

○ 'IMAGINE THERE'S NO CANON'

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For thirty plus years George Aichele has been articulating and practicing a fantastic hermeneutic that rejects canonical certainties about biblical texts in order to concentrate on the text's resistance to ideology and on the biblical texts' recurrence outside the controls of the institution(s) that lays (lay) claim to them. The process has enriched the reading of moribund Mark. To explicate Aichele's hermeneutic, I read Jorge Luis Borges's 'The Gospel According to Mark' vis-à-vis Mark and Aichele's work. The result calls attention to Mark's inevitably new meanings in its translations, to the violence implicit in the canonical ascription of redemptive meaning to Jesus's death, to the Markan Jesus's ambiguous, non-unique identity, and to the non-redemptive character of the Markan Jesus's death. The process makes it possible to read Mark as if it were written by a number of different authors – including Mel Gibson, Denys Arcand, Pier Paolo Pasolini, James Frazer, H. P. Lovecraft, William Peter Blatty, Jorge Borges, and George Aichele.

INTRODUCTION: AICHELE'S FANTASTIC HERMENEUTIC

Imagine there's no canon

It's easy if you try

No hell below us

Above us only sky

Imagine all the people

Living for *bulē*

John Lennon's lyrics called a generation away from heaven (or the spirit), nationalism, and religion to the present and to community consciousness. In the academy, we might think of Marx or of more recent postcolonial thinkers. We might also think of George Aichele's fantastic readings of Mark (see, particularly, 1996; 2006). It's easy if you try. All you need to do is to replace 'heaven' in Lennon's lyrics with the word 'canon'. Canon is Aichele's shorthand for the semiotic machine by which Christian discourse, myth, or ideology controls popular and academic as well as ecclesial readings of biblical texts.¹ This discourse is inevitably spiritualizing, theologizing, or metaphysically dualistic (see Aichele 2001). Hence, the corny reference above to Lennon's lyrics about heaven.

We imagine there is no canon or read that way, following Aichele, by reading biblical texts fantastically. The fantastic is Aichele's shorthand, following Tzvetan Todorov (1973, 25, 31–33, 41, 58) (with splashes of Rabkin 1976, 151–88), for textual undecidability; for a reader's hesitation about metaphysical questions of identity, textual realism, and neat separations of fact and fiction. The fantastic is the momentary pause before a reader decides that the text read requires supernatural additions to reality, that is, that the text is marvelous; or that the text read can be explained from within the reader's notion of reality, that is, that the text is uncanny (Aichele 2006, 15–81).² It is the pause, for example, between interpretations that decide Henry James' governess in *The Turn of the Screw* sees ghosts (marvelous) or is insane (uncanny), between su-

pernatural and psychological interpretations of Franz Kafka's 'The Metamorphosis', between ecclesial and historical critical interpretations of the gospels (think of David F. Strauss), or, in one of Aichele's favorite examples, between the scribes' demonic and the family's 'beside himself' interpretation of Jesus in Mark 3:19b-35.³ The fantastic, then, is a monkey wrench in the canonical/ideological machine. It leads us away from the ideological/institutional limit of a text to its material stuff (*hulē*). It leads us to an intense concentration on the text or to 'living for today', if anyone wishes to continue my tortured use of Lennon's lyrics.

To strive deliberately for the fantastic, we must liberate a text from institutional certainties and controls like the canon; or, more positively, we must concentrate on the *hulē* (the stuff) of a text; upon a text's inevitable distance from ideology and meaning. As insiders always know what a text means because of and within their institutions' discourse-systems, such fantastic readings are necessarily those of outsiders, thieves, or heretics – Aichele uses all these terms – or, more simply, those of counter-readers (1996, 157–65; Aichele and Walsh 2005, vii–xvi).

Concisely, then, what Aichele has done in thirty plus years of research and scholarly publications in theory, Markan studies, and the afterlives of biblical texts is to create a series of fantastic readings and a hermeneutic for interpretative theft, for stealing texts from institutional control and, specifically, for stealing Mark from the canon.⁴ He also implies an ethic for reading, or, at least, he clarifies a choice between two, rival hermeneutics: (1) the use of words to fill in blanks (in texts; between ourselves and reality) with ideology or meaning or (2) the use of words to structure emptiness and to refer to holes (1985, 137–39; 2006: 131–55), to point to the fictional quality of our stories, ideologies, and myths. Aichele's pursuit of the second choice, to paraphrase Jorge Luis Borges, has immeasurably 'enriched... the hesitant and rudimentary art of [the scholarly] reading' of Mark (Borges 1999, 95).

JORGE LUIS BORGES'S 'THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO MARK'

To explicate Aichele's hermeneutic further, I read Jorge Luis Borges's 'The Gospel According to Mark' (Borges 1999, 397–401) vis-à-vis the Gospel of Mark and Aichele's work. I choose this particular short story for many reasons. It is Mark, Aichele's favorite gospel, and yet not. It translates Mark into a different time and place. As it does, it makes Mark its precursor in quite unsettling ways. Finally, this piece, as well as Borges's aesthetic worldview generally, has many similarities with Aichele's notion of the fantastic. By concentrating on this piece, I can make both Georges – Borges and Aichele – as well as Mark my precursors.

In the short story, Baltasar Espinosa, a lazy, pliable, thirty-three year old medical student, vacations at a friend's ranch. While his friend is away on business, a flood leaves Espinosa stranded alone with the ranch foreman and his son and daughter, the Gutres. To pass the time, Espinosa decides to read a gaucho novel to the illiterate family, but the foreman rejects this tale as too similar to his own life to interest him. Finding a Bible in English, Espinosa begins a dramatic translation of the Gospel of Mark. Enthralled, the family asks Espinosa, to whom they attribute miraculous authority and to whom they offer various sacrifices, to reread this gospel when he finishes, rather than beginning a new text. Eventually, the father asks Espinosa about the redemptive significance of Christ's death. Assured by Espinosa that salvation extends even to the crucifixion party, the family worships and crucifies Espinosa. At least, it seems that they

crucify him. The story mercifully ends after they revile him and as they lead him out to their newly made cross.

TRANSLATING MARK: CHRISTIAN, MODERN, AND POSTMODERN SEMIOSIS

In the story, the narrator says Espinosa translates Mark, but we never actually read Espinosa's translation. There is a gap in the text. The story proceeds, of course, as if the Gutres hear Mark in Spanish repeatedly. Following Aichele, however, we should note the textual hole here.

Given that hole, it may be pointless to wonder whether Espinosa's translations rely upon a theory of dynamic equivalence or of literal translation; nevertheless, I will speculate because Aichele often deals with these different theories of translation to illustrate differences between modern and postmodern semiotics (1997, 9–55; 2001, 61–83; 2002b, 85–95). Modern semiotics and the theory of dynamic equivalence presume texts are channels for messages, which can be housed in various bodies/texts and can be translated without significant loss *ad infinitum*. Such theories are spiritual, theological, and metaphysically dualistic. Canonical (or orthodox) Christianity depends upon such theories, as Aichele has astutely noted (see the repeated reflections on the spirit in Aichele 2001). By contrast, postmodern semiotics and literal translations seek to call attention to the text's material surface (*hulē*) or to expose glitches between the text and its interpretation (cf. Benjamin 1968, 71–72, 82, 223).⁵ As Aichele says, those following such theories do not capture a text's message, but 'play [the surface of] texts' as one plays a fish or a musical score (cf. 1997, 39–40).

To return to Borges's short story, are there any clues about Espinosa's translation theory? Maybe the hole says it all. Perhaps, neither Borges nor his narrator needs an actual translation of Mark (or any *hulē* for that matter) – not simply for the economy of a short story but – because of the persistence of Mark in cultural memory (an idealistic notion). The fact that Espinosa translates 'Mark' from English into Spanish (not from Greek) also suggests dynamic equivalence, as does the fact that Espinosa translates Mark repeatedly and dramatically. Espinosa might be playing Mark in these performances, running various riffs upon some Markan score, but the subsequent story, including the Gutres' demand for repetition, suggests the ritualistic repetition of some eternal/ideal Mark, a Mark not differing noticeably from that of cultural memory.⁶ I will not press the point, however, and am quite willing to be wrong. After all, there is that hole in the text.

And, there is another, more powerful translation of Mark to which I should be attending, the Mark that the Gutres enact. Despite or because of their illiteracy, their translation has an eerie literalness. For those, who have read Borges, there is something Menardian about the Gutres' project.⁷ Like Borges's Pierre Menard, the Gutres reenact sections of the Markan passion as exactly as possible, but in doing so they move beyond the controls of Christian myth and ritual.

Consequently, their enactment exposes a novel feature of Mark. Specifically, it reveals the intense violence done to a person and/or that person's death, when someone else covers that death with spiritual and redemptive meanings (a myth).⁸ This ideological violence may appear to differ from the physical violence of Roman crucifixion (which, of course, includes its own ideological violence), but the Gutres' interlinear, literal translation of Mark erases any difference between physical and ideological violence.

Accordingly, the Gutres' crucifixion party is no longer the Romans, the Jews, or any other outsider. The Gutres are better, more honest theologians than that. Their crucifixion party consists of those who intend to benefit directly and spiritually from the crucified's death. Their transparency reveals what is really happening under the spiritual covers of the canonical readings of Mark. The canonical gospel's crucifixion party is Christian too. More accurately, Judas, Caiaphas, the religious leaders, Pilate, and so forth are not historical figures or real persons; they are signs within Christian discourse, serving canonical ends and the deification of canonical readers.

While the Gutres' translation of Mark makes gospel violence inescapable, canonical readers of Mark eschew any association with violence. Thus, the idea, common among such readers, that Jesus's death is redemptive covers a violent death with meaning and directs our attention away from crucifixion's physical violence to its benefits for canonical insiders.⁹ The relentless focus on which specific outsiders are to blame for the crucifixion, which frequently operates under the ethical high ground of exposing anti-Semitism, is a similar misdirection. It foists violence onto outsiders (whether Jews or Romans matters little here) as canonical readers, less honest than the Gutres, identify themselves with various spiritual ideals. The increasingly common assertion among recent Markan scholars that Mark demands discipleship, not suffering, of its readers is a similar misdirection.¹⁰ Of course, the most common canonical misdirection is the simple device of adding stories of resurrection (the shorter and longer endings of Mark; Matthew; the canon) to Mark.¹¹ These misdirections allow the canon and its readers to eschew associations with violence and transform Mark's all-too-human Jesus story into a marvelous, supernatural story.

Borges's Gutres do not allow us to look away from the canon's ideological violence. Like Pierre Menard, they enrich the process of reading. They make it possible for us to read Mark as if it were written by Mel Gibson (*The Passion of the Christ*).

JESUS'S AMBIGUOUS IDENTITY

In light of their reading of Mark, the Gutres sacrifice Espinosa for their own religious ends. As we have just noted, Christian readings also trace spiritual benefits to Jesus's death (and its myth-ritual repetition). Following Aichele's style of close reading of Mark, however, we might note that Mark says surprisingly little about the matter. Jesus's so-called passion predictions prophesy the death of the son of man, not Jesus (8:31; 9:31; 10:33-34) and the famous ransom passage interprets the death of the son of man, not Jesus (10:45). Because of such glitches, Aichele has repeatedly pointed to the gap between son of man and Jesus in Mark (1996, 13-33, 99-120; 2001, 151-72; 2006, 131-52).

In the canonical reading of Mark, readers know from Mark 1:1 that Jesus is the messiah (and the son of god in some texts as well). This identity is subsequently confirmed by Peter (8:29), by Jesus himself (14:62), and by the Roman centurion (15:39). By contrast, for Aichele, Mark fails to deliver on the messianic promises of 1:1.

While Mark 1:1 identifies Jesus as a messiah, Jesus and messiah never quite cohere thereafter in Mark. The scholarly identification of a 'messianic secret' in Mark succinctly confirms this appraisal. While the demons repeat Jesus's titular identity, they are notorious liars. The ambiguities of Mark 3:20-27 further unsettle matters.

In response to Peter's messianic confession in Mark 8:29, Jesus demands silence (8:30). Further, while Peter speaks of messiah, Jesus talks instead about the son of man, who will suffer, be killed, and rise again (8:31). While Christian discourse slides easily between these 'titles', Mark's Jesus never explicitly identifies the son of man or himself or the son of man with himself.¹²

Even in 14:61, when the high priest poses Peter's confession as a question and Jesus responds publicly to the issue of his identity for the only time in Mark, that which Jesus gives, 'I am', he quickly confuses by talking again about the son of man (now one who triumphs apocalyptically, 14:62) (Aichele 2006, 131–52). That the high priest sees the answer as blasphemy only clarifies the high priest's agenda (14:63–64). Finally, as Aichele nicely notes, as Mark peters to its end, Jesus is not messiah, son of god, or son of man, he is simply 'of Nazareth' and 'crucified' (Aichele 1996, 24).

Mark's Jesus is all too human, not a supernatural being. In Mark, then, there remains a significant gap between Jesus and all these titles. The Jesus/son of man story is told around this 'hole' (cf. Aichele 1985, 137) and, consequently, Jesus is more a phantom messiah or a 'ghost on the water' (2006, 136–41, 228–31), than a secret messiah. In this Aichelean reading, Mark becomes a story of loss, not of discovery. It becomes a text that keeps its (messianic) secrets (1996, 41).

The Gutres' translation of Mark adds further ambiguities to Jesus's identity. They find nothing unique or salvific about Jesus and his death. Perhaps, both have passed their shelf date. At any rate, they are no longer effective for the Gutres. They need a new savior and a new death, a local death. They need the salvific death of the aristocratic Baltasar Espinosa. Their reading, then, hopelessly confuses Borges's protagonist with that of Mark. They rewrite Jesus as Baltasar Espinosa or vice versa. In fact, Borges's protagonist's very name suggests eerie connections with the Jesus story. He is Baltasar, the wise man/king. He is Espinosa, the 'thorny', which suggests, given the subsequent connections with Mark, a crown of thorns. He is the king to be sacrificed (cf. Mark 14:3–9).

Unlike his distant forerunner Belshazzar, however, Baltasar does not see the writing on his wall.¹³ He reads the script (Mark) unknowingly. Thus, Espinosa is human and non-heroic. He is no transcendent son of man, even though he acquiesces finally to the Gutres' writing of him as such. However, Borges's story, which ends even more abruptly than Mark's, denies any triumph. A gap lies between the Gutres' attempted interpretation of Espinosa and what Borges actually says. As Espinosa's death is not even narrated, there can be no redemption here, despite the mythic covers that the Gutres' apply. There is only suffering humanity.

Like Borges's Espinosa, Mark's Jesus enacts only the human part of Mark's Jesus's son of man stories. Redemption and triumph are only forecast and only for another. Jesus's humanness implicitly denies his uniqueness. So, too, does Jesus's mandate for his disciples in 8:34, which calls them all to their own crosses. So, too, does the plural sons of men saying in 3:28. As far as I know, only Aichele has identified this, too, as a son of man saying (the NRSV certainly does not) and understood its demythologizing significance (2006, 203–21). In short, Mark's Jesus is not unique; even the illiterate Gutres know so. Mark's story about Jesus as son of man could be a story about any nobody in the Roman (or any subsequent) Empire(s). Appropriately, Mark ends with death, absence, and silence. Thus, Jesus of Nazareth, the crucified, is among the sons of men.

Once again, Aichele and Borges's Gutres have enriched the reading of Mark. They make it possible to read Mark as the story of a hero sacrificed by the superstitious or simply as the story of an unlucky human. In short, we may now read Mark as if it were written by Arcand (*Jesus of Montreal*) or Pasolini (*Il Vangelo secondo Matteo*).

BEYOND THE CANON: GENRE CONFUSION AND THE FANTASTIC

The Gutres, Borges, and Aichele revitalize Mark by removing it from the canon. Aichele does so through his fantastic hermeneutic and by the simple device of reading Mark vis-à-vis mass media products, like *Blade Runner* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (2006, 159–21). When one removes Mark from the canon, nothing guarantees its meaning. Its message vanishes in limitless semiotic play, and its genre (Aichele 1985, 77–102) becomes as uncertain as the identity of its protagonist.

As everyone knows, historical critics were the first to remove Mark from the canon and to find thereby an uncanny, rather than marvelous Mark. Their readings, however, seldom leave Christian controls very far behind and hardly ever find fantastic elements. Instead, they create modern versions of Christian discourse/myth. Nonetheless, and despite the fact that they multiply Jesuses, they never seem to realize that their method inherently denies Jesus's uniqueness (their loud insistence on his uniqueness, of course, justifies their academic careers and still leads to charges of anti-Semitism).

Borges and Aichele read more fantastically. When Borges removes Mark from the canon, institutions – including the academy represented by the educated Espinosa – lose control over Mark's meaning. Despite the Gutres' literal translation, the new situation transforms Mark, just as Borges's Menard's exact repetition of Cervantes transforms that text. Read among illiterate twentieth-century Americans, the gospel becomes a native legend or myth. It becomes the story of the sacrificed king (or the thorny magi) – or, at least, the aristocratic medical student – to whom the illiterate Gutres attribute authority and magical powers even in his death. We wait for the cannibalism which must certainly follow. Certainly, we can imagine James Frazer happy reading this story.

In this context, Mark becomes a myth, as Enlightenment thinkers dismissively define myth (not as Roland Barthes or more recent interpreters understand myth). As such a myth, Mark becomes something we know to be fictional; something that previous, benighted souls believed, but which we definitely do not need to believe. It becomes fictional. This generic disruption calls all of the canon's metaphysical assertions into question. Specifically, Mark, the gospel, and the canon cease to be the ground of reality and truth, the basis of the distinction between fact and fiction. Mark becomes uncanny. It becomes something modern rationalists can dismiss.

Nonetheless, the superstitious, illiterate Gutres read more powerfully than the enlightened, aristocratic Espinosa (cf. Strauss' preference for supernatural readings vis-à-vis rationalist readings; or consider the power of various fundamentalisms today). Their primitive mythic (marvelous) Mark – is it also the canonical Mark? – has its revenge on Espinosa. It consumes him. Of course, I have now followed Aichele and Borges to Sigmund Freud's uncanny, not to Todorov's. For Freud, the uncanny is a superstitious remnant in modern minds that rises to haunt such minds in crisis situations, but which such minds reject in more rational times. It is the Heimlich become unheimlich; the homely become alien and strange. Certainly, the Gutres make Espinosa's 'homely', familiar Mark into something quite strange and unfamiliar.

The Gutres' illiterate, superstitious, marvelous reading of Mark resurrects horrors that the canon tames as spiritual truths and which the Enlightenment reduces to primitive myth. That which happens to Espinosa at the hands of the Gutres' reading of Mark chills the blood. The Gutres', of course, are only one example of many Borgesian obsessives. These obsessives come under the spell of the infinite (book) and come to disastrous ends (cf. Runeberg in 'Three Versions of Judas', 1999, 163–67; or Lönnrot in 'Death and the Compass', 1999, 147–56). Like Cervantes' Don Quixote, such readers foolishly try to live life according to a book (cf. Aichele 2002a, 100–19). In Borges, such obsessives lack the rebellious resistance of Job, Oedipus, or Sisyphus. Borges's obsessives acquiesce to the script provided for them. They become mere phantoms of an already written tale.¹⁴

In this particular short story, however, while Espinosa is lazy and compliant, he does not follow his own obsessions. He follows the script that the Gutres write for him by their obsessive, horrible reading. But, then, what happens to Mark's Jesus is quite similar. Mark's Jesus, who has told stories about the son of man, acquiesces to Mark's reading of him as son of man (at least, he does in the canonical reading). If the Gutres make Espinosa follow the Markan script, Mark does the same thing to Jesus. Mark's Jesus is another phantom of the infinite book, another Borgesian obsessive.¹⁵ To use Aichele's phrasing, the Markan Jesus is a ghost on the water (2006, 131–55). The result is as chilling as a Borges's story.

And, once again, Borges and Aichele have enriched the reading of Mark. Now, we may read Mark as if it were written by H. P. Lovecraft or William Peter Blatty.

A MORE FANTASTIC READING?

The gospel become horror is, of course, as marvelous and violent a resolution for Mark as that which the canon provides. Perhaps, we should go back, then, and read Borges's 'The Gospel According to Mark' more closely and more fantastically. Perhaps, we should remember that Borges's story ends before Espinosa's crucifixion. While we might think the murder a *fait accompli*, we might also think more fantastic thoughts, however temporarily. We might leave the matter suspended between Enlightenment myth and horror, between Espinosa's homely reading of Mark and the Gutres' (uncanny [Freud], yet clearly marvelous [Todorov]) reading.

From this hesitation, can we return to the Mark, once protected by the canon, and read Jesus's uncanny family scene (3:19b-35) with Aichele again? Can we see that the pericope leaves marvelous (the scribes) and uncanny (the family) interpretations of Mark's Jesus similarly unresolved? Can we also see that the certainty of canonical readings is strikingly absent?

Perhaps, that is where we should end, given Aichele's 'fantastic' contribution to the study of Mark. He is always calling attention to undecidables in Mark. Perhaps, we should stop with Borges's title, 'The Gospel According to Mark'. Without that title, what would the story mean? With that title, the short story becomes a deliberate, defiant fiction that exposes Mark's canonically conferred metaphysical, generic identity to powerful corrosives. Borges's title (and short story) leaves Mark teetering on the border of fiction(s). After all, as Borges has a narrator say in another place, metaphysics (the ground of the distinction between fact and fiction) is but a branch of fantasy – let us say fiction (1999, 74). As fiction can only refer to itself, as Aichele's theoretical analyses illustrate (see Aichele 1985), we might thereby momentarily achieve Aichele's hermeneutical standard and tell stories (interpretations) that structure emptiness, rather than merely

covering textual blanks with some eisegetical meaning, which we then proffer as the text's true or natural meaning.

If so, Aichele has enriched the reading of Mark (like Menard) once again. Now we can read Mark as if it were written by Jorge Borges, or was that Jorge Aichele?

ENDNOTES

- ¹ For Aichele, the 'limits of story' are (1) the *bulē* of a text and (2) readers/institutions (1985, 1–23). Canon is an example of the second and represents the institutional imposition of an ideology to a text. Thereafter, institutional readers assume that ideology to be the right, true, or natural meaning of the text (1997, 87–145; 2001, 15–60). Commonly, *bulē* means 'wood', but Aristotle uses it to refer to 'matter', for example, in reference to the material cause and to the human body as matter without a soul/form. The word appears in the NT only in Jas 3:5, where it means 'wood/forest'. Should this cause us to reflect on the absence of *bulē* in the (canonical) NT? Is this another one of Aichele's holes? See below and Aichele 1985, 137–39.
- ² See also Aichele 1996, 57–74; 1997, 105–16; and 1999, 29–49. For Todorov and for Aichele, it is also important that the text be neither poetic nor allegorical.
- ³ Aichele terms this passage 'Jesus's uncanny family scene' in order to conjure up Freud's notion of the uncanny as well as Todorov's (Aichele 1999, 29–49; 2006, 50–58).
- ⁴ Hermes is the god of thieves as well as interpreters (Aichele and Walsh 2005, x–xi).
- ⁵ This gap is crucial to textual undecidability and to Aichele's notion of the fantastic.
- ⁶ It seems likely that Borges is using Mark as another example of the infinite book that bedevils so many of his characters. See below.
- ⁷ Borges's Pierre Menard reproduces fragments of Don Quixote exactly, but in a different culture, the repetition means differently (1999, 88–95).
- ⁸ The process is mythic in Barthes' sense of myth. See Barthes 1972, 114–17.
- ⁹ The complaints raised against Gibson's violent *The Passion of the Christ* made the success of canonical misdirection quite evident.
- ¹⁰ One can hardly fault Christian interpreters for reading Mark so. Who would want to stand in a pulpit and commend suffering or to demand it as divinely mandated? Friedrich Nietzsche and Albert Camus long ago criticized Christianity for its inherent connections with suicidal violence. Borges also associates Christianity and suicide as part of his critique of obsession (cf. 'The Sect of the Thirty', 1999, 443–45; 'Three Versions of Judas', 1999, 163–67). The Gutres belong to a long list of violent, Borgesian obsessives. In 'The Sect of the Thirty', the sectarians think all aspects of the passion divinely predetermined and follow the teachings and example of Jesus to absurd lengths, including self-crucifixion. The Gutres sacrifice another. Are they thereby more Christian?
- ¹¹ Incidentally, such readers also deny Mark's fictional status. As Aichele has nicely shown (1996, 34–56), Mark's abrupt ending makes Mark relentlessly self-referential (a marker of fiction). Mark's final *gar* sends one back to the text; and the frightened, silent women make it impossible to imagine Mark's writing, except as a fiction, unless one is a canonical reader of Mark.
- ¹² Jesus never identifies himself as the son of man unless one reads Mark 14:41 so. See no. 15 below.
- ¹³ Baltasar/Balthazar equals Belshazzar.

- ¹⁴ In Borges's 'The Library of Babel', a librarian opines, 'The certainty that everything has already been written annuls us, or renders us phantasmal' (1999, 118).
- ¹⁵ Given more time and space, I would play further with the idea of Jesus as a Borgesian obsessive. As Aichele notes, Mark 14:41 is the place where Jesus comes closest to identifying himself with the son of man (2006, 145). One might see that as the moment in which the Markan Jesus reads himself into the Markan son of man story. If so, Mark's Jesus is more like Borges's Runeberg ('Three Versions of Judas', 1999, 163–67) or Lönnrot ('Death and the Compass', 1999, 147–56) than Espinosa.

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Cite this article as: Richard Walsh. 2010. 'Imagine there's no canon'. *The Bible and Critical Theory* 6 (3): pp. 39.1–39.9. DOI: 10.2104/bc100039.