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Mark's sowing: The effacement and encrypting of Jesus

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MARK’S SOWING: THE EFFACEMENT AND ENCRYPTING
OF JESUS

by

STEVEN LAROCCH

A THESIS SUBMITTED
IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE
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Abstract

"Mark's Sowing: the Effacement and Encrypting of Jesus"

by

Steven Larocco

In traditional hermeneutics and textual criticism, narratives are read in accordance with the trope synecdoche: parts of the narrative are related to the whole and the whole to parts. However, in my analysis, narratives produce textual effects which correspond to the trope metonymy: parts are related to parts with no natural thrust towards synthesis. When one reads the gospel of Mark metonymically, it ceases to function as a story articulating a coherent suffering Messiah Christology. Instead, two contradictory textual "logics" emerge: first, certain textual constellations and discourses suggest the need for the "effacement" of Jesus, the need to reduce his "presence" in order to allow the "introjection" of his message; second, other constellations and discourses suggest the need to retain his narratival "presence," to "encrypt" him in the textuality of the gospel, to "incorporate" his "presence" in a way which resists epistemic assimilation or identification. My analysis examines these differing "logics."
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Chapter 1

Early in the gospel of Mark, the figure of Jesus proclaims to "those who were about him with the twelve" (Mk. 4.10)\(^1\) that:

To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again, and be forgiven.

(Mk. 4.11-12)

Here, in his own declaration about the nature and function of speaking in parables, Jesus raises the issue of interpretation. For "those outside," parables function by occultation, by blocking comprehension and/or understanding; they are forms of language which resist or deny disclosure, which prevent decipherment. However, for those "inside," those who have been given "the secret ["musterion"] of the kingdom of God," parables ought not present the same type of epistemic barrier, for the insiders have access to the "key" which unlocks the parabolic system of discourse. Yet, as the narrative proceeds to manifest, even the insiders, those who possess this key, cannot properly achieve understanding, cannot create a cognitively
assimilable re-presentation of the parables which renders their meaning transparent. What parables do, perhaps, at least as defined in the Markan narrative, is motivate and interrogate the relationship between language, interpretation and understanding. As Jesus himself queries after he delivers the parable of the sower and the insiders do not comprehend it, "Do you not understand this parable? How then will you understand all the parables?" (4.13) If one cannot move through the form of this parable to its content, its "secret," will one ever be able to do so with other parables? Will one ever be able to understand Jesus' parabolic message?

The effect of this parabolic "logic" is to introduce a problematic which seems woven throughout the entire text. To what extent is the gospel as a whole involved in parabolic dynamics; to what extent does its narrativel shape and form occlude the possibility of theological disclosure, of access to its narrativel "secrets?" Werner Kelber, for one, sees "the extension of parabolic dynamics across the narrative," but in his view "the result is a story of Jesus' life and death which functions as a parabolic vehicle of the kingdom."² In this portrayal of parable, epistemic access to the kingdom occurs through parable which is a "vehicle" for it. The "kingdom" thus becomes a transcendental signified, an essentially non-lingual idea which exists outside of language, outside parable, but
which provides the "center" for parabolic signification and is delivered to consciousness by it. Unlike the Markan model of the functioning of parables, in Kelber's account parables do not block access to "knowledge;" rather, they become the means by which "knowledge" is transported. In my analysis of Mark's gospel, I will show that epistemic blockage is a more pervasive mode of textual and narratival functioning in the text than epistemic "delivery." The gospel consistently problematizes, resists, defers, occludes, mediates, disrupts, denies the appropriation of its "meaning" in a holistic sense, but also of its "meanings" in a microstructural sense, those inklings of "sense" produced by the smaller units of the narrative. Nevertheless, since Mark's Jesus himself has posited the notion that there exists a "secret of the kingdom of God," I will work through some interpretive models of Markan secrecy first, and their implications in terms of a more general theory of narratival functioning, before positing my own narratological theory and relating it to the Markan narrative.

Ever since the work of Wrede, interpreters of the gospel of Mark have had to confront the notion that the narrative itself or the Jesus character within it is "hiding" or concealing something, that the text contains, embedded within it, a "secret" or "mystery" which analysis should disclose. For Wrede, this mystery is the "Messianic Secret" of Jesus'
identity. In the gospel, Wrede noticed in the figure of Jesus a desire not to reveal his full identity to all the people with whom he had contact. Instead, Jesus carefully delimits the disclosure of that identity, frequently ordering those who have some grasp of his identity to keep silent in order that his “secret” not be freely disseminated. Thus, in Wrede’s reading, secrecy has a central narrative function—it is a thematic and functional part of the gospel’s “plot.” More specifically, as Kelber notes, for Wrede the notion of the “Messianic Secret was meant to reconcile an unmessianic life of Jesus with a messianizing tradition.” For Wrede, then, “secrecy” becomes a means by which he produces a coherent reading of the text, using this theme as a means of explaining away spaces of disjunction, incoherence and/or perplexity in the Markan narrative. In more recent efforts to cope with “secrecy” in the gospel, some interpreters have changed the focus of the argument. Unlike Wrede, they do not posit secrecy merely as a narrative theme, as an intended constellation of certain narrative elements, but as a fundamental property of the narrative itself. This notion of secrecy as an inherent attribute of the Markan text nonetheless is not univocal; rather, it appears in two radically different forms depending on whether the interpreter’s orientation is historical or narratological.

Morton Smith, a historian of early Christianity, argues, for example,
in *Clement of Alexandria and a Secret Gospel of Mark*, that the gospel of
Mark which has been accepted as canonical may also have existed in a longer
version. He founds this notion on a letter purportedly written by Clement
of Alexandria which relates a story of how Carpocrates, a gnostic, stole a
"secret" gospel of Mark and corrupted it, producing a rival gospel to
canonical Mark which existed in Clement's own time. In the letter,
"Clement" suggests that the secret gospel which Carpocrates took was one
composed by Mark from notes he and Peter had compiled before Mark left
Rome due to Peter's martyrdom. Though Smith does not endorse this
legend, he does feel that it gives evidence for the existence of a prior
"secret" gospel of Mark, a section of which is recorded in the letter,
written solely for Christian initiates, those members of certain Christian
communities who had been ritually initiated into higher levels of
discipleship and who had therefore been given access to knowledge of
theological mysteries withheld from those not initiated. These mysteries,
though suggested in the canonical gospel, are not explicated and therefore
remain secret, being revealed, in Smith's view, only in the "secret" longer
version. For Smith, the central "mystery" of the kingdom of God is baptism,
which canonical Mark refers to cryptically through the "young man" who
flees naked from the garden of Gethsemane after Jesus' arrest and his own
brush with the temple authorities. The evidence for this understanding does not properly exist in the narrative itself; it is, in effect, a narratival secret. For Smith, the fact that the young man is present in Gethsemane suggests that he was there for a nocturnal meeting with Jesus. Such a meeting, Smith writes, could only occur with historical logic if it were a meeting of initiation, which, in the historical context Smith motivates, would strongly imply baptism. As support for this hypothesis, Smith points to the term used for the robe the young man wears ("sindon"), which he asserts can signify a baptismal cloth. Thus, in Smith's analysis, the text contains within it cryptic or truncated indices which "secretly" point to a meaning which exists in "full" or "revealed" form only "outside" the narrative of canonical Mark itself: either in "secret" Mark or in historical context.

Smith's argument thus represents one position towards Mark as a text fraught with secrecy. On the one hand, Smith assumes that because one is distanced historically from the text, because one does not have access to the contexts in which the text both acquired and asserted its "meaning," many of the text's meanings have become hidden, "secret." Thus, a certain amount of narrative secrecy occurs because of the loss of the "world" to which the text refers. Smith as historian views canonical Mark as a
mimetic text, as a narrative which imitates and refers to a world which exists outside it.\textsuperscript{11} Since this context no longer exists, except as one can re-construct it from other texts, portions of the text become cryptic: references which were once overt have become covert. On the other hand, the "secrecy" of canonical Mark has a second aspect for Smith. In a cultural milieu in which there was a "commonality of secrecy,"\textsuperscript{12} in which secrecy often served the cultic function of separating initiates from non-initiates, texts may have been produced which functioned to reveal only certain areas of knowledge about a given topic and to keep other areas secret. Canonical Mark, therefore, may contain secrecy because, in Smith's analysis, it refuses to divulge the "mysteries" revealed in secret Mark, mysteries reserved for initiates only.\textsuperscript{13} In the case of either historical distanciation or "intentional" obfuscation, however, the textual secrecy produced is ultimately decipherable if all the absent referents are recovered. It is not, for Smith, the narrative as narrative which is unclear or labyrinthine; rather, understanding of the subject text becomes problematic only because of the loss, withholding or removal of certain necessary forms of extra-narratival "knowledge."

What Smith elides, or at least fails to acknowledge, in his modeling of secrecy in Mark, is the ways in which language itself problematizes such
notions as reference, secrecy, decipherment, historical reconstruction. For example, Smith assumes that Mark is a referential text, that it has a mimetic relationship (however deformed) with the historical Jesus. But Mark is not a set of propositions about a historical figure which refers to and which one can judge on the basis of how well they correspond to the extra-lingual world; Mark is, rather, to use the terms of semiology, a network of signs which have been joined according to certain narratival conventions to produce something that can be recognized as a story. As story, the narrative shapes a textual world created by and responding primarily to the dictates--both the codes and fictive possibilities--of language. Thus, any referential value or import that the text may have operates only within a system of signs which are, before all else, self-reflexive. Mark, if it does indeed function mimetically, does so not "realistically," that is, by merely mirroring the reality it seeks to reproduce, but rather conventionally: its narratival organization responds not to aspects of the "world," but rather to the generic and lingual conventions by which narrative is formed. Smith, in order to deny the primacy of the narrative form as the initial generator of the text's meaning, asserts that Mark is merely a redactionary document, produced in stages by multiple editors who expanded an outline through the addition of short,
independent narratival units—pericopae. Thus, the narrative is not, for Smith, self-reflexive, since it is composed of smaller elements which existed independently of it and which therefore had a different narrative "intent" and referentiality. Yet even if this story of the creation of the gospel were true (Werner Kelber, for one, argues strongly and persuasively that it is not), it still would not negate the problem of reference, for each pericope which Smith would desire to analyze would first function as a simulacrum, as a self-enclosed lingual unit (micro-narrative) created according to the laws and codes of language and narrative and not according to those of "world," not according to the dictates of a reality external to it. The narrative of the young man, for instance, has its meaning, however occultly, enmeshed in the web of its own narratival form and not solely in some extra-narratival referent such as baptism. This is not to deny absolutely that the types of secrecy to which Smith refers may exist (though to suggest how they would exist one would have to broach the complicated problem of determining how and in what sense language refers outside itself and not merely to its own conventions); but only to place them in relationship to other types of "secrecy" which may exist in the text when read in its self-referential, narratival form.

From this latter model of textual functioning, an entirely different
model of narrative secrecy is introduced, one based on narratological rather
than historical problematics and assumptions. Frank Kermode, in The
Genesis of Secrecy, uses the Markan narrative, and the other gospels to a
lesser extent, as an example of what he articulates as a general problem of
secrecy in narrative. For Kermode, narrative secrecy is a double
phenomenon: on the one hand, it is the effect of narrative conjunctions,
paradoxes and oppositions which hide latent meaning; on the other hand,
secrecy is the result of the "unfollowable word," of narrative obscurity
perceived as secrecy but which has no secrets to deliver. Operating
within the former description of secrecy, Kermode writes:

Perhaps ... there is a secret at the
heart of Mark which is not a theology and
perhaps not even really a secret; but rather
some habit of narrative paradox or conjunction
that might, in the end, be best represented
without the use of words, in a diagram or
by algebra.

In this depiction of the dynamics of secrecy, Kermode reduces the
functioning of a narrative to the occult representation of "paradox or
conjunction" which, in his analysis, are merely relations without any
specific content, in effect an "algebra." This notion of narrative as a mystification of the structural relations which underlie it has affinities with Levi-Strauss' analysis of myth.\textsuperscript{20} For Levi-Strauss, mythological narratives result from the lingual transformation of "bundles of relations."\textsuperscript{21} In the Oedipus myth, for example, the narrative erupts from the binary opposition between two versions of human origin: whether humanity was born from one, autochthonously, or from two, sexually.\textsuperscript{22} Thus, the myth's "secret" is the binary opposition which lies behind the entire narrative. Kermode himself is suspicious of such a reduction of narrative form to an "algebraic" content; he feels that it is part of "interpreter's disease," the desire to "divine" the secret sense of a narrative. Yet, as he recognizes, this disease is his disease. When he reads Mark, his desire is to grasp "the sense concealed in the proclamation,"\textsuperscript{24} even if, as he asserts, such a desire will always be disappointed.\textsuperscript{25}

Kermode's problem here is that he articulates the meaning of a text, its "secret(s)," as a function of the text itself, and not as something produced, in conjunction with the formal configurations of the text, through particular modes of reading competence possessed by the interpreter. Although he does acknowledge that the reader is a relevant issue in narratological theory, his reader is always a humanistically mystified
being, one who divines first and explains second, as if the two processes were somehow separate. When he seeks to defend his notion that intercalation, the insertion of one narrative into the temporal sequence of another, is a central narratological device in Mark's gospel, he asserts that:

the pursuit of such interpretations is not merely a matter of method; there also has to be divination, and divination is an art related only dubiously to rules. When Eliot said that the only method was to be very intelligent he was both exaggerating and saying too little. Method, he meant, is secondary, for first there must be divination. Having divined, you must say something by way of explaining or communicating the experience of that bewildering minute, and then method is useful.26

I quote Kermode here at length to show his need to differentiate "method" and "divination," and to privilege the latter. For Kermode, interpretation is an art which, in its best moments, can disclose or "record a radiance."27 Although interpretation ultimately ends in disappointment, divination is "the way we satisfy ourselves with explanations of the
unfollowable word."\textsuperscript{28} It is also the means by which one intuits the
significant thematic and structural constellations inherent in a text. Thus,
Kermode tacitly suggests an opposition between intuition (as implied by his
use of the term "divination") and method, an opposition which could be
re-translated as a Coleridgean-type distinction between "creative genius"
and logic. This opposition serves to romantically recuperate, if only
temporarily, the functioning and reception of narrative as narrative, which
Kermode himself perceives to be fractured, splayed, disappointing. Even if
the text does not divulge secrets, even if the text delivers nothing, even if
the lingual constellations one finds ultimately do not make sense,
nevertheless the interpreter, in his moments of divinatory engagement with
the text, experiences moments of "radiance," of connection or engagement,
of "hope and pleasure":\textsuperscript{29} "Secrecy," then, for Kermode, becomes the textual
effect which both elicits and justifies divination, which legitimizes the
interpreter's engagement with the text, which legitimates and authorizes
interpretive desire. Secrecy also becomes, however, for Kermode, a means
by which he mystifies the problematics of textual functioning and
reception; for it allows him to assimilate interpretive engagement to
divination, and thereby avoid the notion that "method" is always inherent in
"divination," that the interpretation of texts is not merely art but, at least
in part, a learned, coded competence.

Jonathan Culler makes this argument. In *Structuralist Poetics*, Culler writes how a knowledge of lingual conventions is necessary for any understanding of language to take place:

> When a speaker of language hears a phonetic sequence, he is able to give it meaning because he brings to the act of communication an amazing repertoire of conscious and unconscious knowledge. Mastery of the phonological, syntactic and semantic systems of his language enables him to convert sounds into discreet units, to recognize words, and to assign structural description and interpretation to the resulting sentence, even though it be quite new to him.30

Thus for Culler, unlike Kermode, the process of interpretation is not a matter of art or mystery, but an ability predicated on the mastery of certain lingual conventions and codes (Saussure’s *langue*). This lingual competence, Culler then suggests, is analogous to the process by which interpreters come to understand narratives (he is explicitly talking about poems):
The semiological approach suggests, rather,
that the poem be thought of as an utterance
that has meaning only with respect to a system of
conventions which the reader has assimilated.\textsuperscript{31}

In this reader oriented approach, an "utterance [a slippage occurs here
between the spoken and the written word] has meaning" only if its receiver
has the competence required to produce it; it has meaning only if the
reader’s conventions deliver it. Yet, as Culler also recognizes, "the
conventions of poetry, the logic of symbols, the operation for the production
of poetic effects, are not simply the property of readers but the basis of
literary forms."\textsuperscript{32} Conventions, then, exist implicitly in two places—in the
work itself as conventionally structured language, and in the mind, both
conscious and unconscious, of the reader. For Culler, the implication of the
dependence of interpretation on codes and rules is that "reading poetry is a
rule-governed process of producing meanings; the poem offers a structure
which must be filled up and one therefore attempts to invent something,
guided by a series of formal rules derived from one's experience of reading
poetry, which both makes possible invention and imposes limits on it."\textsuperscript{33}
Here, in opposition to Kermode, "invention" (a notion connotatively allied
with divination) does not precede "rules" (a notion allied with "method"), but
is guided by it. In this model of interpretation, rules provide the ground and basis for invention.

The problem with Culler's formulation, however, is that it is dependent on the notion of comprehension being based on the "mastery" of conventions both by the reader and also by the author. For Culler, the author, though operating simultaneously in conscious and unconscious registers of her mind, nonetheless writes with mastery of the relevant codes: "Mastery may be largely unconscious or it may have reached a stage of highly self-conscious theoretical elaboration, but it is mastery in both cases." At issue in this formulation is Culler's recognition that in order for codes and laws to engender an appropriation of meaning, they must be "possessed" both by the receiver and sender of the "message." Mastery of lingual conventions thus becomes, in this model of narrative functioning, the foundation on which understanding and also authorial creativity are based. But there are at least two problems in this account. First, the analogical application of theories of linguistic functioning originally formed to explain the workings of sentences to describe the functioning of entire narratives may obscure or neglect possible differences between two modes of generating meaning. Sentences, for example, inscribe there meaning through an operation one could describe figuratively as synecdoche:
each part of the sentence must be understood in relation to the whole (all the elements of the sentence taken together). The comprehension of a sentence, then, is dependent on one's ability to relate parts to wholes, an ability which requires the acquisition of the lingual codes which structure that relation. For holistic thinkers such as Paul Ricoeur, this synecdochic model is the model for the comprehension of a given text: "in understanding we comprehend or grasp as a whole the chain of partial meanings in one act of synthesis." In narrative, however, it is possible that no such codes exist, or, if they exist, that they do not exert or allow the same type of formal control over functional elements that are allowed in a sentence. Narratives, in contrast to sentences, may articulate their meanings under the figure of metonymy rather than synecdoche--relating parts to parts without an overarching "grammar" which would allow a synecdochic synthesis. This leads to the second problem: whether narrative codes (those that do exist) can ever be mastered in the way Culler asserts, and whether such mastery would lead to a holistic mastery of the narrative itself. Does one ever have total control over the (inferred) conventions that delimit or order the conjunction of formal elements in narrative?

Culler's own assertion of the mastery of the relevant codes by an author attempts to "finesse" one possible fissure in the concept of mastery
as such. He asserts that both unconscious and "highly self-conscious theoretical elaboration" are equivalent forms of appropriation, that there is a congruence between the conscious and unconscious "possession" of the codes, that the codes when applied either consciously or unconsciously operate in the same way. Such a position is strongly open to psychoanalytic critique. Even if one allows that the only codes and rules for discourse formation that Culler is writing about are those which provide the structuring "grammar" of narrative, one still might ask whether unconscious and conscious use of the codes would differ. Jacques Lacan theorizes, for example, that consciously, perhaps, one tries, in the use of codes, to articulate one's own desire, to write or speak the "self;" however, when one uses the codes, what Lacan terms the "symbolic order," what one articulates is not one's own desire at all, but the desire of the "Other," that lost object both engendered and constituted by language.36 Thus, the subject who writes or speaks, the one who in Culler's purview "masters" the codes of discourse, is ineluctably divided, ineluctably split. In some sense, she speaks (or writes) two discourses at once: the imaginary discourse of the conscious subject, the one who believes she can master her articulations; and the unpossessed discourse of the "Other," the discourse which, in effect, writes the subject from the outside, from the "external" position of
language itself. But for Lacan the unconscious itself is structured like a language. The "Other" is also interior to the "self."

In this depiction of mental and linguistic functioning, mastery cannot occur because there exists no stable or congruent relationship between conscious and unconscious processes and appropriations. Conscious and unconscious, code and code, would always already exist in a differential relation with respect to each other, each disrupting the other's possibility for hegemony. Though this problematic exists at the level of the sentence, it manifests itself more prominently at the level of the narrative. In Mark, for example, I will argue that the narrative simultaneously encourages and discourages identification with the figure of Jesus, encouraging it through Jesus' own teaching ["...whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man came not to be served but to serve..."] (10.44-45), and discouraging it through a number of different narrative effects, from the progressive inability as the gospel progresses of the disciples to manifest identification with Jesus to the refusal of the narrative to fully "present" Jesus, either for the gospel's readers or within the "world" of the narrative, for epistemic or identificatory appropriation. In the text, these differing narrative schemas cannot be reconciled by an overarching synthesis; rather, they function metonymically, differentially, each
interacting with and subverting the implicit "logic" of the other.

This textual effect cannot be "mastered" by any linguistic code or "literary competence," to use Culler's phrasing. Instead, it disrupts the structuralist and/or hermeneutic effort to comprehend textual functioning within a holistic (synechdocial) model. Roland Barthes assertion that narrative is either a "rambling collection of events...or else it shares with other narratives a common structure which is open to analysis, no matter how much patience its formulation requires" thus appears as a false polarization of narrative operation(s). Perhaps narrative does not contain "a common structure" that allies it with all other narratives, but common structures, a multivalent and conflicted weave of various schemes, discursive practices, lingual and semantic registers. This is not to categorically deny Barthes' statement that "it is impossible to combine (to produce) a narrative without reference to an implicit system of units and rules," but to supplement his notion with the observation that such an "implicit system of units and rules" may not be the controlling force or structuring architectonics of narrative, that narrative may tacitly use these codes in a way that undermines or ruptures the codes own posited ability to deliver formal order or "logic" to a textual network.

Jacques Derrida has, from his "grammatological" perspective,
designated this effect as textual grafting. For him, texts always refer outside themselves, beyond their own margins and borders, not to the "world" as such, but to other texts, other writings. This referentiality creates, in Derrida's analysis, a difficulty which:

arises in the relation between the medium of writing and the determination of each textual unit. It is necessary that while referring each time to another text, to another determinate system, each organism only refer to itself as a determinate structure; a structure that is opened and closed at the same time.40

For Derrida, textual logic is always divided, always double. Because each "organism" in a text, each unit, always refers not only to its context within a given manuscript, within a spatially and ontically "determinate system," but also to other systems, to other manuscripts, to other texts, the functioning of that unit is always heterogeneous; for it "grafts" the "logic" of its "parent" text into a "non-kin" scion. As with a vegetal graft (to use Derrida's analogy), this splice engenders a new "organism" with two separate "tissues," two distinct morphologies. This principal of grafting has radical implications; for, one might ask, what are the determinate
structures free from grafting? Is textuality produced by a delimited
number of grafts or is textuality grafting itself? Is a text, at every point,
in each network or structure it constitutes, splicing together heterogeneous
registers of discourse, heterogenous logics, heterogeneous desires? If
Derrida's "logic" of double referentiality holds, if the units of a text always
refer simultaneously to their immediate ontic context and to other
contexts, other "determinate systems," then a text "contains," at every
point, a multiplicity of logics, significations, possible structures of
meaning. It is split, conflicted, contradictory, a fissured and fractured
aggregation, a grafted multiplicity of parts, parts which, because of their
heterogeneity, cannot be synthesized.

This general depiction of textuality, however, does not imply in any
sense a return to form criticism or redaction criticism, those forms of
interpretation which desire to probe the referential heterogeneity of a text
whether with respect to its historical foundations or to the intention of its
editor(s). Instead it implies a mode of reading narrative in which the
interpreter would engage the text as text, engage it as a differential
network of lingual registers, logics, desires, constitutions, articulations,
narrations which do and do not fit together. Thus, one would no longer read
Mark, as Morton Smith does, as a cryptic indice to historical circumstance,
nor, as Werner Kelber does, in his *Mark's Story of Jesus,* as "a single coherent story,"\(^{41}\) nor, as in a later, less simple formulation by Kelber, as a narrative in which the more it "strives to reveal, the more it becomes involved in concealment,"\(^{42}\) nor even in a reductively deconstructionist way, attempting, in Culler's terms, to determine "what are the points of juncture and stress where one scion or line of argument has been spliced with another,"\(^{43}\) rather, one would read Mark in the heterogeneity and weave of its narratorial discourses and desires, laying emphasis not on its narrative coherence or incoherence, but on the slippage and intertwining of the two. This is not to resurrect, however, some mystifying notion of narrative "secrecy" such as Kermode's.

In my delineation of narrative functioning, there are conventions and logics in a text which a reader or interpreter who has internalized the relevant codes can cause to signify; what she can't do is cause them to signify unitarily, what she can't do is eliminate the ubiquitous nodes and spaces in a text in which "literary competency," the knowledge of relevant lingual codes and conventions, fails to produce "full" understanding based on a synthesis of contradictory elements. By making this point, however, I do not mean to posit an "ideal" reader who stands for all readers, but rather to suggest how the text as text, as an ontic object separate from the reader,
does not deliver synthetic or seamless readings. This property of the text
does not produce secrecy but illogic, contradiction, plurivocity, meaning or
sense which cannot be hermeneutically appropriated, meaning which is
always, in the reading process, becoming unmeaning, unmeaning which is
always sliding towards meaning, meaning which is always differing from
both other meanings and, in addition, from itself; for even at the level of
each term in a discourse, there is simultaneously too much and too little
signification. Semantically, a word always signifies more than it “intends;”
it always bears with it residual significations. Because of this, a term
signifies too little, for it never signifies fully one meaning, one intent.
Such a meaning or intent is always already undermined or destabilized by
the intrusion of other significations, other associations, other “grafted”
meanings. Thus, to posit the point in its most radical mode, a narrative, at
every point, in each of its terms, subverts the logic of narrative coherence,
of synecdochic appropriation, of the hermeneutic circle.

By positing this account of narrative functioning, however, I do not
mean to suggest that all narratives produce the same textual effects. Some
narratives, for example, are more easily followable than others, seem to
have less overt “evidence” of the splits, fissures and differential logics
which I have been articulating. Some narratives, in other words, do not
"manifest" their fractures as ubiquitously as others. Mark's gospel, in spite of the drive in its "plot" towards the crucifixion and, to a lesser extent, towards the resurrection, appears, qualitatively, as a fissured, "less followable" narrative. In its paratactic style and in its consistent resistance to fully delineating or presenting an identity for Jesus (except diacritically), it displays a significant amount of narrative occultation, of narrative crypticity. (Crypticity is not another term for secrecy, however; it does not imply a hidden, comprehensible meaning of "presence" that exists "outside" the narrative, but rather a narratival resistance to coded appropriation, to understanding.) This narrative effect I shall term incorporative, following Derrida's usage in his introduction to Nicholas Abraham and Maria Torok's text *The Wolfmen's Magic Word: A Cryptonymy*.44

In Derrida's discourse, this term is set in opposition to another—introjection. This diacritical relation, Derrida writes, follows the "rigorous demarcation" between the two terms established psychoanalytically by Maria Torok.45 For Torok, as Derrida relates, introjection is a process of identification in which qualities of the "other," the loved object, are assimilated into the space and contours of one's own tenuously established "identity"—into the self. This process expands the self by allowing it to appropriate those objects in which it has "libidinal"
investments. Thus introjection can, in part, negate the effects of losing a loved object since salient characteristics of that object now "belong" to the self. Incorporation, in contrast, nullifies the effect of object loss in a different way. In this mode of appropriating a "lost" object, the object is, in effect, "swallowed whole" by the self; it is taken "inside" the self but remains in the otherness of its own identity, not assimilable cognitively, epistemically or affectively by the self. For Derrida, this raises the question "of the general appropriation and safekeeping of the other as other . . . . which leads to the paradox of a foreign body preserved as foreign but by the same token excluded from a self that henceforth deals not with the other, but only with itself. The more the self keeps the foreign element as a foreigner inside itself, the more it excludes it."\(^{46}\) (his italics). To summarize, incorporation, in this model, is a process by which the self prevents the loss of a loved object by sealing that object off in what Derrida, through Abraham and Torok, terms a "crypt," a topographical space or cleft within the self in which the incorporated other can be preserved.\(^{47}\)

In Abraham and Torok's own analysis, the effect of this "crypt" in the self is the production of a coded language with its own peculiar conventions which, with the proper key (the "magic word"), can be deciphered or rendered coherent.\(^{48}\) However, one does not have to follow
their desire to use the concepts of incorporation and of a crypt or crypts within the self as a means of enabling a coherent translation of puzzling textual phenomena into a lucid or "transparent" meta-discourse. One could posit, rather, especially if unpersuaded by the "coherence" Abraham and Torok produce through their analysis, that the effects produced by such a crypt in a narrative text, or, to write more cautiously, the textual effects which "mime" the psychic effects produced by incorporation, do not register, at any level, as coherence. Instead, they register as occultation, as a resistance to or denial of assimilation, as crypticity, as the "scattering" of epistemically coded materials across the surface of the text. Crucial in the differentiation between "psychic" and "narrative" incorporation is the difference in the "spatiality" between psyche and text.

For Derrida, Abraham and Torok, following Freud's topographical metaphors, the psyche in which incorporation occurs can be represented as "three-dimensional" space. For example, Derrida writes of crypts in a way which emphasizes, by way of a certain detour, this spatiality: "The crypt is ... the striking history of ... a place comprehended within another but rigorously separate from it, isolated from general space by partitions, an enclosure, an enclave"\(^49\) (his italics). The detour is that the crypt exists, in this delineation, as a writing, a "striking history," as an ontic object whose
spatiality is only the flattened two dimensionality of a text, of "spaced" language. However, in spite of this detour, the crypt, for Derrida, has a three dimensional spatiality in its "past," to use his metaphor of history; and the crypt refers, in a tacitly representational sense, to this spatial structure. In contrast, when one posits cryptic effects for a text, this notion of a cryptic reference to another space becomes problematic. A text has no such "space" either within or outside it, either in its "present" or in its past. In Mark, for instance, if one suggests that the crypticity of Jesus' identity is an incorporative effect, that does not mean that there is a non-narrative Jesus encrypted somewhere behind the text or in the text's "real" or fantasized past. Rather, the Jesus of the gospel, in his occultation, in his epistemic foreignness, is the incorporated Jesus. In a narrative or in a text, there is no psychic topography to hide the incorporated Jesus; all one has is the writing that both suggests and constitutes whatever "crypt" may exist. The Markan narrative, then, does not refer to an encrypted Jesus who has been secluded outside it, but rather, in its "crypticity," articulates Jesus as a figure without an essential identity, as a figure who, while not absent from the text, is not fully present there either.

Jesus and the narrative plot which articulates his activity, then, both center and decenter the gospel. In my analysis, I will show how the
contradictory logics, thematics and significations of the Markan text produce such a narrative effect, how the text has no "unity" except in its elliptical constellations oriented but not fixed or determined by the cryptic figure of Jesus. Specifically, I will trace the ways in which Mark's gospel resists allowing cognitive or introjective assimilation of the Jesus it sets forth (not the "historical Jesus but the imaginary Jesus constituted by the text itself), how the text both mandates and denies identification with Jesus, how the text defines, re-defines and contradictorily signifies the semantic and conceptual fields of life and death, how the "conversion" of Jesus from memory to text produces, in Mark, incorporative effects which serve both to preserve and kill the risen Jesus. My method of reading will be at once metonymic and synecdochic, at certain points strategically constituting unities by relating parts to wholes and, simultaneously, describing textual effects which undermine such unities, which, by the narratival and interpretational juxtaposition of parts against parts, articulate the fissures, cleavages and contradictions that occlude the possibility of coherence, understanding, sense, mastery or revelation. In concert with this, my focus will be necessarily double, as my elaboration of textual theory up to now has been double: on the one hand, I will deploy general models of textuality to interpret (dis/simulate) Mark, models
which Mark at once illustrates and subverts; and, on the other hand, I will read Mark in its specificity, not merely as an example of more universal narrative effects, but as a particular (which is not to say either delimited or ontological) lingual field in its own right, with its own specific effects and properties, with its own (though not "properly" its own) textual configurations and disjunctions. This, then, is the orientation I set for myself in the "reading" which follows.
Chapter II

If nothing else, Mark's gospel is a narrative of preservation. For what the gospel articulates is the story of a central figure—Jesus—who has corporeally and spiritually absented himself from the world of his followers. By committing the story of Jesus to writing, the "author" of Mark endows the story with the "eternal" still life of the written word. In some ways, this is analogous to Freud's account of the "fort-da" game in Beyond the Pleasure Principle. There, a child compensates for his inability to control the periodic absences of his mother by creating a game with a ball of string in which he can mime his mother's absences by throwing away the string and then assert his mastery over those absences by reeling it in. Freud interprets the child's activity as an attempt to acquire the ability to willfully regain the presence of the lost object whenever he desires, thereby garnering control over at least a section of his "world." Thus, by displacement, by substituting a situation he can control (the game) for a situation he could not control (the disappearances of his mother), the child learns to cope with the trauma of absence. In an analogous sense, Mark's gospel could be construed as a simple attempt to assert mastery over a lost object. "Mark," by writing the gospel, may have been attempting to "control"
the absence of Jesus by grafting together a narrative which both accounted for his absence and textually memorialized his presence, compensating for the loss of Jesus by textual preservation.

As Werner Kelber has pointed out, however, this mode of preservation does not "naturally" proceed from the absence of Jesus in early Christian communities. In primitive Christianity, it seems, there were other more dynamic and perhaps successful modes of recovery and reparation of the "lost" Jesus than that of narrative textualization, such as the re-presencing of Jesus himself through the emergence of an oral tradition that spoke for and as the "living" Christ, the resurrected lord.51 Eugene Boring, in his analysis of early Christian prophecy, narrates this "re-presencing" as the endeavor of Christian prophets, asserting that "the early Christian prophet was an immediately-inspired spokesman for the risen Jesus who received intelligible oracles that he felt impelled to deliver to the Christian community."52 These prophets, then, in his view, spoke with the "immediate voice of the deity."53 This identification of the prophet with the risen lord is an identification which manifests itself in speaking, in the arena of oral discourse, an arena in which the prophets oral "performance" was not "distanced" from the "interior voice" of the risen
Christ. This oral mode of reparation, by assimilating the lost master into a mode of discoursing which uttered his words, not merely repetitively but spontaneously, creatively, both allowed and incited the notion that the risen Jesus himself shared the "interior space" of the speaking subject. Jesus thus, at least in those communitites influenced by such prophets, was not entirely absent from his followers after his death; he remained present in the self, spiritually, speaking his words anew through the vehicle of his prophets. Psychodynamically, this identification suggests a mechanism of introjection in which the essential characteristics of a significant other are absorbed as living aspects of the self. Thus, in this oral milieu, Jesus would be preserved by his presence as a "living" aspect of the self, as a "living" part of the expansive, prophetic ego.

Mark’s gospel, however, as Kelber has pointed out, is not an oral re-presentation of the risen lord, but a written text, which, as text, as writing, breaks with the dynamics of oral traditions and culture. In Kelber’s analysis, the transposition of a belief system derived from "oral voices" into a gospel constituted by "written signs" effects a rupture with the presencing effects of oral performances of Jesus’ teaching. This "new technology of writing," Kelber asserts, "produced a christology that was in
tension with, and a replacement of, oral christology.\textsuperscript{55} By submitting to
the exigencies of writing, the "author" of Mark, in Kelber's view, excludes
the living, present Jesus of the oral, prophetic tradition, replacing him with
a Jesus who is textually caught and ossified. No longer an "interior" reality,
no longer an introjected part of the believer's psyche (for Jesus is now
"present" only in the exterior space of writing, only in the exterior space of
the text which "preserves" him), Mark's Jesus is arrested and fixed in a
re-presentation of his historical existence. As Boring has noted, Mark's
gospel does not allow Jesus to speak in his own voice after the resurrection.
His voice is confined to his earthly existence.\textsuperscript{56} Thus, peculiarly, the voice
of the Jesus who would continue to speak in primitive Christian
communities is, within one of Mark's own narratival "logics," cut off. The
Jesus who speaks in the gospel is an "unchanging," narratival "character,"
not a living being or presence. For Kelber, this "cutting off" has a coherent,
functional logic:

Mark, the storyteller, suffers and accomplishes
the death of living words for the purpose
of inaugurating the life of textuality. . .

Medium and message are connected by a
compelling parabolic logic. It is this logic
that shapes the gospel's narrative, disorienting
away from oral authorities and reorienting toward
the textually captured Jesus, and all along
gesturing toward the mystery of God's kingdom. 55

Mark's gospel, in this depiction, reflects "a compelling parabolic logic"
which "all along gestur[es] toward the mystery of God's kingdom." For
Kelber, the shift in media from orality to textuality provides a means of
explaining the gospel's textual effects: puzzling aspects of the narrative are
"naturalized" or normalized by their manifestation of a parabolic logic, and
this "logic", which Kelber articulates as a mode of linguistic practice that
"deviate[s] from literal meaning, evade[s] the event character of oral speech,
suspend[s] meaning, and disrupt[s] oral synthesis," 58 functions indexively,
referentially, pointing not to the kingdom itself, but to its "mystery:
"Mark's gospel in its entirety points beyond itself to the mystery of the
kingdom of God" 59 (my emphasis). Kelber's use of mystery here has the
radiance of transcendence; the text transcends its own textual form by
indexing a mystery that exists outside it. Thus, in this "story" of Markan
signification, the "author" gives up the living words of Jesus to enable a
different type of "recuperation" by exposing to view radiant traces of the
mystery of God's kingdom. The media shift from orality to textuality then
serves, in this analysis, to displace or translate one mode of religious
preservation for another: from Jesus as an introjected portion of the ego to
a parabolic disclosure of the aura of the kingdom, a change from a notion of
presence to a notion of the sublime.

Even if one does not accept Kelber's synthesis of narrative
peculiarities under the indexive function of channeling attention towards
the mystery of the kingdom, an acceptance he himself at least in part breaks
with in a recent article in which he asserts that the gospel not only strives
towards a disclosure of the mystery of the kingdom but also, in its
narrative web, "reveils" that disclosure,60 one can still strategically deploy
Kelber's assertion that the writing of the Markan gospel is not merely a
"natural" outcome of Jesus' corporeal absence in the community; it is not a
"simple" recovery of presence, a recovery which could have been (in Boring's
view at least in part had been) accomplished by identification or
introjection. In fact, what may be recovered is not "presence" at all, but
only traces of presence, a Jesus who cannot be grasped, cannot be
assimilated, cannot be appropriated, who has no identity except that
constituted by his difference from others. This textual effect, which I will exfoliate later in this paper, may be involved with an infrapsychic dynamic related to Mark’s possible translation of oral traditions into text. In the oral milieu, as I suggested earlier, introjection is the primary psychic mechanism used to negate the absence of the material Jesus. Though Jesus is not present in a community physically, he can be “present” psychically, assimilated as a living force within the contours and space of the “self.” Mark’s gospel, in contrast, by relegating Jesus’ “presence” to the narrated moments of his “historical” existence with a projected eschatological return in the future, by relegating Jesus to the psychically exterior space of a text, removes him from the present as a living aspect of “reality.” In the “now” of the gospel, Jesus exists in a “crypt” of writing, not the crypt of his “historical” burial, but a crypt which, as I asserted earlier in my discussion of the work of Abraham and Torok, mimes textually the psychodynamics of incorporation. In incorporation, a lost other is preserved and hidden in an enclosed space within the self, partitioned off from the assimilative drive of the ego. In Mark, the figure of Jesus, distanced from the oral introjective milieu by writing, and from other modes of introjective assimilation by the particular dynamics of the Markan narrative (though the narratival Jesus
himself does invoke some modes of identification as in Mark 8. 34; but even here the identification is cryptic, for it specifies that one must, to follow Jesus, "take up his cross," a phrase which the disciples cannot understand at this point in the narrative), is encrypted in the gospel, "walled off," at least in part, from cognitive or epistemic assimilation.

This blockage of assimilation serves, incorporatively, to preserve the lost object as a lost object. Though the loss or absence of the object signifies its "death," because incorporation perpetuates the death, keeps the object cryptically present, "alive," the loss is not mourned, is not consciously recognized as loss.61 In Mark, Jesus' loss is infinitely deferred; Jesus absents himself from his followers after his death, but the text promises an eventual eschatological return. Jesus' absence, psychically a "death," thus is not articulated as death but as deferred life, as temporary corporeal displacement—the loss is neither mourned nor recognized. The crypt's "economic" function, then, both as a psychic phenomena and as a miming textual phenomena, is to maintain the scene of the "trauma," of the moment(s) of loss, with all their hidden signifiers, to paraphrase Derrida62 to memorialize the lost object by writing, under the guise of preservation and disavowal, its epitaph which, in a text, is all the crypt finally can be.
Yet in the gospel the crypt effect is not univocal, but is itself undermined by the conflicted and contradictory narratival "logics" of the text. Thus, I posit the crypt only to open it, to supplement it with other readings, other logics, which both produce crypt (or preservative) effects and which work against them. The crypt, then, is at once a synthetic construct which I will use to specify a certain constellation of textual effects that produces a certain mode of preserving "Jesus," and also as a diacritical tool to specify the functional otherness of different textual patterns and configurations. With this "double" focus set forth in advance, I will articulate my "reading(s)" of the gospel. I put the term "reading(s)" in quotation marks here for two reasons: first, all I actually produce in the pages which follow is an account, a "story" of my reading, which inevitably differs from any reading which I may have done, which re-presents a version of my reading under the exigency and generic constraints of what may generously be called "scholarly writing;" second, this reading is in no sense a "reading" of the entire gospel, but is only a summary of what such a reading might have been or might be, shaped according to the multiple and differing requirements and pressures of my argument(s). In no sense is it comprehensive or exhaustive.
One might ask, then, whether such a lack of comprehensiveness, such an "incompleteness," undermines my description of narrative functioning: are there uninccluded portions of the text which would contradict my depiction of narrative functioning, either in Mark or in general? I would suggest, however, that any contradictory example or examples would not serve to undermine my theoretical purpose, to manifest inconsistent logics and textual patterns in Mark's narrative, but would rather confirm it, in that an additional non-assimilable detail or pericope would suggest an additional non-synthesizable configuration in the narrative that could produce meanings. And even if there were a thousand such examples in the text all of which combined to produce one unified reading in contradiction to the ones I have produced, all it would show is that there is a major "logic" in the text which I have neglected, one which would produce even more heterogeneity in the narrative than I have elicited and described. Thus, even though the "reading" I articulate engages only limited portions of the text, even though it only accounts for the narratival functioning of certain pericope in it, nonetheless, if the conflicted significations I produce in my reading describe the textual unit(s) or sequence(s) under discussion, then the "scantness" of my reading serves
merely to reduce complexity and fragmentation, not to hide it. Though the
errelative importance of a particular pattern of meaning may change if the
reading were more "full"—incorporative effects, for example, might have
greater or less proportional "weight" in the narrative—the reading would
never be "full" enough to eliminate such effects. Supplementary examples
would never fulfill either my analysis or reading, or a reader's desire for
completeness. So I proceed, knowing that my reading will not be complete
or full, but also knowing that the resulting "lack" supports my analysis.

The text begins with a phrase which at one signifies and disavows
this sense of "doubleness," for it attempts, at least overtly, to specify an
identity for Jesus through the use of christological titles: "The beginning of
the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God" ("Arche tou euangeliou Jesou
Christou huiou theou"). Jesus, in this formulation, has two terms
attached to his name which serve to specify an identity for him; he is
"Christ," and he is "Son of God." Thus, at the very outset, the narrative
seems to be attempting to clarify an identity for its main protagonist; he is
the "christos," the anointed one of God who is further affiliated with God by
the notion of sonship. This specification of the identity of Jesus does not
appear to respond to my theoretical assertion that the gospel mimes an
incorporative dynamic, blocking epistemic or cognitive access to or assimilation of the figure of Jesus. Jesus, in this line, is defined “christologically,” that is, by terms which open and delimit his narratival function in theological terms. The line itself seems to function as a title for the gospel as a whole for, unlike almost all the discourse that follows, it can be construed merely as a sentence fragment, as a predication without a specified subject, as if, in some sense, as a title, it were predication itself, a formulation which ideally corresponds to the significations of the entire text.

There are, however, problems with such a description of the line. First, the second term appended to Jesus—“Son of God”—does not have universal manuscript authority; in some documents it appears as “son of the lord/master” (“huiou tou kuriou”), in others it does not appear, suggesting that the filial designation which appears in modern versions of the gospel is not authentic. If this is so, then the functioning of the word “Christ” as a specification of Jesus’ identity changes, for it much more strongly opens the possibility that the term is not descriptive but nominal, not specifying the role or function of Jesus, but rather naming him, designating him diacritically. He is not, perhaps, Jesus the Christ, the Jesus who has
christological properties predicated to him, but Jesus Christ, a Jesus specified by his nominal difference from others named "Jesus." Thus, the term may or may not give epistemic access or introduction to Jesus; it may designate Jesus as having a "messianic" quality, yet it pushes one towards the narrative to clarify what that quality may be. But the line complicates even this reading. For the line does not focus on Jesus himself, but on "the gospel of Jesus Christ," not on the person of Jesus, but almost self-consciously on the "euangelion," the good news of Jesus Christ, not on his presence but on the words told about him. The genitive construction suggests a further ambiguity, as Boring has pointed out, whether the gospel concerns Jesus, whether it is about him (the gospel of Jesus), or whether the gospel belongs to Jesus, whether the good news belongs to him (Jesus' gospel). In the former instance, if the gospel is about Jesus, then the Markan "author" makes a tacit claim for his own mastery and ownership of the good news concerning Jesus; the gospel is, to speak the rhetoric of the "proper," his good news. Though it concerns Jesus, it is the "property" of Mark. But if the gospel belongs to Jesus, if, to speak again the rhetoric of the "proper," it is his gospel, then the gospel does not belong to the Markan author at all but to the figure of Jesus himself in his otherness. The first
possibility corresponds to an introjective dynamic; Mark cognitively possesses and can "express" the story of Jesus. The second possibility, in contrast, suggests an incorporative dynamic; the gospel does not belong to Mark at all, but to Jesus. Thus the genitive construction opens a question about who is the proper author or master of the text, Mark or Jesus.

The radicality of this problem becomes more acute when one takes into account the word that begins the line—"arche"—which, without an attached article, can designate either a beginning or the beginning, either a ruler or the ruler, either an authority or the authority, either an office of authority or the office of authority. Thus the term signifies in a multitude of conflicting ways. First, it may merely designate the line's own self-referential activity—this line is the beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Or, perhaps, since the gospel begins with John the Baptist and not with Jesus, the term designates that the narrative concerning John is the first part of the good news of Jesus, suggesting that the gospel, though focused on Jesus' life, encompasses more than that, specifically a figure who valorizes Jesus' position by differentiating it from his own position. In a more extreme reading, however, the term suggests that the text does not re-present a "good news" of Jesus which existed outside and prior to it,
but that this text itself, this writing by the Markan author, in itself is the gospel, that the gospel begins ex nihilo with the inception of this text. In this sense of the line, the Markan author strongly asserts his own priority for "ownership" of the gospel; it is his and not Jesus'. Yet, the term "arche," even if taken in this extreme sense, does not arrest the possibility that the gospel still "belongs" to Jesus, that Jesus' own proclamation did not exist in past historical time, but comes into being in the "now" of the text, that the gospel, this text, begins Jesus' articulation of his own good news.

These textual significations raise an epistemological issue at the very outset of the Markan text--its "referentially" or lack thereof. On the one hand, the gospel exhibits, to use Hans Frei's term, "history-likeness." At least overtly, it refers to historical events which existed in the past, and attempts to fashion those events into a narrative for preservative and/or polemical purposes. Yet, what the first line brings into question is whether the gospel refers to anything outside itself, whether the good news "begins" with the narrative's first line. Thus, the narrative would appear to have two contradictory senses of its own functioning; on the one hand, it seeks to "reflect" a series of events which, in themselves, were not narratival and, on the other hand, it seeks to articulate those events in a
narrative which seemingly writes its own autonomy, its difference from preceding events (or other textual and oral representations of Jesus) in its first line.

The gospel, then, at least in its "intent," is involved in two contrary strategies of representation which Michel Foucault terms resemblance and similitude.68 "Resemblance," according to Foucault, "has a model, an original element that orders and hierarchizes the increasingly less faithful copies that can be struck from it.... Resemblance serves representation, which rules over it.... Resemblance predicates itself on a model it must return to and reveal...."69 This lingual desire opens the space for mimesis in its classical sense to occur, allows Mark, through the recounting of Jesus' miracles, his ministry, his crucifixion, to re-present Jesus narratively, to preserve a resemblance of him in language which corresponds to the "materiality" of his life. But in this model of textual functioning, the text itself is "dead," for it neither reproduces the "life" of the figures it seeks to portray, nor, in its own nonphonetic embodiment, has any "life" of its own. As Derrida reasons: "What writing itself, in its nonphonetic moment, betrays, is life. It menaces at once the breath, the spirit, and history as the spirit's relationship with itself."70 Resemblance, in particular,
corresponds to Derrida's formulation, for it, as Foucault points out, is always a "fallen" version of an original which "lives" or "lived" outside it. Thus the gospel as "history," as resemblance, opens itself to the death of writing, of textualization.

Similitude, however, has a different dynamic than resemblance. In Foucault's words, "the similar develops in a series that have neither beginning nor end, that can be followed in one direction as well as in another, that obey no hierarchy, but propagate themselves from small differences among small differences . . . .similitude circulates the simulacrum as an indefinite and reversible relation of the similar to the similar."71 The gospel's opening line, in its focus on Jesus on the one hand and the good news which depicts him on the other, in its willingness to circulate the "simulacrum" of its own textuality in his place without making the difference between the "real" Jesus and the textual one hierarchical, responds, in part, to the desires of similitude. In this lingual register, "life" is not so clearly distinguished from the "death" of textualization, of writing, for the difference between a text and its model, the difference between the simulacrum and what exists outside it, the difference between even speech and writing, is not hierarchical, is not valorized. Thus, the
gospel as simulacrum, as Jesus Christ's good news, somehow separate from the representational "intent" of Mark, has its own "life," does not only, perhaps, convert oral traditions to the "death" of textuality, but in so doing gives them life, gives them an ability to "speak" as writing, gives Jesus as an incorporated figure the possibility of writing his own gospel in which the differences between the "historical" Jesus and the "encrypted" Jesus do not matter.

The possibility that the gospel is a simulacrum also suggests further epistemological questioning about its functionality as a narrative. In language conceived of as "similitude," the conjunction of lingual signifiers does not communicate "knowledge," an accurate mental representation of the "forms" of reality, but rather tends to subvert the notion that knowledge can exist as a viable concept. For if the "simulacrum," if "representations" do not correspond to a privileged model, to an origin in reality, if they are infinitely reversible and interchangeable, then no representation can give access to a world external to representation—no simulacrum can engender knowledge of the world. Thus, the possibility suggested by the first line of Mark that the gospel is a simulacrum and not simply mimetic suggests that two contradictory lingual
epistemologies operate "within" the narrative as "textual desires": on the one hand, actantial structures give some epistemic access to the figure of Jesus and, on the other hand, discursive practices such as the use of parables function according to the desires of similitude and perpetuate Jesus in the text as an other, as foreign, puzzling, exterior, as encrypted, a figure about whom one cannot obtain "full" knowledge. The Jesus of the gospel is thus intricately involved in a discourse which simultaneously fashions him as a hero, a figure of immense power and presence, particularly in his early activity, and as a figure who befuddles understanding, who remains resistant to the mastering functions of predicative and/or idealist uses of language.

But I have not yet exhausted the first line's possible significations. For if the line's suggestion that the gospel functions as a simulacrum articulates a certain subversion of the authority of both Mark and mimesis, of the "author" and the "historical" Jesus, the term "arche" introduces the notion of authority into the gospel at its outset. As I indicated earlier in my discussion, "arche" signifies not only "beginning," but also "rule," "authority," or "the office of authority." Thus the line suggests, covertly perhaps, that the gospel not only begins with the inception of its textual
existence, but that the text itself comprises and constitutes the "authority" of that gospel, its arena of mastery, its rule. This can have at least two senses: either that the body of the gospel, in its depiction of Jesus and his words, invokes and bodies forth the "rule," the normative effects and status, of the "good news" as a mode of conduct or, by a different construction of sense, that the gospel itself is the arena or space in which the "good news" has authority--only in the simulacrum of the text is the "good news" powerful or efficacious, in any other representational form (in the world of orality?) it is not a mode of power. The line, then, poses two different modes of textual force or influence. It either asserts, in a tacitly imperative tone, that the text functions as a document of authority, as a normative text which intends to promote and promulgate the control of the "good news" over one's conduct; or it implies that the "rule" of the "good news" exists only across the surface of the gospel itself, in the arena of immediate textual control. In either connotation, however, what this invocation of the "authority" of the gospel itself suggests is the supplantation of the authority of Jesus himself. It is the "evangelion," either the gospel text or Jesus' words, which has rule. Consequently, it is not Jesus himself who has or embodies "rule" or "authority;" it is not Jesus
who is master or lord, even if the gospel does, cryptically, belong to him.

What the first line then signifies, in a conflicted and mulivalent way, is the displacement of Jesus as the "center" of the text. Even though the line designates Jesus by the title or name "Christos," suggesting his privileged position in the narrative, it radically disrupts the ability of that title to focus attention in any simple way on Jesus as a mimetic or historical figure. Instead, the phrasing of the line, while connoting a desire to re-present Jesus as a messianic figure, simultaneously focuses attention on Jesus as textualized, as a figure who exists only through the "good news," only through the gospel narrative, only in the space of the simulacrum constituted by the text itself. As the narrative proceeds, this focus on Jesus is itself both emphasized and undercut, for the gospel begins with the written words of Isaiah the prophet, proclaiming the coming of a messenger:

Behold, I send my messenger before your face, who shall prepare your way; a voice crying in the wilderness: prepare the way of the Lord, make straight his paths.

(1.2-3)

Considering that the opening statement of the narrative has announced the
"beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ," one would assume that Isaiah’s prophecy refers to this Jesus. But this would imply that the Jesus textualized in the gospel is not only textualized there, but has already been proleptically textualized in the writing of at least one of the prophets (the emphasis here on Isaiah as written through the use of the phrase "kathos gegraptau" is an early indication, following Kelber, of Mark’s tendency to associate writing and authority). This reference, then, would problematize the opening line’s assertion that the gospel of Jesus begins with Mark itself. For Jesus is proclaimed not only in the Markan narrative, but also in the words of at least one prophet. Mark’s grafting of the words of Isaiah into his own narrative cuts two ways: on the one hand, it ruptures, at the very outset of the gospel, the hegemony of Mark as the story, the simulacrum which articulates the life of Jesus, for it manifests Jesus’ articulation in other voices (other writings) which Mark will allow to be valorized; on the other hand, it reinforces the notion of Mark’s narrative as the articulation of the story of Jesus, for it allows Mark to use his own writing to contextualize other writings that might have traditionally been said to refer to Jesus and proclaim him, to assimilate a heterogenous discourse into his own text. This, then suggests a double logic of displacement.
Either Mark as narrator is displaced from his own position momentarily by the inclusion of a segment of the Isaiah text into his own writing, thus undermining his own narrative authority, or Mark, by exerting his authorial power over Isaiah's text by appropriating a section of it, asserts his own authority (even if the selected piece has already been associated with either Jesus or John the Baptist) by forcing the Isaiah passage's meaning to be construed through its position and sense in his narrative, thus displacing "Isaiah" (the author, the text designated by that name) as the controlling influence on the "messenger" prophecy.

But besides calling into question the notion of Mark's text as the autonomous and authoritative depiction of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the prophecy also displaces Jesus himself. For within its narratival context, the notion that the prophecy refers to Jesus is eventually excluded (or at least seriously undermined) by the prophecy's contiguity with the pericope depicting John's ministry and Jesus' baptism by him. As one reads the gospel in its linearity, one comes to "understand" that the "messenger" in the reference is John; it is he who suddenly appears in the "wilderness," the place Isaiah had predicted; it is he who comes as a vehicle to prepare "your way," a phrase which at once refers to the way of Jesus, the "path" of his
ministry, and also to the way of the gospel's readers, those whose way is, by one textual "logic," in the process of being defined and articulated by the narrative itself. In a sense, then, before syntagmatic context delimits the referent, within the space of the prophecy, Jesus and John "compete" to become the subject of the prophecy, to be the one who prepares the way. Overtly, John "wins" the competition; Mark attaches the prophecy, which could refer to either figure, to him. But this delimitation of the prophecy's referent merely serves to occlude the sameness of John and Jesus, a sameness which issues from their dual roles as messengers--John being the messenger of Jesus, Jesus being the messenger of the kingdom of God. This sense of similarity slightly undermines the "identity" denominated for Jesus in the gospel's opening line, for if Jesus and John can both fulfill an ambiguous prophecy, if both can fulfill the same narrative "space" (paradigmatic position) as referent, then perhaps they are not substantially different, perhaps their difference is only diacritical.

This sense of non-difference is amplified by the prophecy's designation of its referent as a "messenger" ("angelos"), an envoy, one sent to carry or bear a message. In the case of John, this term would designate his effacement before the person for whom he is serving as an
envoy—Jesus. In addition, the message he delivers would not be his own message, but that of the one for whom he is envoy; for John’s function would only be to “transport” the message, not to mediate or augment it. The designation of John as “messenger,” then, has two connotations: first, his effacement before what he is attempting, as envoy, to announce; and second, his “transparency” as a vehicle for the message which he is conveying. In John’s case, however, the notion of the “transparency” of the messenger is subverted first by Mark’s interest in the details of John’s appearance—“John was clothed with camel’s hair, and had a leather girdle around his waist and ate locusts and wild honey” (1.6)—and later by Mark’s inclusion of the story of John’s decapitation at the hands of Herod, a Jewish authority (6.14–29), a story which does not cohere with “the gospel of Jesus Christ” except in its suggestion of further similarities between John and Jesus, the former’s life in many ways anticipating the latter’s. Thus John as messenger is both effaced and not effaced, fading in importance before the message he delivers and his recognition of the superiority of the figure who shall follow him, but sustaining importance as a specific analogue to Jesus, as a narratival “speculum” for the figure of Jesus.

Jesus, as messenger, functions similarly. On the one hand, through
his resistance to assuming messianic titles which would emphasize his "being" above his message, from his narrated desire to point to the kingdom of God and to deliver a new proclamation which, in part, articulates the necessity of his own absence, and finally, through his crucifixion and the substitution of his preaching for both his presence and that of the "world"--"heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words will not pass away" (13.31)--Jesus participates in his own effacement. But on the other hand, as the "central" figure of the gospel, the message in part remains his message. His story becomes radically intricated with that message. Jesus’ narrativval "presence," then, comes to "rival" that for which he acts as messenger--the kingdom of God and his normative teachings. Thus, like John, but in a more complicated way, Jesus’ function as messenger at once indicates the need for his effacement, but also how the narrative’s inability to efface him suggests an implicit rivalry--what will receive emphasis, the medium (the messenger) or the message? In the case of the figure of John the Baptist, his own demarcated identity serves to partially subvert the notion of an absolutely distinct or substantively individual identity for the one to whom he points as messenger--Jesus; their similarity undermines the gospel's opening focus on editorially labeling the "identity" of "Jesus
Christ." But John's arrest before Jesus' begins preaching and his eventual
death narratively mute their "rivalry;" Mark reserves space to specify
Jesus' difference from his messenger. In the case of Jesus, his
"non-difference" from (his intrication with) his message, the "competition"
for the same narratival "space" between his teaching and his narratological
"presence," suggests a "logic" of rivalry which runs across the entire
narrative and which is not as easily resolved by the death of the messenger
as in the case of John. Perhaps this is an effect of a certain conflict of
desire in the narrative: the desire to incorporatively "preserve" Jesus and
the desire to efface Jesus before his proclamation.

As the baptismal pericope continues, however, this conflict is
muted, for the narrative at this point seems to be specifying an identity for
Jesus. First, John effaces himself before the one for whom he acts as
messenger, declaring "after me comes he who is mightier than I, the thong
of whose sandals I am not worthy to stoop down and untie. I have baptized
you with water; but he will baptize you with the Holy Spirit" (1.7-8). The
emphasis in John's statement is on Jesus' exalted power, especially in
relation to John's own weakness. This sense of inadequacy in John is
conveyed by Jesus' quality of being "mightier," and more pointedly in John's
statement that he is not "worthy" ("ikanos") to loose the thong of Jesus' sandals. The term "ikanos" can connote "worthy," as it does here, but it also can signify "sufficiency," "adequacy," or even being "large enough." 73 Thus, there is a sense of John's physical "smallness" in relation to Jesus, his lack of worth defined as a lack of power--"I am so small and weak compared to Jesus that I am neither worthy to loose his sandals nor do I even have the strength to do so." The power of Jesus then, here the lynchpin of his identity in relation to John, is thus not defined intrinsically, by its own value, but diacritically, by John's abasement. In this mode of rhetoric, the exaltation of one figure requires a "death" of the value of others; Jesus' exaltation requires the abasement, the effacement, the negation of the power or worth, of John.

This mode of establishing identity based on a rhetoric of abasement and power is implicit in John's own message, which proclaims "a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins" (1.4). For the notion of repentance requires abjection to a power outside oneself which one accepts as bearing authority over the self. One's own autonomy, desires, power are devalued, "killed," in order to acknowledge and submit to an external authority, in order to seek "forgiveness," the release of the other's aggressivity (anger,
hurt, rejection) towards the self. In practice, this authority of the other is transmitted verbally. John proclaims the need for repentance, based on an established verbal order, a set of laws, norms and codes which at once constitute and define the needs of the other, the requirements which engender either aggressivity or satisfaction in the other. But this effacement before the codes, the laws of the other, has a double function: on the one hand, it "kills" the "self," the notion that one has an autonomous identity constituted through a negotiation of one's own desires; on the other hand, it constitutes the self, for it is through the internalization of the desires and needs of the other that one's "identity" comes to be shaped. Thus, one "dies" by abasing oneself in the act of repentance, but it is there that one lives, in the internalized authority, needs and satisfaction of the other. For John, his role, his "life," is constituted by his effacement before the desires, the "power" of the other, the one who shall grant the "other life" of the Holy Spirit. Those too who accept John's message tolerate the "death" of one identity for the "life" of another, that constituted in relation to John's proclamation of the need of God to have his aggressivity appeased. From the very outset, then, the narrative poses the necessity of constructing identity through one's abasement to verbal codes,
of constructing identity through the effacement of self before language, before texts.

John's effacement, however, as a means of diacritically constituting Jesus' identity, is followed in the pericope by a second mode of conferring identity upon Jesus, both different from and subtly allied with the first mode. In the narrative, Jesus comes from Nazareth to be baptized by John in the Jordan:

   And when he came up out of the water, immediately he saw the heavens opened and the Spirit descending upon him like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, "Thou art my beloved son: with thee I am well pleased."

   (1.10-11)

Here, identity is conferred not by abasement but by acceptance. The "voice" from heaven, a possible synecdoche for God, defines Jesus as his "son."

Though the narrative does not specify in what sense this filiation is to be understood [whether literally as in Matthew and Luke, which include "conception" stories, or as a term of endearment signifying one's acceptance by a higher authority such as in Jesus' own reference to the woman with an
issue of blood as "daughter" (5.34)), it serves here, with other indicators of Jesus’ acceptance by God, to define Jesus dialectically. It is he, and no-one else, who is the "beloved son" of God; it is he, and no-one else, who sees the Spirit descend upon him in the shape of a dove. Nevertheless, even though Jesus is pleasing to God, even though he is identified as his son, the pericope, by a supplementary logic, also defines Jesus' identity up to that point as inadequate. For if Jesus' identity were complete in itself, why would he need external signs to confirm that identity or aids from God to empower that identity? The means of conveying that new identity, the Spirit in the form of a dove and the voice from heaven function both as external signs and means of empowerment. For both are externally experienced by Jesus, yet both are depicted as approaching him, as moving towards or into the "space" of his self, the Spirit "descending" ("katabaino") and the voice coming ("egeneto") to him. Thus Jesus' identity at this stage in the narrative is established by his contact with tacitly hypostasized agencies of God as other. Jesus, even in his filial relationship with God, nonetheless continues to have significant differences from God which God must supplement from his external position. Jesus' baptismal empowerment thus implies that one's identity is never sufficient before
God, that the possibility of the adequacy of one’s being before God does not exist, for even at the moment of symbolic purification or cleansing when one is defined as being pleasing to God, one’s difference from God is represented by external signs, is mediated through those signs to oneself; even though accepted and empowered, one is still “abased,” one still needs the voice of the other to “externally” constitute one’s identity. In a cryptic way, then, empowerment signifies a necessity of “death,” of loss of self, of textualization. But, conversely, it also signifies the possibility of “life,” for if Jesus were not “different” from God, if their identities were one, Jesus as a particular “being” would be absorbed into the identity of God; his “own” identity would be negated.

This possibility of non-difference, at once a suggestion of rivalry or opposition but also of unity, receives immediate exfoliation in the text as it is articulated in the displacement of John by Jesus:

Now after John was arrested, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, and saying,

“The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent, and believe in the gospel.”

(1.14-15)
Jesus’ ministry begins precisely when John is “spatially” removed from the territory Jesus will attempt to occupy. And this removal is double: on the one hand, John has been “arrested,” brought under the jurisdiction of a hostile power, in order to keep him from continuing his role. Thus, he has been physically removed from competition with Jesus. In addition, John cannot preach while in prison in the same way that he could when free. The arrest prevents his voice from competing with that of Jesus. The narrative emphasizes this effect by having Jesus proclaim his own message, which is at once the same as and different than John’s. It is the same in that it is a call for repentance or abasement to an authority outside the self that is verbally mediated, in this case the gospel. It is different in that it does not preach baptism as a sign of the desire for cleansing but rather speaks of both an exaltation and abasement of time, of the coming/presence of an eschatological change in the course of the world: “The time is fulfilled and the kingdom of God is at hand (“engiken”)” (1.15). Overtly, then, as Jesus inhabits John’s place as “messenger,” he points away from himself to the “fulfillment” of time in the spatial and temporal proximity of the kingdom (the verb “engizo” can signify both75). Within his formulation of time, however, Jesus opens a strange “space” between the “fulfillment” of time
which has occurred (the verb “peplerotai” as passive perfect), and the coming of the kingdom, which has come near (“engiken” as perfect), which is spatially and temporally proximal, but which is not “present.” Narratively, since this is the moment of the manifestation of Jesus’ ministry, that manifestation is coincident with the “fulfillment” of time; but since Jesus himself articulates the kingdom as only being proximal, not as “present,” his ministry is tacitly divorced or “spatially” distanced from the kingdom. His proclamation then opens for itself a “space,” a place in time for it to have authority before the coming of the kingdom. This notion recurs in the second portion of Jesus’ message where he commands belief in the “gospel,” a term which Mark’s opening line has already associated with the figure of Jesus. The focus, then, in Jesus’ appropriation of John’s message is double: he points both to the kingdom as separate from his own activity, and he also points to the gospel which articulates and tacitly preserves his own activity. Thus, again, the narrative constitutes a logic of effacement, Jesus serving merely to indicate the eschatological coming of the kingdom in effect as its “messenger,” and a tacitly competing logic of identity in which the figure of Jesus will resist abasement, or effacement, through the articulation of his narrativel “presence.”
This "presence," however, though desired, is in part undermined by a logic of incorporation. Within the gospel, though Jesus' identity is textualized, it is not ultimately delivered, transmitted, communicated. Early in the gospel, Jesus' identity is narrated in a number of ways. As I have already discussed, at his baptism, he receives the witness of John as to the unique magnitude of his power, the visible bestowal of the Holy Spirit, and the witness of a heavenly voice declaring his sonship. He has also been entitled "Christ" by the gospel narrator. All of these modes of articulating his identity define as much his difference from those around him, his "alienness," as they do qualities which would make him cognitively assimilable to the gospel's audience (readership). For in order to "open up" Jesus for comprehension, these terms, titles and definitions would have to undergo elaboration and specification in the syntagmatic progression of the narrative. But such a specification does not, in any simple sense, occur. Instead, the narrative registers a Jesus who has the power to amaze--to invoke wonder and awe but also to perplex and confuse--a Jesus who is "present" but alien, textualized but not assimilable, a Jesus who is narratively incorporated.

This mode of articulating identity is intertwined with the rhetoric
of exaltation and abasement which I discussed earlier. Throughout the first half of the gospel, Jesus’ identity is constituted by the power he has over others—the power to cast out demons, the power to heal, the power to grant life, the power to forgive, the power to call, the power to feed, the power to calm the threatening forces of nature, the power to give to one the secret of the kingdom of God; in short, powers which identify him with the activity of God. These powers, which in this portion of the narrative largely comprise his identity (along with his teaching), weigh strongly against his effacement before the words he speaks. Jesus power strongly registers his narratival “presence,” his exaltation, even if the narrative does not specify the way in which that exaltation is to be comprehended. For example, in the first story of Jesus exorcising a demon, he enters a synagogue ostensibly to teach

And immediately there was in their synagogue
a man with an unclean spirit; and he cried out,
“What have you to do with us, Jesus of Nazereth?
Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are,
the Holy One of God.” But Jesus rebuked him saying, “Be silent, and come out of him!” . . . And
they were all amazed, so that they questioned
among themselves, saying, "What is this? A new
teaching! With authority he commands even the
unclean spirits, and they obey him."

(1.22-27)

By entering into the synagogue, Jesus had chosen to emphasize his
teaching, his message. He had chosen to manifest himself in a place where
the word has authority. Yet soon after he arrives (the narrative gives him
time to perform enough teaching to astonish his listeners before his
"immediate" conflict with the demoniac), he is confronted with a situation
which requires not a message but a word with miraculous performative
power. An unclean spirit, apparently through the use of "supernatural"
knowledge, asks Jesus what his purpose is either in coming to the synagogue
or in his ministry in general (the phrasing is ambiguous). He wants to know
if Jesus' purpose is entirely aggressive, to destroy "us." Jesus, asserting
his own power through the abasement of the unclean spirit, commands it to
silence and casts it out. Onlookers respond with wonder and amazement at
Jesus' voiced power, but with incomplete understanding. Though they try to
comprehend Jesus' activity within the category of a "new teaching," they
have no idea what that teaching means except that it has "authority" ("exousian"). This relation of Jesus' teaching and authority echoes the narrator's assertion at the beginning of the pericope that when Jesus had first entered the synagogue and taught, worshippers "were astonished at his teaching, for he taught them as one who had authority ("exousian"), and not as the scribes." In both cases, Jesus' teaching is valued because it has "exousian"—power, authority, warrant, official or ruling power. 77 This enunciative "power," whether due, as in the first instance, to his persuasive capability, his ability to convey the "warrant" that would validate his teaching, or, as in the second instance, to the performative force of his words, their ability to enact their own "rule" over the unclean spirit, receives its meaning diacritically. For Jesus' words receive their power by the tacit abasement of the words of the scribes and by their usurpation of control over the will of the demoniac from a rival supernatural voice. But what the passage delivers is not the content of that teaching but only its force, its "authority." Thus, if one narrativel logic has suggested the need for Jesus' effacement before his message, this pericope conflicts with that logic; for it introduces a situation in which Jesus' words as transmitters of knowledge should be emphasized, and not solely their authority. Though part
of the reason Jesus' words may have "authority" as opposed to the scribes is
their "content," it is not content which is emphasized here but power, not
the ability of words to transmit or convey, but the ability of words to act.

The exaltation of Jesus in the pericope becomes more complicated,
however, when one takes into account the interchange between Jesus and
the unclean spirit. In that exchange, the identity of Jesus and its possible
dissemination is made an issue; for the spirit declares that it "knows"
("oide" from the root "eido," to see\textsuperscript{78}) Jesus, and divulges that knowledge
through its articulation of a descriptive title for Jesus--"the Holy One of
God." Thus Jesus, when properly "seen" or known, when made manifest, when
made "representable" visually, is recognized in his singularity. He is
"hagios" in relation to God--holy, set apart, sacred, dedicated to God, able
to approach God, worthy, cultically acceptable.\textsuperscript{79} By denomining Jesus in
this way at the very moment when the disclosure of an identity for Jesus
might aid cognitive appropriation, and then defining him by his separation,
his difference from others, his sacredness, the unclean spirit creates a
radical rift between Jesus and those around him, a difference which may
resist identification. This sense is tacitly reinforced by slippage in the
spirit's designation of itself with first person plural pronouns. Although
the pronouns "umos" and "umin" (both translated by "us") overtly refer to the spirit alone (since they agree with the spirit in gender), they also, in an associative sense, include Jesus' onlookers. For though the pronouns don't grammatically agree with the narrative's designation of that audience as masculine ("autous"), they do correspond to its plurality. Since the spirit is singular (though a singular reference may subsume a plural nature as with the unclean spirit designated as "Legion" in 5.9), the plural pronouns, even if agrammatically, associate the crowd in the synagogue with the unclean spirit, subliminally including the onlookers within the spirit's own discourse, its own position, in opposition to Jesus. Jesus, the "Holy One of God," thus, in the pericope, is set in contrast not only to the scribes and the unclean spirit, but also to the very crowd which notices his "authority," his "difference." Apparently, then, Jesus exaltation is complete, for he stands in a superior and different position than all the others present.

But within the pericope, Jesus himself tries to efface, to de-articulate, this differential position by commanding the spirit to silence, by preventing the spirit from divulging information which would render him cognitively assimilable. The spirit's attempt to "fix" Jesus' identity verbally, to "capture" it (and thereby epistemically "capture" Jesus
himself), is met with a command to silence. Jesus will allow the awe and wonder of the crowd concerning his authority, but not a verbalization which would serve to reify that authority in terms of identity. Yet this attempt by Jesus to avoid the dissemination of his identity within the text raises the question of whether the gospel’s readers nonetheless garner epistemic access to that identity through the unclean spirit’s “disclosure;” for even though Jesus cuts off the spirit’s revelation of a verbal identity for him, that identity nevertheless is articulated by the text. Later in the gospel, a parallel passage occurs in which Jesus’ continued activity towards unclean spirits is summarized:

> And whenever the unclean spirits beheld him,
> they fell down before him and cried out,
> “You are the Son of God.” and he strictly ordered them not to make him known (“phaneron”).

(3.11-12)

The unclean spirits, speaking in harmony with the voice from heaven which dubbed Jesus after his baptism as its “beloved son,” continually articulate Jesus’ identity and are continually commanded by Jesus not to “make him known.” The use of the verb “phaneroo,” here, which has the senses to
become visible or to be revealed, suggests that there is an identity to Jesus which he wants to keep hidden that is, at least in part, revealed by the designation "Son of God." Within this narratival logic, by designating Jesus as "Son of God," the unclean spirits would render Jesus manifest, cognitively assimilable. In the narrative itself, Jesus' silencing of the spirits serves to thwart the spread of such knowledge. But the gospel's readers do have access to this "knowledge," to this secret about Jesus. Thus, Jesus' attempt to efface his titles within the narrative by silencing the unclean spirits does not extend "outside" the narrative. And if I have asserted that an incorporative logic exists in the text whereby Jesus is not rendered cognitively assimilable but instead is "encrypted" to prevent such assimilation, this language of revelation suggests a contradictory logic, one which calls my own accounting of textual effects into question; for if Jesus has a substantive identity which can be adequately articulated, he cannot also have that same identity encrypted, withheld from manifestation by narrative occlusion.

What the Jesus of the gospel seems to be resisting is the dissemination of a lingual register which would open him and his ministry to being "captured" in a discourse about him. When Jesus, for example, heals
a leper in a pericope that follows closely after the exorcism in the
synagogue, he charges the man to "see that you say nothing to any one; but
go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses
commanded, for a proof to the people" (1.44). The leper, however, rather
than heeding Jesus' injunction, "went out and began to talk freely about it,
and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town,
but was out in the country" (1.45). Having had his physical infirmity healed,
the leper displays the need to proclaim the miracle of his newfound
"cleansness" in spite of Jesus' injunction not to do so. Within the account of
the leper, the effect of this attempt to narratively "capture" and
disseminate the "miracle" of Jesus begets mass interest in his power (allied
with his identity) and not with his message. It renders impossible Jesus'
need to efface himself so that his message can supplant his "presence." For
the leper, Jesus' "being," through his healing activity, becomes the focus of
discourse—not his teaching. In the following pericope, where Jesus heals a
man with a withered hand, the Pharisees too focus on Jesus' ontology—"Who
can forgive sins but God alone?" (2.6)—rather than on his message, an
ontology understood by them solely in terms of rivalry, authority and their
possible abasement before it. For Jesus, then, titles which give epistemic
access to him must be silenced, for they interfere with his own effacement before his teaching. Thus, even though the assigning of titles to Jesus suggests the narrative's interest, by one logic, of "disclosing" his identity, within the narrative Jesus seeks verbally to squelch such attempts to "capture" his ontology in discourse, to render him cognitively assimilable.

In a more comprehensive sense, however, the narrative in its syntagmatic progression undermines the ability of titles or paradigmatic denominations such as those used by the unclean spirits to fully "deliver" identity. Within the narrative itself, the notion of what "Holy One of God" or "Son of God" conveys in terms of epistemic access to Jesus is called into question in two ways: first, by the failure of Jesus' disciples, as Theodore Weeden has suggested, to understand the identity of Jesus; second, by the gospels movement from title to title as the narrative proceeds, from "Son of God" to "Son of man" (Jesus own characteristic designation of himself) to "Christ" (8.29) to "Good Teacher" (10.17) to "Son of David" (Mk. 10.48) to "Jesus of Nazareth" (16.6) [for the "young man" ("neaniskos") in the empty tomb], each denomination functioning to supplement the others, each adding an "excess" to what the other titles signify, but in so doing each indicating the "lack," the insufficiency, the inadequacy of the other titles. If Jesus
needs a multitude of titles spaced throughout the narrative to define his identity, then no one title is complete in itself, no single title re-presents the identity of Jesus, either for the disciples within the gospel or for the gospel’s readers. To use a distinction that I introduced earlier, the titles function in the gospel according to a logic of similitude rather than a logic of resemblance, or, to put it less cryptically, the titles specify their meaning not by reference to the object, the model, which existed prior to them, to the original identity of Jesus, but rather by their differences one from another, by their similarities and differences in the weave of Mark’s discourse. Though scholars such as Theodore Weeden feel that there is a thematic “shift” in the use of titles to define or delimit Jesus’ identity as the narrative proceeds—the narrative, he feels, moves from the use of titles to signify Jesus within a “theos aner” theology to the use of titles to designate a suffering messiah Christology which “deconstructs” the “theos aner” paradigm—which—the inability of the syntagmatic pole of the narrative to specify the meaning for any one title or group of titles in an unambiguous way indicates that the titles function more by similitude than resemblance, by supplementation rather than by specification.

In addition, each of the titles has a complicated and polysemous range
of significations attached to it by its multiple possible uses in other texts or contexts. The term "Son of man," for example, which Jesus habitually uses in the gospel to denominate himself in his "theological" role, has a multitude of possible meanings and links with different religious traditions. Frederick Borsch, in his study of the term, traces its use in the Hebraic bible (particularly in Daniel and Ezekiel) but also in apocryphal books such as I Enoch and the Testament of Levi, and in rabbinic writings. In each of these traditions, the term has a slightly different "field" of signification. By the time Mark's gospel was written, this heterogeneity in the tradition would preclude that the use of "Son of men" as a title of Jesus would either deliver or resolve his identity. Consequently, for the term to have a "clear" meaning in the gospel, that meaning would have to be delimited by a clear and stable context. But if each term in that context has the same possibility for multiple significations, no such stable context can exist.

This supplemental logic, however, is not merely an "exterior" imposition on the text, a theoretical linguistic effect imported into the narrative a priori, but is actually enacted in the gospel itself in, for example, Jesus' own parabolic mode of discourse which simultaneously directs attention away from Jesus towards the kingdom, prevents the
disciples from gaining epistemic access either to the kingdom or to Jesus' identity, declares the effacement of the "messenger" before his "message," and in its continual supplementation of its articulations, complicates the mimetic cast of the narrative with the alien logic of similitude. For almost immediately after the unclean spirits try to "disclose" Jesus' identity, Jesus himself, as if to consciously thwart the "predicational" discourses ("you are the Son of God") directed at him, begins to speak parabolically, to shift his discursive practice from the use of performative imperatives which emphasize his "mimetic" presence, to the use of speech patterns which emphasize the non-disclosive aspects of language, its continual need to supplement itself.

When the scribes, for example, declare that "by the prince of demons he casts out demons" (3.22), Jesus' reply avoids asserting anything about himself, anything that could be construed as self-disclosive; instead, through the deployment of a series of analogies functioning according to a logic of supplementation, he undermines the referential basis of their language: "How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand. And if a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand. And if Satan has risen up against himself and is
divided, he cannot stand, but is coming to an end" (3.23-26). The scribe's accusations, which they thought to be predicational, logical, under the jurisdiction of resemblance, Jesus subverts by exposing it to logical contradiction. If Jesus were a servant of Beelzebub or Satan, why would he wage war against his master's fellow servants—the demons? But Jesus' quibble, which ostensibly is referential—in the world, could such a thing happen?—is actually formal: if a "set" (Satan, house, kingdom) which one postulates as whole and complete is found actually to consist of two opposing "sets", is internally divided, does the original "set" still exist—can a "unity" which is "divided" stand? The formal quality of Jesus' argument emerges from the series of similitudes that Jesus uses to convey it. If an analogy about kingdoms or houses applies equally well to the scribe's accusation as an analogy about Satan, if each supplements the other, if their accusation can be answered by a series of similitudes which replies to the scribes' "predicational" accusation with simulacra depicting formal contradiction, does their language point to reality or merely operate within the formalistic conventions of logic? What Jesus' reply does is reduce their discourse through analogy, through similitude, to rhetoric. By deploying analogies which are not referential (an opposition of Satan against Satan
has no existence outside the fictive structures of language; Jesus’ discourse here allies itself with a model of “truth” as coherence, a formalist modeling of truth, rather than with a model of “truth” as correspondence, a referential or mimetic modeling of truth), Mark has Jesus tacitly undermine the representational conception of discourse, a concept Mark himself continues to use throughout the gospel.

In addition, it provides a further means by which Jesus can exalt himself through the abasement of others. Here, in an agonistic verbal conflict, Jesus deploys the power of language understood as an implicitly formal system which operates within a “law” of non-contradiction against a use of language which is predicative, which seeks to use language as a “transparent” means of communicating a state of affairs (Jesus’ alliance with Satan) that exists is the world. For the scribes, “truth” exists at this point in experience, in the world, even if the “shape” that their “experience” takes is ultimately founded on “codes”--contemporary conventions, the Hebrew bible, midrash, historical matrices, etc. In contrast, for Jesus, at least at this point in the narrative, “truth” exists in the “logical” aspects of language. Thus, abasement implicitly comes to be attached to a discourse in which language relates to “life,” to the world, and exaltation comes to be
attached to a discourse which emphasizes language as a system of formal relationships, as an "inert" closed system (tacitly suggesting stasis, suggesting "death"). This is a significant difference from the narrative's earlier indication of the implicit ligatures which existed between the performative power of language, exaltation and life in Jesus' exorcisms. However, the logic of similitude itself, the fact that Jesus articulates three analogies to refute the scribes' accusation, implies that the formal aspects of Jesus' language are not as rigid as I have suggested. For the analogy of Satan being divided is different than the analogies of the house and the kingdom being divided. The latter two analogies focus on a unity--house, kingdom--constituted by laws and/or agreements among multiple individual agencies, a unity which, if the laws don't hold, could be divided and fall. The first analogy, in contrast, focuses on the unity of a being--Satan--which could not be divided in the same way. Though the analogies are similar, they are not the same. Jesus' language, then, does not hide a "dead" formal system, an algebra, which exists "underneath" it, but rather works by supplementing one meaning with another, threading together a series of similitudes which will not deliver "truth," or even the "life" of representation, but rather the "life" of similitude, of supplementation, of a
tacitly infinite movement from one set of signifiers to another.

Representation or resemblance as a paradigm of lingual functioning is further interrogated by Jesus after he delivers the parable of the sower. The twelve apostles and those with them question Jesus concerning the meaning of parables. Jesus responds:

To you has been given to know the mystery
["musterion"—secret, secret teaching, mystery φρ] of the kingdom of God. But for those outside, everything is in parables; so that they may indeed see but not perceive, and may indeed hear but not understand; lest they should turn again and be forgiven.

(4.11–12)

Jesus’ words in this passage call to mind the split that I have suggested exists between introjective and incorporative modes of textual appropriation. To the “you” Jesus addresses (most directly the audience within the narrative but also, in its ambiguous capacity as a shifter, to the text’s reading audience, suggesting an implicit identification between these two audiences since they can occupy the same textual space), the secret
teaching, the mystery, the secret of the kingdom of God has been given. By this paradigm they, interiorly, have "introjected" a "key," a psychic system of translation which should give them cognitive access to the ontology of the kingdom (though not to the ontology of Jesus himself). This model of parabolic functioning situates the "meaning" of parables under the jurisdiction of resemblance: if one understands parables properly, one knows the "real" content, object or situation to which they refer— one can "pass through" their form to the secret kernel of meaning within.

Understanding occurs (if it occurs) because the receiver of the parable has already been given, has already assimilated the hermeneutic "key" that will allow the disclosure of the parable's meaning. This "key," as Andre Jolles has suggested in his analysis of riddles, is an unstated set of codes and conventions, a "mythic knowledge" (the phrase is Robert Scholes), which provides the internalized framework through which the "meaning" of the parable is processed. This "knowledge," then, would allow the "introjection" of the "content" of the parable, would release it from its resistance to meaning resulting from its formal structure. It is this "knowledge," implicitly, that Jesus has already given to the disciples.

However, as Jesus' discourse also articulates, not all hearers have
access to the "secret" that would allow them to assimilate the parables cognitively. For them, the absence of this "knowledge," of the "secret," serves to keep them "outside" the circle of "initiates" who possess the secret knowledge. These people, within the model of parabolic functioning as delivered by Jesus, would experience parables in a radically different way than would the "insiders." Rather than being able to "translate" the parable through their special interiorized knowledge or codes, they would have to deal with the parables resistance to disclosure, the difficulties of its structure, without the aid of a "key," a mediating meta-discourse. This lack would block them completely from comprehending the parables; a parable, for them, would function as a "crypt," an exterior object-text which could be incorporated but not absorbed or assimilated within the pre-existing cognitive structures of the "self." Kelber suggests in accordance with this "double" effect that Jesus' description of parabolic functioning invokes an insider-outsider dichotomy in which those on the inside, those "possessing" the "secret"—specifically the twelve—are gradually pushed outside during the syntagmatic progression of the narrative.66 If this is so, if the insiders cannot "understand" the parables and gradually come to perceive them as "crypts," as empty tombs of
meaning, then it also suggests a shift in the narrative's manifestation of
the role of parable, from portraying it as a species of resemblance, as a
linguual unit whose primary operation is referential, to portraying it as a
species of similitude, as a mode of discourse which repeats itself
incessantly without re-presenting its supposed object.

In the sower pericope, this shift is immediately at issue since the
disciples, those designated as having been given the "secret" of the kingdom,
do not understand Jesus' parable. Jesus notices this and queries: "Do you
not know ["oidete"] this parable and how shall you know ["gune"este"] all
parables?" (4.13, my translation). Mark's use of the term "kai" to connect
the two clauses syntactically (a link omitted in the RSV translation)
suggests a relationship between the clauses: if one cannot understand this
parable, if one's secret, interior discursive practice cannot assimilate it,
how can one expect to "know," have interior access to any parable? When
Jesus offers his own, allegorical interpretation of the sower parable, he
implies the possibility of closure, of a hermeneutic completion which would
translate and thereby erase the significance of the specific lingual form of
the parable itself. However, as he continues speaking, he continues to talk
about the kingdom and continues to use parables. The interpretation he had
offered the disciples was not enough to "resemble" the object to which the parable supposedly referred—the irruption of the kingdom—for the first parable needs to be augmented, supplemented, by others. Thus he delivers the parable of the growing seed (4:26–29) and the parable of the mustard seed (4:30–32). Significantly, while the sower parable had been presented as a "metaphorical" presentation of the kingdom, in the later parables Jesus shifts from the use of parable as metaphor to its use as simile, attempting to specify more clearly the analogy which the parable attempts to construct. The introduction of "as" ("hōs") in both later parables indicates the "conscious" use of them as similitudes. If, as Paul Ricoeur has argued, the "productivity" of parable is related to its "metaphorical process," then this shift by Jesus away from the "extravagance" of metaphor to the comparative "banality" of simile has a double edge: on the one hand, it is a shift towards comprehension since simile, in its specification of the analogy it is predicated on, does not require the cognitive "leap" necessitated by metaphor to grasp that analogy; on the other hand, however, it is a shift away from understanding, since the object to which the simile refers, in this case the kingdom, is rendered in a way which does not attempt to "transport" it through a lingual translation into metaphorical
presence, but only to reduplicate it through difference, the operation of similitude.

The effect of this shift is to call the possibility of "metaphorical" delivery of the kingdom itself into question. If simile can take the place of metaphor, if they are interchangeable across their small differences, if in Mark, parables functioning according to the dictates of metaphor and parables functioning according to the dictates of simile circulate freely across the text, can one clearly distinguish their operations? Can the sower parable in its "extravagance" render the kingdom or refer to it with any more efficaciousness than simile? The answer seems to be no, for within the narrative, parables do not deliver Jesus' teaching to anyone, particularly the disciples. As Mark narrates:

> With many such parables he spoke the word to them, as they were able to hear it; he did not speak to them without a parable, but privately to his own disciples he explained everything.

(4.33-34)

According to this narratival summary, Jesus does not speak to anyone
without using parables, whether insider or outsider. Mark, in fact, emphasizes the profusion of Jesus' use of parabolic discourse, depicting Jesus as speaking with as many parables as "they" were able to "hear" ("akouo"). Mark's use of the verb "akouo" in this passage introduces a subtle irony, however, since it signifies both the sensory registering of sound, a connotation which suggests no necessary comprehension of what is heard, and also, by a conventional figurative extension, understanding or comprehension. In a sense, then, Mark suggests that the hearers do and do not understand the parables though Jesus depiction of parabolic functioning as preventing understanding would strengthen the sense that the hearers do not understand them. For the disciples, this non-comprehension, however, is specified, since Jesus must "explain" ("epiluo"—explain, interpret, but also set free or release) everything to them privately. The disciples, exalted as insiders by being given "the secret of the kingdom of God," here are simultaneously exalted and abased. On the one hand, they are exalted because they have access to the the explanations of Jesus, his "release" of parabolic meaning from its cryptic form; but on the other hand, they are abased, since as insiders they still cannot understand parables on their own, either do not possess or cannot use the hermeneutic "key" which Jesus has
given to them. The implication in this abasement is that the disciples' unperceptiveness in relation to Jesus teaching is not something that can be eliminated. Parables, one gradually comes to suspect, render all "outsiders," lingually distanced from comprehending the teaching of Jesus, dependent on Jesus' own elaboration of parabolic meaning for understanding to occur. And if, as Mark writes, "he did not speak to them without a parable," if all his discourse is somehow parabolic, then his explanations may not be able to be understood any better than his parables. Perhaps all Jesus' discourse is an infinite circulation of similitudes which have no ultimate referent, and which therefore force those who wish to understand the discourse, like the disciples, continually to refer back to the source of the parables—Jesus himself.

This logic, however, is contradicted by the depiction of Jesus and his words within certain parables. In the sower parable, for example, the "word" grows autonomously, apart from the "sower," even if that growth is not always successful. This autonomous growth occurs in the absence of the sower. The sower merely plants the seed and leaves, and the organism which sprouts has no similarity to the originator of its growth. Since the seed in the parable is translated by Jesus into the "word" in his explanation,
one might infer that the "sower," though not identified by Jesus himself as such, signifies the activity of Jesus. This identification is supported by the pattern in the Markan narrative of Jesus constantly leaving places where he has "taught" (see, for example, 1.29, 1.35, 3.7, 3.13, 4.35, 5.21 and 6.1). In the narrative, Jesus distances himself spatially from places where he has spoken and performed miracles in order to prevent the attempt to "capture" his identity, in order to disseminate his message elsewhere. In the parable, the sower also distances himself from the areas where he has sown, allowing his "seed" to grow in isolation. Though this has the effect of allowing the "seed" to die in some areas, in others it produces tremendous growth. One thing, however, which does not interfere with the growth of the seed is the continued "presence" of the sower himself. The "seed," the word, has a life of its own, its own organismic existence, which is not dependent on the status of the sower. The sower's absence, his figurative death or abasement before the seed which he leaves behind and on which the parable focuses, does not arrest or block the seed's growth; instead, when the seed falls on "good soil" it grows with miraculous fecundity, "yielding thirtyfold, and sixtyfold and a hundredfold" (4.8).

If the role of the sower, as I have suggested, is analogous to that of
Jesus, then Jesus, parabolically, has articulated, if not the "necessity" of his effacement before his message, then at least a need to cryptically signify the possibility of such an effacement. In Jesus' explanation of the parable, it is the identity of the sower which is effaced, for it is the one major term in the parable which does not receive an interpretive translation in Jesus' "setting free" of the meaning of the parable; it is one "identity" which Jesus narratively resists releasing. This abasement of the "sower" and its relation to the kingdom of God recurs in a slightly different form in another of Jesus' parables:

The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come.

(4.26–29)

Since Jesus' reading, as portrayed by Mark, of his own parable is allegorical,
I will deploy Jesus' own method strategically here. In this parable, which by simile contracts an analogy to the kingdom of God, once again there appears a "sower," "seed," and miraculous autonomous growth of that seed. Here, even more strongly than in the earlier parable, Jesus emphasizes the independence of the one who scatters the seed and the seed's eventual growth. The agent in the parable is no longer a "sower" but a "man" whose occupation is less clearly defined by his role in spreading the seed. Significantly, he no longer "sows" but "scatter[s]" ("belllo") his material, acting almost as if without purpose. In addition, he does not merely absent himself from the seed after its dissemination, but remains "near" the seed oscillating between presence and absence through the rhythms of sleep and waking. Nonetheless, in spite of this carefully articulated separation of the "man" from the seed, the seed springs up and ripens "he knows not how." The only aspect of control that the "man" has is the harvest of what the seed produces. Thematically, this portrayal of the bearer of the seed, of the "word," to use Jesus' earlier translation, corresponds to Jesus own ministry in which he disseminates the word almost randomly, "throws" it here and there across Galilee, the land of the Gerasenes, eventually Jerusalem, doesn't "tend" it, but eventually will, as the empowered "Son of man" of the
Markan "little" apocalypse, gather his harvest (13.27). As in the earlier parable, the word as seed grows apart from the one who disseminates it; the messenger is effaced before the organic and spontaneous growth of the message. This theme, then, would suggest, perhaps, the inevitable distanciation of Jesus from the "word" which grows not by the nurturance of its sower but by its own capacity to exfoliate, which grows by the miraculous fecundity of the earth, a tacit implication of the power of God (or, more arcane, of the "text" as the "ground" of the word) in contrast to that of the "sower," to that of Jesus.

But this logic of effacement, which culminates in the crucifixion, in the physical absence of Jesus from the arena in which he has disseminated his word, is contradicted by the narrative's logic of incorporation which memorializes the "presence" of Jesus by textualizing it, even beyond his "death." This "presence" of Jesus, as in the parables I have just discussed where his implicit function as referent for the discourse is suggested by Jesus' own allegorical interpretation and resisted by the parable's own formal specificity and shape (is Jesus merely a scatterer of seed or is his dissemination of the word different than that articulated in the parables since he does try to "nurture" or explain the word to his disciples), operates
in the narrative's continued oscillation between resemblance and similitude as its modes of "representational" logic. For example, immediately after the narration of Jesus' use of parables, with their function as non-indexive pointers to the kingdom (by which I mean as discursive practices which emphasize there desire to point but which point out *nothing*), Mark has Jesus cross the sea of Galilee to the land of the Gerasenes where he heals a demoniac. Significantly, now that Jesus is in Gentile territory where the attachment of a title to him would not involve him in a web of intertextual references to Hebraic writings and traditions, where the attachment of a title to him would not be able to articulate so easily with a pre-existing linguistic framework or set of expectations, he does not silence the "spirit" when it calls him "son of the Most High God" (5.7), nor does Jesus try to regulate the discourse of the man he has healed. Though for the spirit the title he gives to Jesus serves to "fix" his identity, a use of language to re-present a hidden but "true" aspect of Jesus, tacitly a mode of speech working according to the logic of resemblance, amongst the Gerasenes, who have no means to "arrest" the significations of the term within a fixed framework, no meta-discourse to "key" its referentiality, the term would only be able to function according to the logic of similitude. Thus, Jesus
actually tells the healed demoniac to tell his friends "how much the Lord has done" (5.19). In a land in which his identity and the titles that might appear to define it have little power to allow cognitive absorption of Jesus according to the paradigm of resemblance, Jesus allows such articulations voice, allows them "life."

As the gospel proceeds, Jesus continues to use language as if it could convey or transmit information, though Mark almost invariably shapes the narrative to show how understanding has not taken place, how a discourse delivered as if it functioned according to the parameters of resemblance actually functions within the story more according to the mode of similitude. When Jesus walks on water before the disciples, for example, and they fear him, he tries to calm them with the statement: "Have courage, I am ["ego eimi"]" (6.50, my translation). The phrase "ego eimi," according to Weedon, "has been recognized for some time as a formal title of the Deity."90 Thus while miraculously supported on the waves of the sea, Jesus apparently gives to himself a deific denomination. But the disciples, perplexed by his previous feeding of the multitudes (6.30–44), are stupified, beside themselves ("existemi"), "for they did not understand about the loaves, but their hearts were hardened" (6.51). For the disciples, Jesus'
remembered "presence," the miraculous activities that he had performed which had centered a particular type of attention on him, block the possibility that language can "reveal" his identity, that it can, even in its representational fallenness, refer to or disclose his identity. Jesus' "presence," then, here incorporative for his identity cannot be assimilated by the disciples, functions to negate the efficacy of his words—the presence of the sower blocks the growth of his seed.

Occasionally, during this portion of the narrative, someone other than the disciples will to some extent grasp Jesus' discourse particularly in its performative power. The Syrophoenician woman, for example, answers Jesus' parabolic comments with an equally "metaphoric" discourse of her own, and thereby prods him into healing her daughter, prods him into restoring to his daughter a single, unified consciousness (7.24-29). By deploying "parabolic" discourse of her own, however, by being able to assimilate that of Jesus, to negotiate its "formal" difficulty, the Syrophoenician woman momentarily upsets the narrative's logic that all people are diacritically abased before Jesus. Since the woman speaks the same language as Jesus, she becomes "like" Jesus. Jesus himself emphasizes this when he authorizes the healing by saying, "On account of
this word["ton logon"] go your way; the demon has gone out from your daughter" (7.29, my translation and emphasis). Because of the word the woman has spoken, because of her reckoning or reasoning (another possible meaning for “logos”\footnote{1}) of her role in relation to Jesus, because, at least in this instance, she understands him, operates with the same linguistic codes and competencies as he does, Jesus agrees to use the performative power of his discourse to heal her daughter. Thus, comprehension of Jesus’ discourse becomes, in this sequence, both a possibility and a means of acquiring favor. Though the woman’s comprehension of Jesus’ words does not, in the narrative, function toward disclosing his “identity” to her, nonetheless it disrupts her absolute abasement before him and also before Jesus’ Jewish compatriots who cannot reduplicate Jesus’ discourse. For the reader, then, if for no-one else, the pericope of the Syrophoenician woman holds up the possibility of understanding Jesus, of assimilating Jesus’ discourse, of hearing it within the logic of resemblance. This possibility of appropriation, however, does not imply epistemic access to Jesus himself; rather, it implies, at least much more strongly, the possibility of understanding Jesus’ parabolic teaching, the words he issues not about himself but about one’s place or conduct in the world. Perhaps, then, this
pericope suggests a subtle differentiation within the narrative between its portrayal of the possibility of assimilating the metaphorical pedagogy of Jesus and other pericope's portrayal of the near impossibility of comprehending Jesus' identity, of assimilating him. Or perhaps, it merely suggests a conflict in the gospel's portrayal of Jesus' speech, declaring, on the one hand that one would have to possess the "secret," "mythic knowledge," in order to be able to understand parabolic discourse, and, on the other hand, that someone without such "knowledge" can nonetheless "intuit" Jesus' meaning in spite of its metaphoric mediation.

For the disciples, however, the narrative gives space for no such possibility. Within the narrative, they are enmeshed in the discursive practices and codes of their social realm which seek to identify the "messiah" through improper paradigms, to cognitively assimilate him through linguistic identification, through resemblance. But this quest does not lead to a "proper" understanding of Jesus, to an "interior" knowledge of him. Even when Peter most succinctly gives to Jesus an appropriate title, one validated by the narrator's use of the same title in the gospel's opening line, the context implies Peter's ignorance rather than knowledge:

"Who do men say that I am?" And they told him,
"John the Baptist; and others say Elijah, and others one of the prophets." And he asked them, "But who do you say that I am?" Peter answered him, "You are the Christ." And he rebuked ("epitima") them in order that they speak to no-one concerning him (my emphasis and translation). And he began to teach them that the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again. And he said this plainly ("paresia," my emphasis). And Peter took him, and began to rebuke ("epitima") him. But turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked ("epitima") Peter, and said, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men.

(8.27-33)

The question with which Jesus initiates the first exchange---"Who do men say that I am?---elicits a response that mixes similitude and
resemblance. On the one hand, for the disciples, the possible identities of Jesus which they recount--John, Elijah, a prophet--function as similitudes yoked together in an axis of equivalence which does not privilege or give an ostensive "value" to any term. On the other hand, however, each title, for the "constituency," the "men," who reportedly utter it, signifies through resemblance; each functions to disclose an aspect of or identity for a paradigmatic model which exists in its "fullness" outside language--Jesus himself. When Peter identifies Jesus as the anointed one, the Christ, he too asserts a term as functioning through resemblance, as a title giving epistemic access to the "truth" of Jesus' identity. Jesus, however, upon hearing Peter's response, a response that his own questioning had prodded, rebukes not only Peter but all the disciples ("autous") in order that they do not disseminate the title to others. As a term betraying an illusory cognitive assimilation of Jesus, an "introjection," it runs counter to the narrative's incorporative thrust, here manifested in Jesus' drawing attention to his identity only to "re-inscribe" it in a different way. The issue is not that the designation is wrong, but that as a privileged signifier it gives a false sense of "knowing" about Jesus. This confusion on Peter's part is exposed in the succeeding pericope when Jesus substitutes the title
"Son of man" for Peter’s denomination, and then exfoliates the significance of this change with a prophetic account of the crucifixion. It is significant that at this moment when Jesus' own discourse begins to slide back towards resemblance (though the title "Son of man" at this point has not been specified, functioning diacritically, the prophecy is founded on a narratival event with which its accuracy as a representation can be compared), the narrator articulates Jesus as now speaking "openly," as if by following a certain discursive practice (that of resemblance), similitude and its related discursive mode, parabolic discourse, would disappear. Weeden, attuned to this possible implication, sees this moment as a dividing point in the narrative, suggesting that here the gospel shifts to stressing "the unambiguous, unconcealed character of Jesus' Christological teaching."92

Yet the gospel does not exhibit a simple, coherent shift. The intrication and interweaving of resemblance and similitude, of discourse implying possibilities of verification and knowledge and discourse which subverts that possibility, continues through the remainder of the text, preventing the reader, at least in part, in accordance with the psychodynamics of incorporation, from cognitively assimilating Jesus as a suffering messiah. After Jesus speaks "openly," for example, Peter, lacking
an interior paradigm, a "pre-understanding" capable of processing so foreign a narration of future events, lacking perhaps the "secret of the kingdom of God," the meta-discourse or code which would allow Peter to assimilate Jesus' prophecy, rebukes him. As Kelber has noted, the narrative also accentuates the inability of the twelve (either as a group or through the use of synecdoche in which one or two members of the group stand for the whole) to comprehend Jesus' discourse immediately after his two other passion predictions (9.31, 10.33–34).93 For Kelber, this textual configuration signifies the final translation of the disciples from being "insiders," those who have privileged and "secret" access to the "secret of the kingdom of God," to "outsiders," those whose understanding is both regulated and confused by Jesus' use of parabolic discourse.94 Yet the misunderstanding of the twelve, which does indicate their failure throughout the narrative to epistemically grasp either Jesus or the kingdom, also serves to problematize the notion that epistemic access to Jesus can occur at all. The twelve, then, kept from "interior" introjective access to Jesus by their inability to know him even when he teaches "openly" through an explicitly referential discourse, through resemblance, call into question the possibility of ever possessing the "living" Jesus, the Jesus whose
narratival "presence" constantly occludes the discourses (both his own and Mark's) about him. Jesus, for the twelve, remains external, an "exterior" surface which resists either linguistic or specular absorption into the self.

If the gospel, then, contains two major contradictory logics (in addition to numerous "other" logics and textual configurations), one which necessitates Jesus' effacement, his abasement, to give autonomous "life" to his words, the other requiring a continuous non-assimilable "presence" of Jesus, a Jesus who cannot be effaced, perhaps the place to look for a possible mediation of this conflict is in the crucifixion narrative, where these two patterns (both in the text and constructed by my reading) appear to cross. The depiction of the abasement of Jesus heightens as the narrative progresses towards his death. Though the narrative still focuses on Jesus, never releasing him from its "need" to "present" him, the emphasis is now more clearly on his eventual death, his absolute abasement in obedience to God, the necessity to enact his translation out of the realm of "presence" defined as spatial proximity. In the Gethsemane sequence, Jesus' abasement becomes a primary focus of the narrative. In this pericope, Jesus is abased in two ways. First, his voice has no performative power. His use of imperatives, so compelling in the early portions of the narrative,
particularly with unclean spirits, the ill and the dead (5.41), here is impotent to enact its dictates; it has no authority. When Jesus orders Peter, James and John to "remain here and watch" (14.34), rather than obeying him they fall asleep. If, as I have suggested earlier, Jesus' power, his exaltation, is expressed in the narrative by the abasement of others, in this sequence this model becomes more complicated. On the one hand, by sleeping through Jesus' sufferings, by their non-obedience, the three disciples manifest their "outsider" status in relation to Jesus; their "transgressive" behavior signifies their alienation from the system of status and power oriented in the gospel around Jesus. However, their disobedience, their ability to resist Jesus' demand, increases their power to act in relation to Jesus. At the beginning of the gospel, when Jesus commanded, "follow me," they obeyed, even though that command, for John and James, meant abandoning their father. Here, when Jesus orders their vigilance, the need of their bodies for sleep outweighs the power of his words and they doze. This suggests for Jesus a shift in his lingual economy from the valorization of the performative power of his use of imperatives to the devaluation of that same power.

The second way in which the abasement of Jesus manifests itself
in the pericope is in the differentiation of his will from that of his "Father."
For the first time in the narrative, the "will" or "desire" of Jesus is clearly
differentiated from that of God as father. In fact, in two earlier instances
in the narrative, at his baptism and at the transfiguration, Jesus was
exalted by the positive emphasis on the bond of filiation between himself
and God—he was declared to be God's "beloved Son" (1.11, 9.7). Throughout
the gospel, filial bonds of one type or another have served, I think, as a
primary model of human interconnectedness. Repeatedly, the narrative
presents fathers or mothers seeking the healing of one of their children
(5.23, 7.25, 9.17), pointing to the investment of parents in their children,
perhaps tacitly indicating the blurring of boundaries of self between
parents and children. This emphasis on filiation also occurs in the parable
of the vineyard and the tenants in which the violence committed against the
owner's son signifies violence against the owner himself (12.1-9). In
addition, early in the gospel, filiation is emphasized as the model for one's
relationship of discipleship with Jesus, for when a crowd tells him that his
mother and brothers wish to talk to him, Jesus declares that "whoever does
the will of God is my brother, and sister, and mother" (3.35). For Jesus,
blood ties are not the true measure of filiation; instead, filiation is an
effect of obedience, of embedding oneself in and enacting the codes of the
"Father."

Thus filiation as a model of human relations in the narrative implies
the blurring of ego boundaries in a double sense: the investment of the
parent in the child, seeing the child as extension of oneself, and the
assimilation, by the child, of the "will," the "Symbolic order" to use Lacan's
phrase, of the Father, the sharing with the Father the codes of language.
In the Gethsemane sequence, Jesus' abasement functions against this
constellation of motifs manifesting filiation. For Jesus, Gethsemane is the
crucial moment in the narrative when his will, his own verbal codes and
desires, do not match those of God. His desire, at this point, is for "life,"
for the continuation of his corporeal existence against the
prophesied—verbally coded and constituted—necessity of his own death, a
"death" which exists primarily in the desires and verbal order of his
"Father." Thus, in a moment of almost infantile diminution and abasement,
Jesus begs the alliance of God's will with his own: "Abba, Father, all thing
are possible to thee; remove this cup from me; yet not what I will, but what
thou wilt" (14:36). Here "life" as "presence" in the world and "death" as
"textualization" are carefully brought into conflict, the life of imaginary
freedom, the freedom to be the father, to have the father's will adapt to
one's own being juxtaposed against the death of the "fall" into the father's
system of symbolization, his system of narrating the world, against the
death of having the father as an internal, introjected, assimilated order
within the self. In Gethsemane, Jesus' verbal power, his ability for
self-articulation, is radically undermined; in a transition that has affinities
with Lacan's version of Dedipal passage, Jesus' illusory autonomy is abased
by the aggressive, silent intrusion of the father's codes into his own psyche.
Jesus, within the narrative, within his own story-consciousness, is
interiorly "textualized," his own identity given up to that of the "Other."

This abasement, occurs, significantly, in the absence of the father,
in the implicit withdrawal of God's presence from Jesus. When God was
"present" to Jesus through the oral contact of the "voice" from heaven,
filiation was asserted and stressed. In Gethsemane, however, when Jesus
prays for a change in God's will, prays that his filiation with God will cause
God to recognize his own blurred ego boundaries with Jesus, see him as a
partial extension of himself, and rescue him from the "death" of God's will,
he receives no answer. He prays three times, but the narrative does not give
a response. Jesus' imploring conjures nothing. His attempt to be God, then,
to be the Father, to assert his will in opposition to God, occurs in the
narrative at the moment of abandonment, the moment when introjected
textualization supplants identification as Jesus' mode of contact with
God. The "death" involved in this abasement, in this remodeling of filiation
as control by the "Other," by the symbolic order of the Father, becomes
manifest most clearly in the crucifixion itself, where Jesus, during the
moments of supreme obedience, the moments of his death, cries out:

"Eloi, eloi lama sabachthani?" which means, "My
God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"

(15.34)

What Jesus tacitly articulates here during this moment of his
abasement, of his erasure, is the rupture of his filial ties with God. The God
formerly denominated in Aramaic by the term "abba" is now termed
"eloi"—*God* rather than *father*—in a sentence which specifically
emphasizes abandonment, abjection, abasement. One may ask, at this point,
whether this moment of abasement, of effacement, is merely part of a
strategic absenting of Jesus in order to change the emphasis from him to
his "spoken" words or, more radically, to the words which incorporate him in
the gospel. Or whether this is not a moment of effacement at all, but a
moment of mediation in which Jesus' "corporeal" and narratival "presence" undergoes a process of translation, in which, to "paraphrase" Rudolph Bultmann's formulation, the messenger becomes the message.

Central to the interpretation of the abasement and death of Jesus on the cross as a moment of mediation is a particular reading of the centurion's proclamation that " Truly this man was the Son of God!" (15.39). In such a reading, the words of the centurion would recuperate the rupture in filiation that occurred on the cross by designating Jesus even in death as "Son of God," would suggest the release of this identity from its "secrecy" since it has been recognized by a Gentile, and would valorize this identity of Jesus as suffering messiah as the central thrust of the text. Such an interpretation, I would suggest, is the product of a certain desire on the part of the reader to, in the phrasing of Peter Brooks, "read for the plot."96

In Brooks' view:

We read the incidents of narration as 'promises and annunciations' of final coherence, that metaphor [by which he means a totalizing reading] that may be reached through the chain of metonymies.97
At the end of the text, in this narration of how one reads, one comes, in retrospection, to gather the varied threads produced by "metonymy," by the relation between parts and parts in the narrative, those "incidents of narration" perceived as "promises and annunciations," and twist them together, through "metaphor" (a process I called synechdoche earlier in this paper), into a coherent whole. But does one necessarily read this way? When I read the centurion’s proclamation, I am puzzled; for me, it doesn’t provide a stable point from which to orient previous narrative effects but rather a radically de-stabilized point, one which calls into question the "end" of this text (and perhaps by analogy any text) as a place of the final recuperation of narrative "sense." For if the centurion’s proclamation is a moment of narrative "apotheosis," why does he frame his proclamation in the imperfect rather than in the present tense ("alethos houtos ho anthropos huios theou en, " my emphasis)? And why is the denomination "Son of God" ("huios theou") lacking a definite article? Why does it suggest that, perhaps, for the centurion, Jesus is one "Son of God" among others?

The use of the imperfect tense ("en") allows at least two contradictory statements to reconfigure the centurion’s phrasing: that this man was habitually and still is the (or, in keeping with the absence of the
definite article, "a") Son of God, but also that this man was a Son of God in
the past, implicitly during his life. This latter meaning, less immediately
overt, receives support, however from the narrator's conjunction of a
genitive participle connoting time ("idōn ho kenturion," 15.8) with a
subordinate clause which intimates that the centurion's response is
elicited by Jesus' death: "When the centurion saw, the one standing facing
him, that thus, shouting, he expired, he said...." (15.36, my translation).
Though this may cryptically express his grasp of a suffering messiah
Christology, it may also tacitly indicate a denial of that possibility. For
within the narrative, the centurion has already witnessed the strange
darkening of the world that coincides with Jesus' placement on the cross,
Jesus' cry of God-forsakenness (since it is in Aramaic, however, the
centurion may not understand it, a notion reinforced by the narrator's
comment that what the centurion heard was Jesus' "shouting," foregrounding
the noise level of the outcry rather than its content) and, for the
Greek-speaking audience of the gospel which might not know the spatial
distance separating the temple from Golgotha, a distance which has no
narratival reality and which Mark does not comment on or emphasize,
perhaps the tearing of the temple veil. Thus, the centurion, influenced by
these "miraculous" occurrences, may have been declaring that this man was, as these miracles attest, until his death, the/a Son of God. The elision of the verb "en" from the proclamation would have eliminated this ambiguity, giving the confession a definite present import. The fact that the verb is unnecessary grammatically to the sentence and is nevertheless included suggests that its "semantic excess" has some significance. In contrast to a recuperative reading of the line, then, one could also read the line as responding to two entirely different logics: on the one hand, it may indicate the identification of Jesus in death as the suffering messiah, and act to textualize that identification; or it may resist the identification of Jesus as "Son of God" after his death, resist a statement which would provide epistemic access to him, allow his assimilation, his introjection, which would enact the shift from messenger to message, from proclaimer to proclaimed. By emphasizing his physical death, perhaps even the finality of it, the centurion keeps Jesus incorporatively "present," keeps the narrative focused on him; on his abasement, on his necessary absence, and on the ability of that absence to generate statements about him, not "knowing" statements, not a Christology, but cryptic statements, words inscribed across the narrative tomb of his articulated death.
In keeping with this incorporative logic, the narrative denies the presence of the risen Jesus to either the disciples or any other witnesses. After the crucifixion, three women--Mary Magdalene, Salome, and Mary the mother of James--bring spices to anoint the body of Jesus which they imagine to be still inside the tomb. But when they reach the burial site, they discover that the stone sealing the mouth of the tomb has been rolled away. Upon entering, they see a “young man” (“neaniskos”) who tells them that Jesus “has risen; he is not here” (16.15). The young man emphasizes the physical absence of Jesus, directing the women to the spot where Jesus had lain. He then instructs them to go and tell Peter and the other disciples to meet the risen Jesus in Galilee as Jesus had told them earlier (at 14.28). But, according to the narrator, they do not disseminate the message but rather, frightened to silence, let the message die with them: “And they went out and fled from the tomb; for fear and astonishment had come upon them; and they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid” (16.8, my emphasis). By having the women not deliver the message of the resurrection, Mark apparently bars the disciples from seeing the risen Jesus. Having scattered in grief and fear themselves, and in ignorance in response to the events leading to and encompassing the crucifixion, they
have little narratival probability of remembering Jesus' earlier remark that when he was risen from the dead, he would go before them to Galilee. The young man's directive from the tomb thus has a critical importance: to remind them of Jesus' earlier prophecy and to declare the resurrection. But since the women do not transmit the message, because they are immobilized by misrecognition and misunderstanding, the disciples do not receive the "secret" that would lead them to new contact with Jesus. Thus, they remain in ignorance, cut off from their resurrected master.

By this "logic" the gospel's ending portrays a Jesus who, even after his resurrection, remains spatially separate from his followers. At least two separate endings were written by early Christians to "correct" this anomaly, both depicting a meeting between Jesus and the twelve. Within the strand of "logic" (in the text and created by my reading), however, which I have designated incorporative, such contact is not possible. If the disciples had met with Jesus after his rising, they would have had a new access to him, a new understanding of his resurrected status and being. This knowledge would have reduced his "otherness," remove him from the partial crypt constituted by certain aspects of the Markan narrative and locate him, however problematically, in the space of the "self." By not narrating a
post-resurrection meeting between Jesus and the twelve, Mark may be "limiting" or "cutting off" two modes of access to Jesus: that of oral charismatics, to follow Kelber's oral-written distinction in the gospel's dynamics, who might claim, in the tradition of the disciples, to have experienced a "meeting" with the risen Jesus; or, in a reading less predicated on imagined historical circumstance (I say "imagined" because one sees the orality and "history" Kelber talks about only through the double mediation of writing and a certain re-presentation of "history"), that of textual revelation which, by narrating Jesus' post-resurrection condition, purpose and function, would have submitted him to epistemic assimilation, to "being known." In the narrative, Jesus disappears from human contact at the moment of his death, buried in a physical crypt which cannot hold him, "buried" in a textual crypt from which he *can and cannot* escape, can escape by being narrated, by being signified, cannot escape because that writing, which *is* Jesus, does not "deliver" him, does not, through resemblance, re-present or refer to a Jesus who has "real" existence in any sense outside of the crypt of writing. Though Jesus is said to "live" after death, the reader's access to that life is problematized by Mark who suspends Jesus in an absence which is not death, but which is not properly life either. Thus, in
this reading, Jesus is presented as textually incorporated, narratively "present" in the text but sealed off from identification or introjection, a trace, a phantom, a lost object which remains in a place where it can be located and written about if not cognitively "found."

But, by a different "logic," one could suggest, as with the proclamation by the centurion, that this narrative ending merely aids in effacing Jesus, in cutting off his "physical" presence so that others, such as the Markan text itself, can textualize him, release his message from the problematics of his presence. In Gethsemane, after Jesus' arrest, a "young man," ("neaniskos") appears "wearing a linen cloth ["sindon," also a baptismal or burial cloth\textsuperscript{100}] upon his naked body" (14.51, my translation). This young man, as Jesus had been, is seized by those who came with Judas, but unlike Jesus he "left the linen cloth and ran away naked" (14.52). Kermode, in his effort to explain the youth's strange existence in the gospel, suggests that perhaps he is a function of narrative obscurity.\textsuperscript{101} He also suggests a possible link between the youth in this pericope and the one who appears in the tomb after the resurrection, since both are designated by the term "neaniskos," a term which does not occur elsewhere in the gospel. Kermode himself wonders if the link is significant. Reading
psychoanalytically, however, this textual relation signifies as does another: the verbal connection between the young man and the dead Jesus, both of whom wear a "s indon" (14.51-52, 15.46), a term which appears only at these two junctures in the narrative. Thus, the text indicates a cryptic relationship between the young man in Gethsemane, the dead body of Jesus, and the young man in the tomb. What this cryptic set of relations suggest, however, in contrast to the "logic" of incorporation which I have just articulated, is a "logic" of identification. In Gethsemane, the young man, proleptically wearing a burial cloth, has an experience that parallels that of Jesus: both are seized by institutional authorities. The young man, however, does not parallel Jesus' response to his captors. Where Jesus submits peacefully, having already introjected the voice of the "Other" in Gethsemane calling for his own death, the young man, "dressed" for death in his "s indon," flees. Exterierly related to Jesus by his garment, a link which the syntagmatic chain of the narrative will make slightly more explicit later, he cannot, at this point, interiorly replicate Jesus' response--Jesus' consciousness does not merge with that of the young man. In this non-identification the young man's garment is snatched from him. Unable to share in Jesus' physical capture, his abasement, his death, in Jesus'
acceptance of the voice of the "Other," the young man physically separates himself from Jesus as well. As Jesus is brought to Jerusalem, he flees ostensibly in the opposite direction.

Later in the gospel, the "sindon" reappears, but now it covers the dead body of Jesus. The young man who in the garden had had the opportunity to identify with Jesus through his inability to enact that identification has his burial cloth return to its "originary" place—on Jesus. But the garment, though indicating a spatial separation between the young man and Jesus, also subliminally indicates a continuing correspondance. If the young man wore the garment proleptically for Jesus, perhaps Jesus now—dead, inert—wears the garment for him. This suggests, perhaps, an identification not with the life of Jesus, but perhaps with his death. But the gospel does not end the ligatures between the "neaniskos" and Jesus with that possible identification, for in the gospel's final pericope, the "young man," the "neaniskos," appears again in a translated form, now wearing not a burial cloth but a white robe. Here, standing in the place of Jesus' burial, the young man himself speaks in the place of Jesus, suggesting a partial identification in which the young man displaces Jesus with his own speaking voice, a gesture which effaces Jesus, which allows
him to textualize the resurrection of Jesus through the discourse he issues about it.

But this effacement and textualization does not negate Jesus' "presence" as the text's centering and lost object. The young man, though speaking for Jesus at the narrative's close, does not speak as Jesus. He does not define for the women who Jesus is (this may not be necessary if one accepts the centurion's proclamation as a narrative "apotheosis" identifying Jesus), but rather merely points towards him, repeats the injunction for the disciples to meet Jesus in Galilee, directs the women towards a figure they can't assimilate or understand, orients them towards the exterior of the crypt constituted by Jesus' "non-presence" in textualization. This "pointing" of the young man, however, can signify according either to the "logic" of similitude or resemblance. It may either attempt to refer the narrative's readers "outside" the narrative, to its lost object, to the "being" the gospel attempts to recapitulate and delimit; or it may point to the Jesus who only exists as a textualized being, as a product of a discursive practice which reduplicates itself throughout the narrative, difference by difference by difference.

If you are confused at this point, so am I--by the text, by my
reading, by the competencies I have used which produce readings, by the competencies I have used which problematize readings. But I won't summarize; for if Mark, if all texts, enact a multiplicity of heterogeneous patterns, logics, discursive practices, modes of preservation, then perhaps my confusion, my reading, even in its slippage, its oscillations, its movements towards and away from the death of fragmentation, its raveling and unraveling, its status as a reading, without ground, without mastery, without authority, is a double beginning. Arche--beginning, rule, origin, authority, first cause, ruler. Perhaps my reading is

The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, as it is written...
Notes


4 Kelber, Oral and Written, 220.


6 Smith, 91.

7 Smith, 91.

8 Smith, 176-183.

9 Smith, 237.

10 Smith, 176-177.
These notions have come under increasing scrutiny in contemporary theoretical debate. See, for a theological example, John Dominic Crossan. *The Dark Interval: The Limits of Story*. Nilus, Ill.: Argus Communications, 1975, p. 9-39.

Smith, 197.

Smith, 91, 284.

Smith, 196, 199, 209-213.


Smith, 94-97.


Kermode, 127, 142.

206-231.

21 Levi-Strauss, 210-211.


23 Kermode, 127.

24 Kermode, xi.

25 Kermode, 145.

26 Kermode, 137.

27 Kermode, 137.

28 Kermode, 145.

29 Kermode, 145.


31 Culler, 116.

32 Culler, 117.

33 Culler, 126.

34 Culler, 118.


W. Norton and Company, 1977, p. 165-175, 304-305. See also Anthony
commentary by Anthony Wilden. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press,
1984, p. 263-266.


38 Roland Barthes. "Introduction to the Structural Analysis of Narratives,"


253.

39 Barthes, 253.


41 Werner Kelber. *Mark's Story of Jesus*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press,

1979, p. 11.

42 Werner Kelber, "Narrative and Disclosure: Mechanisms of Concealing,

Revealing, and Reveiling," forthcoming in *Semeia*.

43 Jonathan Culler. *On Deconstruction: Theory and Criticism after


Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok. Trans. Nicholas Rand. Minneapolis:

45 Derrida, *Wolfman*, xvi.


53 Boring, 16.

54 Kelber, *Oral and Written*, 90–139.


56 Boring, 201.


60 Kelber, "Narrative and Disclosure."


64 Nestle-Aland, 88.

65 Boring, 111.


69 Foucault, 44.


71 Foucault, 44.
72 Bauer, 7.
73 Bauer, 374.
75 Derrida, *Grammatology*, 244–247.
76 Bauer, 213.
77 Bauer, 277–278.
78 Bauer, 555.
79 Bauer, 9.
80 Bauer, 853.
82 Weeden, 52–69.
84 Bauer, 530.

p.32-34,

88 Bauer, 31-33.

89 Bauer, 295.

90 Weeden, 77.

91 Bauer, 479.

92 Weeden, 152.


97 Brooks, 93-94.

98 This possibility was suggested to me in a discussion with Werner Kelber.


100 Bauer, 751. Smith, 176-177.

101 Kermode, 57-64.
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