediscovery of the Legendary Hero of the Second Jewish Revolt Against Rome} (New York: Random House, 1971), 66-85, esp. 69.


\(^{50}\) These and other examples are found in Jacob Milgrom, “Of Hems and Tassels: Rank, Authority and Holiness Were Expressed in Antiquity by Fringes on Garments,” \textit{Biblical Archaeology Review} 9.3 (1983): 61 – 65.
from you” (1 Samuel 15:27-28). Later, David cuts the hem of Saul’s cloak in order to demonstrate his ability to kill Saul, though the act also dissolves the king’s authority; Saul proclaims, “Now I know that you will become king” (1 Samuel 24:20).51

The hem could change relationships between individuals, and embody the qualities or power of the individual. Babylonian gods wore tasseled hems, and worshippers could “take hold of” or “grasp” the fringed hem of the god’s cloak in petition.52 IV R2 60a 34-37, an incantation text addressed to Shamash, reads: “O king of heaven and earth, I have sought after thee; I have turned to thee; like the sisiktu (hem) of my god and my goddess, thy great sisiktu I have seized; because it is in thy province to give judgment, to announce decisions, and to establish well-being.”53 Nebuchadnezzar equates Marduk’s love with his act of seizing Marduk’s sisiktu; Nabonidus lists one of his praiseworthy attributes as “seizing the sisiktu of the gods” in order to avoid immoral behaviours.54 Seizing the hem of a god’s garment is interpreted as having tangible physical effects, or effecting tangible change to persons or situations.

When applied to persons, seizing the hem also has real effects. If a man grasped another’s hem during a business transaction, that person was forced to comply with the person’s demands.55 Jacob Milgrom explains that professional prophets in the ancient Near East would enclose a lock of hair and a piece of their hem with their reports to the

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51 Silverman writes that the cutting of Saul’s hem is also the avenging of “Saul’s prior assault on Samuel’s hem.” Silverman, Cultural History, 15.
52 Stephens envisions the situation as follows: “We may picture the suppliant as before the statue of the god, placing his hand upon the representation of some portion of the god’s garment, or possibly as grasping some part of an actual garment with which the statue may have been clothed.” Stephens, “Ancient Significance,” 61.
55 Stephens, “Ancient Significance,” 63: “this transaction was a formal procedure, and … it was carried out before duly constituted authorities and recorded in the archives.”
king, or to “sign their name” by pressing part of the hem into a clay tablet, for “the hair and the hem served to identify the prophet, but more important, the piece of hem served to guarantee that the prediction was true.” The hem embodies the potency or effective ability of the individual.

Taken in this context, it makes sense that the woman would have confidence in the power of Jesus’ cloak, for the cloak, of which the hem was a representative part, was an extension of the person in a very tangible, causal way. Jesus’ garment is a material “embodiment” of Jesus himself. As Lurker writes,

Die Kleidung ergänzt das Bild vom äusseren Menschen; sie ist nicht zufällig sonder spiegelt etwas vom Wesen des inneren Menschen wider… das Kleid ist eine Art alter ego; der Kleidertausch kann das Auswechseln des inneren Ich bedeuten. Acts of removing, spreading, giving or stripping the cloak had tangible consequences for persons and relationships; Lurker asserts that the exchange of clothing involves the taking on of a new “inner self.” Jonathan’s stripping of his cloak in 1 Samuel 18:4 not only indicates his loyalty to David, but also represents Jonathan’s concession of royal claims: “Jonathan stripped himself of the robe that he was wearing, and gave it to David, and his armor, and even his sword and his bow and his belt.” Even an apparently small behaviour, such as picking up the edge of a cloak in order to run, for example, could have severe consequences to the perception of an individual; Batten has argued that the father in Luke’s parable of the prodigal son (Luke 15:11-32) makes himself into a fool before

his kin and community by hiking up his robe and exposing his ankles in his enthusiastic welcome of his returned son.\(^5\)

The woman’s touch of Jesus’ cloak is the climax of the miracle story:

καὶ γυνὴ οὖσα ἐν ῥύσει αἷματος δώδεκα ἡμέρας ὑπὸ πολλῶν ἰατρῶν καὶ διαπανήσασα τὰ πάντα καὶ μηδὲν ὑφεληθείςα ἄλλα μᾶλλον εἰς τὸ χέριν ἐλθούσα, ἀκούσασα περὶ τοῦ Ἰησοῦ, ἐλθούσα ἐν τῷ οἴχῳ ὀπισθεὶς ἡμᾶτο τοῦ ἰματίου αὐτοῦ.

And there was a woman who, having had a flow of blood for twelve years, and having suffered much under many physicians, and having spent all that she had, becoming no better but rather growing worse, having heard reports about Jesus, coming up behind him in the crowd, *she touched his cloak*” (5:25-27).

Even touching only his garment (the woman says, “If I touch *even* his garments”), not his body, Jesus’ power is transferred to the woman. Jesus’ cloak is synonymous with Jesus himself. Jesus and his cloak are part of the same embodied “package.”

The interchangeability of the individual and their clothing, or the necessity of the complex of person-dress, is overlooked in other discussions of interactions between human and garment as well; consideration is of the practice of healing through physical touch, rather than of healing through the touching of a textile.\(^5\) When the direction of the action is reversed, when attention is not on the petitioner’s touch but on what is actually touched, exciting new meanings open up. Commentators, for instance, reference a story about the Roman general Sulla and his first encounter with Valeria Messalla: “As she passed along behind Sulla, she rested her hand upon him, drew off a bit of thread from his cloak, and then proceeded to her own place. When Sulla looked at her in astonishment, she said, “It’s nothing of importance, General, but I too wish to partake a


little in your good luck.” Both Gerd Theissen and Mary Rose D’Angelo emphasize that the anecdote “underlines the expectation that a touch can transfer power,” though the focus is only one way, on the woman’s touch of “Sulla.” D’Angelo writes that the story about Sulla “shows that the woman’s prescription for her own healing [in Mark] would be entirely comprehensible to the audience of Mark: as Valeria Messalla’s touch could draw out Sulla’s luck, her touch can draw out of Jesus the power she seeks and needs.” The woman really heals herself, suggesting that Jesus’ power is active or effective only in interaction with others, or the collaboration with others.

The woman touches Jesus, but what she touches of Jesus is his cloak. The hem of the cloak in particular encoded certain qualities of the person and could effectively “stand in” for the person in the structuring, maintenance or deconstruction of relationships. The cloak as a whole had similar functions: the bestowal of a cloak could mark the restoration of relationship or social status, while the stripping of a cloak indicated the removal of honour or the dissolution of relationship. In the Book of Acts, people take items of dress that had come into contact with Paul in order to benefit from Paul’s healing power: “God did extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons (σουδάρια ἢ σιμικίνθια) were carried away from his body to the sick, and diseases left them and the evil spirits came out of them” (Acts 19:11-12). Even in contractual

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60 Plutarch, Sull. 35.4; quoted in full, with Greek text, in Collins, Mark, 282.
62 D’Angelo, “Gender and Power,” 99. Valeria Messalla does seem to have been successful; she eventually married Sulla.
63 “Anointed handkerchiefs” are currently used in Pentecostal churches in order to procure physical healing from illness; see R. Marie Griffith, “‘Joy Unspeakable and Full of Glory: The Vocabulary of Pious Emotion in the Narratives of American Pentecostal Women, 1910 – 1945,” 218 – 40 in An Emotional
relationships, the cloak could serve as legal evidence; Kruger explains that in Sumerian
documents of sale, “the seller would “invest” the buyer with his garment to signify that
he ceded all his claims and transferred the right of property to the new owner.”  

The cloak by itself asserts nothing; the meaning of the cloak, by itself, is not clear
or settled. As an extension of Jesus, the configuration of his borders, the cloak is a
material “healing substance,” like, perhaps, Jesus’ saliva (Mark 8:22). Moss is careful
to note that “[t]he power that heals the woman does not come from the garments but from
Jesus himself... This is not an act of simple magical transference from garment to
woman; the woman’s touch pulls power out of Jesus himself.” Whatever Moss’ reasons
for denying the “magic” of this action, the text itself explicitly states that the power does,
in face, come from the garments, and from Jesus himself. The cloak is not “draped on
otherwise invisible and immaterial ideas,” but is draped on Jesus. While Jesus asks,
“Who touched my clothes?”, his disciples rephrase the question as “Who touched me?”
(5:30: τίς μου ἤψατο τῶν ιματίων; 5:31: τίς μου ἤψατο;). They are asking the same
question. Clothing does not just “make” the man; clothing “is” the man. There is a clear
correlation between subject and materiality.

Whether the woman understands Jesus as man or god, her act of touching the hem
of his cloak resonates with other ancient eastern Mediterranean interactions with hems,

**References**

66 Moss, “The Man with the Flow of Power,” 510. The question of “magic” needs further examination:
what does Moss define as “magical”? Why does there seem to be an inherent scholarly problem with
“magic”?
67 Keane, “Signs are Not the Garb of Meaning,” 193.
and with wider Greco-Roman traditions as well. Seneca (in a lost work; the passage exists within Augustine’s *City of God*) describes a ritual performed on the Capitoline Hill in Rome before a statue of Jupiter Optimus Maximus as involving a similar connection between deity and dress:

> Alius nomina deo subicit, alius horas Iovi nuntiat; alius lutor est, alius unctor, qui vano motu bracchiorum imitatur unguentem. Sunt quae Iunoni ac Minervae capillos disponant (longe a templo, non tatum a simulacro stantes digitos movent ornantium modo), sunt quae speculum teneant; sunt qui ad vadimonia sua deos advocent, sunt qui libellos offerant et illos causam suam doceant.

One man supplies names to the god, another announces the time to Jupiter; another is his bather, while another acts as perfumer, gesturing as if he is applying unguents with empty hands. There are women who act as hairdressers for Juno and Minerva (standing far from the temple, as well as from the image, they move [their] fingers like they were dressing [the goddesses’] hair), and there are others who hold a mirror. There are men who call the gods to court to act as sureties on their behalf, and some who offer documents to explain to the gods their particular suit.⁶⁸

Seneca (through Augustine) is writing scornfully of these ritual practices yet, as Anthony Corbeill notes, he still refers to the statues not as “images,” but as named “gods” – Jupiter, Juno, Minerva. As Corbeill states, the practitioners “address not piles of inert material but “gods.” Following what seems to be a popular mode of expression, Seneca names the image as if it were the divinity itself. The power of the god has become such an integral part of its representation that the two cannot be named as linguistically separate entities.”⁶⁹ Participants use their own bodies mimetically to dress and address the gods, men caring for the body of Jupiter, women dressing the hair of the goddesses. The act of care and dress is ostensibly thought to bring about connection with the deities: “its common efficacy depends upon the idea that these bodily movements can have a real effect on the god, that successful participation with the more-than-human can effect

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desirable outcomes in daily life.” Physical attention to the bodily care and dress of the gods on the part of the worshipper is required for ritual efficacy, or is conducted in order to ensure ritual efficacy. Dress here does not involve a hem or cloak, but the interaction between god-dress-human is essential.

In the human realm, dress also works to bring about some kind of action or result in contexts of binding and shaking. In Acts 21:11, Paul’s belt is used in a prophetic action, indicative of Paul’s future binding in Jerusalem; Agabus binds his own feet and hands with Paul’s belt, declaring, τάδε λέγει τὸ πνεῦμα ἄγιον· τὸν ἄνδρα οὐ ἔστιν ἢ ζώνη αὕτη, οὗτως δήσουσιν ἐν Ἰερουσαλήμ οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι καὶ παραδώσουσιν εἰς χεῖρας ἐθνῶν, “thus says the Holy Spirit, thus shall the Judeans in Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt and hand him over into the hands of the nations [Gentiles].” Pliny mentions binding actions with reference to pregnancy: if a man takes off his belt, binds it around the pregnant woman and then, while untying it again, prays that “the one who has bound will also release,” birth should be accelerated (Nat. 28.42: partus accelerat hic mas ex quo quaeque conceperit, si cinctu suo soluto feminam cinxerit, dein solverit adiecta

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70 Corbeill, Nature, 28. Situations in which women used their hair to influence the gods apply here as well; Livy describes how women used their unbound hair to sweep out temples in order to avoid war or violent threat (Livy 3.7.7-8; 26.9.7). Corbeill asserts, “There is no sense in these texts that the women are performing an essentially degrading act; indeed, on these desperate occasions, when men were occupied with military affairs, one could even argue that this extraordinarily pious behavior shows the women as the most capable of influencing divine favor.” Corbeill, Nature, 71. Corbeill uses these texts to demonstrate the connection between humanity and nature, or human bodily participation in the world, specifically through gesture. The body is not separate from the world, but is very much a part of nature and the actions and activities of nature. Physical movement impacts on “nature” in tangible ways. Cures, for example, often parallel the injured or sick part of the body: the pith of a plant, the medulla, is to cure fever, which resides in the bone marrow, medulla (Pliny, Nat. 26.116; Corbeill, Nature, 35). Pointing the finger is enough to claim property; Corbeill refers to Pliny, Nat. 28.15, the story of the Etruscan seer Olenus who tries to usurp power from Rome by pointing to an image of a Roman temple he has drawn on the ground and encouraging Roman envoys to also point to the image; the envoys are unwilling to imitate Olenus’ gesture. Corbeill, Nature, 30-31. See also Cicero, Har. resp. 23.
precatione se vinxisse, eundem et soluturum, atque abierit). Proper use of the belt, in conjunction with proper use of the body, ensures the result. Pliny prohibits any binding action or gesture in formal meetings, rituals or recitations of vows “since they hinder all action” (velut omnem actum impeditia, Nat. 28.59).

In terms of shaking, cloaks were shaken out in order to enact or reinforce a curse, as in Lysias, Against Andocides 6.51: “priests and priestesses, standing and facing towards the west, cursed him and shook out their red garments, according to the ancient and time-honoured custom” (ιέρειαι καὶ ιερεῖς στάντες κατηράσαντο πρὸς ἐσπέραν καὶ φοινικίδας ἀνέσειαν, κατὰ τὸ νόμιμον τὸ παλαιὸν ἀρχαῖον). The shaking of the cloak in curse is the situation encountered in Acts 18:6, though translations sometimes do not preserve or proffer this reading:

And when they opposed and spoke profanely, shaking out his garments, he said to them: “Your blood be upon your heads! I am pure (clean, spotless, innocent). From now on I will go to the nations [Gentiles].

The NLT has “Paul shook the dust from his clothes” here; the NIV reads, “he shook out his clothes in protest” (see also the NET). The NRSV has “Paul shook the dust from his clothes,” but in a footnote, the translators include the more literal “Gk. reviled him, he shook out his clothes.” Paul is not shaking dust in some kind of symbolic gesture, but is enacting his curse through the shaking of his cloak.72

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71 In Greek contexts, the moon goddess Eileithyia is known as the “belt-loosener,” or λυσιζονος, as are Artemis and Athena Zosteria, also associated with pregnancy and childbirth: Theocritus, Idylls 17.60; Orphic Hymns 2.7; refer to Maurizio Bettini, Women & Weasels: Mythologies of Birth in Ancient Greece and Rome, trans. Emlyn Eisenach (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2013), 71; 263 nos. 16-17.
72 Alan L. Boegehold writes that the hesitance of translators to refer to the act of cursing is actually a good thing in the translation of the text! Their reticence is, “given the exigencies of responsible translation, not
These texts all point to the link between body, dress and action. While this evidence is all textual, scholars of material culture should not find me guilty of reducing the semiotics of material things to language; material things, here items of dress, are acting in non-discursive ways in these texts. These situations are very different than the use of dress in the *Historia Augusta*, for example, where dress is used almost excessively in order to demonstrate the character of various emperors, or as an extension of their character: “good” emperors are frugal and moderate in their dress, while “bad” emperors wear luxurious, extravagant garments (contrast *Alexander Severus* 4.2; 40.10-11 with *Elagabalus* 23.3-6 and *Gallienus* 6.4-6; hearing of revolt in Egypt, Gallienus reacts with the exclamation, “What! We cannot do without Egyptian linen!”). Dress in the *Historia Augusta* (and in texts like Suetonius, *Gaius* 13, 52; *Nero* 50; *Caligula* 52; *Tiberius* 13.1) reflects imperial character and moral suitability: “it is an example of a language of dress in action, but not of dress in action.”

Dress is not a reflection of something else in these texts, a demonstration of meaning located elsewhere. In Mark’s gospel, Jesus’ cloak is working as a material thing to influence action or achieve a result. His cloak is not an agent in and of itself, but as part of his bodily complex “participates,” to a certain degree, in actions and reactions to Jesus as a dressed body. The woman is healed when her hand comes in contact with Jesus’ cloak; later, people seek Jesus out “that they might touch even the fringe of his

only understandable but even desirable.” While Boegehold does not expand on this comment, it seems as though he feels that readers might get the wrong idea about Paul, or the wrong idea about “responsible” behaviour, if they read about Paul enacting some kind of “magical” curse. Alan L. Boegehold, *When a Gesture was Expected: A Selection of Examples from Archaic and Classical Greek Literature* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999), 74. Boegehold compares Paul’s gesture to the modern Greek gesture of plucking the cloth of a shirt or coat near the collarbone to signify abhorrence, Boegehold, *Gesture*, 73.

cloak,” and those who touch it are healed (Mark 6:56). Jesus is a dressed body, and his being – his qualities, his character, his power, his status – are embodied in his cloak.⁷⁴

5 Clothing in context: honour and shame

Honour

Cloaks in Mark’s gospel should also be read in terms of the ancient Mediterranean paradigm of honour and shame. Cloaks work to ascribe honour to Jesus or to shame Jesus in the text, and Jesus also uses the absence of cloaks to shame others. At his triumphal entry into Jerusalem, people throw their cloaks under and before Jesus:

καὶ φέρουσιν τὸν πῶλον πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν καὶ ἐπιβάλλουσιν αὐτῷ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐκάθισεν ἐπ’ αὐτόν. καὶ πολλοὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτῶν ἐστρωσαν εἰς τὴν ὁδὸν, ἄλλοι δὲ στιβάδας κόψαντες ἐκ τῶν ἁγρῶν.

And they brought the colt to Jesus, and threw their garments on it; and he sat upon it. And many spread their garments on the road, and others spread leafy branches which they had cut from the fields (11:7-8).

The throwing of cloaks before Jesus is a clearly honorific gesture. The anointing of Jehu in 2 Kings 9:13 is marked with the spreading of cloaks over the new king’s path:

“hurriedly they all took their cloaks and spread them for him on the bare steps; and they blew the trumpet, and proclaimed, “Jehu is king.”” Similarly, Plutarch relates that the act was reserved for “a few imperators” only:

When the time of Cato’s military service came to an end, he was sent on his way, not with blessings, as is common, nor yet with praises, but with tears and insatiable embraces, the soldiers casting their cloaks down for him to walk upon,

⁷⁴ Keane uses the lovely example of Charlotte Zolotow’s children’s book Mr. Rabbit and the Lovely Present, illustrated by Maurice Sendak (Markham, ON: Puffin Books, 1977) as an illustration of the idea that qualities must be embodied in something in order to “work”: “‘She likes red,’ said the little girl. ‘Red,’ said Mr. Rabbit. ‘You can’t give her red.’ ‘Something red, maybe,’ said the little girl. ‘Oh, something red,’ said Mr. Rabbit.” Zolotow, Mr. Rabbit, quoted in Keane, “Signs,” 187-88.
and kissing his hands, things which the Romans of that day rarely did, and only to a few of their imperators (Cato Minor 12.1).

This rare gesture marks Jesus’ royal identity in the gospel.

Jesus is ascribed an even higher degree of honour with the transformation of his cloak (here, “garments,” ἱμάτια) at his transfiguration. In Matthew and Luke’s versions of the story (see Matt. 17:2; Luke 9:29), Jesus changes both in dress and appearance (a minor agreement between Matthew and Luke against Mark); in Mark, however, his transfiguration is marked solely through his clothing:

καὶ τὰ ἱμάτια αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο στύλβοντα λευκὰ λίαν, οἷα γναφεύς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς οὐ δύναται ὑπὸ τῆς λευκάναι.

…. and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them (whiten them) (9:3).

MacDonald compares the transfiguration scene in Mark to Odysseus’ transformation before his son Telemachus. Odysseus’ change from beggar to father is marked through a change in dress (and a change in countenance, suggesting perhaps a closer identification with Matthew and Luke, though the referent in these texts is likely Moses):

… he let fly with a burst of exclamations:
“Stranger, you’re a new man – not what I saw before!
Your clothes, they’ve changed, even your skin has changed –
Surely you are some god who rules the vaulting skies!” (Od. 16.178-85).

Odysseus had first appeared dressed as a beggar, wrapped in rags; transformed, he appears “like a god” to his son (Od. 16.196-200). Odysseus also seems to have had “a

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76 Quoted in Dennis R. MacDonald, The Homeric Epics and the Gospel of Mark (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2000), 92. MacDonald uses Robert Fagles’ translation of The Odyssey (London and New York: Penguin, 1996). MacDonald also compares Mark’s scene to the epiphany of Aphrodite to Anchises in Homeric Hymn 5, which mentions Aphrodite’s “shining garments.” Anchises responds to the epiphany by offering to build an altar to Aphrodite “upon a high peak”, lines 84-87; 100-102.
divine launderer”: “Athene touched him with her golden wand. A well-washed cloak and
tunic she first of all put about his breast” (Od. 16.172-73).77

MacDonald presents the “parallel” texts from The Odyssey in order to argue for
Mark’s dependence upon the epic; here I would suggest that the parallels are significant
in terms of the function of the clothing in both texts. White clothing was difficult to
create, purchase and maintain; it was expensive to bleach garments properly.78 White
was important, though, in characterizing an individual as pure. The elect in Revelation,
for example, wear white garments (7:13-15). Jesus’ white garment in Mark suggests not
only purity or contact with the divine but, as in the comparative texts from The Odyssey,
identification with the divine. The portrayal of Jesus in a dazzling garment
communicates his ultimate status as the “beloved” of God (9:7). The clothing is a
demonstration of Jesus’ ascribed honour.

Shame

Jesus’ clothing shows his ascribed honour, while the clothing of others in the
gospel allows for the ascription of shame. Jesus denounces the scribes by drawing
attention to their dress: “beware of the scribes, who like to walk about in long robes, and
to have salutations in the market places and the best seats in the synagogues and the
places of honour at feasts…” (Mark 12:38-39, βλέπετε ἀπὸ τῶν γραμματέων τῶν
θελόντων ἐν στολαῖς περιπατεῖν καὶ ἀσπασμοῦς ἐν ταῖς ἁγοραῖς καὶ πρωτοκαθεδρίας ἐν
tαῖς συναγωγαῖς καὶ πρωτοκλησίας ἐν τοῖς δείπνοις; Luke 20:46). The “long robes” of
translation more simply means “dress” in Greek. The Roman stola was the characteristic

77 MacDonald, Homeric Epics, 93-94.
78 For more on washing and bleaching clothes, consult Miko Flohr, The World of the Fullo: Work,
Economy, and Society in Roman Italy (Oxford studies on the Roman economy; Oxford: Oxford University
dress of the Roman matron, usually a long, sleeveless dress with shoulder straps, belted under the breasts, long enough to cover the feet. The Greek στολή (στολίς) refers to garments in general, though appears more frequently in tragic performance in reference to the garments of actors (Sophocles, Phil. 224; Aristophanes, Eccl. 846).

The στολή of the scribe presents the reader with two interpretative possibilities. The robe could have referenced the higher social position of the scribes, as mentions of the garment in the LXX in particular suggest that the στολή (stola) was a more expensive garment (the dress of royalty and priests, Gen. 41:42; Exod. 28:2; 29:21; 31:10; 2 Chr. 18:9; 23:13; Esth. 6:8; 8:15; 1 Macc. 6:15; Jonah 3:6). Josephus (Ant. 3.151; 11.80) and Philo (Legat. 296) use this word to refer to priestly vestments. Within the gospel of Mark, στολή refers to the dress of the young man in 16:5, an angelic figure; this use resonates with Revelation 6:11; 7:9, 13, where the garments are indicative of a heavenly location. The scribes could have been walking around in overly luxurious or expensive clothing in an attempt to display their honour. Jesus is critiquing the scribes because they are claiming a higher status than belonged to them. The scribes act in order to draw the gaze, to be seen; they try to do this partly through their clothing: “wanting to walk around in such a robe indicates a desire to be able to display a symbol of high status. Similarly, wanting greetings in the marketplace shows a desire to be honored and recognized by people as someone important.”

79 As the dress of the wives of Roman citizens, it was meant to protect the inviolable status of the female wearer: “its length and bulk deflected the male gaze and signaled immunity to improper and unwanted approaches.” Cleland, Davies and Llewellyn-Jones, Greek and Roman Dress, 181. See also Kelly Olson, Dress and the Roman Woman: Self-presentation and society (London and New York: Routledge, 2008), 27 – 33.
80 Cleland, Davies and Llewellyn-Jones, Greek and Roman Dress, 181.
81 Sirach 39:4-11; Ulrich Luz, Das Evangelium nach Matthäus (Mt 18 – 25) (EKK 1.3; Zurich: Benziger; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1997), 306 n. 73; Collins, Mark, 583.
82 Yarbro Collins, Mark, 583.
Dress was the most obvious site for the negotiation of honour and status, located at the boundaries of the body, the visible projection of self into the visual culture of the Greco-Roman world. Lauren Hackworth Petersen offers a fascinating case study of this negotiation of status through dress in her discussion of the visible tension in the display of the Roman freedman’s body, images seeming to contend both with past status as slave and present status as free.83 Arguing that “ex-slave bodies were constructed to embody the limitations of a system so heavily dependent on dress and outward appearances,” she examines reliefs of freedmen that seem to encapsulate the complexity of a location between slave and citizen body.84 The stele of M. Publilius Satyr (Capua; late Republican/early Imperial period) depicts, for example, two adult males in togas, their right hands slung within the folds, in an upper panel, and two dressed people examining a naked, shackled slave on a raised platform in a lower panel. The clothing of the man who seems to be the seller flows out behind him, demonstrative of motion, while the buyer is still. The inscriptions on the stele suggest that Publilius Satyr may have been involved in the buying and selling of slaves; whether or not this was his profession, the stele “seems to affirm simple social hierarchies through the adornment of bodies,” but, Hackworth Petersen argues,

…it also suggests the complex status of Roman society’s newest citizens shown above – by displaying a slave on the auction block, a subtle, if inadvertent, reminder of the past each had left behind…. Functioning as a referent, the naked slave body potentially tarnishes the social identity of the togate citizens shown above, thus visually encroaching on the boundary between slave and citizen for these libertini.85

84 Hackworth Petersen, “Clothes,” 181.
85 Hackworth Petersen, “Clothes,” 197. Hackworth Petersen also discusses the appearance of Trimalchio at his dinner party in Petronius, Sat. 32.1 – 33.1: Trimalchio, a freedman, cannot hide his former slave status, though he tries to, desperately, through dress. His recognizable “slave hair cut” immediately gives him
The tension in the social status of the freedmen is enacted, in this monument, through dress.

Scribes and freedmen are very different, but the point of the example is to demonstrate the connection between status negotiation and dress. Wearing a garment associated with priests and royalty would be grasping for higher honour than belonged to the scribes. The scribes want attention, and they get it, though not the attention they were hoping for. Jesus criticizes the scribes’ claim to honour by highlighting what they are wearing. Matthew’s performance of the text supports this interpretative possibility as the author highlights not the robes, but the phylactery and fringes of the scribes: “They do all their deeds to be seen by men; for they make their phylactery broad and their fringes long…” (Matt. 23:5, πάντα δὲ τὰ ἔργα αὐτῶν ποιοῦσιν πρὸς τὸ θεαθῆναι τοῖς ἄνθρωποις. πλατύνουσιν γὰρ τὰ φυλακτήρια αὐτῶν καὶ μεγαλύνουσιν τὰ κράσπεδα....). The scribes are claiming a “holier” status than they deserved.

Another interpretive possibility for Mark 12:38 concerns effeminacy. Jesus may be making an effeminacy charge against the scribes here, attacking their masculinity, which would also be an attack against their honour. Any form of “dress out of place” was subject to such accusation in the Greco-Roman world. If the problem is that the scribes are wearing garments that are beyond their status, i.e. luxurious garments, these luxury away. Presumably Trimalchio could have changed his hair cut; other ex-slaves could not have hidden other remnants of their pasts, such as tattoos on their foreheads (Martial 2.29.9-10) or scars. According to Suetonius, Aug. 40.4, Augustus decreed that no one who had ever been put in irons or tortured could become a citizen; this statement is followed with the declaration in 40.5 that Romans are “the nation wearing the toga,” and that all those appearing in the Forum or its environs should be togate. The implication is, here, that ex-slaves bearing marks of abuse or torture could never be togate. Hackworth Petersen, “Clothes,” 204.
items could make them “soft” (μαλακός, “soft,” “effeminate”). If the scribes are too concerned with their appearance or bodies, this over-concern would also make them the objects of derision (Horace, Sat. 1.2.25; Seneca. Nat. 7.31, Ep. 114.21; Martial 1.96). “Walking about in long robes” is significant both for the “long robe” component and the “walking about” component, dress influencing or structuring one’s method of walking. If the scribes are walking about in long robes, the robes could be shortening their stride, rendering their stride more “feminine.” Mark 12:38 can be read as an honour attack based on the undermining of conventionally masculine social codes, expressed in the pairing of the long robes and the walking about in public.

Men wearing clothing that was not generally worn by men were the most frequent targets for the negative discourse of “softness” or effeminacy. Long clothing, particularly the στολή, was feminine. As mentioned above, the Roman stola was emblematic of a woman’s status as matron, married in a iustum matrimonium (legal marriage between two citizens). Women wore “long robes,” not men (Plautus, Menaechmi 143: vae capiti tuo. Omnis cinaedos esse censes, tu quia es? Tun med indutum fuisse pallam praedicas?; Ovid, Fast. 4.134; Ars. 1.31-2; Tibullus 1.6.68; Martial 1.35.8-9; Festus 112 L; Macrobius, Sat. 1.6.13; Prop. 4.11.63). Items of dress did not have to be conventionally feminine, however: “[l]ong, flowing tunics, reaching to the ankles (talaris tunica) and wrists (manicata tunica), marked the effeminate male. In fact, the state of being “loosely belted” (discinctus) became the metaphorical equivalent to having an effeminate

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86 Cicero asserts that luxury items are “ruinous to societies” (perniciosa civitatibus; Rep. 2.8); see Eric C. Stewart, Gathered around Jesus: An Alternative Spatial Practice in the Gospel of Mark (Matrix: The Bible in Mediterranean Context; Eugene, OR: Cascade Books [Wipf & Stock], 2009), 106-07.
87 See Olson, Dress, 27. The term “veste longa” or “long robe” can be read as “shorthand for legally married” (Olson, Dress, 30): “the Romans often used an article of clothing associated with a particular rank or status as a symbol for the status or rank itself” (Olson, Dress, 29).
lifestyle.” Men who wore long robes or long sleeves on their tunics were subject to charges of effeminacy (Quin. Inst. 11.1.3; Juvenal 2.124, the effeminate man as segmenta et longos habitus et flammae sumit; Gellius 6.12.1, 4-5; see also Cicero, Verr. 2.4.103; 5.31; 5.86; Suet. Jul. 45.3; Macrobius, Sat. 2.3.9; Plutarch, Caes. 4.9; Martial 1.96). The “long robes” of the scribes may have associated the scribes with the discourse of effeminacy, particularly if the gospel of Mark is interpreted as originating from Rome.

The long robes of the scribes would have impeded their “walking about.” In terms of the use of cloaks as a shaming mechanism, the difficulty of walking with a long robe would have implications for the masculinity of the scribes, as shorter steps were associated with femininity. Dress, adornment, gender, gesture and movement are overlapping categories, working together to display morality or character. Women wearing robes that covered the feet walked with small steps; goddesses mince “like doves” (Iliad 5.778). Heroes walk with long strides, moving powerfully at a moderate pace (Il. 3.22; 7.211-4; 15.206-10; 15.676. 686; Od. 11.539; Pseudo-Aristotle, Physiognomy 807b; 809a; 813a; Ambrose, Off. 1.18.74). Seneca proclaims,

Non vides, si animus elanguit, trahi membra et pigre moveri pedes? Si ille effeminatus est, in ipso incessu adparere mollitiam? Si ille acer est et ferox, concitari gradum? Si furit aut, quod furori simile est, irascitur, turbatam esse corporis motum nec ire, sed ferri?

Do you not see that, if the soul has become faint, his limbs drag and his feet move reluctantly? If it is effeminate, that the softness is apparent in his very gait? That if it is sharp and courageous, the pace is quickened? That being mad or, resembling madness, being angry, disorders bodily movements from walking to rushing? (Ep. 114.3)

The workings of the soul are made visible in bodily movement. Again, this bodily movement is part of the complex of the dressed body, for the impeded movement of the body due to a long robe is not separate from a non-dressed, “natural” gait. Small steps revealed a man to be “less than” a man. The body required constant vigilance, as it was under constant scrutiny. The scribes, presenting themselves explicitly to be seen, would have had to take smaller steps if wearing long robes, which would have been viewed negatively.

Mark and Luke do not comment on the gait of the scribes, though the scribes are “walking about” in these verses, and “walking about” in order to be seen. Luke’s gospel in particular is about seeing and being seen, hearing and being heard; for example, Luke redacts Mark 6:1-6a, Jesus’ rejection at Nazareth, by eliminating the unbelief of the people and emphasizing Jesus’ good speech. After reading from Isaiah and proclaiming his message, he sits down, and “the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on him…. And all spoke well of him, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth” (Luke 4:20, 22: καὶ πάντων οἱ ὀφθαλμοὶ ἐν τῇ συναγωγῇ ἦσαν ἀτενίζοντες αὐτῷ…. Καὶ πάντες ἐμαρτύρουν αὐτῷ καὶ ἐθαύμαζον ἐπὶ τοῖς λόγοις τῆς χάριτος τοῖς ἐκπορευομένοις ἐκ τοῦ στόματος αὐτοῦ; see also Luke 24:19-20). The Greco-Roman world was a culture of surveillance. The gaze was a primary element of social life. The scribes in Mark are behaving in self-consciously public ways, behaving in a way that

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90 On the Greco-Roman world as a culture of surveillance, see, for example, Cicero, Nat. d. 2.145: “the eyes, in those arts that are judged by the eyes, in painting, sculpture, engraving, and in the motion and gesture of bodies, distinguish with great subtlety; the eyes judge the beauty, proportion and, as I may call it, the becomingness (decentiam) of colours, and they distinguish things of greater importance, even virtues and vices…. “
would be looked at, scrutinized. Their performative action of “walking about in long robes” should be interpreted as more far-reaching than a simple honour claim.

Walking was not a “natural” action in the Greco-Roman world; much like Mauss comments on the different marching techniques of British vs. French soldiers, for example, the male walk was learned through deliberate practice. One’s walk was watched carefully. The walk was not as idiosyncratic as, for example, the modern fashion model’s attempt to slink down a runway with a characteristic gait, but was something natural yet “learned” at the same time: “bodily movements are not only the product of individual idiosyncrasies, but are an integral part of the way the individual interacts with the social world.”91 The male walk should be fast yet not too fast, with a broad stride, bold yet not showy (Cicero, Sest. 17, 19). It should still appear “natural” and unstudied, however; feigning a walk could lead to discovery of one’s true nature, especially if that nature was effeminate (Cicero, Pis. 18; Clod. 21; Brut. 225; Seneca, Ep. 114.3; Petronius, Sat. 119; Juv. 2.17; Quint. Inst. 5.9.14), or if the walk did not match other elements of bodily movement, voice and gesture (Cicero, Agr. 2.13, on Rullus).

One’s walk should coincide with specific masculine ideals, but it also revealed the “true” person, a person’s true, particular nature. The second-century physiognomist par excellence, Polemon of Laodicea, affirms that a man’s walk enacts a man’s virtue: “You should know that a certain amplitude in a man’s stride signifies trustworthiness, sincerity, liberality, and a high-minded nature free from anger. Such men come off successful in

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their encounters with emperors." In Petronius, *Satyricon* 126.3, a slave-girl discusses her method of recognizing a male prostitute when she sees one:

> Quia nosti venerem tuam, superbiam captas vendisque amplexus, noncom modas. Quo enim spectant flexae pectine comae, quo facies medicamine attritae
> oculorum quoque mollis petulantia, quo incessus arte compositus et ne vestigia
> quidem pedum extra mensuram aberrantia, nisi quod formam prostituis, ut vendas?
> Vides me: nec auguria novi nec mathematicorum caelum curare sole o, exvultibus tamen hominem mores colligo, et cum spatiantem vidi, quid cogitaret
> scio.

Because you know your beauty you are haughty, and do not bestow your embraces, but sell them. What is the object of your nicely combed hair, your face plastered with dyes, and the soft fondness even in your glance, and your walk arranged by art so that never a footstep strays from its place? It means of course that you offer your comeliness freely for sale. Look at me; I know nothing of omens, and I never attend to the astrologer's sky, but I read character in a man's face, and when I see him walk I know his thoughts.

Physical features – face, walk – are indicative of thought and character. Polybius 6.53.6 describes the proceedings of the funeral rites of illustrious men as including the dressing-up of representative men who can act like the deceased, representatives who, dressed up in appropriate togas should resemble the deceased “in stature and carriage (walk).” The spectacle is meant to inspire young men to similar virtue, 6.53.9-10. Diodorus Siculus implies that these representatives are actors who have actually studied the appearance and 

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94 Polybius 6.53.4-7: “Next after the interment and the performance of the usual ceremonies, they place the image of the departed in the most conspicuous position in the house, enclosed in a wooden shrine. This image is a mask reproducing with remarkable fidelity both the features and complexion of the deceased. On the occasion of public sacrifices they display these images, and decorate them with much care, and when any distinguished member of the family dies they take them to the funeral, putting them on men who seem to them to bear the closest resemblance to the original in stature and carriage. These representatives wear togas, with a purple border if the deceased was a consul or praetor, whole purple if he was a censor, and embroidered with gold if he had celebrated a triumph or achieved anything similar.” *The Histories of Polybius*, trans. W.R. Paton (Loeb Classical Library; London: W. Heinemann, 1922-1927).
walk of the deceased “through a man’s whole life;” writing on the funeral of Lucius Aemilius, he states,

Those Romans who by reason of noble birth and the fame of their ancestors are pre-eminent are, when they die, portrayed in figures that are not only lifelike as to features but show their whole bodily appearance. For they employ actors who through a man's whole life have carefully observed his carriage and the several peculiarities of his appearance. In like fashion each of the dead man's ancestors takes his place in the funeral procession, with such robes and insignia as enable the spectators to distinguish from the portrayal how far each had advanced in the *cursus honorum* and had had a part in the dignities of the state.\(^95\)

Again, face, walk and dress combine to form the complex of the deceased individual. The funeral procession is more than the memorialization of the deceased but, in effect, brings the deceased back to life: “[t]he body believes what it plays at: it weeps if it mimes grief. It does not represent what it performs, it does not memorize the past, it *enacts* the past, bringing it back to life. What is ‘learned by the body’ is not something that one has, like knowledge that can be brandished, but something that one is.”\(^96\) The physical and the social are here made equivalent through the primary, socialized experience of the body.

Proper techniques of walking were not only the concern of elite males, however; an epitaph from the third century BCE of a certain Claudia reads, “sermone lepido, tum autem incessu commodo” – “her conversation was pleasant, and her walk was appropriate” (*CLE* 52.7). Walking becomes an early Christian concern as well; Ambrose affirms that he refused to accept two men into the clergy because of one’s “unseemly gestures” and the other’s “arrogance of walk.” The two men later left the church, confirming Ambrose’s earlier reading of their bodies (*On the Duties of the Clergy* 1.18.72). As an extension of their dress (dress impacting stride and pace), the walk of the

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\(^{95}\) Translation of Diodorus Siculus 31.25 by Russel M. Geer (Loeb Classical Library; London: W. Heinemann, 1933-67).

\(^{96}\) Bourdieu, *Logic*, 73.
scribes would have been indicative of their character. Dio Chrysostom states that
“walking, a universal and simple activity perhaps, reveals the composure of character and
the attention one man gives to his conduct, but reveals another’s disorder and
shamelessness” (Or. 32.54 [Alex.]: ἀλλὰ τὸ βαδίζειν, δό κοινὸν ἐστι καὶ ἀπλοῦν δῆποιθεν,
tοῦ μὲν ἐμφαίναι τὴν ἡσυχίαν τοῦ τρόπου καὶ τὸ προσέχειν ἑαυτῷ, τοῦ δὲ ταραχήν καὶ
ἀναίδειαν). The scribes’ walk, a potential complication of their “walking about” in long
robes, would have revealed their ἀναίδεια, their shamelessness, their arrogance in
claiming a higher honour status than was theirs.

The “walking about” of Mark 12:38, the verb περιπατέω, does not in and of itself
indicate a shameful kind of walking or negative situation. Περιπατέω refers very
generally to walking, particularly in a certain place, such as, in a gospel context, by or on
the sea of Galilee or in the Jerusalem Temple (Matt 14:25, 26/Mark 6:48, 49; Mark
11:27; see also healing contexts in the gospels, such as Matt 9:5/Mark 2:9/Luke 5:23;
Matt 11:5/Luke 7:22; Mark 5:42). The verb refers to the walking about of philosophers
while teaching or arguing, giving the name “Peripatetic” to the followers of Aristotle.97
The “walking about” of the scribes could reference their teaching activity, their
engagement in discourse or debate. In early Christian literature, the verb sometimes
appears paired with dress, as in Mark 12:38 (and the parallel verse in Luke 20:46),
Revelation 3:4 (“and they shall walk with me in white”) and 1 Clement 17.1 (referring to
prophets who walked about in goat- or sheep-skins). Περιπατέω is also used

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97 For lists of primary references, see LSJ 1382; BDAG 649. BDAG = Willam F. Arndt and F. Wilbur
translation and adaptation of the fourth revised and augmented edition of Walter Bauer’s *Griechisch-
Deutsches Wörterbuch zu den Schriften des Neuen Testaments und der übrigen urchristlichen Literatur*,
revised and augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich and Frederick W. Danker from Walter Bauer’s Fifth Edition,
metaphorically to refer to life, conduct or one’s way or living, as in Mark 7:5: “the Pharisees and scribes asked him, “Why do your disciples not live [lit. walk, περιπατοῦσιν] according to the tradition of the elders?”” (see also 1 Thess 2:12, 4:12; 2 Thess 3:6, 11; Rom 13:13; Gal 5:16). While περιπατέω has a number of valences, in Mark 12:38 it directs attention to dress, as in Rev 3:4 and 1 Clem. 17.1. The metaphorical use of the verb is relevant here as well, as walk was taken as indicative of conduct or character.

Jesus’ accusation against the scribes is an honour challenge, part of a long challenge-riposte sequence in Mark, but there is more to this honour challenge than meets the modern eye. If ἐν στολαῖς is going to continue to be translated as “in long robes,” the possibility of an effeminacy charge against the scribes needs to be taken into account, particularly as the scribes are wearing these robes in public, as they “walk about.” On the spectrum of male and female, Jesus could be locating the scribes at the negative end of the scale with this accusation.98 In Mark at least, Jesus is not necessarily located at the positive end of the spectrum, though Jesus’ masculinity in Mark is debated.99 Miracles, for example, show that Jesus is not necessarily in control of the boundaries of his body,

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98 This reading may account for the en stoais of the Old Syriac Sinaiticus manuscript; Marcus notes that en stoais (“in stoas,” or porches, a one-letter difference from en stolais) in this manuscript could be a mistake or an attempt to make the text easier to understand, or less problematic. Joel Marcus, Mark 8 – 16: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary (Anchor Yale Bible; New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2009), 852. The combination of “walk about” and “in stoas,” περιπατεῖν and ἐν ταῖς στοαῖς, occurs as well in Dicaearchus ap. Plu. 2.796d (LSJ 1382).

power leaving his body when he is touched. Lack of boundary control is a conventionally feminine characteristic. The assaulting of the masculinity of the scribes may not work as a contrast to Jesus’ masculinity per se, but may highlight Jesus’ status as a “good man,” a vir bonus, a particular concern for Luke. As an example of “good speech,” a characteristic of the good man, Jesus’ besting of his opponents through language uses a conventional rhetorical trope, the appearance (and perhaps walk or movement) of his opponents, to boost his own honour status (and correspondingly lessen that of the scribes).

Jesus shames, but is also shamed through clothing. The trial and crucifixion of Jesus include multiple performances of dress and undress: the soldiers shame Jesus by clothing him in purple (15:17). Jesus is then stripped of this purple garment (stripping being an act of ultimate humiliation, Isa 47:2-3; 2 Sam 10:4; Ezek 16:39). The implication is that Jesus was naked on the cross, a basic expression of shame. Cloaks and clothing therefore both ascribe honour to Jesus in the gospels and ascribe shame.

6 Conclusions

Cloaks – present or absent – play a vital role in the movement of the gospels, Mark’s gospel in particular. The ubiquity of cloaks specifically, and items of dress more generally, in the narratives allows the interpreter to take a fresh look at the materiality of all of this material, for the garments are not functioning as literary motifs, or as symbolic media – they do not “clothe” other meaning. They are simply clothes. Clothing has huge potential for meaning; a single piece of cloth holds multiple possibilities for

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interpretation, including the metaphorical and symbolic.\textsuperscript{102} The cloak alone could be used in diverse contexts (as a blanket, item of pledge, sling, method of escape) to communicate, ascribe or challenge status (marriage, divorce, to shame, to honour). When the historical context of clothing in the gospels is considered, or when the semiotic ideology of clothing in the ancient Mediterranean is factored into interpretation, the pile of clothing begins to make some sense; some of its potential is realized.

Clothing has an intimate relationship with the person, acting as physical protection, social signifier, and expression or encapsulation of identity, but clothing has a very corporeal quality as well, making certain behaviours, gestures and practices possible or impossible, constructing a particular bodily practice or habitus.\textsuperscript{103} Clothing is both structured and structuring, acting as a kind of conservative socio-cultural code; as McCracken asserts, “clothing provides society with a fixed set of messages… It allows for the representation of cultural categories, principles and processes without at the same time encouraging their innovative manipulation… Clothing is constant in its semiotic responsibilities.”\textsuperscript{104} The person or subject and the material or object are dependent. In Mark’s gospel in particular, there is an explicit identification between the materiality of dress and the domain of the human; Jesus is known through dress, and he commands his disciples to be known through their dress (or undress – see chapter three) as well. The meaning of clothing in the gospel context is what makes this matter so much; given the richness of potential inherent in the ancient tunic and cloak, its embodied potential, it forms a natural and essential part of the narrative toolkit. Qualities must be embodied in

\begin{footnotes}
\item[102] Keane, “Signs,” 189.
\item[103] See the quotation from Keane on page 41: Keane, “Signs,” 192.
\end{footnotes}
something in order to be intelligible; in the Greco-Roman world where the body was a fundamentally social construction as well as a biological one, the qualities of Jesus are concretized in his clothing. If the Romans were “the race that wore the toga,” Jesus was “the man who wore the cloak.”
ABSENT CLOTHES, NAKED BODIES

Chapter 3

1 Introduction

Shakespeare presents essential, raw humanity as stripped, naked; Lear, no longer a king, no longer with social connection, no longer sane, exposes his ultimate “stripping” finally through the stripping of his clothes. Having encountered Edgar, who is disguised as a madman (his “disguise” being a state of nakedness, save for a blanket), Lear raves,

Thou wert better in a grave than to answer with thy uncovered body this extremity of the skies. Is man no more than this? Consider him well. Thou ow’st the worm no silk, the beast no hide, the sheep no wool, the cat no perfume. Ha! Here’s three on ’s are sophisticated. Thou art the thing itself; unaccommodated man is no more but such a poor, bare, forked animal as thou art. Off, off, you lendings! Come, unbutton here (III.iv.100-108).¹

The naked human is tragic, no longer human but a bare animal – without protection

(Edgar, as the madman, continuously complains, “Tom’s a-cold”), status, or connection

(upon seeing Edgar naked, Lear reacts, “Has his daughters brought him to this pass? Couldst thou save nothing? Wouldst thou give ’em all?” III.iv.62-63). Shakespeare uses a(n almost) naked body as an index of impoverished, bare humanity.

The disguised Edgar represents “unaccommodated man” in his almost naked state, though nakedness itself is not “unaccommodated.” Naked bodies always mean something, and they mean something in a particular place, at a particular time, to particular observers. Nakedness is an adapted, contingent category: “[w]hatever it is, the nude body is never naked, if naked means stripped of meaning, value and political

¹ Text of King Lear from Shakespeare: Four Tragedies, ed. David Bevington, with a foreword by Joseph Papp (New York: Bantam books,1988). On nakedness as a disguise, Barcan quotes the adage, “If you want to hide your face, go completely naked.” Barcan, Nudity, 87-88; Barcan here quotes Mina Guillois and André Guillois, L’Humour des nudistes... et des stripteaseuses (Alleur, Belgium: Marabout, 1989), 149.
import. The processes in which bodies (or parts of bodies) are rendered visible or invisible are profoundly social and profoundly political.” What counts as nakedness in one context might not count in another, or might not be interpreted in the same manner. Getting dressed and undressed in a gym locker room, for example, is “normal”; seeing my neighbour change his shirt in the middle of the road, not so normal (or desirable). Furthermore, what counts as nakedness for a woman in given context might not count for a man; nakedness, as discussed in chapter one, is a fundamentally gendered category.

In Lear, the undressed body is unarguably negative; the person without clothes is a “naked wretch” (III.iv.28). Nakedness is very often interpreted negatively, as “bad,” particularly when contemporary observers encounter ancient eastern Mediterranean contexts of nakedness. Nakedness forms the negative pair of dress in a list of binary oppositions: nakedness/dress, savage/civilized, nature/society, vulnerability/strength, deficiency/plenty, and so on. Genesis 2:25 pairs nakedness with negative shame: “The two of them were naked, the man and his wife, yet they felt no shame.” Even though they were naked, Adam and Eve were not ashamed. Humanity’s original created state differs from accepted social norms.

Citing Genesis 2:25, Michael Satlow critiques the pervasive scholarly interpretation of textual evidence regarding nakedness in late antique Jewish contexts as “bad,” arguing instead that “nakedness, like clothing, is culturally complex.” Yes, Adam and Eve are naked yet not ashamed, but this naked/shame parallelism does not mean that

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2 Barcan, Nudity, 9 – 10.
nakedness simply connoted a negative value or was interpreted in a negative framework; Satlow suggests that the verse requires interpretative questioning: “What exactly do “naked” and “shame” mean? Why was there no shame to nakedness and, conversely, why should there be shame to nakedness? Before whom are then man and his wife shamed? Are they shamed equally?”4 Nakedness has different meanings, different valences, depending upon who is naked, where, and when. Satlow argues, for example, that rabbinic evidence suggests that, in a late antique Jewish context, female and male nakedness are understood differently, and male nakedness is itself understood differently depending on where the nakedness occurs: in the Temple, bathhouse, or agricultural field.5 The naked body is not a universal category; it is something ambivalent and contingent.

In a dressed society (and every human society that we know of is “dressed,” in one form or another), the experience of dress or being dressed mediates our experience of nakedness. “To be naked,” declares Kenneth Clark, “is to be deprived of our clothes.”6 Dress is primary. Christopher Hallett argues that the Romans had no clear idea of what a naked body “should” look like; when commissioning an heroic portrait, Roman sculptors had to look to idealized Greek statuary for their models. Romans were not naked in public, unless the nakedness was involuntary. Greeks, on the other hand, bathed together naked, exercised together naked, and participated in sport and military activity together

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4 Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 429.
6 Clark, The Nude, 23. The fuller quotation reads as follows: “To be naked is to be deprived of our clothes and the word implies some of the embarrassment which most of us feel in that condition. The word nude, on the other hand, carries, in educated usage, no uncomfortable overtone. The vague image it projects into the mind is not of a huddled and defenceless body but of a balanced, confident and prosperous body: The body re-formed.”
naked, and therefore had a good idea of how the naked body should properly appear.

Hallett writes,

With their obsession with the life of the gymnasium, their idolization of the victorious athlete, and their concentration on the nude male body in art, the Greeks had evolved a highly impressive formula for what a heroic body should look like… Thus, when Romans commissioned a ‘heroic portrait’ of someone, they required from the sculptor a fully idealized image. The head must be an idealized portrait, according to the Roman ideals of age and character described earlier: it should represent the man as a ‘Roman hero.’ But the body must be ideal too, like the bodies displayed by heroes in Greek art.7

This nude heroism is a “costume,” and is almost never without some form of mediating dress. A short cloak or chlamys is draped over the left shoulder; men wear the lion skin of Heracles as a hood; enthroned emperors wear a large, heavy cloak across their hips in an evocation of Jupiter.8

Since our experience of dress mediates our experience of nakedness (what Barcan calls the “nudity/clothing dialectic”) and dress is the “norm” from which nakedness deviates (either acceptably or unacceptably, normally or abnormally), nakedness becomes something not exactly empty or “bare,” but a kind of raw vehicle for material meaning, particularly social meanings relating to relationship and power. As Barcan reflects, “it is precisely in the “nothingness” of nakedness – its ability to symbolize the raw human being … – that profound cultural operations are performed. In the name of the degree-zero humanity, all sorts of boundaries can be drawn, exclusions made, bodies regulated and disciplined, and cultural work performed.”9 Absent clothes focus our attention partly on what clothes are missing, but more importantly, why the clothes are missing, and what

8 Hallett, Roman Nude, 210-16; 198-204; 166-72. Hallett provides a wonderful list of Roman nude portraits in Appendix B of Roman Nude, 312 – 32.
9 Barcan, Nudity, 72-73. See also Barcan, Nudity, 2: “the categories of clothing and nakedness are bound up with a fundamental ambiguity about the nature of human existence, and have thus repeatedly been used as indices of humanness, its others and its hierarchies.”
this absence of dress might mean. The range of meaning is vast and complex, Lear’s “naked wretch” standing in for vulnerable, impoverished humanity on one end of the spectrum and the idealized Roman nude, the enthroned naked Roman emperor as Jupiter on the other.

Dress makes nakedness possible. Without dress, nakedness would not exist. Absent items of dress therefore have their own presence as missing things, whether intentionally or unintentionally missing, influencing or directing social relationships. Absent things are disruptive, requiring response or reconciliation. Naked bodies, bodies with absent clothing, are likewise disruptive, opening or closing space, establishing boundary lines of identity or meaning. This meaning comes, as previously noted, from the encounter of presence and absence, between dressed (normative) and undressed (abject) body. This meaning is also local, specific to socio-historical contexts and micro-contexts.

The confrontation between present and absent dress is visible in the synoptic gospels, specifically where one person wears a cloak and another does not. The cloak is highly noteworthy in its absence. This absence occurs specifically in didactic contexts, contexts where Jesus instructs his followers on their proper performance as disciples. In his instructions to the disciples regarding missionary journeying, Jesus directs as follows:

καὶ παρήγγειλεν αὐτοῖς ἵνα μηδὲν ἀἱροσιν εἰς ὀδὸν εἰ μὴ ράβδον μόνον, μὴ ἄρτον, μὴ πίθραν, μὴ εἰς τὴν ζώνην χαλκόν, ἀλλὰ ὑποδεδεμένους σανδάλια, καὶ μὴ ἐνδύσησθε δύο χιτώνας.

He charged them to take nothing for the road except a staff only; no bread, no knapsack, no money in their belts; but to wear sandals and not put on two tunics. (Mark 6:8-9)

The text in Q 10:4 regarding provisions is presented slightly differently in Matthew and
Luke:

μὴ βαστάζετε καὶ μὴ πήραν, μὴ ὑποδήματα, καὶ μὴ δέ την ὀδὸν ἀσπάσησθε.

Matthew 10:9-10:

μὴ κτήσησθε χρυσὸν, μὴ δέ χαλκὸν, μὴ δέ ὕποδημα, καὶ μὴ δέ την ὀδὸν ἀσπάσησθε.

Do not take gold nor silver nor copper in your belts, nor knapsack for the road, nor two tunics, nor shoes, nor a staff; for the labourer deserves his food.

Luke 9:3 (Markan parallel):

Μηδὲν αἴρετε εἰς τὴν ὀδὸν, μήτε ράβδον, μήτε πήραν, μήτε ἄρτον, μήτε ἄργυριον, μήτε [ἀνὰ] δύο χιτώνας ἔχειν.

Take nothing for the road, no staff, no knapsack, no bread, no money; and do not have two tunics.


μὴ βαστάζετε ἐντονιο, μη πήραν, μη υποδήματα, καὶ μηδένα κατὰ τὴν ὀδὸν ἀσπάσησθε.

Mark’s provisions include sandals, unlike Q (Matthew/Luke); none of the texts mention a cloak. While the texts are slightly different, the didactic focus remains constant: proper preparation for and self-presentation during travel for labour involves a specific construction of dress or, as I will argue, undress. This labour context is particularly clear in Q10:2, 4, 5-9, 10-12, 13-15, 16: ἔργαται, workers, are sent into the harvest, like sheep among wolves, with minimal provisions, to preach and cure the sick, though the disciples
should prepare for rejection. The disciples dress for their labour, but this labour “uniform” of the disciples is one of absent dress.

2 Definitions of nakedness

The items of dress in the missionary instructions to the disciples have long been subject to description in gospel commentaries and are frequently compared to Josephus’ account of the travel provisions of the Essenes or to the habitual garments of wandering Cynic philosophers. These observations can be taken further by focusing on what is left out of these instructions, for going without certain items of clothing was considered, in the social context of the first-century Mediterranean, to be not simply a form of partial undress, but a form of nakedness. As discussed in chapter two, the two basic items of dress worn across the ancient Mediterranean were the tunic (chiton), worn next to the body, and the cloak or mantle (himation), the outer garment. Proper or “full” dress included the cloak very specifically, an item excluded in the synoptic verses. Wearing the cloak alone was an acceptable form of complete dress, but wearing the tunic alone was not.

In some cases, wearing only an outer garment without a tunic was preferable, as it allowed for the masculine display of honorable battle scars. Marcus Servilius, during a speech, seeks to draw support from his audience through his honorable scars, all of them on the front of his body as scars on the back were shameful. In stripping himself of his

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toga in order to explain in which war each scar had been received, he “uncovered what ought to be concealed” by accident, however, causing people near him to laugh. He tries to use the “swelling in the groin” that was made visible to his advantage, stating that he got it from sitting on horseback all the time, further testifying to his life-long work as a soldier. He invites his opponent to strip also, to “show his smooth skin with not a scar upon it” (Livy 45.39.17-19).

Nakedness is situationally determined; nakedness in the locker room is acceptable, nakedness in the street is not. Nakedness in the social world of the ancient Mediterranean was likewise situational, and a “naked” body in this context was not necessarily totally without clothing. The Greek word γυμνός (gymnos) means “naked” or “unclad” at its most basic level, but can also mean unarmed, stripped, or lightly clad, in a tunic or undergarment only. In Aristophanes Clouds, Socrates tells Strepsiades that the rule for entry to his school is nakedness:

Socrates: Come, then, lay down your cloak.
Strepsiades: Have I done any wrong?
Socrates: No, but it is the rule to enter naked (gymnos).
Strepsiades: But I do not enter to search for stolen goods.
Socrates: Lay it down (lines 496 – 500).

See also Cicero, Verr. 2.5.3-5; 2.5.32; De or. 2.194-5: Marcus Antonius, an orator, defends a Roman general by tearing open the general’s toga before the jury, again to show the honorable scars from his military service. The jury acquits him of the charge of extortion, even though it was widely recognized that he was guilty. Plutarch, Mor. 276c-d: Plutarch quotes Cato the Elder, who reports that Roman statesmen canvassed for office wearing only a toga without a tunic so that they could easily show off their scars to their constituents. See also Plutarch, Cor. 14.1-15.1. References from Hallett, Roman Nude, 292-92.

LSJ 362-63. On Roman undergarments (clothing worn underneath the tunic), see Kelly Olson, “Roman Underwear Revisited,” The Classical World 96.2 (2003): 201 – 10. Literary evidence suggests that Roman men did not generally wear “underwear” (the subligaculum, campestre, licium, perizomatium, subcinctorium), despite the preponderance of “underwear” vocabulary; actors might wear a loincloth (Cic. Off. 1.129); athletes and soldiers might have worn the campestre (also like a loincloth or “briefs”) while exercising (Augustine, C.D. 14.17), but otherwise, “underwear” was unusual as everyday wear under the tunic; Olson, “Underwear,” 206-07.

These lines contain much of interest: first, nakedness is here a negative value. Strepsiades equates the removal of his cloak with a form of punishment: “Have I done any wrong?” Stripping or being stripped indicates reprimand (or a synonym, “dressing down”). When Socrates tells Strepsiades that it is a custom, Strepsiades states that he is not entering the school in order to search for stolen property, suggesting that such searches were conducted naked, presumably so that individuals could not conceal items beneath their cloaks. Finally, Socrates does not ask Strepsiades to remove all of his clothing, just his cloak. Presumably Strepsiades would be wearing a tunic under his cloak, so gymnos would here refer to a Strepsiades dressed in a tunic only, without the cloak. Similarly, gymnos can mean stripped of weapons or armour; in Plutarch, Mor. 245a, men without their weapons are referred to as “going forth naked”; their clothing is reduced to one cloak and one inner garment (a χλαίνα) after they lose to a more powerful army, but without arms they are naked.14

If “lightly clad” is a secondary meaning of gymnos, it is the primary meaning of the Latin nudus. Hallett has gathered convincing evidence regarding this use of nudus, relating to the Roman intolerance of total nakedness: “even in the case of criminals and slaves, persons morally beyond the pale, Roman feelings of modesty were so strong that… those described in our ancient sources as ‘stripped’ (nudus) will mostly have retained an undergarment which at least kept their sexual organs covered.”15 “Naked” Lupercalian priests were either “naked, their loins girt with the skins of sacrificial

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14 Plutarch, Mor. 245a is perhaps a hyperbolic use of gymnos; see Hallett, Roman Nude, 61 n. 1. For other instances of gymnos as lightly clad, see Demosthenes 21.216; Plato, Resp. 5.474a.
15 Hallett, Roman Nude, 61.
victims” or “naked, wearing only a *perizōma*” (undergarment).\(^{16}\) Similarly, someone suspecting another of robbery may search the person’s house for the stolen property only if *nudus*, but clothed in some kind of undergarment that hid the *necessariae partes*.\(^{17}\) *Nudus* seldom means totally naked, often modified with a “clothed in …” phrase: naked, clothed in a (insert item of dress here). Total nakedness occurred only in contexts where nudity was *expected*, according to Hallett: the bathhouse, the stadium, or the Greek gymnasium.\(^{18}\)

For our purposes, “naked,” “nakedness” must be examined alongside *gymnos* and *nudus*. In the Judean context, “nakedness” was again a highly contextualized, ambiguous state. The majority of uses of “naked” in the Hebrew Bible can be valued as negative: nakedness is an indicator of vulnerability and poverty (Job 1:21; 22:6: “You exact pledges from your fellows without reason, And leave them naked, stripped of their clothes”; 24:7: “They pass the night naked for lack of clothing, They have no covering against the cold”; Eccl. 5:14; Ezek. 16:7, 22, 39; Hos. 2:5; Isa. 58:7; see also 1 Sam. 24), of defeat and punishment ( Isa. 20:2-4; Amos 2:16, “Even the most stouthearted warrior shall run away naked that day, declares the LORD” – though *עירם*, “naked” is usually translated as “unarmed” in this context), or of shame and humiliation (Gen. 2:25; Gen. 3; 9:18-27; Mi. 1:8). Nakedness is something God does not want (Ex. 20:23, “Do not ascend My altar by steps, that your nakedness may not be exposed upon it”; 28:42-43, Aaron and his sons are to wear “linen breeches” to cover their bodies from hip to thigh “so that they do not incur punishment and die”), and God therefore is a

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\(^{18}\) Hallett, *Roman Nude*, 62.
provider of clothing (Gen. 3:21, “And the LORD God made garments of skins for Adam and his wife, and clothed them”; Gen. 28:20; metaphorical garments in Isa. 61:10).

In extra-biblical contexts, nakedness is also a state to be avoided. A dressed state differentiates Judean from Gentile, according to the book of Jubilees: “But from all the beasts and all the cattle he granted to Adam alone that he might cover his shame. Therefore it is commanded in the heavenly tablets to all who will know the judgment of the Law that they should cover their shame and they should not be uncovered as the gentiles are uncovered.” The text of the Community Rule specifies that anyone who “walks about naked in front of his fellow, without needing to” shall receive a six-month punishment, while the individual who “takes out ‘his hand’ from under his clothes, or if these are rags which allow his nakedness to be seen” shall receive a thirty-day punishment (1QS VII, 12-14). Rabbinic texts treat nakedness in terms of male social relationships, which map onto divine-human relationship: just as the Judean male cannot be naked before God or in holy space, kings should not be naked before subjects, and social superiors should not be naked in front of inferiors, unless the inferior is directly serving them. Satlow notes, “[o]ne can better ‘fear’ a man, the Mishna suggests, if one

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21 Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 440, 453: “The relationship between a Jewish king or priest is, at least when it comes to nakedness, mapped out analogously to the relationship between God and his people.” I use “Judean male” here specifically, as female nakedness was understood very differently in rabbinic writings than male nakedness. Satlow argues that rabbinic discussions of female nakedness do not relate to social status or situations of women naked in front of or with other women, but exist “entirely within a context of female modesty or propriety before men.” Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 440. Women should avoid nakedness as it arouses sexual desire or temptation in men.
has not seen him naked." In an early Christian context, Eusebius relates the story of Origen’s foiled attempt at seeking martyrdom: Origen could not leave the house because his mother hid his clothes, and it would have been too shameful to go outside naked.

Like gymnos and nudus, ‘rwmi, or Judean contexts of nakedness, should not be taken as instances of bodies completely without clothing. Male nakedness in this ancient context is defined as exposure of the penis, exposure which can occur even if the body is fully clothed. Rabbinic interpretation of the Hebrew Bible seeks to avoid situations of total nakedness; commenting on Isaiah 20:3, “as My servant Isaiah has gone naked and barefoot for three years,” the rabbinic authors of b. Yoma 77a respond, “Actually naked? Rather, in worn garments.” The Judean male can never truly be naked, as he always “wears” the commandments on his body, through circumcision.

Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 438. See m. Sanh. 2.5; b. Pesah 51a; y. Sanh. 2.6, 20c on social superiors avoiding nakedness in front of inferiors. Similarly, an inferior appearing improperly dressed in front of a social superior is interpreted as offering the superior an insult.

Eusebius, Hist. eccl. 6.2.5. Mark Edwards suggests that Origen would not go out naked because he would not want to be mistaken for a non-Christian (who would apparently just be walking around naked in public). Origen’s problem here is with nakedness out of place. See Mark J. Edwards, Origen Against Plato (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2002), 11-12.

Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 431.


Sifre Deut. 36; Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 438. See also t. Ber. 2.14:

A. If one was standing naked in the field, or while doing his work, he covers himself with stubble, straw, or anything at all, and then recites [the Shema], even though they say that it is not praiseworthy for a man to stand naked.

B. For when God created Adam, he did not create him naked, as it is written, “When I clothed [him] in clouds, swaddled [him] in dense clouds” (Job 38:9). “Clothed him in clouds” – this is the embryonic sac; “swaddled him in dense clouds” – this is the placenta.

C. Behold, it could be a wrap of a garment and of skin girding his loins – then he recites.

D. Whether this or the other, he does not recite until he covers his heart.

Again, man cannot be “naked,” truly, as God has always provided him with clothing, even in the womb. Text from The Tosefta: The Orders of Zeraim, Moed, Nashim, Nezikin, ed. Saul Lieberman, 4 vols. (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary, 1955-88 1.9; quoted in Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 436-37.)
threadbare with time,” *J.W.* 2.8.4, 2.215); while not necessarily Essenes, the author(s) of the Community Rule seem to envision that their audience might be wearing threadbare clothing also, clothing which could “allow nakedness to be seen,” 1QS VII, 13-14.\(^{27}\) One could still be naked if wearing worn clothing or rags.

Joan E. Taylor’s interpretation of יד (“hand”) in 1QS VII, 12 offers further support for an understanding of “naked” as partially or inappropriately clad or covered up. Taylor reads the verse as “Whoever brings out his hand (יד) from under his garment, and he is exposed, and he allows his nakedness to be seen, will be punished thirty days.”\(^{28}\) This translation removes the rags or threadbare garments from the equation, but the subject here is still one who is naked despite being dressed. While “hand” is sometimes treated as a euphemism for “penis” (Charlesworth, for example, translates the verse as “Whoever causes his penis to come out from under his garment”), here it likely just means “hand.”\(^{29}\) 1QS VII, 15 mentions inappropriate use of the left hand with the same verb as VII, 13, יצא, “to go or come out,” here in the Hiphil imperfect as “to cause to come out,” “to bring out.” Inappropriate “bringing out” of the left hand could refer to

\(^{27}\) There is a tension, for me, between Josephus’ description of the Essene’s worn clothing in this section of his *J.W.* and 2.148 and 161. *J.W.* 2.148 provides the famous description of the Essenes wrapping themselves in himatia while relieving themselves so as not to offend “the Divine rays of light,” and Josephus states in 161 that the Essenes bathe with some kind of undergarment on; such a concern for nakedness leaves me rather surprised at the wearing of rags or worn clothing, which could lead to unintentional nakedness. Josephus repeatedly refers to a white garment that was worn in more formal contexts, laid aside for labour. Taylor suggests that the white garments might have been threadbare or worn because, as white garments, they would have required frequent washing, particularly if the garments were shared. Joan E. Taylor, *Jewish Women Philosophers of First-Century Alexandria: Philo’s Therauteae Reconsidered* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2003), 301.


the general “shame” of the left hand as the personal hygiene hand; used in the intimate
care of the body, the exposure of the left hand could offend the deity, much like relieving
oneself with the incorrect bodily covering with clothing could offend. Inappropriate use
of the left hand could also refer to gesticulation during a council session, which makes
ready sense as the left hand was not free, the cloak being draped over the left shoulder.
The right hand was free while the body was engaged in movement, but Taylor argues that
proper deportment while seated involved a particular placement of the right hand;
drawing on Philo and Porphyry, Taylor asserts,

in antiquity there was a concept of philosophically-minded, attentive deportment,
represented also in statuary. The himation was wrapped around the body with the
right hand underneath the fabric in a kind of sling. Given that a large ἵµάτιον – the
outer garment referred to in 1QS as the יִבלִּוָה – could be all that was worn on certain
occasions … to bring the right hand out from inside the clothing would unloose
the arrangement, making immodest exposure a risk.30

Even if fully dressed, improper movement or behaviour could result in nakedness, as with
the bringing out of the right hand from under the cloak. Taylor’s interpretation makes
good sense; why would a community member intentionally expose his penis during a
council meeting?

“Nakedness” in the ancient Mediterranean – whether one was γυµνός, nudus or
עָרָם – was a broadly defined state. Nakedness could reference the total absence of
clothing, in many cases nakedness applies to situations of partial dress, or situations in
which people are either dressed inappropriately or they behave in ways that cause

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30 Taylor, “Women,” 186-87. Philo, Somn. 2.126 refers to the way Judeans sit in a synagogue, “with the
right hand inside and the other one from under the outerwear fixed along the thighs”; Porphyry, Abst. 4.6
reports that Egyptian priests kept their hands inside their garments. Taylor refers to a statue in the Graeco-
Roman Museum in Alexandria (G532) of a man dressed in a cloak with his right hand inside the garment.
Taylor, “Women,” 186; see also Joan E. Taylor, Jewish Women Philosophers, 292-93.
inappropriate exposure of the body. Compare, for example, the story of Cincinnatus as
told by both Pliny the Elder and Livy. Pliny tells the story as follows:

A messenger brought Cincinnatus notification of his having been chosen dictator
while he was ploughing his four acre property on the Vatican …. and it is said
that he was nudus at the time; since he continued to delay, the messenger said to
him, ‘Cover your body, so that I may deliver the mandates of the Senate and the
People of Rome.’

Livy tells the same story, with slightly different wording:

…There he was found by the deputation from the senate either digging out a ditch
or ploughing, at all events, as is generally agreed, intent on his husbandry. After
mutual salutations he was requested to put on his toga that he might hear the
mandate of the senate, and they expressed the hope that it might turn out well for
him and for the State. He asked them, in surprise, if all was well, and bade his
wife, Racilia, bring him his toga quickly from the cottage. Wiping off the dust and
perspiration, he put it on and came forward, on which the deputation saluted him
as Dictator and congratulated him…

Being nudus, in this context, is being without the outer garment, some form of the cloak.

Full dress included a cloak; wearing a tunic alone, or an undergarment, did not count as
“being dressed.” While this point alone has important implications for the interpretation
of Mark 6:8-9 and Q 10:4 and parallels, an examination of the specific contexts in which
we encounter nakedness in the ancient Mediterranean will lay further groundwork for the
discussion.

31 Pliny, Nat. 18.3.20: aranti quattuor sua iugera in Vaticano … Cincinnato viator attulit dictaturam et
quidem, ut traditur, nudo, plenoque nuntius morarum, “Vela corpus,” inquit, “ut perferam senatus
populique Romani mandata.” Translated in Hallett, Roman Nude, 62.
32 Livy 3.26.8-10: ibi ab legatis – seu fossam fodiens palae inmixus, seu cum araret, opera certe, id quod
constat, agricet intenus – salute data in uicem redditiaque rogatus ut, quod bene ueretet ipsi reique
publicae, togatus mandata senatus audiret, admiratus rogiansque ‘satin salue?’ togam propere e tugurio
proferre uxorem Racilium iubet. Qua simul abstero puluere ac sudore uelatus processit, dictatorem eum
legati gratulanties consulant…. Livy, The History of Rome, Book 3, Rev. Canon Roberts, ed. (New York:
E.P. Dutton and Co., 1912); internet, available online from
pter%3D26; accessed 30 March 2014. See also Plutarch, Rom. 20.3. Hallett refers to these texts also to
make the point that nudus does not mean “completely naked,” though he does so in order to argue that
nudus is therefore not equivalent to the Greek gymnos, which does mean “completely naked.” I hope I have
shown that this was not the case, though it was more likely for a Greek to be completely naked in public
contexts than for a Roman. Hallett, Roman Nude, 62.
3 “Norms” of nakedness

The contrast of nakedness and dress in the world of the ancient Mediterranean communicates some of the most basic differentiations of human experience: death (nakedness) and life (the clothed self), weakness and power, savagery and civilization, shame and honour. Nakedness can be described as having different social valences, existing in different kinds of contexts or combinations with presentations or performances of identity. Though remaining a generally negative or “abjected” value (drawing here from Judith Butler – an abjected value is one that is “cast off” in the construction of the self, a category of exclusion) we can construct various “norms” of nakedness in the ancient Mediterranean social world which allow us to see how nakedness functioned in an intentional kind of way in certain social contexts.

In several texts in the synoptic gospels, Jesus seems to operate outside of these “norms,” advocating a different discourse of the body suggestive of nakedness, or semi-nakedness; in other words, an anomalous identification with the abject, with a state normally rejected in the construction and performance of the self. Identity is largely shaped by what we can see of each other, and how we make sense of what we see based on our own assumptions and categories. If what people could “see” of Jesus and the disciples was a semi-clothed and thus, by ancient standards, naked body, this deconstruction of the clothed body signals an important presentation of religious identity in these texts, as an unclothed performance of the body, a performance generally rejected or disallowed, has significant social consequences, especially when seen outside of certain Greco-Roman “norms” of nakedness, norms linking nudity and death, athletic and

martial nakedness, nudity and shame (shameful nakedness), and nakedness associated
with labour. While this template for social contexts of nakedness remains partial, these
specific “norms” of nakedness provide a helpful measure of access to the discourse of
nakedness underlying certain synoptic logia concerning dress and undress.\footnote{Other “norms” should also be considered: divine nakedness (statuary is particularly relevant here); prophetic nakedness, nakedness as connected to wisdom contexts (\textit{sophia} and nakedness), apotropaic nakedness, the nakedness of slaves… the topic grows ever larger. Barcan approaches the “metaphor of nudity” using similar indexes of meaning for the naked body. Positive indexes include nudity as related to simplicity; honest or openness; innocence, humility, and childhood; freedom; nature or naturalness; and authenticity or truth. Negative indexes include savagery; bare humanity; poverty, wretchedness, or vulnerability; punishment, humiliation or degradation; anxiety; shame; death (though all of Barcan’s examples in this context are from much later time periods); sex (not necessarily a negative!); sin or criminality; and exposure. Overall, these indexes may be characterized in terms of plenitude or lack, “all or nothing.” Barcan, \textit{Nudity}, 77 – 141.}

\textit{Nakedness and death}

an important context of dress as indicator of identity.\footnote{Michael P. Knowles, “What Was the Victim Wearing? Literary, Economic, and Social Contexts for the Parable of the Good Samaritan,” \textit{Biblical Interpretation} 12.2 (2004): 145 – 74. For an interesting papyrological parallel to the situation of the victim in this parable, see \textit{P. Cair. Zen. 4} 59659, an account of theft of clothing while on a journey.} For Knowles, the parable points to
clothing as a \textit{misplaced} identity indicator: the social cues which dress provides should not
be needed for the interpretation of the other and the structuring of relationship with that
other. Items of dress, according to Knowles, characterize each individual in the narrative:
the victim is stripped and robbed, a realistic social situation, as garments were often the
most valuable possessions of a household, and therefore subject to theft; linen vestments
would identify the priest, and perhaps also the Levite. Knowles does not name specific
items of clothing that would identify the Samaritan. The priest and Levite do not help the
victim because he is without any social identifiers; his naked body leaves him socially
unintelligible. The Samaritan’s actions render the need for social identification void;
interestingly, the Samaritan is not described as redressing the victim, or as providing him with any items of clothing which would reinstate his social classification and standing.

The motives of the priest and Levite are unclear; given the principle of *meth mitzwah*, a neglected corpse (one, for example, encountered while on a journey, *m. Nazir* 7.1) requires pious burial (see also *b. Nazir* 48b). The abandoned Samaritan, if resembling a corpse, should have merited attention. More to the point, however: the Samaritan may not have been physically dead, but his nakedness symbolized at least a social death. Moving a step further, his nakedness signaled the possibility of his physical death; in what other circumstance would a body be lying naked? Perhaps the priest and Levite could not touch him because, without the social identification of clothing, they could not tell whether the body was stranger or kinsman (*m. Nazir* 7.1, a high priest or Nazarite cannot bury kin)?

The naked body has an important connection to death in the ancient Mediterranean; this association is sustained in several important ancient Near Eastern texts and documents, including the account the Sumerian goddess Inanna’s descent into the Underworld. Inanna (or in the parallel Akkadian version, Ishtar) must travel through seven gates in order to enter the world of the dead, but in order to pass through each gate, she must remove an item of clothing or adornment, until she is a naked body, described as a corpse, hung on a hook like rotting meat in a slaughter-house. Erec-ki-gala, the mistress of the Underworld, commands:

Let the seven gates of the underworld be bolted. Then let each door of the palace Ganzer be opened separately. As for her, after she has entered, and crouched down and had her clothes removed, they will be carried away.” Neti, the chief doorman of the underworld, paid attention to the instructions of his mistress. He bolted the seven gates of the underworld. Then he opened each of the doors of the palace Ganzer separately. He said to holy Inana: “Come on, Inana, and enter.” And when Inana entered (the first gate), the turban, headgear for the open country, was removed from her head. “What is this?” “Be satisfied, Inana, a divine power
of the underworld has been fulfilled. Inana, you must not open your mouth against the rites of the underworld”....

This continues through the seven gates, until all her clothes are removed. As a naked body, Inanna is a corpse. To return to the world of the living, Inanna is once again clothed, receiving back her items of dress in the same order in which they were removed.  

Ezekiel 16 presents a similar progression of a body from a dressed state to an undressed state, the undressed state concluding with bodily destruction. God dresses Jerusalem, personified as a woman, first “covering her nakedness” as a groom would espouse a bride, bathing her and anointing her with oil, dressing her in embroidered garments, sandals, linen, silks, and jewelry (Ezek 16:7-14).

Jerusalem’s beauty is perfected. However, overconfidence in “beauty and fame” leads to Jerusalem’s demise; Jerusalem forgets the days when she was “naked and bare,” and as a harlot is stripped and exposed, then stoned and killed (Ezek 16:37–40). The dead woman disappears.

The connection between nakedness and death is a common literary topos. In the Epic of Gilgamesh, Enkidu becomes a member of society only when he is clothed. The Assyrian king Esarhaddon brags that he brings conquered people “back to life” and therefore to civilization by providing them with clothing. In the book of Genesis, Joseph without his garment is presumed to be dead, as the evidence of his garment apart from his body, covered with a bit of blood, is enough for his father to assume the worst. Mourners tear their clothes and throw ashes on their heads, aligning themselves with the state of...
death. If clothing was indicative of social “life” and status, nakedness was indicative of total loss of status and death. This “norm” of nudity and death, maintained in diverse ancient contexts, can be viewed as an important part of a social discourse concerning nakedness as a negative or abject state.

**Athletic and martial nakedness**

Greek athletic nakedness was an accident, according to ancient writers like Pausanias. Athletes originally wore undergarments or loincloths (*diazōmata; perizōmata*). In 720 BCE at the fifteenth Olympiad the competitor Orsippus of Megara won the *stadion* after losing his underwear; Pausanias tells us,

Near Coroebus is buried Orsippus who won the footrace at Olympia by running naked when all his competitors wore loincloths according to ancient custom. They say also that Orsippus when general afterwards annexed some of the neighboring territory. My own opinion is that at Olympia he intentionally let the loincloth slip off, realizing that a naked man can run more easily than one clothed. (*Descr.* 1.44.1).39

Naked athletic competition gradually became customary, and cities founded *gymnasia* – literally, “naked places” – for exercise and training.40

In her article “Nudity as a Costume in Classical Art,” Larissa Bonfante argues that classical Greeks reversed negative associations of nakedness, using nudity, specifically athletic and martial nudity, as a “costume” which signified civic responsibility, marking

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39 Translation adapted from Pausanias, *Description of Greece with an English Translation* by W.H.S. Jones, Litt.D., and H.A. Ormerod, M.A., in 4 Volumes (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann Ltd., 1918); internet; available online from [http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D44%3Asection%3D1](http://www.perseus.tufts.edu/hopper/text?doc=Perseus%3Atext%3A1999.01.0160%3Abook%3D1%3Achapter%3D44%3Asection%3D1); accessed 30 April 2014. See also Orsippus’ epitaph, an inscription dating to the second century CE: “He was the first of the Greeks to win the victory crown at Olympia naked, since before everyone competed in loin-cloths in the *stadion*” (*IG* VII 52; *SEG* 35 400).

40 For a timeline regarding the development of Greek athletic nakedness, refer to Andrew Stewart, *Art, Desire, and the Body in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 27.
male civic status: “[i]n Greece the remarkable innovation of athletic male nudity, which surely originated in a ritual, religious context, developed a special social and civic meaning. It became a costume, a uniform: exercising together in the gymnasium marked men’s status as citizens of the polis and as Greeks.” Bonfante identifies this civic responsibility as the willingness of the Greek male to fight at a moment’s notice, a willingness including the possibility of death. Nakedness in martial (“heroic”) contexts in particular would be partial, the “costume” including weapons and protective armour and, after the fourth century BCE, a chlamys (military cloak), belt and footwear. Exercising naked gave Greeks an advantage over opponents in battle, at least a perceived advantage; Xenophon narrates the following story about Agesilaos of Sparta: “[h]e gave instructions … that the barbarians captured in the raids be exposed for sale naked. So when his soldiers saw them white because they never stripped, and fat and lazy through constant riding in carriages, they believed that the war would be exactly like fighting with women.” Nakedness distinguished Greek from “barbarian,” slave from citizen and, as the quotation from Xenophon implies, male from female.

The ideal Greek body – the naked male athlete/warrior body – was, even naked, not itself “natural.” This body was specifically constructed through diet, exercise and bathing (the regimen of δίαιτα), and required habitual public practice or structuring. Mireille Lee argues that the ideal Greek body, achieved through temporary body-modification practices (diet, exercise, bathing, grooming, perfuming, etc.), structured identity, reinforced social hierarchy and separated Greek “self” (high-status male) from “other”

41 Bonfante, “Nudity,” 569.
43 Hallett, Roman Nude, 14-15.
44 Xenophon, Ages. 1.28; cited in Bonfante, “Nudity,” 555.
(female, barbarian): “it is in the repeated performance of body-modification that the subtleties of social identity are constructed and maintained. It is in the negotiation of the boundaries of bodies that Classical Greek society defined itself.”45 This naked body necessitated, structured and maintained gender, status (leisure time to exercise in the palaestra), ethnicity (Greek body-modification was temporary, unlike permanent modifications, such as tattooing and circumcision, undertaken by “others”) and public access (male care of the body, from exercise to hair care, took place outside of the home) for both performance and validation through the male gaze: “[t]he habitual repetition of exercise and bathing reinforces individual identities; the erotic gaze of other men assures identification with the group of masculine elite.”46 Bonfante’s presentation of nakedness as “costume” fits well with Lee’s argument for the continually performed Greek body.

The nakedness of the Greek warrior/athlete still exists within the wider cultural construction of nakedness as abject, a rejected category. Greek nakedness as “costume” signals not perhaps an “innovation” as Bonfante describes its context, but rather an


46 Lee, “Body-Modification,” 163. Her summary of her argument is particularly helpful, from p. 172: “Despite the fact that the nude male body was presented as the ideal in classical Greece, this body was not natural, but was achieved by means of body-modification: exercise, bathing, grooming, and other manipulations such as infibulation. Many of these practices took place in public arenas, such as the palaestra and the barbershop, which underscores the importance of personal display. But it should be noted that such modifications to the body were only temporary; they required repeated performance in order to maintain the ideal of the masculine elite. Whereas masculine body-modification took place primarily in the public contexts of the palaestra and barbershop, feminine body-modification was private and domestic. And whereas masculine body-modification is characterized by personal display and the homoerotic gaze, feminine body-modification is a more intimate process, often performed alone or with only an attendant or two. The self-referential nature of feminine body-modification is underscored by the prevalence of mirrors in scenes of feminine adornment.”
identification with this rejected value, as nakedness here is still associated with death; Greek males exercised naked in order to demonstrate their willingness to die for their ethnos, and the body of the dead young warrior was admired in its nakedness as an object of beauty. A grave lekythos from early fourth century BCE Athens combines athletics, war and death in its depiction of the gifting of a young man’s strigil, the tool used in the gymnasium to scrape oil from the athlete’s body, to his father upon his death, the strigil turned “into the relics of a son’s lost life.”

Athletic nakedness sprang from a context of death, the Panhellenic crown festivals (Olympian, Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean) established as compensation for heroic deaths. Pelops for example, founded the Olympic games in order to repay Oinomaoas for his death; Heracles then celebrated funeral games for Pelops. Stewart writes, “the contestants submit themselves to an ordeal to assuage feelings of guilt at the death of the individual being honored; the winner symbolically “live” by winning the ritual contest, the losers “die.” The connotation of athletic nakedness is one of death. This structuring of the Greek subject is therefore still structured, here by the identification with, rather that the foreclosure of, what is normally rejected: here, the naked body.

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48 Stewart, Art, 32.
49 I do not discuss nakedness in public baths in this chapter. The archaeological record indicates that public baths did not exist in Roman Palestine until the late second century CE, making public bathing irrelevant to my immediate concerns. Hallett suggests that baths did not become a prominent Roman institution until the reign of Nero, who opened thermae in the Campus Martius in 62 CE; Hallett, Roman Nude, 82. Dress in baths was an important issue; people seem to have worn different kinds of garments in the baths, even, it seems, when actually bathing. Clothing was frequently stolen from baths if left unguarded by slaves or attendants (Petronius, Sat. 92-3). The Historia Augusta mentions specific “bathing outfits,” vestis balnearis (Alex. Sev. 42.1). Cato and Cicero disapprove of communal bathing because certain men (mainly family members) should not see one another naked (Cicero, Off. 1.129; Plutarch, Cat. Maj. 20.5). In the late antique context, rabbinic texts describe nakedness in bathhouses in relation to holy space: for example, one can recite the Shema’ in places in a bathhouse where men are clothed, but in places where men are unclothed or some are clothed and some are naked, one cannot recite the Shema’ and must either remove
Shameful nakedness

The unclothed body in the ancient Mediterranean was a paradigmatic threat to the body – the physical body, in terms of protection from the elements, but more importantly in the ancient context, the social body; clothing is a means value expressing the core value of honour, so to be without clothes was to be without honour, and therefore without social status. Social status was often conceived of in terms of lack or excess of clothing; the most prominent contrast of this kind in the gospel literature is Luke’s narrative of the rich man and Lazarus, 16:19-31. The rich man is described as dressed in fine linen and purple, the most expensive of dyes and therefore a colour associated with power or royalty, while Lazarus lies at his gate, covered only in sores. Nakedness erases social distinction, leaving the boundaries of the body permeable and vulnerable.

As we have seen, nakedness is closely correlated to death, but not to physical death only; the naked body in the ancient Mediterranean could signal social “death” or alienation, as in the case of Lazarus, or religious exclusion as well. The Song of Moses in Deuteronomy 32:11 speaks of judgment on Israel through a nation that is “no people”, a passage which is interpreted in Sifre Deuteronomy as people who go about naked in public places. Nations are humiliated through nakedness, expressed in Isaiah 47:3 (to name one of many examples): “Your nakedness shall be uncovered, and your shame shall

his phylacteries, if men are naked, or not remove his phylacteries but not put them on anew, if men are both dressed and undressed (t. Ber. 2.20, quoted below). Images of deities, generally prominent in Greco-Roman baths, were problematic for mishnaic authors as well (m. 'Abod. Zar. 3:4). See the discussion of these texts in Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 432-35. On bathing and baths, see Stefanie Hoss, Baths and Bathing: the culture of bathing and the baths and thermae in Palestine from the Hasmoneans to the Moslem conquest with an appendix on Jewish ritual baths (miqva’ot) (BAR International Series 1346; Oxford: Archaeopress, 2005); Fikret Yegül, Bathing in the Roman World (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010); Yaron Z. Eliav, “The Roman Bath as a Jewish Institution: Another Look at the Encounter between Judaism and the Greco-Roman Culture,” JSJ 31.4 (2000): 416 – 54; Hallett, Roman Nude, 78-83.

be seen.” The archetypal “poor man” in Mesopotamian literature is characterized as one who is clad in “a garment with no change.”\(^{51}\) This garment with no change relates to nudity, as not having a change of clothes meant that in order to wash your clothes, you would have to put yourself in a state of shame by having to be naked. A Palestinian amora states that men were not to look at women while women were washing clothes, the assumption being that women washing clothes were in a state of undress (b. Mak. 24a).\(^{52}\) Not washing your clothes, however, could have important social and religious consequences. Impurities on clothing indicated that the body itself was impure, potentially excluding the individual from participation in certain cultic rites.

Naked bodies could elicit shame in ritual contexts, or contexts in which “holy space” was created.\(^{53}\) Not having the proper clothing, for example, barred one from reciting the Shema\(^ {\prime}\); as t.Ber. 2.14 suggests, workers in a field wearing only a loin cloth could not recite the Shema\(^ {\prime}\) until they covered their chests: “if one was standing naked in the field, or while doing his work, he covers himself with stubble straw, or anything at all, and then recites [the Shema \(^ {\prime}\)], even though they say that it is not praiseworthy for a man to stand naked.”\(^ {54}\) Rabbinic authors discuss comparable rules for comportment in the bathhouse, also indicating that naked bodies have no place in sanctified “space”:

A. When one enters into a bathhouse, in a place where men stand clothed, one can recite the Shema\(^ {\prime}\) and the prayer, and it is not necessary to add that one can greet one’s fellow. He can put on his phylacteries, and it is not necessary to add that he is not required to remove his phylacteries.

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\(^{52}\) References from Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 441.

\(^{53}\) Satlow writes, “any Jewish man, at almost any time or in any place, has the capability of creating a holy “space” through the mention of God’s name (most commonly in a blessing or prayer) or the study of God’s word.” Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 431-32.

\(^{54}\) Text from Lieberman, Tosefta; quoted in Satlow, “Jewish Constructions, 436-37. See also y. Ter. 1.6, 40d; y. Ber. 9.3, 13c.
B. In a place where men stand naked, one does not greet his fellow, and it is not necessary to add that [he may not] recite the Shema ‘ or the prayer. He must remove his phylacteries and it is not necessary to add that he does not put them on.

C. In a place where there are both naked and clothed men, one can greet his fellow but cannot recite the Shema ‘ or the prayer there; and he need not remove his phylacteries but neither can he put them on anew.\footnote{t. Ber. 2.20; ed. Lieberman, Tosefta, 1.10. Quoted in Satlow, “Jewish Constructions,” 432-33.}

The concern is when and under what circumstances one can say the Shema ‘; in a bathhouse, the circumstances must include dress. Similarly, a man dressed in rags could not read from the Law in the assembly (though he could if the text was in Aramaic, rather than Hebrew!).\footnote{m. Meg. 4.6: “he whose clothes are ragged may recite the Shema ‘ with its Benedictions and interpret, but he may not read in the Law or go before the Ark or lift up his hands;” discussed in Hamel, Poverty and Charity, 74-75.}

The stripping of one’s clothing by another was an act of ultimate shame. Stripping of clothing was an act of aggression, one indicating defeat and submission – captives were stripped, as were the dead on the battlefield. Saul’s defeat in 1 Samuel 31 is marked with the stripping of his body, mentioned as part of the customary process of stripping the dead: “the next day, when the Philistines came to strip the dead, they found Saul and his three sons fallen on Mount Gilboa. They cut off his head, stripped off his armor, and sent messengers throughout the land of the Philistines to carry the good news…” (1 Sam 31:8-9; see also 1 Chr 10:8-9). David then defeats the Philistines, and his men return to the battlefield “only to strip the slain” (2 Sam 23:10). Joseph’s brothers strip him before abandoning him (Gen 37:23); stripping the naked of their clothing is an evil (Job 22:6).\footnote{The Hebrew verb for “strip,” פֶלַש, means strip or strip off, but also “make a dash” or raid, put off one’s shelter, invade; the meanings here are all fairly aggressive, and would involve the shame of either oneself or one’s opponent.} Roman writers likewise indicate that stripping was part of the “ancestral custom” of
punishment for prisoners and criminals. Livy describes the surrender of the Roman army during the Second Samnite War (326 – 304 BCE) in the following manner:

While they were uttering these indignant protests, the hour of their humiliation arrived which was to make everything more bitter for them by actual experience than they had anticipated or imagined. First of all they were ordered to lay down their arms and go outside the rampart with only one garment each. The first to be dealt with were those surrendered as hostages who were taken away for safe keeping. Next, the lictors were ordered to retire from the consuls, who were then stripped of their paludamenta [general’s cloaks]. This aroused such deep commiseration amongst those who a short time ago had been cursing them and saying that they ought to be surrendered and scourged, that every man, forgetting his own plight, turned away his eyes from such an outrage upon the majesty of state as from a spectacle too horrible to behold. The consuls were the first to be sent, little more than half-clothed, under the yoke, then each in the order of his rank was exposed to the same disgrace, and finally, the legionaries one after another. Around them stood the enemy fully armed, reviling and jeering at them; swords were pointed at most of them, and when they offended their victors by showing their indignation and resentment too plainly some were wounded and even killed (Livy 9.5.11 – 6.2).\(^{58}\)

Stripping is humiliating, reserved for the defeated, prisoners and captives, and criminals.\(^{59}\)

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58 Latin text: omnia tristiora expeiriendo factura, quam quae praecipierant animis. iam primum cum singulis vestimentis inermes extra vallum eixire iussi, et primi traditi obsides atque in custodiam abduci. tum a consulis abire lictores iussi paludamentaque detracta: id tantam inter ipsos, qui paulo ante eos exsecrantes dedendos lacerandosque censuerant, miserationem fecit, ut suae quisque condicionis oblitus ab illa deformatione tantaes maiestatis velut ab nefando spectaculo averteret oculos. primi consules prope seminudi sub iugum missi, tum ut quisque gradu proximus erat, ita ignominiiae obiectus, tum deinceps singularum legiones. circumstabant armati hostes, exprobantes eludentesque; gladii etiam plerisque intentati, et vulnerati quidam necatique, si vultus eorum indignitate rerum acrior victorem offensisset. For other examples of the Roman stripping of prisoners and criminals, see Seneca, Contr. 9.2.21; Livy 2.5.9; 3.28-11-29; 9.8; 28.29.11; Plutarch, Publ. 6.2; Dionysius of Halicarnassus Ant. Rom. 20.16.8; Suetonius, Nero, 49; Tacitus, Ann. 2.32; Petronius, Sat. 30.7; Cicero, Verr. 2.5.161. References from Hallett, Roman Nude, 63-65. Roman emperors were sometimes depicted nude in statuary in the likeness of gods (heroic portraits); Roman emperors who were naked in real like were making a statement about vulnerability and defeat. Augustus exposes himself to the Roman people when they try to force the dictatorship on him: “he knelt down, threw off his toga from his shoulders, and with bare breast begged them to desist” (Suetonius, Aug. 52). Hallett comments on this verse, “While the ideal nude body of his gilded portrait shows Octavian as a superman, godlike, and invulnerable … in real life the baring of his breast was designed to have the opposite effect: it was a gesture of vulnerability. Augustus offers the crowd his naked breast as if he were humbly presenting it to the sword of an enemy. ‘Make me a dictator’ (as my father Caesar was), he implies, ‘and you might as well strike me down now.’” Hallett, Roman Nude, 100.

59 Trajan’s column depicts naked captives being tortured (whether the captives are Roman or Dacian is unclear; see David J. Mattingly, Imperialism, Power, and Identity: Experiencing the Roman Empire [Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011], 117); reliefs from the Sebasteion at Aphrodisias also include
In the synoptics, part of Jesus’ humiliation at the crucifixion was being stripped and hung naked. Jesus is stripped several times in the Passion narratives: Jesus is dressed in a purple or scarlet cloak (Mark/Matthew; Matthew’s scarlet cloak seems to be a military chlamys rather than a royal robe, Matt 27:28) and crown of thorns, mocked, stripped, and re-dressed in his own clothes; the reader then hears, after arriving at Golgotha, that Jesus is crucified and the soldiers “divide his clothes among them,” Jesus being stripped again (Mark 15:16-24; Matt 27:27-36). The Passion account preserved in Luke’s gospel differs from Mark and Matthew in this regard, however; the reader is told, in Luke, that Herod put an “elegant” or “splendid” robe on Jesus, an ἐσθῆτα λαμπρὰν (Luke 23:11, perhaps a white robe, suggestive of Jesus’ innocence: at judicial hearings, the wearing of white was interpreted as innocence, and someone found guilty was sent away in black. Arriving in the improper colour brought shame upon the individual; to show up in white and then to be found guilty was much more shameful than being found guilty while dressed appropriately in black). The reader does not then hear, as in Mark, that Jesus was

depictions of naked barbarian captives. Images of nakedness in war/conflict context are an interesting mixture of celebratory nakedness and degrading, defeated nakedness; captives are stripped and bound, often on their knees, naked, while victors, specifically victorious emperors, are also often naked, but this nakedness aligns them with the gods, specifically Jupiter. See the Gemma Augustea (Late Augustan, 4 – 14 CE; Vienna, Kunsthistorisches Museum) for an excellent example. Hallett comments on contrasting representations of Achilles’ sacrifice of twelve Trojan captives at the tomb of Patroklos in Homer’s Iliad: Etruscan representations depict clothed Greeks and naked captives, while Greek representations depict naked Greeks (in “heroic costume”) and clothed captives (in “effeminate” finery), Hallett, Roman Nude, 65-67.

60 To appear pleasing to a court, one’s hair should also be messy or unkempt. For examples, see Josephus, Vita 138; Ant. 14.3.2. In Antiquities 14.9.4, Herod tries to intimidate the court by reversing expectations of dress, as related in the speech of Sameas: according to Josephus, Sameas states that while individuals called to trial before the Sanhedrin appear in a submissive fashion, with disheveled hair and a black mourning garment, in order to elicit compassion from the court, Herod, though accused of murder, appears in purple, with “finely trimmed” hair (and a retinue of armed men) to demonstrate his power, his ability to kill the members of the court even if found guilty. This concept of voluntarily reducing one’s status through dress in judicial and religious contexts is discussed in Vogel, “Warum „nicht nackt”? 453. White and black clothing had important consequences in ritual activity as well; the Rule of the Andanian Mysteries, IG 5 1 1390, asserts that men must wear white clothing, and women can wear non-transparent clothing with limited decoration; L.Smyrna 728 (LSAM 84), an inscription relating the requirements for participation in a cult of Dionysios Bromios, indicates that people wearing black clothing cannot approach the altars or lay
stripped again; lots are cast to divide Jesus’ clothing (Luke 23:34), though Jesus might not have been re-dressed in this clothing. It is not clear in Luke whether or not Jesus is crucified in this splendid robe, which could function as an ironic indicator of Jesus’ true status for the Lukan audience.

If a lack of clothing signifies social shame or exclusion, the provision or returning of clothing signals a certain status transformation, a return of honour and therefore a return to social codes of intelligibility. When the prodigal son returns home in Luke 15, the father clothes his son upon meeting him, marking his restoration to the household unit and to social life: he is given the best robe, a ring, and sandals (Ταχὺ ἐξενέγκατε στολὴν τὴν πρώτην καὶ ἐνδύσατε αὐτόν, καὶ δότε δακτύλιον εἰς τὴν χεῖρα αὐτοῦ καὶ ὑποδήματα εἰς τοὺς πόδας, “Quickly! Bring the best robe and dress him, and put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet”). Prodigality as a state of social exclusion (though an exclusion the individual brings upon himself) is often expressed in terms of nakedness, demonstrated in the second century papyrus letter from Antonius Longus to Nilous his mother, mentioned earlier on page 54 (Select Papyri 1.316-19; BGU III 846). The son’s mention of his nakedness is a primary indicator of his degraded status.

The negative value of nakedness is reflected in the ultimate concern to keep the body dressed. Texts from the ancient Mediterranean suggest that every precaution was taken to avoid situations of nakedness, as these situations had the powerful potential to disrupt and exclude. As mentioned above, items of dress were usually the most valuable items in a household. Clothes were worn until ragged, and then patched and saved. Worldly “treasure” is described in Matthew and Luke (Q 12:33-34), and also in the Gospel of

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hands upon unoffered sacrifices; LSCGSap 91, a third century inscription of cultic regulations from Lindos, declares that participants must be barefoot or in white sandals, not wearing anything made of goat skin or having any knots in one’s belt.
Thomas (76.3) as something which moths can consume and thieves can steal, i.e. items of
dress:

Matthew 6:19-20
Μὴ θησαυρίζετε ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐπὶ τῆς γῆς, ὅπου σῆς καὶ βρόσις ἄφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου
cλέπται διορύσσουσι καὶ κλέπτουσιν· θησαυρίζετε δὲ ὑμῖν θησαυροὺς ἐν οὐρανῷ, ὅπου
οὔτε σῆς οὔτε βρόσις ἄφανίζει, καὶ ὅπου κλέπται οὐ διορύσσουσιν οὐδὲ κλέπτουσιν·

Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and
where thieves dig through and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven,
where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not dig through and steal.

Luke 12:33
Πωλήσατε τὰ υπάρχοντα υμῶν καὶ δότε ἐλεημοσύνην· ποιήσατε ἐαυτοῖς βαλλάντια μὴ
παλαιώμενα, θησαυρόν ἀνέκλειπτον ἐν τοῖς οὐρανοῖς, ὅπου κλέπτης οὐκ ἐγγίζει οὐδὲ
σής διαφθείρει·

Sell your possessions, and give alms. Make purses for yourselves that do not wear out, an
unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

While Sheffer suggests that the patched state of clothing found at Masada indicates the
stressful historical situation of their lives, as they seem to have patched their clothing
repeatedly, with any available material. Clothing was always mended and patched,
though it was better to patch a newer garment with newer fabric.61 The identification of
the Essenes with ragged or worn out clothing in Josephus can perhaps also be taken as a
certain association with an abject state, though access to their practice comes through the
mediation of Josephus only, little material evidence being available from the site of
Qumran.62

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61 Avigail Sheffer, “Needlework and Sewing in Israel from Prehistoric Times to the Roman Period,” 527 –
62 Jodi Magness assumes in terms of clothing at Qumran that the Qumran inhabitants were Essenes, and she
relies on Josephus and Philo for clothing evidence. Jodi Magness, The Archaeology of Qumran and the
Provisions were made in ancient work and marriage contracts to ensure the clothed state of the body. *Mishnah Ketubbot* 5.8 concerns a poor man’s wife who is entrusted to a guardian while her husband is away during the week:

If a husband maintained his wife at the hands of a third person... He must also give her a bed and a bed-cover and if he has no bed-cover he must give her a rush mat. He must also give her a cap for her head and a girdle for her loins, and shoes at each of the [three] Feasts, and clothing to the value of fifty *zuż* every year. They may not give her new clothes for summer or worn-out clothes for winter; but he should give her clothes to the value of 50 *zuż* for winter, and she may clothe herself with the rags thereof in the summer time; and the discarded garments belong to her.... This applies to the poorest in Israel, but with folk of the better sort all should be according to the honour due to him.63

Fifty *zuż* worth of clothing would likely cover two tunics and a modest cloak, bare provisions for survival. In the Greco-Roman context, Cato is even stingier in *De Agricultura*, where he describes the provisions to be given to labourers: he allows for only one tunic and one cloak a year, and the workers must return the rags at the end of the year for future use, denoting the high value placed on cloth in the ancient context (*Agr.* 59). Records of work contracts preserved in documentary papyri indicate that labourers were often given a clothing allowance or provided with clothing as their wage, again suggesting the importance of ensuring the clothed state of the body.64

*Nakedness associated with labour*

As mentioned above, *t.Ber.* 2.14.4 (lines 21-26) states workers in a field wearing only a loincloth could not recite the *Shema*’ until they covered their chests, and a man dressed

in rags could not read from the Law in the assembly.\textsuperscript{65} This condition suggests that workers conducted their labour in a state of nakedness; different types of work could be done naked, or in a partial state of undress. According to Hesiod’s \textit{Works and Days}, sowing, ploughing and reaping should be done \textit{gymnos} (391-92). Plutarch describes Cato the Elder as conducting work on his farm in a sleeveless tunic in winter, and bare above the waist in the summer (\textit{Cato Major} 3.2). This condition of undress is representative in the text of Cato’s frugality and temperance, and is also associated with masculine “toughness” and youth, demonstrated in Aelian’s \textit{Varia Historia} (7.13): “Agesilaus a Lacedemonian, now an old man, very often went forth without shoes and tunic, in his threadbare cloak, and did so even on winter mornings” (ὁν ἀνυπόδητος πολλάκις καὶ ἄχιτων προήει, τὸν τρίβωνα περιβαλλόμενος αὐτόν, καὶ ταῦτα ἐωθινὸς ἐν ὀραχιμερίῳ).\textsuperscript{66} Work in the nude could therefore be practical (a cloak would get in the way of most manual labour) or a more rhetorical or intentional kind of practice (a demonstration of “toughness” or frugality).

The scene of Jesus’ appearance on the beach in John 21 is also suggestive of nakedness in labour: when Simon Peter hears that it is Jesus speaking to them from the beach, he puts on an outer garment (cloak, here ἑπενδύτης), because he was naked, and jumps into the sea: Σίμων οὖν Πέτρος, ἀκούσας ὅτι ὁ κύριός ἐστιν, τὸν ἑπενδύτην

\textsuperscript{65} Discussed in Hamel, \textit{Poverty and Charity}, 62.

\textsuperscript{66} Claudii Aelianii de natura animalium libri xvii, varia historia, epistolae, fragmenta, Vol 2. Aelian. Rudolf Hercher. In Aedibus B.G. Teubneri. Lipsiae. 1866. Parallel situations were not always viewed positively, however; Xenophon contrasts the physical life of the philosopher with its intellectual goal of happiness through a description of the dress of Socrates in \textit{Memorabilia} 1.6.2: “Socrates, I supposed that philosophy must add to one’s store of happiness. But the fruits you have reaped from philosophy are apparently very different. For example, you are living a life that would drive even a slave to desert his master. Your meat and drink are of the poorest: the cloak you wear is not only a poor thing, but is never changed summer or winter; and you never wear shoes or tunic (καὶ ἵματον ἡμιφέσαι ὅλων φαῦλαν, ἀλλὰ τὸ αὐτὸ θέρους τε και χειμώνος, ἀνυπόδητος τε καὶ ἄχιτων διατελεῖς). From \textit{Xenophon in Seven Volumes}, vol. 4, trans. E.C. Marchant (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; London: William Heinemann, 1923).
διεζώσατο, ἤν γὰρ γυμνός, καὶ ἐβάλεν ἐαυτὸν εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν· (John 21:7b). This verse is often described in terms of the “contradictory” behaviour of Peter: why put on clothing only to jump (literally, “throw himself”) into the sea? His actions make sense, however, when viewed in the context of ancient norms of nakedness: conducting certain forms of manual labour naked was common, but in a changed social situation, here with the identification of Jesus the κύριος, Peter had to put on an outer garment in order to be socially acceptable. When Peter is in the presence of his social superior, he must be properly dressed. Undress before a superior would be considered an insult. Perhaps Peter was “naked” in that he was wearing a tunic only, without a cloak, but it is very likely, despite contemporary resistance to the idea, that he was completely without clothing; ancient frescoes and mosaics often depict fishermen as totally naked.67

Manual labour might be done naked, but not civic labour. Plutarch describes Cato the Younger’s controversial practice of going without tunic and shoes during his time as praetor as interpreted by the majority as a disgrace.68 According to Plutarch, Cato the Younger used his state of partial dress intentionally, as a comment on honour display through dress; he would wear an “off-trend” colour and go out without his shoes or tunic.

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67 For example, see Mosaic of Thalassa the Sea, inventory no. 1017; Roman 5th cen. CE; stone; Hatay Archaeology Museum Mosaic Collection, excavated from Hatay, Harbiye (view an image online on the Hatay Archeology Museum Inventory Page, http://www.hatayarkeolojimuzesi.gov.tr/HatayMuzeWeb/faces/jsp/layouts/inventoryCollectionDetail.jsp?inventoryid=3792; the naked fisherman are part of the border detail); Fisherman, Minoan (Akrotiri), 1500 BCE; fresco; National Archaeological Museum, Athens, Greece; Fragment of a mosaic depicting a naked fisherman; 3rd cen. CE; stone; Sousse Archaeology Museum, Tunisia; Mosaic of fishing boats on a sea, 27 BCE – 395 CE; stone; Sousse Archaeology Museum, Tunisia (image available from http://www.museum.agropolis.fr/english/pages/expos/aliments/poissons/images/mosaique.htm)

68 “For the next year (54 BCE) Cato was elected praetor, but it was thought that he did not add so much majesty and dignity to the office by a good administration as he took away from it by disgracing it. For he would often go forth to his tribunal without shoes or tunic, and in such attire would preside over capital cases involving prominent men. Some say, too, that even after the mid-day meal and when he had drunk wine, he would transact public business; but this is untruthfully said (Cat. Min. 44.1; see also 6.3, 50.1. Text from Plutarch, Plutarch's Lives (LCL), 8. For a different situation of “work” in the nude, see Plato, Leg. 7.954a, which describes searching a house naked; also, Xenophon, Anab. 4.4.12. These references are mentioned in Thomas Day Seymour, Life in the Homeric Age (New York: Macmillan, 1907), 156.
not simply to draw attention to himself, but to “accustom himself to be ashamed only of truly shameful things, and to think little of what others view disdainfully” (Cato Minor 6). The link between clothing and status is both readily accepted, it seems, and viewed with suspicion as a “worldly” or paltry concern in both Latin texts and the early gospels.

Extending out from situations of labour, nakedness also suggests a situation of unreadiness or unfitness. Being dressed indicates a state of readiness: “Be dressed for action (literally, be girded, or have your tunic on and belted) and have your lamps lit,” Luke 12:35. While not a situation of work, in Acts 12:7-9, Peter cannot leave his prison cell until he is dressed: “Suddenly, an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the facility. The angel aroused Peter with a blow in the side and said, “Get up quickly!” The shackles fell from his hands. The angel then said: “Belt up your robe and put on your sandals.” Peter complied. “Put on your coat and follow me,” the angel continued. Peter followed him out.” Commenting on these verses, Pervo writes: “Getting the chains off is no problem. Getting Peter dressed is. A maddening dialogue ensues, as the angel supervises every detail of Peter’s toilet (v. 8). Worried readers will not understand why these niceties cannot wait. When his wardrobe finally meets the standards of this celestial valet, Peter is told to follow.”69 The social consequence of nakedness is too great to risk; even a prison break necessitates a properly dressed state. Contrary to Pervo, the ancient reader would likely understand the necessity of the niceties, as nakedness presents such a significant social threat.

These “norms” of nakedness suggest that naked bodies in the ancient Mediterranean context belong to the category of the abject; the body does not “matter” when naked. Certain situated performances of the body may identify with the naked state, such as

circumstances of labour or athletic and martial nudity, but these performances remain outside primary categories of dress.

4 (Un)dressing the disciple

Jesus’ recommendations for the bodily practice of the disciples vary slightly between the synoptic accounts, as listed earlier (Mark 6:8-9; Q 10:4; Matt 10:9-10; Luke 9:3, 10:4). The instructions include one tunic, a belt (Mark, Matthew; the belt would be necessary to keep the tunic properly secured to the body) and sandals (only in Mark). There is no mention in any of the instructions of a cloak.

Hamel proposes that though not included explicitly here, the cloak would have been essential for the disciples, if only to allow them to spend the night in some relative comfort, particularly if they were not welcomed into a household; the cloak would be taken for granted in a list of dress provisions. The following verses in the synoptic accounts seem to presuppose some rejection of the disciples: “if any place will not receive you and they refuse to hear you, when you leave, shake off the dust that is on your feet for a testimony against them” (Mark 6:11; cf. Matt 10:14; Luke 9:5), suggesting that their appearance would not have been read favourably. The cloak is mentioned often enough in other synoptic contexts that the absence of the cloak is conspicuous here. Other ancient Mediterranean “uniforms” are very specific in terms of dress, explicitly including items and excluding others. The synoptic descriptions are most frequently compared to dress traditions about the Cynics, who are described and describe themselves as wearing a threadbare, “double” cloak (τρίβων διπλαοῦν), a bag (πήρα), and a staff (ῥάβδος).

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70Hamel, Poverty and Charity, 68.
βακτηρία, βάκτρον). A later text, BT Shabbat 120a, includes eighteen garments in a list of clothes that may be taken from a burning house, with a cloak as the first in the list. Full descriptions of wardrobes include cloaks. The cloak, any kind of cloak, is not included in the wardrobe instructions to the disciples, however. The disciples’ “uniform” consists of tunic and belt only (or, according to Mark, tunic, belt, sandals and staff).

If the cloak is indeed excluded from the uniform, this is suggestive of a very unusual construction of identity for the disciples, for to be without the cloak was to be naked, by ancient standards of nakedness. A tunic without the cloak was allowed at home, in private contexts, but not in public (unless you were a slave; slaves were distinguished by their wearing of a short tunic without a cloak). Jesus, in leaving out the cloak from the wardrobe of the disciples, is essentially asking them to go naked, to construct and present themselves in a manner that was conventionally rejected. They were asked to go naked, according to ancient Mediterranean standards of nakedness, in a dressed society. This emphasis on nakedness is consistent with Jesus’ instructions in the Q text interpreted in Matthew and Luke: “To the person wanting to take you to court and get your tunic, turn over to him the cloak as well” (Q 6:29). Here again, the follower of the command would be left, in this case, totally naked.

These directives are suggestive of an identity founded upon an association with a rejected category of being; Jesus constructs the subject, the body of the disciple, on the

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71 See, for example, Diogenes 7 (to his father Hicetas): “Do not be upset, Father, that I am called a dog [Cynic] and put on a threadbare double cloak and carry a bag over my shoulders and have a staff in my hand; for such matters are not worth worrying about, but rather you should be happy that your child is satisfied with little, while being free from popular opinion, to which all, Greeks, and barbarians alike, are subservient.” Translation (modified) from Abraham J. Malherbe, ed., The Cynic Epistles: A Study Edition (SBLSBS 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1977), 98-99; cited as well by Collins, Mark, 299.

72 The mention of two tunics in the gospel texts is not enough to suggest that the cloak is taken for granted. Wearing two tunics was a common practice, used to keep the body warm in cold weather, for example; owning two tunics was even more common, allowing one to have a change of clothes.
boundaries of its social situation. This is quite a radical action, given the social connotations of nakedness in the ancient world: to be naked in public was to risk total exclusion from social categorization and thus from social life. The author of Mark’s gospel relates an account of an exorcism that encapsulates this anti-social functioning of nakedness perfectly in 5:1-20, the story of the Gerasene demoniac. After he is healed, the man is observed near Jesus, ἵματισμένον καὶ σωφρονοῦντα, “clothed and in his right mind” (5:15). The implication here is that before this time, the man was naked – naked, and not in his right mind. Luke makes this explicit in his performance of the story, beginning, “there met him a man from the city who had demons; for a long time he had worn no clothes (οὐκ ἐνεδύσατο ἵματον, literally “he had not worn a cloak”), and he lived not in a house but among the tombs” (Luke 6:27, compared to Mark’s redundant “there met him out of the tombs a man with an unclean spirit, who lived among the tombs”, 5:2-3).

The verb ἵματιζω can mean, in a passive form as we find it in Mark, “to be dressed” or “to be furnished with clothing.” It is possible, as Collins remarks, that the reference to his clothing “may simply imply that his healing resulted in his interest and ability to be properly dressed.”73 Perhaps somebody provided him with clothing after he was healed and perceived that he was naked. However, the pairing of “being clothed” and “being in his right mind” suggest that the two belong together: “[h]is being properly dressed corresponds to his being in his right mind.”74 Collins compares the episode to a story about a man named Nicias in Plutarch’s Marcellus (20.5-6) in which Nicias pretends to be δαιμονὸν καὶ παραφρονὸν, “possessed and crazed,” so that he might avoid arrest:

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73 Collins, Mark, 272.
74 Collins, Mark, 272.
But just as they were ready to arrest him, an assembly of the citizens was held, and here Nicias, right in the midst of some advice that he was giving to the people, suddenly threw himself upon the ground, and after a little while, amid the silence and consternation which naturally prevailed, lifted his head, turned it about, and spoke in a low and trembling voice, little by little raising and sharpening its tones. And when he saw the whole audience struck dumb with horror, he tore off his mantle, rent his tunic, and leaping up half naked, ran towards the exit from the theatre, crying out that he was pursued by the Mothers. No man venturing to lay hands upon him or even to come in his way, out of superstitious fear, but all avoiding him, he ran out to the gate of the city, freely using all the cries and gestures that would become a man possessed and crazed.75

Nakedness results in social ostracism and fear, the naked individual being in a rejected social state. Return to a proper social state is signaled in a return to proper dress, a return to “being clothed.” In this context, the naked body of the disciple could only be interpreted negatively.

The synoptic instructions to the disciples are operating within a certain “norm” of nakedness, but outside of the contextualized parameters of this norm. The accounts envision a situation of nakedness for labour. The activity of the disciples specified in Mark 6:7-13 (Matt 10:7-11, 14; Luke 9:1-6; cf. Matt 9:35) is their new line of work, and Jesus is instructing them that in order to do this work properly, they must be “naked.” Manual labour was often done in a state of undress, and most of the disciples would have been familiar with this context of nakedness; it would have been impractical to try to maintain the draping of one’s cloak around the body in these situations. The apocalyptic discourse of Mark 13, in its description of the “desolating sacrilege,” references such a context: “But when you see the desolating sacrilege set up where it ought not to be (let the reader understand), then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; let him who is on the housetop not go down, nor enter his house, to take anything away; and let him

75 Marc.20.5-6 translation from Plutarch’s Lives (LCL).
who is in the field not turn back to take his cloak” (καὶ ὁ εἰς τὸν ἁγρὸν μὴ ἐπιστρεψάτω εἰς τὰ ὄπισω ἄρα τὸ ἱμάτιον αὐτοῦ, 13:14-16). The cloak is set aside for work.\(^{76}\)

Labour nakedness is consistent with the context of the missionary instructions in Mark, Matthew and Luke. In Mark’s text, Jesus calls the disciples to him and gives them their list of tasks: he sends them out “two by two, and gave them authority over the unclean spirits” (καὶ ἠξελαθόντες ἐκήρυξαν δύο δύο καὶ ἐξελέγοντας ἐξουσίαν τῶν πνευμάτων τῶν ἄκαθάρτων, 6:7b). The wardrobe instructions come next, followed by the actual labour of the disciples: “so they went out and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many demons, and anointed many who were sick with oil and healed them” (Καὶ ἐξελθόντες ἐκήρυξαν ἵνα μετανοήσησιν, καὶ δαμόνια πολλὰ ἐξέβαλον, καὶ ἠλειφὼν ἐλαίῳ πολλοὺς ἀρρώστους καὶ ἐθεράπευον). Jesus, in Mark, dresses the disciples for work.

Similarly, the context of the instructions in Matthew and Luke (following Q 10:2) is labour. Luke preserves both the Markan account and the Q text. In Luke 9:1-2, Jesus calls

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\(^{76}\) The documentary papyrus \textit{SB VI} 9026 might be read as an interesting exception to this “rule” for work. In a second-century CE letter from Areskousa to her brother Herakles, Areskousa asks her brother to send her some good cotton thread, because their other brothers have worn out their cotton garments, and they need something to wear. The context here is identified as agricultural labour:

10 ... πάρῃ τὴν πάντας μιν πέμψῃς τῷ ἀγγέλῳ τούτῳ ἐριοζύλῳ δραχμίας εἴκοσι σπουδαίας κρύ-

κης, ἀλλ’ ὤρα μὴ ἀμελήσῃς ἐπεὶ οἱ ἀδελφοὶ σου ἐπεν-

δύτην οὐκ ἔχουσι εκτριβέντων τῶν ἐριοζύ-

λῶν αὐτῶν, καὶ χρείαν ἔχουσι ὡς οὖδας καθά

15 πάντοτε ἐν ἀγρῷ διατρέβεται.

By all means, please send me in this shipment twenty drachmae worth of good cotton thread. But see that you do not neglect this, because your brothers have no ἐπενδύσην, having worn out their cotton ones, and as you know they have need of them, since they spend all their time in the field.

ἐπενδύσην has been translated as “outer garments,” though as a general term for a garment worn over another (\textit{LSJ} 617), it could refer to an outer or second tunic. A cloak made of cotton seems unlikely, as cotton would not hold up very well as an outer garment. Cloaks were generally made of wool.
the disciples, gives them authority over demons and to cure diseases, and sends them out to preach and to heal; in Luke 9:3 we receive the wardrobe instructions. In Luke 10:1-2, Jesus sends out the disciples, “two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to come. And he said to them, “The harvest is plentiful, but the labourers are few; pray therefore the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest” (Luke 10:2: ἔλεγεν δὲ πρὸς αὐτοῦς· ὁ μὲν θερισμὸς πολύς, οἱ δὲ ἐργάται ὀλίγοι· δεήθητε οὖν τοῦ κυρίου τοῦ θερισμοῦ ὡς ἐργάτας ἐκβάλη εἰς τὸν θερισμὸν αὐτοῦ). Matthew 9:37-38 preserves the “labourers for the harvest” logion; in Matthew 10:5-8 the sending out of the disciples to the “house of Israel” to preach, heal, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, and cast out demons immediately precedes the instructions regarding dress. The dress of the disciples is an integral part of their instructions for work, and can therefore be interpreted as their dress for labour.

The manual labour required for an agricultural harvest looks quite different than the “labour” of the disciples, however, and the undressed state of the disciples does not fit the general “norm” of (male) labour nakedness. By requiring the disciples to do their “work” in a state of incomplete dress or relative nakedness, Jesus in Mark seems to be constructing a particular strategic practice here, a particular formation of identity which elicits meaning from a conventionally rejected state – a state of undress. The presentation of the body in public in only a tunic categorized the body as naked. As agricultural labourers, “workers for the harvest,” nakedness would not be strange or inappropriate. A bikini is not strange if seen on a beach. A bikini is strange, though, if worn in a boardroom. The interesting element of the wardrobe of the disciples is the use of an
agricultural norm in a non-agricultural context. The disciples are not literally harvesting. Their naked bodies, while working, are not doing an acceptable form of naked work.

The inclusion of a cloak in Jesus’ missionary instructions to his disciples is not at all certain. If the disciples could wear a cloak, the directives are still of social consequence; to be without a second tunic was to risk impurity if your garment became stained or marked, or to risk shame if you removed your garment in order to wash it. Similarly, Hamel argues that “a lack of shoes primarily meant a lack of status. Only the very poor were in the same situation, and Jesus, according to Matthew’s version, was asking his disciples to identify with these. The sandals in Mark (6.9) were probably a concession to social mores: the disciples with shoes would be less the object of mockery and insults.”\footnote{Hamel, \textit{Poverty and Charity}, 68.}

The texts themselves suggest that the disciples would not have been easily accepted as they went about their labour. This acceptance, in the highly visual culture of the ancient Mediterranean, would have been based largely on what people could see of the disciples, and it appears as though what people could see was unacceptable (Mark 6:11; parallel texts in Matthew 10:14 and Luke 9:5; 10:10-11). The predicted rejection of the disciples points to their shameful status as naked bodies, an overlooked detail in the synoptic texts. The social consequences of Jesus’ instructions are serious; the disciples are charged with a performance of the body conventionally associated with the abject. This could exclude the disciples from basic forms of social interaction, and possibly ritual interaction, particularly activity associated with the Jerusalem Temple, as well.\footnote{Hamel proposes that the religious aspect of these commands involves an identification with the sacred: “Comparable demands were made on the Temple pilgrims. Carrying money in one’s belt and a staff, wearing sandals, and having dust on the feet were strictly forbidden on the Temple mount. It appears, then, that the disciples were asked... to travel like Temple pilgrims, the purity of the Temple being now that of the whole land.” Hamel, \textit{Poverty and Charity}, 69.}
Whether or not the disciples ever followed these instructions is impossible to know. For the gospel writers, the events of their narratives are well in the past, and the evangelists temper the instructions to make them less radical in the present. Mark makes the instructions less radical with the allowance of shoes, though Mark also offers an exemplar of dress practice in the cameo appearance of Bartimaeus, who does, in fact, throw off his cloak in order to “come to Jesus” (ὁ δὲ ἀποβαλὼν τὸ ἱμάτιον αὑτοῦ ἀναπηδήσας ἔλθεν πρὸς τὸν Ἰησοῦν, Mark 10:50). Jesus, though performing the same labour as the disciples, is fully clothed in the gospels, and is in fact “known” through his cloak (see chapter two). Jesus is not fully known, at least in Mark and Matthew, until his cloak is removed, at the scene of the crucifixion.

Luke betrays more unease with the instructions to the disciples; while the author retains two performances of the labour instructions, his discomfort regarding the undressed state offers further support for the naked presentation of the disciples. Luke repeats the list of purse, knapsack, and shoes from 10:4 (a context that is clearly retrospective in Luke, an idyllic past) in 22:35: Jesus says, “When I sent you out with

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79 Gerhard Dautzenberg makes the argument about the travel practices being already well in the past for the gospel writers in G. Dautzenberg, “Der Wandel der Reich-Gottes-Verkündigung in der urchristlichen Mission,” in Zur Geschichte des Urchristentums: [Festschrift R. Schnackenburg], ed. Gerhard Dautzenberg, Helmut Merklein and Karlheinz Müller (QD 87; Freiburg in Breisgau: Herder, 1979), 11 – 32.

80 Bartimaeus’ exemplary behaviour is in line with suggestions that minor characters in Mark are the ones who best embody and understand Jesus and Jesus’ values; see, for example, David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey and Donald Michie, Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel (2nd ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress, 1999), 129 – 35. Joel Marcus interprets himation in this verse as “outer tunic,” which does not make any sense. Marcus, it seems, does not want Bartimaeus to be completely naked. Marcus does note that some scribes did seem to interpret 10:50 as total nakedness, supporting my reading of the verse; minuscule manuscript 565 and syr having Bartimaeus “throwing on” his cloak instead of throwing it off, which is a very slight lexical difference (ἐπιβαλὼν for ἀποβαλὼν). Joel Marcus, Mark 8 – 16, 759.

no purse or bag or sandals, did you lack anything?” (ὅτε ἀπέστειλα ὑμᾶς ἄτερ βαλλαντίου καὶ πήρας καὶ ύποδημάτων, μὴ τινος ὑστερῆσατε:). In preparation for the coming crisis (Jesus’ impending arrest, trial, and crucifixion), Jesus charges his disciples to change out of their professional wardrobe: “But now, let him who has a purse take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let him who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one” (Luke 22:36). While this verse could indicate that the disciples still own a cloak, though they were not carrying it with them, the verse resonates much more strongly with Luke’s discomfort with nakedness seen elsewhere in the gospel narrative (the assumption being in Luke, then, that the disciples have a cloak).

As mentioned above, Jesus may be crucified in the “splendid robe” in Luke; the reader is not told, as in Mark and Matthew, that Jesus was stripped again after being mocked. Nakedness was part of the torture and humiliation of crucifixion, so Luke’s dressed Jesus is unlikely. Luke does not want Jesus to be naked on the cross and similarly, he does not want the disciples to be naked either. The “two swords” pericope in which the selling of the cloak is found, Luke 22:35-38, is unique to Luke’s account; there are no parallels in other gospel texts.

Luke’s discomfort with nakedness is evident in the sequel to his gospel, the Book of Acts, as well. The apostles seem to have an endless supply of ἱμάτια in Acts: when cloaks are torn or lost, they reappear later in the narrative, without any indication of their return or re-provisioning. Barnabas and Paul tear their cloaks in Acts 14:14; Paul has another cloak, however, by 16:22. This time, Paul’s cloak is stripped off of him, as is Silas’s cloak, when they are beaten and thrown into prison at Philippi. This stripping of their cloaks is an act of humiliation. Perhaps the magistrates return their cloaks when they
come to apologize to Paul and Silas in 16:38-39. Paul has a cloak again by 18:6, when he shakes it out in order to enact a curse against the Judean community at Corinth. Paul attracts cloaks in Acts: in 7:58, witnesses to Stephen’s stoning lay their cloaks at Paul’s (Saul’s) feet. In 7:58 this laying down of cloaks reads like an honorific gesture, similar to the laying down of cloaks at Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem; in Acts 22:20, though, Paul states that he kept the garments of the people who were killing Stephen as an act of protection; Paul (Saul) guarded their cloaks while they stoned Stephen to death (φυλάσσων τὰ ἰμάτια τῶν ἀνωρούντων αὐτῶν), presumably against theft by onlookers.

Nakedness in Acts draws wide public attention. When a man with an evil spirit overpowers the sons of Sceva in 19:16, the sons are forced to flee from the man’s house γυμνοὺς καὶ τετραμματισμένους, “naked and wounded.” Everyone in Ephesus hears of this naked flight: τοῦτο δὲ ἐγένετο γνωστὸν πᾶσιν Ἰουδαίοις τε καὶ Ἑλλησίν τοῖς κατοικοῦσιν τὴν Ἑφέσου καὶ ἐπέπεσεν φόβος ἐπὶ πάντας αὐτοὺς, “and this became known to all the Judeans as well as the Greeks, to all the residents of Ephesus, and fear fell upon them all,” Acts 19:17. Nakedness is something shameful that people hear about; for Luke, Jesus, disciples and apostles cannot be naked; characters in Luke’s texts have a continuous supply of clothing.

5 Conclusions

The disciples were asked to go naked, according to ancient Mediterranean standards of nakedness, in a dressed society. As shown above, nakedness in the ancient world was associated with all that was to be excluded from experience: death, poverty, shame, subjection and slavery, madness. Simply to go barefoot could align one with this state of ultimate abjection, as demonstrated in a rabbinic dispute from around 150 CE: “Now he
saw that he (R. Joshua) was not wearing shoes, (whereupon) he remarked: He (who rides) on a horse is a king, upon an ass, is a free man, and he who has shoes on his feet is a human being; but he who has none of these, one who is dead and buried is better off.”

These directives are suggestive of a socio-religious identity founded upon an association with the abject, with a rejected category of being; Jesus constructs the subject on the boundaries of its social situation, including rather than excluding the abject. This is quite a radical action, given the social connotations of nakedness – to be naked in public was to risk total exclusion from social categorization and thus from social life. The instructions clearly set out to reject the very qualities that bring the body into meaning, or that render the body as “subject”; a rejection of conventional social structuring is at work here.

The strange “uniform” of the disciples can be accounted for in several different ways. First, as John S. Kloppenborg Verbin has argued, the dress of the disciples could be a distinguishing mechanism, separating the work of the disciples from the work of local travellers – “travelling salesmen,” or rochelim (from רוכל, “peddler”) – operating between towns and villages in Roman Galilee. This interpretation fits particularly well with the Q context of the labour instructions, as Q explicitly calls the disciples “workers.” In order to distinguish their work from that of other travellers, the itinerant rochelim in particular, Jesus gives the disciples a visual identity encoded in dress, an identity that would be connected with their specific activities and ideology. William E. Arnal suggests that the limited provisions for labour might reflect a desire to distance the disciples from any

82 b. Sabb. 152a; quoted in Hamel, Poverty and Charity, 76.
83 John S. Kloppenborg Verbin, Excavating Q: The History and Setting of the Sayings Gospel (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2000), 211. See also William E. Arnal, Jesus and the village scribes: Galilean conflicts and the setting of Q (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001), esp. 92 – 95. These travelling salesmen, it should be noted, were not travelling far; “itinerancy” in this context refers to short, probably day-long trips between towns and villages in a relatively small geographical area.
association with travel at all, as travelling strangers were not generally trusted.\textsuperscript{84} In this case, the lack of a cloak would be important to the visual identity, as travellers would certainly have worn cloaks. The Q text does seem to presuppose rejection of the disciples, however; the text does not read as though the disciples would be easily taken in as “acceptable local functionaries.”\textsuperscript{85}

A second possibility for meaning relates to the structuring and conceptualization of status through the dress of the disciples. In the Markan context, the disciples as naked labourers supports the later narrative idea of the role of the disciple as “slave of all” (πάντων δοῦλος, Mark 10:44). Slaves were not distinguished by a particular “uniform;” what a slave wore depended upon the wealth (and whim) of the master. Indeed at Rome, the senate discarded the idea of a slave uniform, of making slaves distinguishable through dress, for fear of potential uprising: if slaves could see just how many slaves there were on the streets of Rome, the forging of a collective slave identity could lead to revolt.\textsuperscript{86} Slaves could wear more elaborate or luxurious garments as advertisements of the wealth and status of their master, or wear next to or absolutely nothing.\textsuperscript{87} Even if wearing something, slaves could have their clothing removed at any time.\textsuperscript{88}

\textsuperscript{84} Arnal writes that the instructions “may refer, specifically, to a class of scribal figures with a distinct ideological agenda … attempting to disseminate that agenda as fully as possible among their fellow administrators in neighboring villages. This is not itinerancy but rather a constructive local agenda involving short trips. The prohibitions against carrying a purse, knapsack, sandals, and staff not only reflect the very short distances involved but may also be intended to eliminate the appearance of travel and to normalize the activity being undertaken.” Arnal, \textit{Jesus}, 94.

\textsuperscript{85} I am here paraphrasing Arnal, \textit{Jesus}, 95.


\textsuperscript{87} Michele George, “Slave Disguise,” 44: “As property, slaves were in themselves a status marker, a kind of luxury good put on exhibition along with expensive objets d’art and lavish domestic decoration. Their finery was therefore a reflection of the master’s status, rather than their own servile status, and could be changed, Cinderella-fashion, at the master’s whim.” George suggests that slaves might have been distinguished more readily by their physical bodies, as many would have been scarred, branded, beaten or
Workers, slave or free, tend to appear in material representation as without a cloak, in shorter tunics ending well above the knee. If labourers possessed cloaks at all, they would have been removed for work, as the length and volume of drapery would have impeded movement. The tomb of Eurysaces the baker in Rome (late first century BCE) presents a clear contrast between manual labourer and overseer/customer; workers wear belted tunics ending mid-thigh, bodies bent or shown in vigorous action. Men accepting the grain and overseeing the work wear cloaks covering the entirety of the legs and are upright and still. Cato the Elder’s treatise De Agricultura offers the following list of provisions for workers: “A tunic measuring three and a half feet long, a sagum [cloak of coarse wool, generally translated as “blanket”; the textile would function as both] every other year. When you give the tunic or the sagum, first take up the old one and make patchwork of it. One ought to give a good pair of wooden shoes every other year” (Tunicam p. III S, saga alternis annis. Quotiens cuique tunicam aut sagum dabis, prius veterem accipito, unde centones fiant. Sculponias bonas alternis annis dare oportet, Agr. 59). Not all employers/owners followed Cato’s instructions; documentary papyri in particular are full of complaints from day labourers, often treated as less than slaves, who complain to former employers about their naked state, not having received their clothing allowance (their wage).

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88 Seneca states that one should pull off the garments of slaves advertised for sale so that bodily flaws come to light (detrahis vestimenta venalibus ne qua vitia corporis lateant, Ep. 80.9).
89 Inscription: CIL 1.2.1203-1204; discussion, Hackworth Petersen, “Clothes Make the Man”, 186-87.
90 On the issue of day labourers, see my article “Redistribution and Reciprocity: A Socio-Economic Interpretation of the Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard (Matthew 20:1-15),” Journal for the Study of the Historical Jesus 8.3 (2010): 199 – 236. P.Mich I 90, discussed above in chapter one, dated in the third century BCE from Philadelphia, offers an excellent example of such a complaint from a labourer.
In a highly visual society in which identity was embodied in dress, the lack of a “canonical slave garment” speaks to the absolute lack of status of the slave. George asserts of the Roman context, “as a group slaves were the least identifiable and the least noticed among the Roman population; possessing no identity of their own separate from their master, they had no public ‘self’ of their own to assert through clothing…. the label of ‘slave’ signified social powerlessness and social invisibility.” While the body of the slave could be dressed up or down, the undressed body of the disciple resonates with this lack of status or identification. Becoming a disciple means leaving conventional social status markers behind. The disciple as “slave of all” should not be distinguishable through dress.

Finally, the dress of the disciples can be interpreted as a more general countercultural positioning. The rejection of conventional social structuring – the body dressed in cloak and tunic, with the stripes on the tunic indicating the status of the wearer (see chapter two) – offers a counterculture offence. Jesus’ message about the kingdom of God frequently transgressed ancient Mediterranean honour codes, and dress would provide the visual means of expressing this transgression. The dress of the disciples is antifashion, to use a contemporary term: it would scandalize viewers, scandalize the dominant cultural group. Antifashion is powerful, states Fred Davis, because it “directly confronts and challenges the symbolic hegemony of the reigning fashion. It injects itself headlong into the dialogue of fashion by attempting through its iconoclasms to debunk and deride

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92 Prime examples of Jesus’ transgression of or challenge to honour codes are Matthew 5:1-12, the Beatitudes, and Matthew 6:1-18, Jesus’ redefinition of honour in almsgiving, prayer and fasting. The synoptic gospels are full of such honour challenges.
the dominant mode." The undressed body of the disciple would offer just such a direct challenge to the viewer.

Critique of the value of honour through dress is not without precedent. As mentioned above, Cato the Younger went without shoes and tunic as a praetor, which was thought to be shameful (Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 44.1). Earlier in the biography, Plutarch describes Cato as dressing inappropriately (making an “antifashion statement”) purposefully to draw attention to the falsity of honour:

And, in general, Cato thought he ought to take a course directly opposed to the life and practices of the time, feeling that these were bad and in need of great change. For instance, when he saw that a purple which was excessively red and vivid was much in vogue, he himself would wear the dark shade. Again, he would often go out into the streets after breakfast without shoes or tunic. He was not hunting for notoriety by this strange practice, but accustoming himself to be ashamed only of what was really shameful, and to ignore men’s low opinion of other things (Plutarch, *Cato Minor* 6.3).

Wearing an off-trend colour might not seem too “counterculture,” but in his visual culture, Cato got people’s attention.

Jesus’ instructions to his disciples fit perfectly with his message elsewhere in the gospel texts about “being ashamed only of what was really shameful, and to ignore men’s low opinion of other things.” Followers of Jesus should “not be anxious about your life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink, nor about your body, what you shall put on”

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93 Fred Davis, “Antifashion: The Vicissitudes of Negation,” 89 – 102 in *Fashion Theory: A reader*, ed. Malcolm Barnard (London and New York: Routledge, 2007), 98. “Counterculture insult” is one of several varieties of antifashion identified in the chapter; Davis also discusses “utilitarian outrage” (clothing should be functional and practical; people spend too much money on clothing, clothing consumption leads to conspicuous waste, dress is a manifestation of ego and vanity); “health and fitness naturalism” (dress can make ridiculous demands on the body; items like corsets, high heels, neckties should be discarded); “feminist protest” (dress is a medium for the expression of the institutions of patriarchy); “conservative skepticism” (a new fashion just might not catch on, for various reasons); and “minority group disidentification” (a subgroup distances itself from a dominant group or cultural mainstream via dress).

(Matthew 6:25).\(^5\) Consider the lilies! The (un)dress of the disciples is the visual expression, the bodily performance of this countercultural stance.

Dress informs bodily techniques, and the dress of the disciples, as their missionary uniform, would have an impact on not only their social self but also their inner formation as disciples.\(^6\) The disciples would have been visually identifiable as “different;” their undress would locate them socially. The “uniform” would construct certain personal, what might here be called occupational, attributes as well. Jennifer Craik asserts that occupational uniforms “wear the body and construct occupational techniques and persona. Central to this is negotiating the tension and “fit” between the civil self and occupational persona.”\(^7\) Their undress might cause tension or even conflict with outsiders, but validate or confirm their insider identity as disciples.\(^8\) Going without

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\(^5\) The *Gospel of Thomas* logion 37 may also be relevant here; *P.Oxy*. 655 reads, “You? Who can add to your age? He himself will give you your garment. His disciples say to him: When will you be revealed to us and when shall we see you? He says: When you undress and are not ashamed…” *P.Oxy*. 655 translated in Smith, “The Garments of Shame,” 218, along with the parallel Coptic text. The disciples will only “see” Jesus when they give up the key cultural convention of dress, a convention which encapsulates cultural codes of honour and shame.

\(^6\) I am here drawing on Jennifer Craik’s definition of uniforms: “Uniforms are all about control not only of the social self but also of the inner self and its formation.” Jennifer Craik, *Uniforms Exposed: From Conformity to Transgression* (Dress, Body, Culture; Oxford and New York: Berg, 2005), 4.

\(^7\) Craik, *Uniforms*, 138. Craik gives a helpful example of the design for clerical garb for ordained women priests in Australia in (I believe) the early 1990s: three designers were chosen to participate in a design competition, and all of them chose conservative, “modest,” “reverent” looks, designed to produce or bring out specific attributes and behaviours. Craik writes, “these outfits were constructing personal and occupational attributes of modesty, decency, moderate authority, auxiliary religious roles and a nod to fashion. In other words, the outfits constructed the modified occupational activities of female clergy at this time.” Craik, *Uniforms*, 108. For more on uniforms, see Mary Ellen Roach and Joanne Eicher, *The Visible Self* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1973), 127 – 29; Nathan Joseph and Nicholas Alex, “The Uniform: A Sociological Perspective,” *American Journal of Sociology* 77.4 (1972): 719 – 30.

\(^8\) Joseph and Alex call this function of uniforms, the underscoring of difference together with the emphasis on group membership, “conflictual identity validation.” Joseph and Alex, “The Uniform,” 726. The affirmation of the value of work or of collective identity constructed or defined through work resonates with research on the social identity of freedmen and free labourers as expressed through imagery, specifically imagery of their dress/undress in relationship to status and work. Michele George and John R. Clarke argue separately that imagery created by and relating to “ordinary Romans,” here freedmen or free born workers, expresses a pride in work, demonstrated most particularly in reliefs of a cloth and garment shop from Rome (G. Zimmer, *Römische Berufsdarstellungen* [Berlin: Gebr. Mann, 1982], nos. 38 and 39) and in frescoes from the cloth and garment shop of Verecundus in Pompeii. The imagery shows cloth work in detail, particularly the Pompeian frescoes, and depicts the owners of the shop holding up finished
acceptable dress would threaten the honour of the (non)wearer, but in this way confirm and express the broader message of the disciples’ “labour” as preachers; “honour” and “shame” do not come from anxieties about food, shelter, family… or dress. The (almost) naked body of the disciple – without protection, without status – offers a visual expression of the message of the kingdom, the message Jesus sends his disciples out to preach.

1 Introduction

The most famous cloak in the gospels is missing. The two short verses of Mark 14:51-52 tell the brief story of a certain “young man” at the scene of Jesus’ arrest who, in order to elude arrest himself, leaves the “linen cloth” in which he is dressed behind in the clutches of his would-be captors and runs away “naked” (gymnos) into the night:

καὶ νεανίσκος τις συνηκολούθει αὐτῷ περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ, καὶ κρατοῦσιν αὐτὸν· ὁ δὲ καταλιπὼν τὴν σινδόνα γυμνὸς ἔφυγεν.

And a certain young man followed him, wearing a linen garment upon [his] naked [body], and they seized him; but he left the linen garment and fled naked.

The young man, the gospel “streaker,” has received a great deal of attention in the writings of biblical commentators, because the detail, preserved only in Mark, seems so strange to contemporary audiences. Scholars cannot seem to make sense of the verse; while the young man’s clothed and unclothed body is clearly the focal point of the verses, interpretation of the incident discounts the details of dress; for Lohmeyer, Scroggs and Groff, Marcus and others, the details of the garment and its abandonment are not relevant to the meaning of the verses. Mark 14:51-52 is assigned meaning outside of its

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1 I have published my research on Mark 14:51-52; this section of the chapter appears as “Cloaks, Conflict, and Mark 14:51-52,” CBQ 75 (2013): 683-703. Since publication I have found additional references that offer strong support for my argument, which I will include in this section.

2 See Raymond E. Brown: “If the evangelist terminated with the young man alone and naked and did not spell out the implication of the scene, ingenious preachers and scholars have been eager to make up for his silence.” Brown, The Death of the Messiah: from Gethsemane to the Grave; a commentary on the Passion narratives in the four Gospels (Anchor Bible Reference Library; New York and Toronto: Doubleday, 1994), 294.

3 Ernst Lohmeyer in Das Evangelium des Markus (Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament Abt. 1, Bd. 2; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1937 [reprinted 1951]), 324 goes so far as to assert that this scene of naked flight is completely meaningless in its context; it has no consequence for
immediate context, meaning which draws on or points to larger themes and concerns of the author of Mark: Mark’s apocalyptic interests; discipleship; Jesus’ resurrection (even though the reader does not actually hear of the resurrection in Mark); and baptism. ⁴

Each of these fields of inquiry are profitable, to some degree; my interest is not in the limitation of interpretative possibilities for the passage. Rather, my suggestion is that Mark 14:51-52 makes sense in and of itself, without an immediate need for symbolic interpretation. A familiar situation presents itself in these verses, strange to contemporary readers, but familiar to an ancient audience: they depict a moment of violence in the course of the chaos of Jesus’ arrest, a moment that has precedent in multiple literary and

an understanding of the course of events of the Markan narrative and the interpretation of these events (“Für den Gang und Geist des Geschehens völlig bedeutungslos”). Robin Scroggs and Kent I. Groff (“Baptism in Mark: Dying and Rising with Christ,” JBL 92 [1973]: 531-48, here 541) assert that “the synoptic tradition is not interested in such historical details” as items of dress, and that the reference to the garment can only be symbolic. See also Marcus, Mark 8-16, 1124-25.

documentary contexts. An appreciation of the historical elements of everyday life that the verses take for granted is essential to the interpretation of this narrative setting. These elements include the details of ancient dress – what it looked like, how items were worn – and, most particularly, how dress figured in situations of conflict. A detailed examination of the young man’s “linen garment” – called here a σινδών, *sindôn* – as an outer garment or cloak and of literary and documentary texts in which cloaks figure prominently in situations of conflict reveals that there is nothing mysterious about these two verses in Mark. Rather, drawing upon familiar imagery relating to cloaks and their loss in situations of conflict, the author of the gospel heightens the drama of the arrest scene, bringing it to a vivid culmination through an appeal to common experience. Once the valences of σινδών and “throwing off one’s cloak” are understood, the verses make good sense.

2 Understanding the σινδών

The young man’s “linen garment” in Mark 14:51-52 is identified as a σινδών, *sindôn*. Without knowing what the garment is, it is difficult to understand why the young man might have left it behind as he did, and what the implications of leaving it behind might have been. Although it is often left out of scholarly presentations of ancient dress, the σινδών should be understood as part of a vestiary vocabulary which applies to the most basic of Greco-Roman garments in their general and multiple fabrications and uses; it is a term assigned to different materials and fabrics in different contexts for different purposes, much like the cloak which, demonstrated in chapter three, could be used for many different applications.
The term σινδών is found in contexts similar to the ἱµάτιον and related terms (χλαῖνα, φάρος, τρίβων, etc.), suggesting that its construction and use were also similar. In the majority of instances, the word refers to linen cloth, though Saglio mentions that the term can refer to cotton as well, citing Theophrastus, Historia plantarum IV.7.7; Strabo, Geography XV.1.20; and Periplus Maris Erythraei 48, 51, 63.\(^5\) Linen is the most common translation for σινδών in documentary papyri; the term is frequently included in inventories of goods and household accounts, and is a familiar request in personal and business letters. In a papyrus from third century BCE Ptolemais (Hormou), for example, a certain Aigyptos writes to Zenon to ask him to send some foodstuffs and some pitch, and he concludes by requesting two “linen garments”:

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\text{'ἀπόστειλον δὲ μοι πάντως σινδόνας β',}
\text{καὶ προσκεφάλαια δ᾽ ἐρρ[ω]σο.}
\text{And send to me above all two linen garments}
\text{and four pillows. Farewell.}\(^6\)
\]

Σινδών is translated here as “linen garments,” though its juxtaposition with προσκεφάλαια, the pillows, may suggest that its function is broader than “garment” allows, perhaps indicating that the cloth here may also have served as blankets or bed-sheets.

Whether linen or cotton, σινδών denotes a fine material, lighter or more delicate fabric; in both Greek and Latin (sindon), the term “s’applique à des sortes variées de

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\(^6\) P.Mich. 1 72; published in Claude Orrieux, Les papyrus de Zénon: l’horizon d’un Grec en Égypte au IIIe siècle avant J.C. (Paris: Macula, c.1983), S. 91. The occurrences of the term σινδών, σινδόνος in the documentary papyri are too numerous to list in full, but some helpful examples include P.Cair.Zen. 2 59176 (255 BCE; a daily account of receipts and expenses); P.Oxy. 6 921 (third century CE; an inventory of property) and P.Ryl. 4 627 (early fourth century CE; memoranda and accounts).
tissus fins.” Strabo’s description of the impact of sun-warmed rain and rivers on the growth of “wool” upon particular trees in India illustrates this characteristic of fine quality of cloth as essential to the interpretation of the term σινδῶν clearly:

έκ δὲ τῆς αὐτῆς αἰτίας ἔνιοις καὶ ἐπανθεῖν ἔριον. ἐκ τούτου δὲ Νεαρχὸς φησὶ τὰς εὐφυτρίας ύψαίνεσθαι σινδῶνας, τοὺς δὲ Μακεδόνας ἀντὶ κναφάλλων αὐτοῖς χρῆσθαι καὶ τοῖς σάγμασι σάγης....

And from this same cause even wool [or cotton] flowers on some. And from this [wool], says Nearchos, finely-threaded cloths are woven, and the Macedonians use them instead of pillows and as padding for their saddles (Geogr. XV.1.20).

The use of the term to reference a cloth woven in India is significant here as well, as σινδῶν seems most often to reference imported cloth; Saglio mentions that σινδῶν specifically applies to materials made in Egypt and Syria and in Diocletian’s price edict, linen from Scythopolis (Beit She’an), Tarsos and Byblos is mentioned as the most expensive.8 The Rule of the Andanian Mysteries (IG 5 1 1390 ll. 17-18) mentions a σινδονίτης next to a καλάσηρις (lexical form καλάσιρις, LSJ 866), an “Egyptian garment” or a “Persian garment” with a fringe or tassels at the bottom; the juxtaposition of these two items, σινδονίτης and καλάσηρις, highlights both the character of the σινδῶν as a garment and its status as a finer type of garment.9

In Hebrew, the word translated as “linen wrapper” or “garment” is סדין, sadin: close enough to sindôn to imply that the term was borrowed from Greek. Brown-Driver-Briggs suggest that sadin is “perhaps a foreign word,” listing Mark 15:46, another

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7 Saglio, “SINDON” 1346.
9 The garment in the form of σινδονίτης is mentioned in the fragments of the Brauron clothing catalogues (records of clothing dedications to the goddess Artemis Brauronia) as well, 1524B.130 l. 106. Liza Cleland translates σινδονίτης as “a garment of fine linen,” but places it between garment categories to emphasize more precisely the connection between garment and fabric. This is the only instance in the catalogues of fabric composition appearing as the only defining characteristic of an item of clothing. Cleland, The Brauron Clothing Catalogues, 126.
occurrence of *sindôn*, as an example.\textsuperscript{10} Biblical occurrences of *sadìn* indicate that the textile was multi-purpose, like the cloak, and that it was a particularly fine or luxurious kind of garment:

In that day, my LORD will strip off the finery of the anklets, the fillets, and the crescents; of the eardrops, the bracelets, and the veils; the turbans, the armlets and the sashes; of the talismans and the amulets; the signet rings and the nose rings; of the festive robes, the mantles, and the shawls; the purses, the lace gowns, and the linen vests (*סדינים*); and the kerchiefs and the capes. And then – instead of perfume, there shall be rot; and instead of an apron, a rope; instead of a diadem of beaten-work, a shorn head; instead of a rich robe, a girding of sackcloth; a burn instead of beauty (Isa 3:18-24; see also Prov 31:24; Judg 14:12-13).

Listed here as part of a list of “women’s finery,” the *sadìn*, a linen “vest” in the JPS Hebrew-English *Tanakh* translation but more generally a linen garment, is an expensive, “special” garment.

The *σινδών* worn by the young man in Mark is therefore most likely a finely woven, imported cloth, making it an object of considerable value.\textsuperscript{11} Indeed, if the *σινδών* of Mark 14:51-52 is associated with that of Mark 15:46, the detail that Joseph of Arimathea, a man of political prominence and therefore likely of some wealth (Mark 15:42-43), buys the cloth also suggests that the *σινδών* is a more expensive type of cloth, particularly when considered against the *ἱμάτιον* worn by the blind beggar Bartimæus in Mark 10:50.\textsuperscript{12} Brown affirms, if the audience of the gospel understood the expense of the


\textsuperscript{11} William L. Lane (*The Gospel according to Mark: the English text with introduction, exposition, and notes* [NICNT; Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 1974], 527) also makes this connection with the *σινδών* and wealth, arguing that because of the expensiveness of the cloth, the young man was most likely from a wealthy family. See also the brief discussion in Robert H. Gundry, *Mark: A commentary on his apology for the cross* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1993), 882. The connection between linen and cost can also be made in reference to the priestly garb described in Exod 28.39, 42; Lev 16.4, 32; etc.

\textsuperscript{12} This coincides with Neirynck’s argument that the detail of the young man in Mark 14.51-52 does not warrant a symbolic interpretation: Frans Neirynck, “La fuite du jeune homme nu en Mc 14,51-52,” *ETL* 55 (1979): 43 – 66, here 64 – 5. See also Joseph Bînzler’s comments on *σινδών* as “fine linen stuff” (feines Linnenzeug) in “ΟΘΟΝΙΑ und andere Stoffbezeichnungen im ‘Wäschekatalog’ des Ägypters Theophanes
σινδών, “leaving it behind had even more force in depicting the young man’s desperate flight.”\(^{13}\) Σινδών should be interpreted as a higher quality and therefore a more expensive type of textile.

Further testimony to the value of the σινδών is offered in LGM 1, a fragment of the “Longer Gospel of Mark” or “Secret Mark." Debates about authenticity aside,\(^ {14}\) LGM 1 offers a young man, a νεανίσκος, as we find in Mark 14, and here the young man is described as being rich (Jesus and the young man go together to the young man’s house, “for he was rich,” ἦν γὰρ πλούσιος). The young man comes to Jesus at night, περιβεβληµένος σινδόνα ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ, “wearing a σινδών around his naked body,” or “over his nakedness,” the same clause we encounter in Mark 14:51 (for more on this phrase, see the discussion below). The explicit status of the young man as rich supports the interpretation of the high value of the linen garment.

As a simple rectangular textile, σινδών is used in multiple contexts including sleeping and dress, the foremost uses of the Ἰματιον; these uses indicate its basic similarity to the “cloak.”\(^{15}\) A common use of the term also relevant to this discussion is in descriptions of linen used to wrap or shroud the bodies of the dead. Herodotus refers to the “fine linen” used to wrap a corpse in Histories II.86 (6):

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13 Brown, Death, 303. P.Princ. 2 82 (SB 3 7033), while a later text (fifth century CE), offers further support for this interpretation in its inclusion of linen items in a list of covetable clothing. A deacon of a church in Theophilus brings a complaint against a bishop and two presbyters, resulting in a settlement in gold between the deacon and the bishop, and a settlement in expensive, imported clothing between the deacon and the two presbyters, including a honey-coloured cloak from Dalmatia, an Egyptian cloak, five tunics with a specialized design and two linen shirts (δύο σινδόνια, line 40).


15 Σινδών can also refer to a ship’s sail (Euripides, Phaethon fr. 36; Lucian, Epigrams 39), bed clothes (P.Mich. 1 72; Edict.Diocl. 28.12, 16; and possibly Thucydides II.49.5), or bandages (Herodotus, Histories VII.181 [2]). The usage of σινδών in Thucydides highlights its flexibility; paired in this passage with Ἰματιον, it could refer either to a garment or to a light sheet.
And after the seventy days have passed, after washing the corpse they wrap the entire body in fine linen cut into bandages….16

The association of the σινδόνων with burial wrappings or clothing is made in Mark 15:46, the description of the burial of Jesus which often influences the interpretation of the term in Mark 14:51-52. This mention is the only other occurrence of σινδόνων in the literature of the early Jesus movement outside of the parallel texts in Matt 27:59 and Luke 23:53. The σινδόνων of the young man is understood as anticipatory of the linen shroud in which Joseph wraps the body of Jesus; as Gundry writes,

"the repetition of “linen cloth” within both 14:51-52 and 15:46 and the anarthrousness of the first occurrence and arthrousness of the second in each passage underscore this anticipation. The young man’s nakedness, except for the linen cloth, may anticipate the soldiers’ dividing Jesus’ garments among themselves…. The crowd’s seizing the young man (κρατοῦσαν αὐτόν) parallels their having seized Jesus (ἐκράτησαν αὐτόν – v 46; cf. v 49)…. Leaving [the linen cloth] behind anticipates Jesus’ resurrection, portrayed as a leaving behind of his linen burial cloth.17"

The use of σινδόνων as burial shroud or winding-sheet in Mark 15:46 suggests, according to most commentators, that the first incidence should be interpreted in light of the second.

It is significant that the author of the gospel uses σινδόνων only in 14:51-52 (twice) and 15:46 (twice), but this does not mean that the young man was himself wearing a burial shroud, or indeed that his dress was peculiar at all.18 The interpretation of 14:51-52

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16 Herodotus refers to σινδόνος βυσσίνης in a similar context in 7.181 (2).
17 Gundry, Mark, 862. Gundry does here note, “To be sure, Mark will write nothing about Jesus’ abandoning the linen burial cloth in the empty tomb, but presumably only because none of Jesus’ enemies will be there to clutch the cloth when he leaves it behind.”
18 Similarly, just because a νεανίσκος is mentioned in Mark 16:5, the only other use of the term in the gospel, it does not mean that the young man of 14:51-52 and the young man of 16:5 are the same young man. A different garment characterizes the second young man (without a definite article – he is simply “a young man”); this youth wears a white robe, a στολὴ λευκήν. I disagree with Meyer’s strong assertion that “[h]e is the youthful disciple, and no angel, in spite of what Matthew and Luke may make of him.” Marvin Meyer, “The Young Streaker in Secret and Canonical Mark,” 145 – 56 in Ancient Gospel or Modern Forgery? The Secret Gospel of Mark in Debate: Proceedings from the 2011 York University Christian
in light of 15:46 has led to some confusion regarding what the young man was wearing, and how he was wearing it; when the σινδόν is a burial shroud, 14:51-52 does not make ready sense, unless interpreted symbolically. Generally the term is translated as “linen cloth” or “linen sheet” (KJV, RSV, NRSV for “cloth”; NASB “sheet”; NIV has “linen garment”). As a “linen cloth” or “linen sheet,” the verses do seem strange or unlikely: “[a]t first glance, the “interpolation” seems bizarre and out of place, with its peculiar description of a young man wrapped in a linen cloth around his naked body.”19 “Linen cloth” cannot make sense, unless the young man’s appearance points to some other meaning.

Translations of the verses also tend to include the non-textual detail of the man’s wearing “nothing but” a linen “cloth:” “a certain young man was following him, wearing nothing but a linen cloth” (NRSV; see also RSV, NASB, NIV, etc.; the KJV reads that the man had a cloth “cast about” his naked body). The wearing of “nothing but” a linen cloth suggests that the young man’s dress was unusual or out of place. The “nothing but” reference is not, however, included in the Greek text of 14:51-52, and without the extraneous “nothing but,” the text does not seem to be as peculiar. Neirynck suggests further that ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ was not original to the text, appealing instead for the lectio brevior περιβεβλημένος σινδόνα –καταλιπών τὴν σινδόνα. In addition to manuscript evidence in which ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ is absent, Neirynck argues that copyists read γυμνός in 14:52 in the sense of “completely naked,” and they therefore felt the need to prepare for this situation in 14:51 by adding ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ, perhaps because they did not understand the

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Apocrypha Symposium, ed. Tony Burke (Eugene, OR: Cascade Books [Wipf & Stock Publishers], 2013), 154. Simple repetition of a term is not enough evidence to make such a firm identification.
nature of ancient clothing, where wearing a cloak alone was not unusual.\textsuperscript{20} The σινδών certainly was not “underwear,” as Pesch suggests (“das Unterkleid, das Hemd”).\textsuperscript{21} “Naked” in 14:52 could also mean that the man fled in his tunic alone; again, in the ancient Mediterranean, one was “naked” without the cloak. With or without ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ the narrative proceeds in perfect sense: the young man flees naked, i.e. divested of his cloak, in order to escape from his aggressor.\textsuperscript{22}

Σινδών can therefore be interpreted in Mark 14:51-52 not as a strange “cloth” (i.e. shroud) or as underwear or an undergarment, but in the same manner as ἵματιον; likely more expensive that a coarser cloak, the σινδών was a proper outer garment. There was nothing unusual in wearing a cloak against the skin;\textsuperscript{23} the young man’s manner of dress is not peculiar, and does not warrant the “nothing but” addition. This interpretation also makes better sense of the verb περιβάλλω (περιβεβληµένος σινδόνα). The linen garment was not “cast about” his body, nor was it “hastig umgeworfen,” “hastily thrown on,” as

\textsuperscript{20} Neirynck (“La fuite” 61) lists three variants: om. W λ c k sy\textsuperscript{a} sa

\textsuperscript{γυμνὸς Θ φ 565 sy\textsuperscript{b} eth

\textsuperscript{επὶ γυμνοῦ B D etc.}

C.E.B. Cranfield (\textit{The Gospel According to Saint Mark} [CGTC; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974], 438) prefers γυμνὸς as a more difficult and therefore original reading. Marcus (\textit{Mark} 995) favors ἐπὶ γυμνοῦ as it is attested in earlier and more reliable manuscripts (ς, B,D, etc.), as does Brown (\textit{Death} 295).

\textsuperscript{21} Rudolf Pesch, \textit{Das Markusevangelium} (HTKNT 2; 2 vols.; 3rd ed.; Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel and Wien: Herder, 1984), 2. 402. See Hilhorst, “Alternative Uses,” 494 here as well. Yarbro Collins (\textit{Mark}, 688 and 688 n. 153) makes a similar comment about “underwear”, noting m. \textit{Kelim} 29.1, which discusses undergarments worn by Jews by the end of the second century; she also remarks, “According to Joshua Schwartz (personal communication), since practices related to material culture are conservative, it is likely that Jews normally wore underwear in the first century CE.” However, we may have a different understanding of “conservative” when it comes to material culture than the ancients; Bonfante and Jaunzems (“Clothing and Ornament,” 1403) note that “conservative” Roman families did not wear undergarments, and were labeled as “old-fashioned” because of their lack of underwear: “Conservative families that clung to the old ways wore nothing else under the toga; cinctuti Cethegi, Horace (\textit{Art of Poetry} 50) calls them, implying that they were old-fashioned.” See also Olson, “Underwear,” mentioned above.

\textsuperscript{22} Neirynck, “La fuite,” 63. Neirynck here appeals also to Mark 10:50, in which Bartimaeus throws off his cloak (ἀποβάλλω) in order to go to Jesus, and to Mark 13:16, where one must leave one’s cloak behind in the face of the desolating sacrilege.

Pesch recommends. The verb can be translated as “wrapped about,” as Field proposes with reference to the Cynic philosopher Crates’ style of dress, but as the outer garment was a simple rectangle of fabric, this is always how the outer garment was worn, draped or wrapped around the body. There are many notable uses of περιβάλλω in the early Christian literature in which the verb simply denotes “dressed” or “dressed in,” including Mark 16:5; Matt 6:31; 25:36, 38, 43; Luke 12:27; John 19:2; Acts 12:8; and Rev 7:9, 13; 11:3; 19:8. Given the common use of περιβάλλω as “dressed,” there is no reason to assume that the young man’s manner of dress in 14:51 was anything unusual.

Further attestation of the manner in which the σινδών was worn comes from the Onomasticon of Julius Pollux of Naukratis, dating to the second century CE. The rhetorician defines σινδών in the seventh book of his ten-volume thesaurus as something which is thrown or wrapped around the body, using the term περιβόλαιον, “that which is thrown around” or “covering,” related to the verb περιβάλλω. The evangelist’s choice of σινδών in 14:51-52 is noteworthy, and may indeed anticipate its use in 15:46, but its use in 15:46 does not necessitate any stretch in translation in 14:51. The σινδών, in its rectangular simplicity, lent itself to multiple applications, including its function as a cloak which was wrapped or draped around the body. As the cloak is draped around the body rather than fastened, it is not unusual that the νεανίσκος could slip out of it in order to evade arrest, as cloaks needed a considerable level of effort to keep them on the body.

24 Pesch, Das Markusevangelium, 2.402; see also Hilhorst’s comments, “Alternative Uses,” 494.
25 Frederick Field, Notes on the Translation of the New Testament: Being the Otium Norvicense (Pars Tertia) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 40; Diogenes Laertius, Vit. Phil. 6.90, cited by Yarbro Collins, Mark, 693. Field (Notes, 40) also negates the notion of hastiness in the young man’s manner of dress, appealing to the use of the verb in Acts 12:8.
26 Julius Pollux, Onom. VII.72: Σινδών ἔστιν Ἀιγυπτία μέν, περιβόλαιον δ’ ἀν ἐι τό νῦν δικροσσόν καλομένον. ἔιρηται δὲ ποι καὶ τελείως συνδόνης.
The young man following Jesus was dressed in an expensive cloak, and he left this cloak behind when grabbed at the scene of Jesus’ arrest, fleeing the violent scene naked. Being naked had different valences in the ancient Mediterranean, as discussed in the previous chapter; outside of acceptable circumstances (such as athletics, labour, etc.), being naked was generally indicative of a state of shame, not “something good, as it is in the symbolic interpretation; [nakedness] is something to be avoided.”28 The abandonment of the garment for naked flight has a deeper resonance in these verses than often assumed.

3 Cloaks and Conflict: The Violent Situation of Mark 14:51-52

Interpreters of Mark 14:51-52 have focused on the garment of the νεανίσκος, as described above, but without a developed appreciation for what this garment might have materially looked like and how it would have been worn. As Jackson writes, the main – or really, the only – question for interpretation has been the details of the garment: its wear, and its subsequent loss: “The only question, really, concerns the details – namely, why the youth must abandon his garment and flee naked. It is actually only these two elements of the incident that make it enigmatic.”29 Inquiry into the σινδών reveals that, while it does appear in contexts of burial, as a rectangular piece of cloth, its function was very similar to that of the ἵματιον or cloak, though made of a more costly linen, rather than wool. As it could be worn either over a tunic or undergarment or on its own, the portrayal of the young man as wrapped in a σινδών – even in “nothing but” a σινδών, as many translators suggest – becomes readily understandable on its own terms.

comment: “even in the best of circumstances, consequently, [cloaks] were likely to slip off with the normal movements of the body.”

29 Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 277.
The young man’s abandonment of this expensive garment in flight can be similarly contextualized. The escape from the scene of arrest can and should remain tied to that arrest: “both contextually and thematically (κρατεῖν, φεύγειν), the incident is intimately tied to the arrest, to which its position suggests it serves somehow as the climax.” Neirynck has made this connection to the context of arrest, as has Brown. Mark 14:43-52 describes the scene of the arrest: Judas betrays Jesus with the infamous kiss, the crowd seizes Jesus, the slave of the high priest has his ear cut off, the disciples abandon Jesus and flee; in a final moment of desperation, the young man is seized, but manages to shrug off his cloak and flee, leaving the σινδών behind to escape naked.

The two verses relating the young man’s capture and flight are part of the arrest scene, and can be interpreted as such. References to similar scenes of conflict, scenes involving the seizure of an individual in a situation of conflict, the escape of the individual and the loss of a cloak during this escape are quite numerous in both literary contexts and documentary contexts. Cloaks and conflict (“the garment-disrobing-nakedness paradigm”) seem to regularly pair together.

Jackson discusses a range of literary texts in order to demonstrate that the author of the gospel text is using familiar images from everyday life in order to heighten the violent pathos of the scene: “what has not been appreciated before is that the loss of a garment in highly emotionally charged circumstances was a commonplace of ancient life, and references to such sudden dishabille abound in a wide variety of different cultural

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30 Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 276.
31 Brown, Death, 303: “[i]there is nothing mystical about this neaniskos; a would-be disciple is described by that term in Matt 19:20-22. That he is described as being “clothed with a linen cloth over his nakedness” is to prepare the reader for the denouement, for when his garment is abandoned, he will be naked.”
32 Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 278. Jackson (“Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 282) also refers to this paradigm as the “shed-garment motif.”
and representational contexts.”\textsuperscript{33} Jackson goes so far as to call the cycle of garment-disrolement-naked flight “a virtual ekphrastic topos” by the gospel writer’s time.\textsuperscript{34} In response to the call of a goddess, Odysseus flings off his cloak and “sets off to run” (Homer, \textit{Iliad} 2.183), presumably discarding his cloak so that he can respond as quickly as possible, without any encumbrance; having narrowly escaped poisoning, a man shouts to know his would-be murderer, holding his arms out “bare from his robe” in his fury (Euripides, \textit{Ion} 1208-09).\textsuperscript{35} In these contexts, throwing off one’s cloak is an indicator of heroic resolve. I have found a few other examples that testify to the throwing off of cloaks in heightened physical situations; references include Aristophanes, \textit{Wasps} 408; Hipponax, \textit{Fragments} 74 (58); and Theophrastus, \textit{Characters} 27.

Shifting towards more “unheroic” situations and therefore closer to the Markan context, Jackson highlights an incident described in Lysias’ oration \textit{Against Simon} (\textit{Oration} 3), an action which is “purely and ingloriously evasive”;\textsuperscript{36} having quarreled with Simon over the attentions of the boy Theodotus, Lysias leaves the house of Lysimachus only to be attacked, and Simon and several of his friends, drunk, tried to drag the boy away. Theodotus, however, threw off his cloak and ran away (ὁ δὲ ρίψας τὸ ἱμάτιον ὑπεύγων, §12, mentioned again in §35). Jackson suggests that this incident

\textsuperscript{33} Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 280.
\textsuperscript{34} Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 280.
\textsuperscript{35} Exactly what holding ones arms out “bare from one’s robe” means is not yet fully understood. The connection to the Joseph cycle is important to mention in this context; it also contains a shed-garment motif, as Joseph flees Potiphar’s wife, leaving his garment behind him (Gen 39:12; this motif is even more explicit in \textit{T. Jos.} 8:3: “She grabbed my garment; I abandoned it and ran away naked”). Mark 14.51-52 has been linked to this episode since at least the Middle Ages, when Pseudo-Jerome wrote that as Joseph fled from the “shameless mistress,” so those who want to escape wickedness should abandon worldly concerns and “flee after Jesus” (fugiat post Iesum) – though the young man actually flees \textit{from} Jesus in Mark. Pseudo-Jerome quoted in Yarbro Collins, \textit{Mark}, 688-89; text from Michael Cahill, \textit{Expositio Evangelii secundum Marcum} (Turnholti: Brepols, 1997) 66. MacDonald (\textit{Homeric Epics}, 127-30, especially 129) makes a very different connection between the young man in Mark and the writings of Homer; he argues that a likely antecedent for this character may be found in the descriptions of Elpenor in the \textit{Odyssey} 10.552-60.
\textsuperscript{36} Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 283.
may be compared to Mark 14:51-52 as, moving from the descriptions of heroes taking
noble action in the *Iliad* and *Ion* we have here “descended to the purely human realm of
everyday life.” Indeed, the loss of Theodotus’ cloak is not indicative of heroic resolve,
but neither is it “everyday,” as Jackson suggests; people were surely not throwing off
their cloaks all the time. In this case, the loss of the cloak is an effort to escape an attack,
presented in the literary context of the speech.

Jackson’s last example comes from a speech of Demosthenes (384 – 322 BCE)
against Meidias, a long-time enemy of the orator (*Oration* 21). Appealing to an earlier
vote by the assembly (προβολή) against Meidias, Demosthenes recalls the turmoil of the
situation:

…. you kept shouting out to me not to let him off the hook, and … when Blepaios
the financier came up to me you raised such a clamor, fellow citizens, at the
thought “The same old story! He’s going to accept a financial settlement from
Meidias” I was so startled that in trying to get away from him as he tugged at me I
let my cloak slip off and stood there almost naked in my shirtsleeves…. (215-
217).^38

The assembly, seeing the financier come up to Demosthenes, thought that Demosthenes
was going to accept a deal, and therefore began to shout; Demosthenes, so startled by the
uproar and trying to get away from the grasping financier in order to distance himself
from the appearance of a settlement, slipped out of his cloak, ending up “almost naked”
before the assembly. Jackson proposes that Demosthenes mentions this incident with his
cloak in order to gain the sympathy of his audience: “Demosthenes understood the
embarrassing incident involving his cloak to be at once striking enough and
commonplace enough to evoke unanimous sympathy from his present audience and so

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^37 Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 282.
^38 Translation from Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 284. For the text of the oration, see
lead them to a verdict in his favour.”

This sequence of seizure, fear, escape through the loss of a cloak, and final nakedness would appeal, according to Jackson, to the audience’s experience of “the same extreme emotion – sudden, desperate panic at seizure and the hot adrenal instinct to flee…They [the sequence of events] represent something … to which everyone could readily relate and which consequently effects in the reader a more primal, more immediate response than any merely verbal allusion to terror.”

Here, the loss of the cloak occurs as the result of an “attack,” or of an escalating situation, at the least, used as a trope in a speech to win over an audience.

Two non-rhetorical situations lend themselves better to the interpretation of cloak-shedding as a realistic event, though perhaps not as part of the “realia of everyday life,” as Jackson suggests; again, people were not abandoning their cloaks every day, all of the time.

In Plato’s Republic 473e-f, the suggestion that philosophical inquiry and political power merge in the ideal character of the “philosopher king” will be met, it is anticipated in the Republic, with a violent reaction: “after hurling at us such an utterance and statement as that, you must expect to be attacked by many and not slight men, who forthwith will … cast of their cloaks (ἰμάτια) and naked (γυμνός), snatch the first weapon that comes to hand…. “

Another reference to shed cloaks comes from Lucian’s Hermotimus: in describing the need to arrive at the ideal, virtuous State, Lucian’s Lycinus proclaims that every other pull or claim must be left behind:

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39 Jackson, “Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 284. Pliny, Ep. 4.16 can also be referred to in this context.
…. we should devote all our efforts to this, and neglect everything else; we need pay little heed to any claims of our earthly country; we should steel our hearts against the clingings and cryings of children or parents, if we have them; it is well if we can induce them to go with us; but, if they will not or cannot, shake them off and march straight for the city of bliss, leaving your cloak in their hands, if they lay hold of it to keep you back, in your hurry to get there; what matter for a coat? You will be admitted there without one (lit. “naked,” *gymnos*).43

The text presents a hypothetical situation here, but the removal of the cloak in order to keep hold of someone seems to be an anticipated occurrence.

Losing one’s cloak is not an “everyday” event. Thus far, the typology of lost cloaks extends only to heightened or extreme circumstances, or to action under duress. The lost cloak is a literary trope, used to demonstrate heroic resolve, commitment to virtue, or to win over an audience in the course of a speech. Cloaks are lost in the effort to escape an attack or as the result of an attack. Removing the cloak is an act of aggression, indicating one’s preparation to attack. As a literary motif, the lost cloak indicates resolve; as a reported occurrence, the lost cloak indicates some kind of participation in a violent outburst, either as aggressor or as victim of aggression.

The strongest evidence for the cloak-removal paradigm comes from documentary papyri, petitions, letters, accounts and other various documents written by “everyday” people. Papyrological evidence shows that the loss of a cloak in a situation of conflict was a fairly common experience. In a petition to a hipparches dating to 135 BCE, the captain of a ship complains that certain persons boarded his boat, damaged his equipment and assaulted him, an assault which resulted in the loss of his cloak (*P.Tebt.* 3.1 802; from Teblynis, Arsinoite nome):

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The 36th year, Hathur 11. To Demetrios of the diadochoi, also hipparches over men and epistates, from Paalas son of Harmais, ship’s guard of the barge of Apollonios, one of the first friends and strategos and (administrator) over the revenues. On the 3rd of Phaophi of the 36th year, the foresaid barge being at anchor, certain persons in their own boat, coming against us, came to anchor outside (?) and broke off some of our gear, and when I rebuked them in order that they might withdraw, leaping into (the boat) uttering offensive shouts they also gave me many blows, with the result that in the skirmish my cloak was lost, worth 3,000 bronze drachmas, and besides the broken ship’s gear, which likewise was worth 3,000 bronze drachmas. Therefore I beseech you to order … and … Farewell.\footnote{Translation is my own.}

While it is not clear that the captain lost his cloak in order to evade seizure by one of his assailants, his cloak was lost in a situation of conflict, either having slipped off his body and then being stolen or having been forcibly taken.
Many documents suggest that cloaks were frequent casualties of conflict. *P. Enteuxis* 75 recalls the situation of the sea captain described above: a land commissioner, Crateuas, having approached a group of shepherds who were letting their sheep graze on land entrusted to the commissioner’s care, received a brutal beating from the shepherds, who also stripped him of the cloak he had been wearing (καὶ τὸ ἰμάτιον μου ὁ περιεβεβλήμην ἄφειλοντο). Crateuas then had to endure an examination of his naked body in order to show the epistates the marks from the blows. In another petition, *P.Lille* 2.42 (= *P. Enteux*. 83; 221 BCE from Magdola, discussed also above, in chapter two) Thamounis reports that a woman assaulted her and when she complained to the komarches, he took the side of the accused and took away her cloak (valued at 20 drachmas), “stripping it off” her and giving it to the accused, while Thamounis was locked up in prison. Thamounis now writes to the king, not with a complaint against her incarceration, but with a plea for the return of her cloak; she titles her petition, “Thamounis against Thothortais, concerning a cloak” (Θαµοῦνις πρ(ός) Θοτορταῖον περὶ ἰμάτιου).

Cloaks could also be taken away in situations of conflict concerning labor, as items of pledge, often (according to the petitions) taken without cause. *P.Col*. 8 209 (Theadelphia; first half of the first century CE) describes a situation in which Marsisouchos son of Marres, while working on some public land received by cession, was arrested in his fields by the praktor and policemen, sent by a scribe, Soterichos:
This document recalls the well-known ostracon from Mesad Hashavyahu (the Yavneh Yam Ostracon, 639 – 609 BCE) discovered in 1960:

Let my lord commander hear the case of his servant. As for your servant, your servant was harvesting at Ḥeṣar Asam and your servant had reaped and measured and stored (grain) for the days agreed before stopping. After your servant had measured his (quota of) grain and put it in store for the days agreed, along came Hoshaiah, son of Shobay, and took your servant’s mantle. After I had measured my (quota of) grain over the aforementioned days, he took your servant’s mantle.

But all my companions can testify on my behalf – those who were harvesting with me in the heat (of the sun) – my companions can testify on my behalf, really, I am innocent, so please return my mantle, and I will be satisfied. It is up to the commander to return his servant’s mantle and to show (him mercy). If you have heard the case of your servant, you will not be silent…

The subjects complain that while they were going about their regular work, an aggressive party interrupted this work, taking their cloaks as a form of surety for work not yet completed. Each of the petitions described testify to the value of the cloak, as it was worth an official appeal, or series of appeals in the case of Thamounis, to try to secure the return of the cloak. None of these texts offers an exact parallel to Mark 14:51-52, but

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45 Translation is my own.
each depicts a scene of some violence in which a cloak, an object of great value, was somehow lost.  

*P.Hib. 2.200* (246 – 241 BCE; unknown provenance) comes slightly closer to the situation of Mark 14:51-52. A witness offers a deposition in favour of Chrysis, who began to be abused by a certain Athenais. When Chrysis laughed at the verbal abuse, Athenais jumped up, approached Chrysis and hit her several times. Athenais then seized Chrysis (ἐπιλαβ[ομένη]ν τὸν..., line 9), and grabbed her linen tunic and tore it in two (κ[αὶ ὁν ἐνε]δεύκη χιτῶνα λινοῦν ἐπιλαβομένη διέρρηξεν, line 10). Here, as in Mark, the subject is seized with some violence, and this seizure results in the loss of an item of clothing. In this case, the item seems to have been forcibly removed, and the item is here the inner garment, the tunic; the tearing of Chrysis’ tunic would have left her in an unmistakable state of nakedness.

The closest parallel to the Markan verses is a petition from Horos, a resident of Kerkeosiris (Arsinoite nome), dating to between 118 – 112 BCE (*P.Tebt. 1 48*). Its similarity to the gospel text warrants its presentation in full:

1 Μεγχεῖ κομογραμματεῖ
 Κερκεσίρεως
 παρὰ Ὡρου κοιμάρχου καὶ τ[ὸν]
 πρεσβυτέρων τῶν γεω(ργῶν) τῆς αὐτῆς.

5 κεχειρογραφηκότων ἴμμον
 Πολέμων τοῦ τοπάρχηι
 περὶ τοῦ παραδώσειν εἰς [τὸ]
 βασιλικὸν ἐως ἰ’ τοῦ Παχών
 πυροῦ (ἀρτάβας). Αφ περὶ ὁν καὶ προσ-
 εδρευόντον διὰ τε νυκτὸς
 καὶ ἴμμα &;νε μέχρι τοῦ τὸ προκεί-
 μενον ἐκπληρώσας καὶ τὴν ἑπι-
 γεγραμμένην πρὸς τὴν τοῦ βασι-
 λέος παρουσίαν ἀγοράν (πυροῦ) (ἀρταβδὸν) π’,

10 τῆι δὲ γ’ τοῦ ὑποκειμένου μηνὸς

15

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47 See also *P.Ryl. 2 128* (about 30 CE).
To Menches, komogrammateus (village scribe) of Kerkeosiris, from Horos, komarches (village official), and the elders of the farmers/cultivators of the same (village). Having given a guarantee by note of hand to Polemon the toparches (district head) to hand over to the treasury by the tenth of Pachon 1,500 artabas of wheat, for which we have been applying ourselves night and day to make up the prescribed amount and also the supplies which have been set down in relation to the coming of the king, namely eighty artabas of wheat, on the third of the aforementioned month, while going about the receipt of the rents and the threshing expenses, Lykos, coming suddenly upon the threshing-floor with others in arms, drawing their swords they seized one of us, Horos the komarches, attempting to violently carry him off, so that he cast off his cloak and hastened to flight, and we together with the rest of the cultivators, being suspicious, ran close behind him, and because of this occasion we have been hindered in the collection of the rents and the other duties. And on the fourth, having forcefully brought (seized) Lykos and those who were with him before the… (here the papyrus breaks off).

Armed men suddenly accost Horos and his fellow workers while on the threshing-floor; when they attempt to violently carry Horos off, he casts off his cloak and flees, at which

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49 Translation is my own.
point the other cultivators follow. The entire garment-seizure-fear-escape-loss of cloak scenario happens here, as it also occurs in Mark. This independent documentary text highlights the everyday quality of Mark 14:51-52, supporting the hypothesis that the verses could represent a realistic incident, and can therefore be interpreted in their own narrative context; they depict a realistic moment of aggression during the scene of Jesus’ arrest. Captured and threatened with a violent “arrest” or carrying-off, Horos too sheds his cloak in order to flee his own violent scene. While the disciples ran off before the young man, here Horos’ fellow cultivators flee after him, having observed his seizure and becoming “suspicious” of the situation.

Evidence from documentary papyri clearly demonstrates that cloaks were often lost in situations of conflict, whether seized in guarantee, in theft, in violence, or in a situation of arrest. Acts 22:20, 23 offers further support for the loss of cloaks in situations of conflict: in Acts 22:20, Paul states that he held people’s cloaks as they stoned Stephen to death; aggressors remove their cloaks in order to perpetrate acts of violence, but the removed cloaks need to be guarded. In Acts 22:23, people become so angry with Paul that they cast off their cloaks and throw dust in the air, .... καὶ ῥυπτοῦντον τὰ ἱμάτια καὶ κονιορτὸν βαλλόντων εἰς τὸν ἄερα .... Mark 14:51-52 can therefore be read as scene which draws upon the vivid emotion of realistic violent behaviours, raising the level of intensity in the narrative in order to bring the arrest scene to its climax. While the examples from the literary texts are enlightening, they cannot go as far as the papyri in highlighting the realistic situation encapsulated in the verses, a situation which the
narrator uses skillfully to encourage the audience to identify with the emotion of the arrest scene.  

4 Implications for Mark 14:51-52

The short description of the young man in Mark 14:51-52, his appearance and quick disappearance, has been the focus of much scholarly attention, but not within its own narrative context, and not in the historical context of ancient dress. When the verses are normalized they can stand on their own; the reader of the verses does not need to invoke symbolic or imaginative interpretation in order to understand 14:51-52. The scene can be interpreted quite realistically: the young man was wearing a σινδών, an outer garment probably of linen, draped around his body, as all cloaks, being simple rectangles of cloth, were worn. This cloak was more expensive than the ἱμάτιον (generally made out of wool), a detail that does seem to interest the author of the gospel, given his reference in 14:3 to the “very costly” nard (a detail modified in Matt 26:7 and Luke 7:37). The young man’s abandonment of this garment would have represented a significant economic loss; his desertion of the garment heightens the drama of the scene.

His desertion of his σινδών leaves him in a state of nakedness, not a desirable condition. As the cloak could be worn next to the skin, it is not unusual that the young man is not described as having anything else on beneath the outer garment. However, “nakedness” was a relative term in the ancient world, as dress in a tunic alone, being an incomplete state of dress, was considered a form of nakedness. The young man, in leaving his cloak in the hands of the arresting crowd, flees “naked” – either in an inner garment, or without any clothing on at all. While this naked flight is not “mysterious” and

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50 As Jackson (“Why the Youth Shed his Cloak,” 287) notes, the use of this image from everyday life “serves to bear additional witness to the evangelist’s ability to create effective narrative.”
similar situations or motifs appear in documentary and literary contexts, given the nature and wear of ancient clothing, the desertion of the garment is dramatic and embarrassing; most people would have owned only one cloak, and being without the cloak for any length of time would be indicative a negative social state, something to be avoided.\textsuperscript{51}

The young man’s escape, the climax of the arrest scene, can also be historically contextualized. Documentary papyri present many situations in which a cloak was lost in a situation of conflict, generally because somebody grabs or tries to seize them. As reported events, cloaks were lost in contexts of attack, either to avoid attack or as the result of being attacked. The closest parallel to Mark 14:51-52 is \textit{P.Tebt. 1 48}, the petition of Horos against Lykos and his armed men. Coming against him and the other cultivators on the threshing floor, the men seized Horos, likely by the cloak and therefore, in order to get away, Horos shrugged out of his cloak and ran. While it is interesting that Horos was wearing his cloak while working on the threshing floor, given the difficulty of keeping the cloak properly draped around the body even while not engaged in a physical task, Horos presents himself as dressed in his outer garment at the time of his seizure. Mark 14:51-52 may be interpreted similarly: grabbed by his outer garment, the young man must make a calculation of cost. He may either keep his expensive garment and remain in the hands of his captors to await an unknown but probably negative fate (imprisonment); or, the young man may leave his garment in the hands of those who grab hold of him, putting some distance between them. Those who find themselves holding only a \textit{σινδών} have to decide whether pursuit of the young man would be beneficial,

\textsuperscript{51} See M. Eugene Boring’s comment here (\textit{Mark: A commentary} [The New Testament Library; Louisville and London: Westminster John Knox Press, 2006], 403), and Hamel, \textit{Poverty and Charity}, 72, 73-5. Gustaf Dalman (\textit{Arbeit und Sitte in Palästina} [6 vols.; Gütersloh: Bertelsmann, 1928-42], 5. 200-1) also discusses the ancient understanding of nudity as shameful. The flight is not “mysterious,” nor is it evidence of some kind of participation in a mysteries rite; see Meyer, “Young Streaker,” 151 – 52.
though they might have been content to simply keep the expensive garment. Likely the young man did not petition to get the garment back, however, in contrast to the documentary petitions; he left all to distance himself from Jesus, an inverted model of discipleship.

5 Conclusions

Not every missing cloak in the synoptic accounts is indicative of identity. Mark’s naked young man leaves his cloak behind in order to avoid arrest. He calculates the cost – stay and be arrested, flee and lose my expensive cloak – and chooses to leave his clothing behind in the hands of the would-be captors. The dramatic scenario heightens the drama of the arrest scene, pointing to the violence and aggression of the moment. Cloaks were frequently lost in situations of conflict, and Mark 14:51-52 can be read as just such a situation.

The shedding of the cloak in the situation of violence of Jesus’ arrest is quite understandable on a socio-historical level, without resorting to symbolic interpretation. However, this is not a dichotomous situation; the cloak can still be read as having symbolic or representative meaning in terms of the literary artistry of the gospel writer. Mark 14:51-52 remains highly significant in discussions of discipleship in Mark, and may fruitfully be compared with 10:28 and 10:50 in particular, another instance of a shed cloak; in this case, Bartimaeus flings off his cloak, his greatest and quite possibly only possession, in order to come more easily to Jesus, in a similar fashion to Odysseus’ throwing off of his cloak in response to Athena’s command (Homer, Il. 2.183), and in a way opposite to that of the fleeing young man. My discussion of the nature of the σινδών and the intersection of cloaks and conflict is intended to demonstrate that the verses may
also be interpreted on their own terms. By allowing the verses to stand in the socio-historical context of ancient dress, the arrest scene becomes even more dramatically charged; by drawing on vivid emotion from realistic scenes of violence or duress, the author of the gospel text brings Jesus’ arrest to a culmination more powerful than modern audiences have perhaps been previously able to appreciate.
CONCLUSION

The authors of the synoptic gospels use dress as the material means of concretizing the identity of Jesus. Jesus’ very being is embodied in his cloak in miracle contexts; honour and shame are negotiated according to what people are (or are not) wearing. The early traditions of Q and Mark show Jesus himself as using dress in the development of the identity of the disciple, as Jesus instructs the disciples to conduct their work as ergatai, naked “labourers for the harvest.”

Dress is not representative or symbolic in many instances in the synoptic narratives; in some cases it operates as metaphor, but in others it operates as material stuff, as literal material. The Greco-Roman body was understood as a complex of social and biological elements, but the latter were radically underdetermined. The body was not “natural,” but constructed from birth according to social norms. This body was a dressed body, and dress was a, if not the, primary means of bodily formation, presentation, and negotiation. The surface of the body was not superficial, but was rather the ultimate revelation and articulation of social and moral values. Bourdieu states that “it is because agents never know completely what they are doing that what they do has more sense than they know.”52 It may be that Jesus and the later authors of the synoptic gospels did not make a conscious choice to use dress in their constructions of identity, but it only makes sense that they did, given the importance of the dressed body in the ancient Mediterranean.

Both men and women wore the two items of dress that have been the focus of this dissertation, the cloak (in various forms) and the tunic, though men and male bodies have been the focus of these chapters. Dress on the bodies of women is not a concern for the

52 Bourdieu, Logic, 69.
authors of the synoptic gospels the way it is for Paul, the writers of 1 Timothy and 1 Peter or later writers like Clement and Tertullian, but the few possible references to women’s dress in the synoptic gospels deserve mention here, particularly as an area for further research.

The ancient Mediterranean assessment of women’s dress, as handed down in the writings of male authors, maintained, overall, that women’s appearance was “constructed” in a way that men’s appearance was not (though of course, men’s appearance was not itself “natural” or unstudied), and this construction could grant women a certain kind of social power that threatened the hierarchical place of men above women. Men must be vigilant in their awareness of this constructed nature of the female and in their subsequent maintenance of female appearance in order to protect their honorable social placement.

The conventional appraisal of women’s dress affixes numerous negative values to the female sex, not only the “dressed” female, but the interpretation or presentation of the female more generally. While the male world was public, civic, and outside of the body, the female world operated “within” the body to a certain extent, defined by bodily, private practice. The “woman’s world” revolved around appearance: Livy, in his account of the repeal of the Oppian law, reports a statement of Cato the Elder as follows:

“elegance (munditiae) and ornamentation (ornatus) and care of the self (cultus), these are

53 As Maria Wyke notes, “the modern study of the female body in the ancient world is largely a study of reflections”—we cannot gaze directly upon “real” women, but can only see women indirectly, in the mirror of discourses composed almost exclusively by men, or male constructions of the female.” Maria Wyke, “Woman in the Mirror: the Rhetoric of Adornment in the Roman World,” in Women in Ancient Societies: An Illusion of the Night, ed. Léonie Archer, Susan Fischler and Maria Wyke (London: MacMillan Press, 1994), 136.

54 This section of my conclusion is largely excerpted from my recent essay “Adorning the protagonist: the use of dress in the Book of Judith,” in Dressing Jews and Christians in Antiquity, ed. Carly Daniel-Hughes, Alicia Batten and Kristi Upson-Saia (Surrey: Ashgate, 2014).
the insignia of women, in these they delight and glory; this our ancestors called “woman’s world” (*mundum muliebrem*) (34.7.9). The phrase “woman’s world” (*mundus muliebris*) denotes both a certain collection of “stock” objects—mirrors, combs, hair pins, toiletry kits, bottles for perfumes, lotions and other unguents, indoor slippers, and devices for straightening or curling the hair—as well as the broader encapsulation of female activity and status. Adornment belonged to and defined the feminine; *ornatus* (ornamentation, adornment) and *cultus* (care of the body, elegance or grooming) composed and represented the female and feminine experience.

As constitutive of the female, a narrowly defined standard of appearance and dress was necessary or normative for social life; adornment was acceptable only within a prescribed range. The proper amount of care for the female body located that body within her social realm, according her an honor status accessible to her as a woman. Olson

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56 These objects are of such “stock” quality that in some cases, when the editors of inscriptions encounter funerary reliefs depicting a collection of these beautification tools, instead of listing them individually below the inscription, as they do for reliefs of “male” objects (for example, the mason’s plumb bob, hand axe, square and ruler), the editor’s simply represent the imagery as “*mundus muliebris.*” For example, *CIL* IX 3826, the monument of Poppaeia P.F. Secunda and her daughter Aetia (?), from Ortona, depicts a toiletry box with four bottles or containers inside; the right side of the monument depicts a mirror in a case, two flasks, one with a handle; the left side shows a closed parasol, comb and two flasks. The *CIL* description of these objects is only “*mundus muliebris*.“ See the discussion of this monument in Leslie Shumka, “Designing Women: The Representation of Women’s Toiletries on Funerary Monuments in Roman Italy,” 172 – 91 in *Roman Dress and the Fabrics of Roman Culture*, ed. Jonathan Edmondson and Alison Keith (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 180.

57 Olson, *Dress*, 8.

58 As an example of “feminine experience,” I am here thinking of the direct link between female dress and ritual practice. Rites relating to goddesses often involved undressing, bathing and re-dressing images of a goddess; mirroring the behavior of the goddess, women would also bathe as part of the ritual observance (Ovid, *Fast.* 4.133-60; Apuleius, *Metam.* 11.9; Augustine, *Civ.* 6.10). See Eve D’Ambra, “Nudity and Adornment in Female Portrait Sculpture of the Second Century AD,” in *I Claudia II: Women in Roman Art and Society*, ed. Diana E.E. Kleiner and Susan B. Matheson (Yale University Art Gallery; Austin: University of Texas Press, 2000), 101–14; Shumka, “Designing Women,” 184. There are also quite a number of records of donations of clothing to deities, particularly Artemis at Brauron, donated always by women.
states, “differing amounts of munditia, cultus, and ornatus together served to delineate the Roman woman as belonging to a specific social class. It fixed her within the proper boundaries in a particular social sphere.”59 A certain degree of care for the body, expressed through grooming and dress, was “necessary” for proper self-presentation. A woman’s self-presentation located her in a particular social role or sphere, and accorded a certain amount of honor to her husband or household as well. Shumka writes, “the ideal woman was attractive, well dressed, and expended time and energy making herself so; she was also a woman whose financial situation afforded her the leisure to engage in cultus and ornatus and to employ slaves or servants to assist her.”60 The dressed body proclaimed personal and household status.

According to masculine interpretations of feminine dress, it seems as though it was fairly easy for women to stray beyond the narrow boundaries of appropriate dress, and the most common references to women’s dress in the literature of the ancient Mediterranean are negative. Plutarch differentiates between gaudiness or “wanton conduct” and “cleanliness”, suggesting,

When women wear rouge, perfume, and gold and purple, they are considered too showily dressed; but no one takes exception to bathing, the use of oil, or shampooing. Homer brings out the difference very neatly in his lines on Hera adorning herself: “First with ambrosia she cleaned all soil from her person. Then with sleek oil she anointed herself.” So far she is showing concern for cleanliness, but when she picks up those gold brooches and finely wrought earrings, and, lastly, turns to the witchery of Aphrodite’s magic band [girdle], it is

59 Olson, Dress, 9. Olson’s chapter “Self-Presentation, Status and Power” contains a wealth of primary source references concerning women’s dress as status claim (Olson, Dress, 96–112).
60 Shumka, “Designing Women,” 186. Shumka highlights this ideal of the dressed female body in the context of mortuary reliefs from the early imperial period through the late third century, in locations across the Roman empire: “the emphasis placed on self-presentation in mortuary contexts, where Romans wished to leave some record for posterity of their earthly achievements, points strongly to dress and adornment as activities suited to honorable women and endorsed by them as well as their (often male) commemorators” (Shumka, “Designing Women,” 186).
plainly a case of overdoing things and of wanton conduct unbecoming to a wife.\textsuperscript{61} Styling the hair and washing and anointing the body were acceptable practices; too much jewelry and the wearing of cosmetics were not.

This “gaudiness” or overuse of adornment was unacceptable as it threatened male social power, conferring a level of indirect power on the female. The indirect power obtained through adornment, hedonic power, was the primary source of social power for the ancient woman, but this social power was mistrusted, viewed as manipulative and harmful, due to its derivation from adornment or physical display.\textsuperscript{62} The disruption of male power ranges from milder expressions of the shaming of a husband through excessive desire for or spending on adornment to more extreme articulations of female attempts, through adornment, to appeal to a lover other than the husband, rendering the adorned female, according to some authors, a prostitute. The object of female adornment is the shaming of the male, shame that undermined proper male status.

The threat of the improperly dressed or adorned female leads an impressive number of male authors to express fear of the “false” or constructed women; men were to protect their social status through the “unveiling” of the “made-up” woman. Propertius’ lover must rid herself of foul cosmetics in order to be truly beautiful (\textit{Eleg.} 2.18B 23-28); Horace identifies a lustful woman by the sweaty melting of her makeup (“now remains

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\textsuperscript{61} Plutarch, \textit{Quaest. conv.} 6.7 (693); translation from \textit{Plutarch’s Moralia in sixteen volumes}, trans. Paul A. Clement and Herbert B. Hoffleit, 8.493 (Loeb Classical Library).
\textsuperscript{62} Rudd and Lennon define hedonic power as “indirect influence over others.. [it] is acquired by virtue of one’s appearance, charm, exhibition, or political savvy. Hedonic power is contrasted with “real” or direct agonic power, conventionally associated with masculine behaviors; hedonic power is a “feminine” power: “attractiveness became a woman’s primary source of social power or influence over others” (Nancy A. Rudd and Sharron J. Lennon, “Social Power and Appearance Management among Women,” \textit{The Berg Fashion Library} [1999], doi: \url{http://dx.doi.org.myaccess.library.utoronto.ca/10.2752/9781847887221/AANDPOWER0012}. Rudd and Lennon define “social power” as “the potential to change a person’s beliefs, behaviors, or attitudes as a result of the actions of the influencing agent” (Rudd and Lennon, “Social Power”). Rudd and Lennon here draw on the work of R.J. Freedman, \textit{Beauty Bound} (Lexington: Lexington Books, 1986).
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damp whitener [foundation] and pigment [blush] coloured in crocodile shit,” *Epod.* 12); Seneca identifies “womanish vices” as unchastity and the temptation of gems and pearls (*Helv.* 16.4).

The vice of *luxuria* links spending on dress and adornment with lust and uncontrolled sexuality. Hedonic power must be neutralized, according to male writers on female dress; women should not be granted influence over men due to their improper appearance-management behaviors.

Paradoxically, while women’s adornment of their bodies defined the female gender as frivolous, socially threatening and inherently sexual, this excessive dress is also considered essential to the construction of the female body. The woman’s over-dressed body, though discursively negative, is the essential site of her gendered identity and social location. In Plautus’ *Poenulus*, for example, two courtesans discuss the necessity of female adornment, comparing the female body to pickled salt-fish: without pickling, fish cannot be eaten; without adornment, the female body is likewise not palatable. While adornment is necessary for female presentation, the male must recognize the fundamentally constructed nature of the female body and rise above it: Ovid’s remedy for love of a woman is for the male lover to arrive early in the morning, to catch the beloved before she has had time to adorn herself. Men admire only a “pageant” or show of

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63 Translation of Horace is my own; while I would not generally choose to swear in translations, swearing seemed appropriate in this case. For more on make-up, particularly male rhetoric against make-up, see Amy Richlin, “Making Up a Woman: The Face of Roman Gender,” 185 – 213 in *Off with Her Head! The Denial of Women’s Identity in Myth, Religion and Culture*, ed. Howard Eilberg-Schwartz and Wendy Doniger (Berkeley, Los Angeles and London: University of California Press, 1995); see also Olson, *Dress*, 80–95 (on the “dangers of adornment”).

64 To use the vocabulary of Rudd and Lennon, women should not achieve or be granted “reward power” through the manipulation of their appearance. Rudd and Lennon, “Social Power.”

65 See Wyke, “Woman in the Mirror,” 137. Hesiod’s accounts of the creation of Pandora in *Theogony* 585 – 612 and *Works and Days* 69 – 105 describe the creation of Pandora, the first female, as a sequence of dressing: Pandora is clothed, adorned, then given a deceitful nature. The first female is packaged with dress; dress is fundamental to her creation as “woman.”
beauty; the true woman is the least part of her appearance (*Rem.* 340ff.). In recognizing the source of womanly social power or influence, this power is defused.

Ancient male authors characterize the dressed woman as a construct designed to deceive men. While a certain degree of “constructedness” was necessary for female social performance, the scope of acceptable or appropriate appearance was very narrow. Women who strayed beyond this scope receive an invariably negative treatment in the literary sources as their use of items of dress was interpreted as threatening to male honor or social positioning. Elsewhere I argue that this assessment sets interesting interpretative limits for the biblical book of *Judith*, as both the author of the text and early Christian readers of the text evaluate the protagonist’s conventionally feminine act of “dressing up,” an act the reader is prepared to interpret negatively, positively. Judith’s counter-conventional use of her hedonic influence grants her the ultimate “reward power” over the general Holofernes, a power that challenges the norms of female appearance-management behaviors.  

Two instances in the synoptic gospels where the reader may encounter female dress are both in Luke: Luke 8:1-3 and 7:36-50 (cf. Mark 14:3-9; Matt 26:6-13). In the former instance, Luke tells us that “some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities,” named as Mary Magdalene, Joanna the wife of Chuza and Susanna with unnamed others, were with Jesus and “provided for [Jesus and the disciples] out of their means” (αἱ τινες διηκόνουν αὐτοῖς ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων αὐταῖς). Their “means,” though not likely much in this context, may have consisted of items of dress or adornment. Alicia Batten has argued persuasively that women used the means available to them, mainly objects of adornment, in competition for status and as significant forms of economic

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66 Again, please refer to my forthcoming essay “Adorning the protagonist.”
power; it could be that they use them here, enabling them to “provide for” Jesus. The latter reference is a more explicit reference to women’s dress: in Mark 14:3-9 (Matt 26:6-13), an anonymous woman approaches Jesus in the Pharisee’s house, wipes Jesus’ feet with her hair and anoints them with ointment, much to the dismay of onlookers.

A Greco-Roman woman’s unbound hair, existing at the boundaries of the unbounded woman, was disruptive. As Terence S. Turner writes on hair,

….unlike skin it continually grows outwards, erupting from the body into the social space beyond it. Inside the body, beneath the skin, it is alive and growing; outside, beyond the skin, it is dead and without sensation, although its growth manifests the unsocialized biological forces within. The hair of the head thus focuses the dynamic and unstable quality of the frontier between the “natural,” bio-libidinous forces of the inner body and the external sphere of social relations.

Commentators have tended to treat this woman’s unbound hair as evidence of sexual promiscuity, though a range of social meanings are possible; women could unbind their hair to sweep out temples, hoping to sway the gods to remove the threat of war. Her gesture in Luke could be one of supplication. Women’s hair was loose in expressing grief as well; her gesture could be one of mourning, foreshadowing Jesus’ death. The synoptic gospels do not provide much information about the dressed body of the woman at all.

67 Batten, “Neither Gold nor Braided Hair.”
69 Charles H. Cosgrove presents a fuller range of meanings, with primary sources, in “A Woman’s Unbound Hair in the Greco-Roman World, with Special Reference to the Story of the “Sinful Woman” in Luke 7:36-50,” JBL 124.4 (2005): 675 – 92. Cosgrove does not come to a firm conclusion regarding the meaning of the woman’s gesture.
Focusing on the dressed and undressed body of the male, this dissertation has argued that dress in the synoptic gospels is used to fashion Jesus and his disciples. This fashioning is not superficial, if “superficial” is defined as the inconsequentiality of the surface; what is on the surface of the body, at the borders of the body, is essential not only to self-presentation but also to social intelligibility. The synoptic gospels, particularly Mark, use dress in their narrative of Jesus not for its symbolic potential, but because dress in the ancient Mediterranean, as an essential element of the embodied self, acts as the material mirror for social structures like status and gender. Dress is an obvious choice for the construction of the body of Jesus and his followers, because it is not really even a choice. Daniel Miller writes on the socializing force of objects, “we are brought up with the expectations characteristic of our particular social group largely through what we learn in our engagement with the relationships found between everyday things.”

Everyday things, including dress, allow us to successfully operate in our social worlds, to make sense of ourselves and to ensure that we make sense to others. Jesus’ dressed body and the undressed bodies of his disciples must be read as embedded within the social dynamics of the ancient Mediterranean. Dress in the synoptic gospels, dress as palpable material stuff, thoroughly, deeply, *matter*.

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