Intertextuality, the Hermeneutics of "Other," and Mark 16:6-7: A New but Not New Challenge for Biblical Interpreters

Michael Trainor

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Intertextuality, the Hermeneutics of "Other," and Mark 16:6-7: A New but Not New Challenge for Biblical Interpreters

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Abstract

The present cultural climate of alienation and suspicion creates a new moment for biblical scholarship. Reclaiming and redefining intertextuality in biblical interpretation with an appreciation for a hermeneutics of "other" can be helpful, especially an explicit and systematic "intertextual" conversation with the voices of the cultural "other" and the biblical text. Mark's resurrection narrative (Mk 16:1–8) and particularly the young man's words to the women at the tomb are studied, employing Julia Kristeva's appreciation of the inner and outer play of a text. A hearing of the Markan text from the perspective of the hermeneutics of "other" reveals startling insights into the gospel's meaning of the resurrection and its implications for a world that suspects the other.

At the time of writing, international political discourse has shifted principally to concerns about the threat of global terrorism, and is only slightly distracted by other global events and natural disasters. Within my own specific location of Australia such discourse by our political leaders has raised the level of suspicion directed against those who are apparently different, asylum-seeking, and foreign. Fear seems to have displaced hospitality and kindness. This new context presents a profound challenge to those of us committed to theological and biblical education.

In what follows I would like first to reflect on the present cultural climate in which we now live, this climate of suspicion directed to those judged alien, foreign or strange. These are the social "other." In a second part I will look at the approach to biblical interpretation called intertextuality and focus on the importance of a hermeneutics of "other." In one sense these interpretative approaches are not new; the work of especially feminist and womanist biblical scholars is familiar to many of us. Yet in another sense the approaches will be new if we allow our agenda as scholars to be shaped by the identification of the ecclesial and cultural "other." In this second part I will suggest what I think intertextuality might offer us as we engage in this hermeneutics of "other." In a brief concluding section, I will bring my reflections to bear on Mark's resurrection narrative, and particularly what the young man says to the women in the tomb (Mk 16:6–7).

The Context of the "Other"

I am aware of many in my nation who are treated as different and alien. The report card (SCRGSP) on the health and welfare of our indgenous people does not make for glowing reading. And there are clear signs that the Australian government's immigration policy on mandatory detention for asylum seekers is imploding. The illegal detention or deportation of some of our citizens and the psychiatric implications of children born in detention centers are only now coming to light. This illustrates that the care and concern for the stranger or foreigner, of those whom I call the "other," is profoundly unimportant. Hospitality has become reversed. Stories about and from those employed in the government's immigration service and the results of a royal

Michael Trainor, D. Theol. (Melbourne College of Divinity, Victoria, Australia), is Senior Lecturer in the School of Theology, Flinders University at the Adelaide College of Divinity, 34 Lipsett Terrace, Brooklyn Park, 5032, South Australia (e-mail: michael.trainor@flinders.edu.au). He is the author of JOURNEYING: A BEGINNER'S GUIDE TO THE BIBLE (N.S.W. St. Paul Publications, 2001), and *The Cosmic Christology of Colossians 1:15–20 in the Light of Contemporary Ecological Issues*, forthcoming in the AUSTRALIAN BIBLICAL REVIEW.

commission into mandatory detention illustrate that, at an official level of scrutiny in Australia, skin color and language accent *do* matter. To be different from the conventionally acceptable social or cultural paradigm, to be indigenous or have come to Australia from a country that does not mirror western or Anglo-Saxon-Celtic values, is to be fundamentally suspected. It is to be socially "other," a target of official scrutiny, or a suspected terrorist capable of undermining our social security and comfort.

I am drawn to all these stories and issues about those who are treated as other because they touch into something deep within. Though I live in a relatively wealthy environment and have academic status and ecclesial privilege, these stories touch into my own experience of vulnerability, creating within a sense of otherness. This has particularly surfaced with the carcinogenic sickness of my two brothers, the ageing of my father, my own proneness to physical injury, and the suspicion levelled at ordained Roman Catholic clergy in recent years. I am not what I had hoped I might have been, however unrealistic that is: fundamentally untouchable, forever healthy, and the model of holiness! No matter how much I seek to pretend I am to the contrary, that I want to belong and be accepted into the social fabric of city or church, I know myself to be other.

The public stories of some of those wrongly detained by our immigration policies catch me by surprise. Their names are well known to us here in Australia. They are two women called Cornelia and Vivian, and a three year old girl, Naomi. Their names are associated with all in our land who are treated as alien, foreign or undeserving of asylum. Theirs is the world of every thing and every one that is not "I." But this world still touches me. In other words, I do not come to an appreciation of who I am only through engaging with every thing and one that reminds me about myself and mirrors back to me what I understand, appreciate, believe or expect. The most intense moment of self-discovery and realization of my identity, I discover, is revealed in my encounter with what is different, alien and rejected. When I hear what has happened to Cornelia, Vivian and Naomi, I learn something about myself. This is the moment in which I recognize my own "otherness" or "foreignness." In my empathy towards others and the recognition of their otherness I know myself to be essentially "other."

This recognition of my experiential relativity and connection is important for me as scholar and educator. As I seek to understand a biblical text, I must acknowledge that I am not the definitive or permanent center of its meaning—no matter how much I might construct or manipulate its interpretation. Meaning can emerge through awareness of and in conversation with the religious, ethical and social voices that speak to me. These are the voices of the "other." This can be the social, moral or religious other, the political or ecclesial other. Those who have no power, may not even be articulate, have no voice in the conventional sense. At the heart of my biblical engagement I can make room for the voice of the other. Their voice must emerge in another way. From a biblical perspective these voices are the "texts" of the world in which I live. They invite me to engage in an intertextual dialogue, especially in those inter-texts that surprise me like the voices of the Cornelias, Vivians and Naomis.

"Intertextuality"

Intertextuality is a neologism credited to Julia Kristeva, who recognized the influence of different "texts" on writing, reading and interpretation of literature (O'Day 1990: 259). It developed out of concern about the relationship of the classical literary tradition with contemporary works of literature. It was also concerned with the role that culture and society played in the construction of literary meaning and expression. The approach of Kristeva and other intertextual scholars like H. Bloom, J. Hollander, M. Riffaterre, G. Genette, R. Jacobson, M. Bakhtin, R. Barthes, J. Culler, and J. Derrida became formally recognized by biblical interpreters in the later part of the twentieth century and adopted as a legitimate approach to literary criticism (O'Day 1999: 546). Intertextuality, with its focus on the literary text and its semiotic and symbolic aspects, offered biblical scholars an alternative to the more conventional diachronic, or historical-critical approaches that dominated biblical interpretation throughout the twentieth century (Joy *et al.*: 84–85).

T. S. Eliot is acknowledged as the originating influence on later intertextual studies. In his 1919 essay, "Tradition and the Individual Talent," Eliot challenged the assumption that poetic inspiration was solely the fruit of the poet's genius and inspiration. Poetic meaning, he argued, was not only personal, but also communal. Meaning must be set "among the dead":

> We shall often find that not only the best, but the most individual parts of [the poet's] work may be those in which the dead poets, [the] ancestors, assert their immortality most vigorously [Eliot: 4; O'Day 1999: 546].

Eliot's point is that the meaning of a poem is influenced by the writer's predecessors, and that the meaning of a text is not confined to the time of its creation. Its meaning develops even beyond the death of its writer. Texts do not stand alone or in isolation; they are interrelated to other texts. It is a "living whole," and is dependent on what preceded. Literature is the fruit of interrelated texts (O'Day 1999: 546).

The intertextual appreciation that Eliot inspired focused on literary texts. This developed into literary studies that looked at the influence of an earlier literary text by another and the way that literary allusions, echoes, rhetorical figures of one work are incorporated into another. These literary-rhetorical critical approaches of intertextuality were later adopted by biblical inter-

preters (Aichele & Phillips).

Within biblical interpretation, intertextuality more frequently seeks to identify the dynamic between tradition and texts. This literary focus, the synchronic interest, is reflected on in the light of the biblical text's historical development, the diachronic concern, and the way the text captures the meaning of the biblical tradition. This intertextual approach allows the possibility of identifying the evolution of the faith tradition in textual form in a new period of history. It also coheres with the interests of recent narrative critics in their attempts to identify or name authorial intention (O'Day 1999: 547).

In the light of this recognition of the "other" and with an eye on Mark's passion narrative, particularly the Gospel's final story of Jesus' resurrection (Mk 16:1–8), I want to suggest that intertextuality might be a fruitful way of engaging the text. Intertextuality considers "texts" metaphorically and not solely as literary products. Here I draw on Eliot's recognition that the meaning and relevance of a text (the "poem"), as the dynamic interrelationships between interpreter, culture, and literary texts, is the fruit of a coalition or "interplay"—a language employed by some biblical interpreters (Wainwright: 119). Eliot's study of the intertextual dynamic operating on the poem underscores and reinforces the possibility of drawing on these insights and applying them to the oral-aural dynamic in a text's performance and proclamation. A poem reveals an essential literary, written intricacy. It also carries an intentional auditory quality that captures the attention of the auditor. A poem is written, read, spoken and heard. The speaking and hearing of the poem is as important as its writing and reading.

The auditory appreciation of texts is further supported by the specific development received by intertextuality in semiotics, an approach that studies the relationship between text and culture. In semiotics, "text" cannot be reduced simply to the rhetorical or literary output of a single author. It is the whole system of social signification, more comprehensive than an interpretation gleaned through the systematic study and visual sighting of texts as literary artifacts. Social meaning and communication derive from a variety of signs and signifiers. Literature is one expression; oral performance and attentive listening another.

The intertextual approach considers two worlds as "texts": the world of the biblical text, and the "cultural text" of the present experience of human beings. In other words and more specifically, in intertextuality I seek to engage in a conversation between two "texts," and to place the biblical text of the resurrection narrative in dialogue with the "text" of a world that silences the other. My experience of society and culture will shape my reception and appreciation of the written text (Halliday; Smith-Christopher; House). As I bring the "text" of my world, with its questions and experiences, to these sacred texts I am engaging intentionally in an "inter-textual" conversation (Wainwright: 9–32). In this case, "text" is a metaphor for any system of meaning (Detweiler: 223). Each of these worlds is like a tapestry or "weaving" ("textere," Latin "to weave"). Each reflects a unique cultural, social and interior dynamic or "weaving." This is expressed in the written text of the Gospels' passion narratives and in the spoken "texts" formulated in the questions and insights about the present. No text can ever offer definitive or ultimate meaning, though in dialogue with other texts, meaning can "spill over" the boundaries that each text seems to set (Miscall). The current experience of those who are treated as other and alien is the context for these new questions and makes possible the intertextual conversation with the Gospel of Mark and the story of the resurrection. To attempt such a conversation further affirms that the Bible and our contemporary situation are both of the arena of God's self-revelation and communication. Through intertextual dialogue as I understand it, we move to and fro between two arenas of God's self-expression and communication as experienced by human beings, in different historical eras and cultural contexts.

I bring to my engagement with the resurrection narrative the particular "text" of my world. This personal or social text has unique questions and perspectives derived from the wider community's in its response to those regarded as other. This communal text can engage the sacred text. It engages it intentionally. In the intertextual dynamic that develops, which Kristeva names "intertextual relations," two aspects must be considered (Barzilai: 297). These are called the "inner play" and "outer play." The inner play is "the web of relationships which produce the structure of the text (or subject)." The outer play is the "web of relationships linking the text (subject) with other discourses." Both plays have been systematically developed by Kristeva in consideration of literature in general and "text" in particular. They have implications for a broader appreciation of texts as auditory encounters. Kristeva's definition of text highlights the linguistic-auditory aspect of language upon which communication is dependent (Kristeva 1980; 1984; Moi: 89–136).

Kristeva defines "text" as a "trans-linguistic apparatus that redistributes the order of language by relating communicative speech . . . to different kinds of anterior or synchronic utterances" (Kristeva 1980: 36).

A text is not something static whose meaning is trans-temporal and trans-cultural, or unaffected by time and cultural context. A text "communicates" and can only do so by its connection to the past meanings that the text has received. This is what Kristeva calls the "anterior utterances." These are the meanings that have been attributed or assigned to a text in history and have preceded this present moment of textual or verbal expression. Kristeva also recognizes that a text is also understood and communicates in the present. It gathers meaning together (what she calls "synchronic utterances") that makes sense in a socially constructed present (Moi: 90–93).

Kristeva urges that a text is the fruit of *productivity*. It redistributes language by destructing and constructing. It results from the interpenetration ("permutation") of texts, of utterances, that

influence each other (Kristeva 1980: 36). A text's meaning is a complex process in Kristeva's semiotic analysis; it is shaped by the text's position within the "general text" of culture. This context that shapes meaning implies a symbiotic relationship between text and culture. Each shapes and is shaped by the other. From this perspective, "studying the text as intertextuality, considers [the text] as such with [the text of] society and history" (Kristeva 1980: 37). A text is historical and social. It is "a tissue of quotations drawn from innumerable centers of culture" (Voelz: 149). Its meaning is shaped by the way the text has been considered in the past ("history") and in the present ("social"). A text is the fruit of "various cultural discourses" (Voelz).

Kristeva's appreciation of the social-cultural-historical relationship that texts have in a symbiotic relationship with their interpreting subject, of inner play and outer play, can be fruitfully adapted and applied as we seek to understand biblical texts in the context of our present moment (Aichele & Phillips; Beal: 37–40).

Inner play focuses on the biblical text and highlights the internal narrative forces that give meaning and power to the resurrection story. It allows the auditor to consider the narrative clues evident in the story, confirmed by the overall literary framework and thematic development of the proclamation. The complexity of internal literary, rhetorical and thematic forces of the story, the inner play, expresses authorial intent. This is what the writer wants to communicate to the auditor. The inner play is the literary dynamic of the biblical narrative.

Outer play attends to the contemporary context in which the biblical narrative is proclaimed and heard. The auditor's outer world—the experience of the other and its implications for the Christian community in which this occurs—is brought into a fruitful symbiotic relationship with the biblical narrative. An identification and articulation of this personal world of the auditor's context is like another "voice." This voice acts as another subject. It articulates what is important for the auditor and provides that voice which will converse with the story. This is the outer play. It is the inter-relational dynamic established between the biblical text and the auditor. It allows the possibility for the voice of gospel texts, from a different time and culture, to speak to our world, and the voice of our world to pose the questions and bring a perspective in reading these texts. Both texts, the biblical text and the auditor's cultural text, through their respective "voices" can speak and listen to each other (Voelz: 156–57).

Even to pose the possibility of an outer play, of an inter-textual-vocal conversation, is to shift the emphasis in classical biblical interpretation away from the search for the mysterious, ever-elusive "objective" meaning. On the other hand, the value of seeking the authorial intent in a biblical work and appreciating the historical and cultural setting of the biblical world cannot simply be dismissed. Authorial recognition allows us to recognize the narrative's inner play. But the position that regards the insights derived from these and other diachronic approaches as offering that pure, neutral datum of theological information is suspect (Segovia: 1995a, 1995b, 1999). There is no pure kernel of objective truth mysteriously concealed in the biblical text awaiting revelation and extraction through a judicious scholarly use of critical exegetical tools.

The Subject as Interpreter

No meaning or interpretation can exist without an interpreter. There is always the subject, the "I" or "we," who hears the text and uses these interpretative methods. The truth is truth for the "subject," for the listening community engaged in dialogue with the biblical text, its author, the authorial community, and the world. From this point of view, truth is subjective and relative to the listening context. The role of the reader is critical (Kitzberger; Allison; Wiles). Such an appreciation coheres with reader-response criticism, socio-linguistics, cultural studies, and autobiographical criticism. These can be clustered under the general category of personal voice criticism (Kitzberger: 4). The affirmation of the personal voice of the auditor as an essential aspect in the interpreting dynamic, however, needs to be nuanced carefully.

There is no pure kernel of objective truth mysteriously concealed in the biblical text awaiting revelation and extraction through a judicious scholarly use of critical exegetical tools.

As interpreters and auditors of the text, we are not pure subjects either. We come to the meaning of the text through our respective interpreting and social contexts. We engage the text and hear the voice of the biblical narrative. If we are sympathetic auditors, we can come to a sense of the text's meaning for our world at this time. This meaning is not the only meaning, but polyvalent, historically conditioned and limited. Future research on the texts, and further cultural insights about the world from which these texts come can open up other possible insights. Fresh or different questions that surface from life experience will also bring a different perspective to our hearing of these texts. As Kristeva suggests in her discussion on intertextuality (1980: 65), every discourse (whether vocal or written) consists of "an intersection of textual surfaces rather than a point (a fixed meaning)."

For the Christian auditor, the chief interpreting communal context is the faith community in its faith life lived throughout history, and seeking authenticity in its relationship with God and

Jesus, and relevance to the world in which it exists. This ecclesial context cautions against the personal voice of the interpreter overruling other ways the text can be heard authentically (Patte). It relativizes the personal voice and guards against imperialistic or hegemonic presentations that exclude other voices. Biblical interpretation is a two-way process (Rhoads: 202–19). We hear and interpret the Bible for and within our historically limited and culturally conditioned world, but the biblical community that speaks through its texts also listens to and interprets us. Our personal, private voices and experiences are valid, but limited. They are not the only voices capable of conversing with these biblical communities through their stories.

Hermeneutic of "Other"

This recognition of our vocal relativity is further acknowledgment of the wider social and community parameters for interpreting biblical texts. It is an acknowledgement that as auditors or interpreters we are not definitive or permanent centers of meaning. The meaning we derive from our engagement with the text emerges in dialogue with the text itself and its authorial community and world. It also emerges through being aware of and in conversation with the religious, ethical and social voices that speak in our contemporary world. This is the world of every thing and every one that is not "I." This is the "other." We do not come to an appreciation of who we are only through engaging with every thing and one that reminds us about ourselves and mirrors back to us what we understand, appreciate or believe. Frequently the most intense moments of self-discovery and realization of our self-identity are revealed in our encounter with what is different, even alien and rejected. This is the moment in which we recognize our "foreignness" and value the voice of the "other" (Joy: 150–60; Dussel). This is the ecclesial or social "other." While many of us cannot personally put ourselves in the actual feet of those, for example, who have been so wrongly treated in detention, we can ground ourselves firmly in the midst of a struggling community as it discerns a way of response. The other's voice or cry can sometimes confirm previously held interpretations and insights. This voice can also disturb, decenter, and dethrone sanitized interpretations of the Bible that canonize the abuse of power and portray victimization as a spiritual opportunity to identify with the suffering redeemer.

A conversation with the biblical text that listens and responds to the questions, cries and sounds of the other is a "hermeneutics of other" (Segovia 1995a: 276–98). This is an approach to biblical interpretation that most affirms our human nature. It acknowledges that we are human interpreters actively and subjectively engaged with listening and attempting to understand the meaning of these texts. This act of meaning-making and understanding texts that are ancient entails our involvement with something that is, in essence, other. The Bible is not us, nor does it reflect our usual, familiar world. Though we are open to its story, listening to it is not an effortless activity. We struggle with it and wrestle with its relevance. The effort required to hear and understand is not something unique to biblical interpretation. It is fundamental to human living. We are affected and influenced by everything that impinges on our consciousness outside ourselves, that is strange or different. This is other. Through a conscious act of subjective engagement with the other we come to know ourselves and learn that we, too, are essentially "other."

In conversation with what is not ourselves, we discover our own unique "otherness" or "alterity." This openness to the other and to the possibility of learning through engagement with the other requires humility and risk. It is a recognition that we cannot live or understand independently. We need the other against which to test and deepen our own conceptions, and explore other possibilities of perception. A step into the world of the other is also a step towards exposing our vulnerability. This requires further courage and the maturity to suspend our own preconceptions that will allow us to truly hear and see what the other is saying and revealing to us.

Mark 16:6–7 and "Otherness"

Drawing on the literary studies of Eliot explicated in a unique direction by Kristeva, I have suggested that a relevant engagement with the biblical text in this world of otherness is through intertextuality. I borrow from and modify Kristeva's work on text, inner play, and outer play. Let me describe what happens when I allow the "otherness" of the text to impinge on my reading or hearing of the text. The openness to the possibility of the other and strange in the text itself can release new insights, especially in my engagement with the world of otherness and those who experience being "other," like those who are abused. From this perspective, I now focus on Mark's resurrection narrative and its inner play. It is a story very familiar to me, especially from all the commentaries I have read on it and the interpretations offered of that last enigmatic verse, where the women run from the tomb and do the exact opposite of what the young man has commissioned them (Trainor 1996). "They say nothing to anyone for they are afraid" (Mk 16:8).

My focus for the kind of hermeneutic in which I engage falls not on the ending but on what the young man says to the women in Mark 16:6–7. In the story, the women come to the tomb with the intention of anointing Jesus' body (16:1). They come at the break of day as the sun is rising (16:2), a rich and powerful image reflective of what is about to unfold and in contrast to the darkness that surrounds the previous scenes of Jesus' death and burial. The question the women voice concerns the agency of how the tomb will be opened ("*Who* will roll away for us the stone from the

tomb's entrance?" 1:3). The apparent absurdity of the question and the narrator's emphasis of the stone's size (1:4) may seem a distraction from the story's main focus and what lies beyond the entrance. But in fact the stone image helps to draw the auditor to another level of reflection: If the rolling back of a "huge" stone is a problem, what about the essentially impossible—life beyond the tomb? Who will bring life from the grave?

As the women discover the entrance to the tomb already opened and they enter, they find a young man in a posture and raiment reminiscent of the exalted Christ "siting on the right side" (16:5). Then the young man addresses the woman (16:6–7). Here we come to the heart of Mark's powerful and radical theology of resurrection:

> v 6a: "Do not be afraid. You seek Jesus the Nazarene, the crucified one.
> v 6b: He has been raised. He is not here. See the place where they laid him.
> v 7: Then go tell his disciples and Peter that he goes before you to Galilee. There you shall see him."

A study of the *inner play* of this central and climactic Easter message allows us to see three parts to the announcement (v 6a, 6b, 7). Two statements (v 6a, 7, telling the women what they are about/are to do) frame the central proclamation: "He has been raised. He is not here. See the place where they laid him" (v 6b). The first part of this statement is the announcement of Jesus' resurrection, and the central declaration of faith by Mark's community. Jesus has been raised from death. The divine passive in the Greek verb *êgérthê* (translated as 'he has been raised") reminds me that this is totally God's act to Jesus. But it is what flows on from this Easter declaration that is so startling. Here Mark unpacks the real meaning of resurrection for struggling, misunderstood and abused disciples. It's a message addressed to those who experience otherness, and its recognition begins the *outer play*.

The declaration of Jesus' resurrection ("He has been raised") leads to two further statements. The first points to the place where Jesus is *not*, to the place of absence ("he is not here"). The second invites the women to *physically observe* this place of absence ("*see* the place where they laid him"). This is the place of the silent God. The women are invited to encounter this place through contemplating it ("see"). For Mark there is a clear link between understanding Jesus' resurrection and pondering the place of absence, negation or nothingness. The invitation to Mark's community is to enter into the contemplation and realization of this experience. This is the place of absence, foreignness and otherness which must be "seen" through silent contemplation. Denial, withdrawal without attention, or an avoidance of recognizing what has happened will not enable the community of disciples in whatever moment of history to proclaim the resurrection. Mark's story of Jesus' resurrection firmly grounds its meaning within the experience of divine absence and the encounter with the divine Other. Auditors throughout history are invited to contemplate this Jesus. They are invited to recognize in those who have been rejected, alienated, in the mandatory detained "others," the figure of Mark's Jesus.

The proclamation of Jesus' resurrection ("He has been raised") is linked to the statement of Jesus' absence and then the injunction to "see" this very place of absence. In other words, where I would be expecting to find *presence* as the focus for Easter meditation, it is the place of *absence*. This is the tomb, the quintessential place of alienation, of death, of all that does not make sense, even nothingness. This is the focus of contemplation: otherness, and the invitation to engage in the outer play with the culturally, ecclesially and socially others.

In the light of Mark's radical and subversive story of Jesus' resurrection, let me return to where I began this essay. The young man's words to the women are intended for the auditors of Mark's Christian urban householders around 70 CE (Trainor 2001). Intertexually considered, these words also address me. I, too, am invited to enter into my cultural, social and personal tombs, and "see," to contemplate the places and experiences of existential nothingness where I encounter the "other" identified in the early part of this essay. For only such contemplation will bring me into an encounter with the power of Mark's truth of Jesus' resurrection. From my Australian context the invitation is to stay with, rather than run away from, the stories of those in mandatory detention and the socially mistreated, like the Cornelias, Vivians and Naomis. Mark's young man invites me, too, to contemplate all those experiences that remind me of my essential otherness: sickness in my family, recognition of my mortality, suspicion surrounding ordained ministers, and global events that mirror the fragility of our planet and those who live upon it.

Mark's young man encourages me to stay with these experiences and stories. By entering into these places where I meet otherness I make room for the possibility of encountering in this absence the presence of the Other. The resurrection is God's act that bursts forth from the tomb; it is not my project nor in my control. Such a personal reflection and engagement becomes the outer-play of Mark's resurrection story.

Conclusion

Reading biblical texts intertextually with a hermeneutics of other deconstructs the familiar and conventional. It cautions against a bland or presumptuous reading to the biblical story. In such a reading, for example, Jesus goes to his death in Mark's Gospel embracing as God's will abuse and his criminal execution on a cross. With such a conventional interpretation, his death and all that accompanies it prepare for and anticipate his inevitable

resurrection.

Reading or hearing the story from the point of view of otherness, I find that Mark's resurrection story touches into and mirrors the profound tragedies of human existence before the face of death—personal isolation and divine absence. Even in this experience of ultimate otherness, no matter how abusively desolate or tragic, there is hope. This is discovered in Mark's Jesus in contemplating those personal places of otherness and absence. Only by entering into these experiences, rather than through denial or flight, can my otherness be the ground for religious meaning and the encounter with the risen Jesus. My experience of otherness and those who are treated as other, then, rather than being peripheral become central to life and my vocation as a biblical scholar.

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