Deconstructive Criticism

Experiencing the Gospel of Mark
LTSG – MGVH

Based on Stephen D. Moore’s “Deconstructive Criticism: The Gospel of the Mark” in Mark & Method

What is deconstruction?

- Jacques Derrida
  - Western thought and binary oppositions: soul/body; nature/culture; male/female; white/nonwhite...
  - “I do not ‘concentrate,’ in my reading... either exclusively or primarily on those points that appear to be the most ‘important,’ ‘central,’ ‘crucial.’ Rather, I de-concentrate, and it is the secondary, eccentric, lateral, marginal, parasitic, borderline cases which are ‘important’ to me and are a source of... insight into the general functioning of a textual system.”

What is deconstruction?

- Paul de Man
  - “The paradigm for all texts consists of a figure (or a system of figures) and its deconstruction.”
  - “A deconstruction always has for its target to reveal the existence of hidden... fragmentations within assumedly monadic totalities.”

What is deconstruction?

- “Deconstruction reads with an eye and ear extended for the excluded, the marginal, the blind spot, the blank.” (SDM, 86)
- “Deconstruction is scrupulously attentive to difficulties in the texts that it reads.” (SDM, 86)

The text as “parable”

- “… the Gospel as a whole can be said to function parabolically, parable being a type of paradox.” (88)
- “Parabolai in Mark are a partition, screen, or membrane designed to keep insiders on one side, outsiders on the other.” (92)
- “There are no insiders in Mark who are not at the same time outsiders.” (93)
- “Parable is prudent. It inflicts a grievous wound on common sense, but takes care to leave it unintended.”

The Written V(o)ice

- “In the West, the spoken word has almost always been privileged over the written.” (89)
- “What if Jesus’ speech were inhabited by writing? What if it were haunted, infected, afflicted by it?” (89)
- “Mark is gradually folding back on itself as we read it... It is a writing about reading, a writing, which, as it retells the story of Jesus, also foretells the history of (mis)reading that the story will generate.” (91)
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Mark’s Nightmaze: Writ(h)ing on a Bed of Paper

“A Gospel is more like a dream than a dissertation... Mark is at least as close to the language of the unconscious (that of the dream, for example) as to the theological treatise or scholarly commentary.” (100)

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“Deconstruction is inventive or it is nothing at all: it does not settle for methodological procedures, it opens up a passageway, it marches ahead and marks a trail;... it produces rules—other conventions.” (Derrida: 99)

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Rabbinic > Freud > Literary theory

Reader Response > Deconstructive

Deconstructing art

www.danbrown.com/the_new_york_times/the_last_supper_interactive.html

What is it about? Where is the focus?
Deconstructive Criticism

- Text? Subtext? Pretext? Pre-text?
- Is this stuff legit? Just literary? Litter?
- Is there any place for this in the Church?
- What if you tried preaching a ‘deconstructed’ sermon?