

Audience Address and Purpose in the Performance of Mark

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The publication of *Mark as Story* in 1982 was a major step in the development of a new paradigm for the study and interpretation of the Gospels in ancient and modern media. The systematic application of what the authors call “narrative criticism” began the process of the reconception of Mark in the context of the media culture of antiquity through the adaptation of the methods of literary criticism that were developed for the study of a major development in modern media culture, the novel.¹ By close attention to the intrinsic features of Mark as a narrative, a new body of scholarship has drawn a rich picture of Mark that has begun the process of removing the shadow from biblical narrative that Hans Frei aptly named the “eclipse” of biblical narrative.²

This intersection of ancient and modern media culture is only the latest stage of this development in biblical study. “Historical criticism” in its classical form was the product of an earlier intersection between what Wellek and Warren termed extrinsic methods of literary criticism that created a picture of the meaning of a literary work by identifying the complex of extrinsic forces—e.g., cultural and political movements, biography of the author, and most important, the history of the sources and traditions—that led to the final work.³ The study of Mark (as well as the Gospels and the Bible) as texts produced by editors of earlier documents and designed to be read in silence by readers draws a picture of Mark that makes sense to readers of history and theology who have lived in the media culture of the 18-20th centuries.

The foundational contribution of *Mark as Story* is that it approaches Mark in a manner that is appropriate to the form of the Gospel, namely, narrative. Rather than interpreting Mark as a source of referential information in the categories of the literatures of “history” and “theology,” this work initiated the study of Mark as a narrative. By paying attention to the dynamics of the interaction of the narrator, the characters and the plot of Mark’s narrative in its final form, the book succeeded in drawing a complex and nuanced description of the story world of Mark as experienced by readers. In the first edition, the authors acknowledge that their approach may be more appropriate to the way modern readers experience the Gospel than to the way Mark was experienced in the ancient context:

¹ For the classic example of an “intrinsic” methodology for the study of the novel, see Wayne Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1961; also Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978

² Hans Frei, *The Eclipse of Biblical Narrative*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1974.

³ Rene Wellek and Austin Warren, *Theory of Literature*. New York, Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1942.

Mark's gospel was probably written to be heard rather than read. It would, therefore, be appropriate to refer to the hearers of the drama. We have chosen, however, to deal with the gospel as literature and to discuss its readers.⁴

The second edition is more attentive to the original medium of the Gospel:

We have chosen here to focus on the literary reading of Mark rather than on an oral hearing, because most modern people will read the Gospel rather than hear it, and because our purpose is to suggest ways of reading. Nevertheless, our interpretations, particularly in regard to the role of the narrator, the character of the disciples, and the understanding of plot, have been influenced by our work on oral narrative.⁵

Both editions, however, were deliberately directed at modern readers who would "read" rather than hear Mark, namely, college and seminary students, even though the authors were aware of an even employed insights arrived at by taking into account the original oral medium. And the book has been highly successful in enabling a generation of students to experience Mark in a mode that is more accessible than traditional historical criticism has provided.

Furthermore, interpreting Mark as addressed to readers is in continuity with the assumptions of most scholarly investigations of Mark. The present conclusions about the historical audiences of Mark have been developed within what can be called the textual paradigm. This paradigm is a hermeneutical circle of assumptions about the medium of Mark. In this paradigm it has been assumed that Mark was a text read by an audience of readers.⁶ This assumption is often explicitly named as in Joel Marcus' recent superb commentary on Mark where he frequently refers to Mark's reader.⁷

This assumption has been most graphically developed in reader response criticism. The most critically informed development of this approach to Mark is Robert Fowler's comprehensive survey of reader response criticism and detailed application to the exegesis of Mark's text, appropriately titled *Let the Reader Understand*.⁸ As he summarizes at one point, "Mark's Gospel is designed to guide, direct, and illuminate the

⁴ David Rhoads and Donald Mitchie, *Mark as Story*. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1982. Introduction, Footnote #1, p. 143.

⁵ David Rhoads, Joanna Dewey, and Donald Mitchie, *Mark as Story*. 2nd ed. Fortress, 1999. Page xii.

⁶ See, for example, E. Best, "Mark's Readers: A Profile." In *The Four Gospels 1992: Festschrift Frans Neirynck*, eds. F. Van Segbroeck et al. BETL 100, 2.839-58. Leuven: Leuven University Press, 1992.

⁷ Joel Marcus, *Mark 1-8*, New York: Doubleday, 2000, p. 468: "The woman's hope that her daughter will be healed, and the reader's, seem to be dashed by Jesus' response." However, Marcus also locates the genre of Mark as part of a liturgical drama in which the Gospel was read as part of the liturgy in Mark's Christian community: see pp. 67-69.

⁸ Robert Fowler, *Let the Reader Understand*. Minneapolis: Fortress, 1991.

reader vigorously and authoritatively, but at the same time challenge, puzzle, and humble its reader.”⁹ The focus of Fowler’s analysis is making explicit in great detail the facets of “the reading experience.” For example, in his exegesis of the crucifixion scene, he identifies the narrator’s use of opacity, irony, paradox, metaphor, and ambiguity as dimensions of Mark’s indirect moves in engaging his readers in the experience of the crucifixion.

The “reading experience” implies a picture of the reception of Mark as that of a single person sitting alone and in silence reading the manuscript, generally in silence as in modern reading but perhaps aloud. This picture sometimes includes the possibility that the reader may read the manuscript aloud to a small group of listeners.

The dominant concept of Mark’s audience and the manuscript’s purpose for the audience is a natural inference within this framework. The most frequent conclusion of Mark scholars is that the audience of Mark is readers who are members of first century Christian communities who already believe that Jesus. This makes sense when the controlling presupposition is that Mark is a text read by readers. It is highly unlikely that persons outside the believing communities of Christians in the first century would go to the trouble and expense of purchasing a manuscript of Mark and reading it. The readers of a Markan manuscript would most naturally be persons who are committed members of a community of believers. The Gospel may have been written for an individual community of which Mark was a member. Joel Marcus argues strongly that this is the historical probability.¹⁰ Richard Bauckham and Mary Ann Tolbert have imagined Mark as being written for broad distribution to Christian communities throughout the Greco-Roman world.¹¹ But they share the assumption that Mark was written for an audience of readers.

The purpose of the Gospel when interpreted in this context is primarily to reinforce in various ways the beliefs and identity of the reader as a follower of Jesus. Thus, Adela Yarbro Collins summarizes Mark’s purposes: “One was to reassert the messiahship of Jesus and to redefine it over against the messianic pretenders during the Jewish war that began in 66 CE. Another was to interpret actual or expected persecution (or both) as discipleship in imitation of Christ.”¹² Both of these purposes are congruent with the function of Mark’s manuscript when read by a believing reader.

Another dimension of this paradigm is the congruence between the medium of contemporary Markan scholarship and its audiences and the original medium and purpose of Mark. Just as contemporary scholars and the audiences they address in commentaries

⁹ *Ibid*, p. 220

¹⁰ Marcus, *Mark*, pp. 25-28.

¹¹ “For Whom Were Gospels Written?” in Richard Bauckham, ed., *The Gospels for All Christians: Rethinking the Gospel Audiences*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1997); see also Mary Ann Tolbert, *Sowing the Gospel: Mark’s World in Literary-Historical Perspective*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1989, p. 304.

¹² Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007, p. 102.

and monographs read the text in silence, so also it is assumed that Mark addressed an audience of persons who read the text in silence. The function of Markan scholarship is to call detailed attention to what a reader sees in the text. The historical validity of this methodology is based on the assumption that this was how Mark's text was originally experienced. That is, scholarship is paying close attention to the reading experience of the original readers of Mark and within those parameters to alert modern readers to dimensions of the meanings of the text.

An integral part of this medium of Markan scholarship is "criticism." Scholars are trained as critics who read Mark from a psychological distance. That distance is an integral dimension of reading a text with one's eyes in silence. Indeed the name of the dominant methodology for the study of Mark is "historical *criticism*." Among the range of meanings of this methodology, it means the *critical* reading of biblical texts in their original historical context. The media dimension of this methodology is silent reading with an attitude of critical detachment.¹³ Silent reading is what a scholar does in the study. Silent "critical" reading is the dominant experience of Mark in the media world of contemporary biblical scholarship.

It is not coincidental that various dimensions of "critical" reading of Mark have been found to be central dimensions of the meaning and purpose of Mark in its original historical context. Wrede's exploration of the Messianic secret is based on an exposition of the theological questions that were raised for Mark's readers by Jesus' persistent injunctions to silence about his identity.¹⁴ An entire school of Markan interpretation has been based on the conclusion that Mark is inviting his readers to be critical of the disciples and their various failures in understanding and action.¹⁵ In his major work on the relationship of Mark to the oral and literate cultures of antiquity, Werner Kelber extended Mark's critical purpose to the criticism of the entire oral gospel tradition

¹³ Fowler writes well about the centrality of his commitment to criticism in the ending of his book. He is reflecting on the ways in which Matthew, Luke, John, and Tatian have each in different ways retold Mark's story and made Mark forever a precursor. Even though he would like to experience Mark without these revisions, he recognizes that if he were to retell Mark's story, he would probably also revise it and turn Mark into a precursor. "Yet my own vocation is not storyteller but critic. If I were a storyteller, I would like to write a Gospel that places Mark's successors in such a light that the shadows they have cast upon Mark for centuries would be dispelled and the highlights they have shone upon Mark would be muted. I would like to construct a grid for reading Matthew that blocks out Matthew and allows only Mark's Gospel to be seen as it was before Matthew came along. Nevertheless, such a reading experience is a pipe dream—no such magical reading grid will ever be produced—so I shall continue to trust the powers of criticism to serve reading." (206)

¹⁴ Wilhelm Wrede, *The Messianic Secret*. Cambridge: James Clarke, 1971 (orig. 1901).

¹⁵ This identification of Mark as a critic of the disciples had its initial book-length exposition in: Theodore J. Weeden, *Mark: Traditions in Conflict*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1971.

represented in Mark by Peter and the apostles.¹⁶ That is, modern “critical” readers of Mark have found that there were “critical” readers of Mark in the ancient world as well. Criticism may be an inevitable dimension of silent reading.

Performance Criticism and the Original Audiences of Mark

A new framework of Markan scholarship in particular and biblical scholarship in general is emerging as a new intersection between ancient and modern media cultures. The results of recent research by both classical and biblical scholars paint a different picture of the media cultures of the ancient world than has been assumed by this textual paradigm of Mark and his readers. Only a cursory summary of the results of this research is possible here.

- 1) Literacy was minimal. Current estimates are that the rates of literacy in urban areas in the 1st century were somewhere between 5-10% of the population with significantly lower rates in rural areas. Thus, the overwhelming majority of people could not read.¹⁷
- 2) Manuscripts had to be copied by hand, were relatively rare by modern standards and relatively expensive. Only rich individuals and communities were able to acquire manuscripts of ancient writings in the 1st century.¹⁸
- 3) Manuscripts were normally published by public performance for audiences. Audiences could range from a few people to a large group.¹⁹
- 4) A biblical manuscript was a recording of sound that the author assumed would be reproduced as sound by those who performed it. The audiences heard the manuscript rather than reading it with their eyes.
- 5) Manuscripts were usually memorized and performed from memory rather than read from a text. This made possible a high degree of interaction between the performer and the audience.²⁰

¹⁶ Werner Kelber, *The Oral and the Written Gospel: The Hermeneutics of Speaking and Writing in the Synoptic Tradition, Mark, Paul, and Q*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983.

¹⁷ See William Harris, *Ancient Literacy*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989.

¹⁸ Harry Y Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church: A History of Early Christian Texts*. New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1995; ‘Literacy and Book Culture’, in *Dictionary of New Testament Background*, ed. Craig A. Evans and Stanley E. Porter. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2000, pp. 644–8.

¹⁹ Moses Hadas, *Ancilla to Classical Reading*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1954, pp. 50-77 for a series of citations from ancient literature showing that performance of written works was the primary mode of publication. Even historical works were published by oral recitation, as is evident in Lucian’s opening of his book, *Herodotus*, in which he tells the story of Herodotus taking the opportunity of the Olympic Games to read his work: ‘He seized the moment when the gathering was at its fullest, and every city had sent the flower of its citizens; then he appeared in the temple hall, bent not on sightseeing but on bidding for an Olympic victory of his own; he recited his Histories and bewitched his hearers’ (Hadas 1954: 60).

- 6) Performances of stories were highly emotional and physically demonstrative. Highly expressive gestures were a crucial dimension of performance.²¹
- 7) Performances of ancient stories were often long and could last anywhere from an hour to all night as was the case with some performances of Homer.

The mass production of books, mass literacy, and silent reading were much later developments in the history of literacy and book production. The assumption that these practices were widespread in the 1st century is an anachronism. The media world of the 1st century was very different than the media world of the 18th-20th century.

When the Gospel of Mark is interpreted in the context of the media world of the 1st century C. E., the medium of Mark has to be reconceived. The most comprehensive study of Mark in the context of the media world of the first century is Whitney Shiner's ground breaking work, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark*.²² Shiner bases his conclusions about Mark's original medium on a comprehensive examination of ancient primarily rhetorical writings that describe often in great detail the character of 1st century rhetorical culture. In Shiner's reconstruction of the 1st century media culture, the Gospel of Mark was usually performed for audiences. The original medium of Mark was the sounds of the story and the gestures of the storytellers who performed it. Storytellers normally learned Mark's story by heart and performed the story. Usually, the whole Gospel was told at one time which took approximately two hours.

This understanding of Mark is congruent with Eusebius' description of Mark's use of the manuscript he had written. Immediately following his citation of the Papias tradition that Mark had written his Gospel by recording Peter's proclamation in writing at the request of the Christian community in Rome, he states the following about what Mark did with his manuscript:

And they say that this Mark was the first that was sent to Egypt, and that he proclaimed the Gospel which he had written, and first established churches in Alexandria.²³

Regardless of the uncertainty of its historical accuracy, this account reflects the assumption of an author some three centuries later that the account he had received—as “they say”—was historically credible, namely that Mark was sent to Egypt where he “performed” the Gospel for audiences in Alexandria and established churches there. That is, Eusebius' description is congruent with the conclusion that Mark's story was *proclaimed orally*. Seen in this context, the primary purpose of the manuscript was to facilitate and resource these proclamations/performances of the story. It is also implicit in

²⁰ Whitney Shiner, *Proclaiming the Gospel: First-Century Performance of Mark*. Harrisburg: Trinity Press, 2003, pp. 103-126.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 77-98.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 171-179.

²³ Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.16.1. The reference to “they” probably refers to Papias and the Elder who are quoted in the preceding paragraph.

Eusebius' description that some of those who heard Mark's proclamation were converted and became the basis for the establishment of churches. In view of the further probability that Mark was highly popular and was developed by Matthew and Luke, it is also probable that Mark was not performed for only one local community such as Alexandria, as reported by Eusebius, or Antioch or Rome, but was performed in many cities and towns throughout the Greco-Roman world. If we want to reconstruct the meaning of Mark for its original audiences, therefore, we need to evaluate the data of the text as essentially a script for storytelling performances of Mark's story.

This in turn raises a methodological issue that has not been resolved since the first introduction to what was then called "rhetorical criticism" of the study of Mark.²⁴ How can we as modern readers study ancient narratives in a manner that is appropriate to their original media culture? Specifically, how can we *hear* in contrast to *read* Mark's stories?

David Rhoads has taken the next step in the development of an approach to this problem in his essays on "performance criticism."²⁵ This work has in turn grown out of his own performances of Mark. Performance criticism is based on the conclusion that the accurate perception and interpretation of biblical literature in its original historical context requires that we conceive and experience the books of the bible in performance. When applied to Mark, performance criticism is redrawing the picture of Mark from a narrative read by readers to a story performed for audiences.

In light of the recognition that the medium of biblical scholarship must be appropriate to the original medium of the bible, the ancient character of Mark as performance literature suggests that the methodologies of Markan scholarship shift from silent reading to oral performance for audiences as a primary medium of research, pedagogy, and proclamation. If we as Mark scholars want to understand the meaning of Mark's Gospel in its original context, we may need, in as far as possible, to ground our research in proclaiming and hearing Mark rather than reading it. Therefore, as an integral part of this initial exploration of audience address in Mark, this article will include a new intersection of ancient and modern media in a series of video performances of sections of Mark that are available at www.gotell.org/Markaudience. The internet and video recordings now make it possible to integrate performances of ancient compositions with contemporary scholarly analyses of those compositions. The references to those recordings are indicated in the article by the video camera sign . It is highly recommended that readers of this

²⁴ David Rhoads has graciously acknowledged the contribution of my earlier dissertation to his work as at the end of footnote #1 above. See Thomas E. Boomershine, "Mark the Storyteller: a Rhetorical-Critical Investigation of Mark's Passion and Resurrection Narrative" (Ph.D. diss., Union Theological Seminary, New York, 1974). An integral part of that dissertation was an audio-tape of the passion narrative in Greek and in English.

²⁵ David Rhoads, "Performance Criticism: An Emerging Methodology in Second Testament Studies – Part 1 and Part 2" in *Biblical Theology Bulletin*, 36 (3&4, 2006) 118-133, 164-183.

article get on line and watch the videos of the stories in the sequence indicated by the numbering in the article.

There are a variety of issues in relation to this study of Mark in its original context that are significantly impacted by the shift in methodology described above. The issue with which the present article is concerned is the question of the makeup of the audience for whom Mark originally intended his story. The reigning consensus that has resulted from approaching Mark as a text read by readers is that the audience must have been Christians. This is usually qualified to say that they are *Gentile* Christians. The study of audience address from the perspective of Mark as a story performed for a listening, not a reading, audience points strongly to a different conclusion.

Data of Markan Audience Address

In the original performances of Mark, there were three major components: the performer or storyteller, the story that the storyteller told with its characters particularly Jesus, and the audiences. In the course of the performance of the story, the storytellers were first and foremost themselves speaking as themselves to the audience, that is, speaking as who they were in their daily life and not as this or that character in the secondary world of the story. This contrasts with ancient theater in which each actor “became” a particular character in the drama. The most important task of a storyteller, in contrast to an actor, is to establish a positive relationship with the audience. The central feature of that relationship is credibility and trust, the credibility of the storyteller and the audience’s confidence that the storyteller will tell them a good story. Thus, at the beginning of the story, Mark, the storyteller, introduced the subject of the story as a direct address to the audience: “the beginning of the good news of Jesus Christ.”

In the performance of stories, storytellers have a complex role. In contrast to drama in which a single actor presents the words and actions of one particular character, storytellers embody all of the characters of the story. In Mark, the major character is Jesus. At many points in the story, the storyteller addresses the audience *as Jesus*. This involves a move from being oneself to presenting and embodying Jesus. It was probably signaled by a change of voice, accent, attitude, or tone as well as gestures. In Mark’s story, John the Baptist introduces Jesus and the story of Jesus’ baptism and testing in the wilderness is the first description of Jesus’ actions. But the first presentation of Jesus as a character is his address to the audience as the people of Galilee: “The time is fulfilled. The Kingdom of God is at hand. Change your minds and believe in this good news” (1.15).¹ In the telling of the story, the storyteller becomes Jesus and presents him as a different character than the storyteller. This change in character happens throughout the story in the many speeches of Jesus. But while the major character that the storyteller presents is Jesus, the storyteller also presents many other characters. In what we now call chapters one and two, for example, the storyteller embodies the demon-possessed man in the synagogue, Simon, the begging leper, the skeptical scribes in the house, the critical scribes of the Pharisees, the disciples of John and the Pharisees, and the accusing Pharisees.

The audience also has a complex role. Since the only people present in a storytelling performance are the storyteller and the audience, the impact of the story depends to a significant degree on the engagement and responses of the audience. Every storyteller experiences this. There are good audiences who respond freely, laugh a lot, and interact with the story enthusiastically and sympathetically. There are bad, unresponsive audiences who are indifferent, hostile or critical and who don't laugh or even smile. For a bad audience a storyteller will often shorten the story in order to get it over as soon as possible.

A central dimension of the interaction of audiences with storytellers is created by a storyteller's address to the audience.²⁶ Most of the time, storytellers present the events of the story to the audience as themselves. In the telling of Mark, they may dramatize some of the short interactions between characters such as the conversation between Jesus and the leper. But most of the story is direct address by the storytellers to the audience as themselves. However, when the storyteller "becomes" a character, often Jesus, and addresses another character in the story, such as the scribes sitting in the crowded house into which the paralytic is lowered, the audience is in turn invited to "become" that other character listening to and interacting with Jesus for the duration of that address by Jesus. The storyteller as Jesus addresses the audience as the scribes who were grumbling to themselves: "Why do you question like this in your hearts? What is easier to say to the paralytic, 'Your sins are forgiven' or to say to him, 'Get up, take up your pallet and walk.' But that you may know that the Son of Man has authority on earth to forgive sins. . ." And then the storyteller steps back out of the character of Jesus into his role as narrator, briefly addressing the audience as his own listeners, "he said to the paralytic" and then again assuming the role of Jesus the storyteller kneels down and speaks to the paralytic.²⁶ This shift in the listeners from being themselves to identification with the characters addressed by Jesus increases in its experiential impact. The length of the speech is an important factor here. The longer Jesus addresses the audience as a particular character, the more deeply the audience identifies with and "becomes" that character. Furthermore, just as storytellers change their presentational identity to embody the various characters of the story, the audience experiences changes in their identity by being addressed as a range of different characters in the story.

If this happened in the ancient performances of Mark's story, as is highly probable, we can identify the character of the audience for whom Mark may have performed his story. We will approach this question through an analysis of audience address in the Gospel. We begin this analysis by gathering and presenting some data. Where does Mark, usually as Jesus but a few times either as himself as narrator or as other characters in his story, address various characters, and who are the characters he addresses? This article will limit the analysis of Markan audience address to speeches of two or more sentences, or

²⁶ Most of the available performances of Mark including those of David Rhoads are conceived as dramatic productions in which the audience is not addressed directly but is invited to watch the imagined interactions of the characters of the story on the other side of "the fourth wall" of the theater. Storytelling is a different performance art than drama.

more accurately “periods,”²⁷ in the Greek text. The following chart identifies the instances in Mark’s story where Mark as a storyteller addresses the audience as particular characters (usually Jesus) in the story for two or more periods. The chart lists the story in which the speech occurs and the location and length of the speech, the character who is the speaker, and the character by whom the audience is addressed.

Audience Address in Mark

Story and address to the audience	Speaker embodied by the storyteller	Audience addressed as
John’s baptism (1.7-8)	John the Baptist	People of Judea, etc.
Proclamation of the Kingdom (1.15)	Jesus	People of Galilee
Healing of paralytic (2.8-10)	Jesus	Scribes
Eating with tax collectors (2.17)	Jesus	Scribes of the Pharisees
Question about fasting (2.19-22)	Jesus	Disciples of John and the Pharisees
Shucking grain on Sabbath (2.25-28)	Jesus	Pharisees
Man with withered hand (3.4-5)	Jesus	The people in the synagogue
Jesus and Beelzebul (3.23-29)	Jesus	Scribes from Jerusalem
Jesus and his mother and brothers (3.33-35)	Jesus	The group sitting around Jesus
Parable of the sower (4.3-9)	Jesus	The crowd
Purpose of parables, the meaning of the sower parable, and parables of the Kingdom (4.11-32)	Jesus	Those around Jesus with the twelve
Rejection of Jesus at Nazareth (6.4)	Jesus	People in Nazareth synagogue
Mission of the twelve (6.10-11)	Jesus	The twelve
Tradition of the elders: cleanliness laws (7.3-4)	Mark	Audience
Tradition of the elders (7.6-13)	Jesus	Pharisees and scribes
Tradition of the elders (7.14-15)	Jesus	The crowd

²⁷ See Bernard Brandon Scott and Margaret Ellen Lee, *Sound Mapping the New Testament*. Salem, OR: Polebridge, 2009, pp. 108-111.

Tradition of the elders (7.18-22)	Jesus	Disciples
Demand for a sign (8.12)	Jesus	Pharisees
Leaven of the Pharisees and bread discourse (8.15-21)	Jesus	Disciples
Messianic confession, passion prophecy and discipleship (8.34-9.1)	Jesus	Crowd with the disciples
Transfiguration (9.12-13)	Jesus	Peter, James and John
2 nd Passion Prophecy (9.31)	Jesus	Disciples
Who is the greatest? (9.35-37)	Jesus	Disciples
The other exorcist (9.39-50)	Jesus	Disciples
Teaching about divorce (10.5-9)	Jesus	Pharisees
Teaching about divorce (10.11-12)	Jesus	Disciples
Blessing the children (10.14-15)	Jesus	Disciples
Rich man (10.18-21)	Jesus	The rich man
Rich man (10.23-27)	Jesus	Disciples
Rich man (10.29-31)	Jesus	Peter
3 rd Passion Prophecy (10.33-34)	Jesus	Disciples
James' and John's request for position (10.42-45)	Jesus	Disciples
The cleansing of the Temple (11.17)	Jesus	The chief priests and crowd in the Temple
The fig tree (11.22-26)	Jesus	Disciples
Parable of the vineyard (12.1-11)	Jesus	The chief priests, scribes and elders
The resurrection controversy (12.24-27)	Jesus	Sadducees
Messiah David's son? (12.35-37)	Jesus	Crowd in the Temple
Denouncing of the scribes (12.38-40)	Jesus	Crowd in the Temple
The widow's gift (12.43-44)	Jesus	Disciples
Apocalyptic discourse (13.4-37)	Jesus	Peter, James, John and Andrew
Anointing by woman (14.6-9)	Jesus	Those who rebuked the woman
Preparations for Passover (14.13-15)	Jesus	Two disciples
Betrayal prophecy (14.18-	Jesus	Twelve

21)		
The last supper (14.22-25)	Jesus	Twelve
Prophecy of desertion and denial (14.27-30)	Jesus	Twelve and Peter
Gethsemane (14.37-38, 41-42)	Jesus	Peter and Peter, James and John
The arrest (14.48-49)	Jesus	The crowd from the priests, scribes, and elders
The trial before the Council (14.63-64)	High priest	The Council
The trial before Pilate (15.9, 12-14)	Pilate	The crowd
The resurrection (16.6-7)	Young man	Mary Magdalene, Mary, and Salome

The category of “Speaker” in the chart above reveals the basic structure of audience address. In speeches of two or more periods, the storyteller addresses the audience as Jesus most of the time (45 of 50). The other characters who address the audience are John the Baptist, Mark as narrator, the high priest, Pilate and the young man at the tomb. The category of “Audience addressed as” reveals another fact that is surprising in the context of the Gentile Christian audiences envisioned by many Markan scholars. The most striking fact about the addresses to the audience is that the audience is almost always addressed as various groups of Jews.

The only exception to this Jewish audience occurs in the story of Jesus’ dispute with the Pharisees over the purity laws. The storyteller’s explanation of the cleanliness laws (7.3-5) is addressed to the audience as persons who do not know these Jewish customs, that is, as non-Jews. This is a sign that the composer of the Gospel recognizes and wants to include non-Jews in the audiences of the story. That is, the audiences that are projected as the potential audiences for the performances of the Gospel are primarily, but not exclusively, Jewish.

This is a paradigmatic example of the difference made by the medium in which Mark is experienced. When the Gospel is read in silence, this comment appears to be an inside address to the reader. Scholars have often inferred from this comment that the audience of Mark is Gentiles. When the Gospel is heard as addressed to audiences, however, this comment is not directed to a reader but is directed to any in the audience who may not be familiar with Jewish customs. The comment indicates only that Mark as the composer of this story projects that there may be Gentiles in its potential audiences. This comment is a storytelling gesture of audience inclusion. The storyteller introduces it after a considerable amount of time during which he has been inviting his listeners to experience being a series of various Jewish characters who are addressed by Jesus. The purpose is to keep on board any Gentiles who might find it difficult to maintain involvement with the story without this essential information.

Another revealing dimension of audience address in Mark is the way in which the audience is invited to move from being addressed as those who are Jesus' opponents to those who are Jesus' disciples. In this structure of audience address, the storyteller as Jesus moves from addressing the audience as 1) Jesus' opponents who are in conflict with him, to addressing them as 2) those around Jesus, often the disciples or the twelve. This pattern is first established in the opening section of the Gospel. After the initial brief addresses by the storyteller as John the Baptist to the audience as the people of Judea (1.7-8) and then by Jesus to the audience as the people of Galilee (1.15), the audience is addressed by the storyteller as Jesus for a long time as various groups with whom Jesus is in conflictual dialogue: the scribes (2.8-10), the scribes of the Pharisees (2.17), the disciples of John and the Pharisees (2.19-22), the Pharisees (2.25-28), the people in the synagogue who are, by inference, Pharisees (3.4-5), and climactically the scribes from Jerusalem (3.23-29). That is, the audience is predominantly addressed in the early parts of the story as various groups of Jews who are in conflict with Jesus.

Furthermore, there is a distinct escalation in the tone and content of the conflict. Jesus' address to the audience as the scribes in the paralytic story is moderate in tone. The address in each of the stories that follows is increasingly intense in tone and content. The longest and most conflictual address in this series is the address to the audience as the scribes who have come down from Jerusalem. They accuse Jesus of being possessed by Beelzebul and of casting out demons by the prince of demons. The climax of Jesus' speech is his description of their accusation as blasphemy against the Holy Spirit that will never be forgiven.

This series of stories ends with the most intimate address to the audience to this point in the Gospel, the story of Jesus' mother and brothers (3.31-35). The storyteller as Jesus says to the audience as those seated around Jesus: "Who are my mother and my brothers?" And looking around at those who were seated around him, he says, "Here are my mother and my brothers. Whoever does the will of God is my brother and sister and mother."³ In the performance of the story, the storyteller addresses this saying to all those in the audience with a gesture of wide-open arms of inclusion. This is implicitly an invitation to the audience to move from identifying with those who are in conflict with Jesus to being one of those in Jesus' intimate circle of friends. This address to the audience as Jesus' followers is then continued throughout Jesus' parabolic address (4.1-32).

The next instance of this pattern in Mark's story is the dialogue about the purity laws. This story begins with the storyteller's description to the audience of the Pharisees' critique of Jesus for allowing his disciples to eat with unwashed hands and his explanation of Jewish purity customs (7.1-5). This introduction is followed by a highly confrontational address by Jesus to the audience as the Pharisees and scribes. This speech begins with Jesus' citation of Isaiah as prophesying their hypocrisy and ends with the accusation that in many ways they abrogate the law of God by the handing on of their tradition (7.6-13). Then the audience is briefly addressed as the crowd (7.14-15). The climax of the dialogue is an extensive address to the audience as his disciples. This speech is introduced by the relocation of the address from a public to a private place,

“When he had left the crowd and entered the house. . .”(7.17). In the telling of the story this introduction was probably accompanied by some gesture, perhaps a simple movement to the side and sitting down. It is also an indication of a lowering of the volume of the speech. The storyteller as Jesus moves from heated public argumentation through explanation to a sympathetic crowd to private explanation to the audience as the disciples. 🗨️⁴ These storytelling moves in sound and gesture create intimacy between the character of Jesus and the audience.

There are two smaller instances of this pattern in audience address prior to the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. The first is the story of the Pharisees demanding a sign followed by Jesus’ speech to the disciples about the leaven of the Pharisees and the bread in the boat (8.11-13 and 8.14-21). The audience is addressed as the Pharisees who were testing him in the expression of their desire for a sign. The tone of the storyteller’s voice as Jesus is best described as exasperation mixed with anger. The discussion is abruptly ended with the description of Jesus getting back into the boat. The trip back to the other side of the lake is the context in which the storyteller as Jesus discusses the significance of the loaves with the audience as the disciples (8.14-21). 🗨️⁵ While Jesus continues to express exasperation with the disciples, the tone is more the exasperation of a teacher whose students just don’t get it. There is a real possibility that the storyteller smiled and even laughed in the delivery of this speech of Jesus. The dynamic of these two stories is an invitation to the audience to experience Jesus as moving from public prophet to private teacher, a move from being addressed as an ongoing adversary to being addressed as a disciple who is also confused about the meaning of the seven and twelve baskets as is the audience.²⁸

The second instance of this pattern in audience address is the divorce controversy. Once again, the Pharisees engage Jesus in another test, this time about divorce law. The public discussion is addressed to the audience as the Pharisees (10.5-9). In contrast to the earlier stories of legal dispute, there is no sign here that the words of Jesus were delivered with a tone of anger or frustration. This rabbinic ruling about divorce law appears to have been delivered in a straightforward and authoritative manner in spite of the fact that their question is introduced as still another testing of Jesus. Once again the scene shifts to the more intimate setting of the house. The storyteller as Jesus addresses the audience as the disciples for a short explanation of his legal opinion. 🗨️⁶ This move from public pronouncement to private discussion about the law has the same rabbinic dynamic as the earlier story about the purity laws.

The most extensive and highly developed instance of this pattern of audience address is the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem. The longest address to the audience as Jesus’ opponents in the Gospel is the parable of the vineyard and the wicked tenants (12.1-11). It is addressed to the audience as the chief priests, scribes and elders. This highly confrontational parable is followed by the controversy about the resurrection in which the audience is addressed as Sadducees. Jesus’ pronouncement in this story ends with a

²⁸ See Joel Marcus’s comment at the end of his commentary about the mystery of the loaves.

dismissal of the Sadducees: “You are quite wrong.” After the relatively cordial story of Jesus’ discussion with the scribe, the audience is addressed as the crowd in the Temple. The storyteller presents Jesus addressing the audience as a large and sympathetic crowd. He first speaks with them about the scribes’ teaching that the Messiah must be the son of David and then levels a climactic denunciation against the scribes. The next move toward more intimate and confidential address to the audience is the story of the widow’s gift where the audience is addressed as the disciples.

The climax of the stories of Jesus in Jerusalem prior to the passion narrative is the most extensive and intimate conversation in the entire Gospel. The so-called apocalyptic discourse (13.4-37) is addressed to the audience as the four disciples who are sitting with Jesus on the Mount of Olives overlooking the Temple. In this long address, the storyteller invites the audience into a relationship of intimacy and belief in Jesus. ²⁷ This intimacy and reinforcement of belief is directly related to Jesus’ prophecies about the Jewish-Roman war that have probably been fulfilled in the audience’s recent experience of the war and the destruction of the Temple.²⁹

This invitation to an intimate relationship with the character of Jesus is the culmination of the storyteller’s appeals to the audience throughout the story. Repeatedly in narrative sequence after narrative sequence, Mark as the teller of the tale invites the audience to move from a relationship of opposition and confrontation with Jesus to a relationship of belief and discipleship. In this structuring of audience address, Mark first engages his audience as adversaries of Jesus. The listeners are invited to enter into a series of testing confrontations with Jesus revolving primarily around the interpretation of the law. The listeners are then invited to engage with Jesus as the members of a sympathetic crowd. This climactic setting in the narrative sequences described above resonated with the real world setting of a storytelling performance in which a crowd of people gathered around a storyteller. The culmination of this implicit appeal to the members of the audience is a storytelling invitation to enter into and identify themselves with Jesus’ disciples listening to Jesus in small, private settings usually in a house. This setting of the story is consistent with the most frequent setting for the telling of Mark’s story in private homes to relatively small groups of people who would gather for an evening of storytelling.

Further evidence that this pattern of audience address was intentional is the progressive structure of engagement with the dynamic of being addressed as a disciple. The first significant address to the audience as persons close to Jesus occurs, as we have seen above, in the story of Jesus and his mother and brothers (3.31-35). There the character with whom the audience is invited to identify is named “the crowd sitting around him” (καὶ ἐκάθητο περὶ αὐτὸν ὄχλος), literally “the sitting around him crowd.” In the first teaching discourse that immediately follows this story, there is an elaborate description of the super large crowd (ὄχλος πλείστος) that gathered along the shore of the sea. The storyteller Jesus then addresses the audience as that large crowd, with Jesus probably

²⁹ See Joel Marcus, “The Jewish War and the *Sitz im Leben* of Mark.” *JBL* 111 (1992), 441-62. The social and political context of Mark that Marcus outlines in this article is congruent with the picture of Mark in performance.

seated and speaking in a loud voice with a slow tempo as one would find it imperative to use in speaking to such a crowd. After the parable, the storyteller shifts the setting to an unnamed place where Jesus is alone and the character addressed in the long discourse that follows is “those who were around him with the twelve” (οἱ περὶ αὐτὸν σὺν τοῖς δώδεκα). This name is a step closer to being addressed as a disciple but this character is “those who were around him *with* the twelve” rather than “the twelve” by themselves. The probable purpose of this rather strange name is the construction of a dynamic structure that invites the audience to draw closer to Jesus in small, incremental steps.

Furthermore, the content of Jesus’ speech in this discourse (4.10 ff.) is a series of implicit invitations to the audience to experience being “insiders” in the Jesus group and to reflect on the quality of their engagement with the story. The first episode of Jesus’ speech about the mystery of the kingdom of God is an explicit address to the audience about the gift offered to them as followers of Jesus. Furthermore, the identification of “the mystery,” like the motif of the Messianic secret, is a classic storytelling lure to an audience to stick around and hear the rest of the story. The contrast between those who are “inside” and those who are “outside” identifies a choice that the audience must make about whether to remain “outsiders” or to become “insiders.” Both the interpretation of the parable of the sower (4.13-20) as a parable about different ways of “hearing” and the saying about “hearing” (the saying can mean both “Pay attention to *what* you hear” and “Pay attention to *how* you hear” [as in Mt. 7.14 and Lk 12.49 BAGD, 3b]) address the quality of the audience’s present engagement with the story. This series of teaching stories (4.1-32) is the longest and most intensive interaction up to this point in the story between the main character, Jesus, and the audience, who are addressed first as “the great crowd” and then as “those around the twelve.”

The first speech addressed to the audience as “the twelve” does not occur until the story of the mission of the twelve (6.10-11). Jesus’ speech has an interesting structure. The storyteller reports the first half of Jesus’ instructions to the twelve in indirect discourse (6.7-9). Only after this introduction does the storyteller as Jesus address the audience directly as “the twelve.” This is the final incremental step in the storytelling process of inviting the audience to accept being addressed as disciples.

Prior to the Messianic confession and discipleship discourse, the audience is addressed once more as “the disciples” in the concluding speech about the purity laws (7.18-22). The major discipleship discourse that follows Peter’s realization (8:27ff), however, is addressed to the audience as “the crowd with the disciples” (8:34). Once again, the storyteller steps back from having Jesus address the audience as “the disciples” or “the twelve” and addresses them as “the crowd with the disciples.” Like the earlier address to the audience as “those who were around him with the twelve,” this name for Jesus’ addressee is initially puzzling because it is difficult as a description of the actual scene. How did Jesus gather a crowd in between his confrontation with Peter and his pronouncements about discipleship? The function of this comment, however, is probably less to describe what happened at Caesarea Philippi than to describe the gestures and gathering of the audience by the storyteller.

This is the turning point in the addresses to the audience as Jesus' disciples. After the discipleship discourse, the audience is addressed as the disciples most of the time (chapters 9-10) in the story of the journey up to Jerusalem. Only the teaching about divorce and the conversation with the rich man are exceptions, and both of those introduce discussions with the audience as the disciples. These stories firmly establish the relationship between the storyteller as Jesus and the audience as disciples prior to the events in Jerusalem that end with the longest and most intimate conversation with the four disciples seated on the Mount of Olives.

Thus, the addresses to the audience as disciples are structured to move the audience *from* a distanced relationship with the character of Jesus *to* an identification of themselves as Jesus' disciples. This dynamic in the relationship between the storyteller and the audience is experienced far more clearly in oral performance for a listening audience than when it is read alone in silence. In oral performance the storyteller can generate waves of emotional interaction upon which she or he seeks to carry the audience towards the desired outcome of an intimate relationship with Jesus that readers reading in the context of a wholly different rhetorical tradition do not experience.

Another sign of the importance of audience address for the composition of the Gospels is the structure of the other three Gospels. While similar patterns of audience address, namely interspersed addresses to the audience as opponents and disciples throughout the pre-passion story, are present in Matthew and Luke, John has a highly distinctive structure of audience address that engages audiences in a clearly marked, progressive relationship with Jesus over the entire story prior to the passion narrative.³⁰ In the first four chapters of the Gospel, the storyteller as Jesus addresses the audience as a series of Jewish groups who are both interested in him and even believe in him: the audience as themselves in the prologue, then in subsequent narratives first as the disciples, particularly Nathaniel, then as the Jews in the Temple, Nicodemus, the disciples of John, and the Samaritan woman.

In John 5 there is a major shift in audience address. Beginning with Jesus' response to the Jews persecuting him after the sabbath healing of the man at the pool of Bethzatha, the storyteller as Jesus consistently addresses the audience as various groups of Jews (e.g., the Pharisees, the Jews who want to kill or stone him or who believe in him, the crowd, and simply the Jews) who for eight chapters (5-12) alternate between extreme opposition and belief in Jesus. This continues through the entry into Jerusalem with the only exception being the brief address to the audience as his disciples at the end of the bread discourse (6.60-70). These long addresses to the audience as Jews torn between opposition and belief have their climax in a series of four addresses, the first by the storyteller as Jesus to the audience first as Philip and Andrew (12.23-28) then as the

³⁰ For a fuller discussion of the structure of audience address in John, see Thomas E. Boomershine, "The Medium and Message of John: Audience Address and Audience Identity in the Fourth Gospel" in *The Fourth Gospel in First-Century Media Culture*, ed. Anthony Le Donne and Tom Thatcher. New York: T&T Clark, 2011.

crowd (12.29-36), by “John” to the audience as themselves (12.37-43), and finally as Jesus to the audience as themselves (12.44-50).

The third section of audience address in John is Jesus’ last words to the eleven disciples in the aftermath of the washing of the disciples’ feet and the departure of Judas (13-17). This is the longest and most intimate discourse of Jesus in the entire Gospel tradition. Thus, in John the same pattern of audience address that is present in smaller sections of Mark provides the structure for the whole of John’s story prior to the passion narrative.

The sign that the composer of John consciously constructs this pattern of audience address is that there are only two relatively short addresses to the audience as the disciples from the story of the man at the pool of Bethzatha to the triumphal entry (6.60-70, 12.23-28). In fact, there are only two additional addresses to the audience as the disciples in the initial section of John’s story(chapters 1-4): Jesus’ response to Nathanael’s “over the top” confession (1.50-53) and his response to the disciples wanting him to eat something after his conversation with the Samaritan woman (4.34-38). This is in marked contrast to the three synoptic gospels in which there are addresses to the audience as the disciples throughout the stories prior to the passion narrative.

This pattern of audience address in John is similar to Mark and may have been a distinctive adaptation of Mark’s story. Mark establishes initial engagement with Jesus in the addresses to the audience by John the Baptist and Jesus himself (1.7-8, 15), moves to an extended series of addresses to the audience as various Jewish groups opposed to Jesus (2.8-10, 17, 19-22, 25-28, 3.4-5, 23-29) and ends with an extended address to the audience as those close to Jesus (3.33-35; 4.11-32). But while Mark repeats this pattern several times, it is always within a shorter storytelling compass, the longest being four chapters (1-4, 11-13). In John this pattern is extended with minor variations over the entire story prior to the passion narrative (1-17). These patterns of audience address in the story world of the Gospels of Mark and John are evidence that this was a structural dimension of the Gospel storytelling tradition.

The addresses to the audience in Mark’s passion story are further confirmation of this compositional structuring in the Gospel of Mark. As can be seen from the chart, prior to the arrest, the storyteller as Jesus addresses the audience as various groups of the disciples. With the exception of the Passover preparation instructions to the two disciples and the highly intimate speech interpreting the meaning of the bread and wine at the meal, Jesus’ speeches address the responses of the disciples to the events of the passion. Jesus’ counter rebuke of those who rebuked the woman who anointed him is implicitly linked with Judas’ offer to betray him. Once again, this is more evident when the story is performed than when it is read in silence because of the level of Jesus’ conflict and rebuke of those who denounce the woman. ⁸ The prophecies of betrayal (14.18-21) and desertion/denial (14.27-30) engage the audience in identification with the disciples’ disbelief and resistance to the prophecies that are more or less immediately fulfilled.

The climax of Jesus’ addresses to the audience prior to the arrest is Gethsemane. This is the quietest, the most intimate and the most emotionally intense interaction of the

storyteller as Jesus with the audience as Jesus' disciples in the entire story. The three-fold repetition of Jesus' plea that they stay awake may have had a direct connection with the audience's struggle to stay awake after an evening of some nearly two hours of storytelling. The audience is invited to identify fully with Peter, James and John as they hear the disappointment in their teacher's voice. In each of these instances the audience is invited to recognize the disciples' responses of betrayal, flight and denial as wrong responses but with which they can fully identify.

The storyteller's addresses to the audience as Jesus, the high priest, and Pilate are the climax of the plot of Jesus' opponents. In each of these addresses, the audience is directly addressed as "you." Thus, after the arrest, the storyteller as Jesus asks the audience as the crowd from the authorities, "Have *you* come out as against an insurrectionist (ληστῆς). . ."(14.48-49) After Jesus' confession, the storyteller as the high priest asks the audience as the council, "*You* have heard his blasphemy. How does it appear to *you*?" (14.63-64) And the storyteller as Pilate addresses the audience as the crowd: "Do *you* want me to release for *you* the King of the Jews?" (15.9) and "What then shall I do with the one *you* call King of the Jews?" (15.12).⁹ These speeches all share the same performance dynamic of requiring the audience to answer these questions internally. It is also significant that the questions at the arrest and the Pilate trial address issues directly related to the audience's experience of the insurrection that led to the Roman-Jewish war. Jesus' question to the crowd arresting him as an insurrectionist (ληστῆς) and the crowd's choice at the Pilate trial between Barabbas, an insurrectionist (στασιαστής), and Jesus frame these direct questions to the audience in the same terms that Josephus uses frequently to describe the various groups that led the revolution.³¹ These questions are formed to resonate with the experience of *Jewish* audiences who lived in the aftermath of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple. The storyteller's implicit appeal to the audiences of the story is to identify the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus as mistakes that are associated with the disasters of the war.

The final address to the audience in Mark's story by the storyteller as a character in the story is the address of the storyteller as "the young man" dressed in white to the audience as Mary Magdalene, Mary and Salome (16.6-7). This speech is the climax of the entire two-hour story. The speech is quiet, slow and intimate. The audience's identification with the women has been established in the stories of their presence at Jesus' crucifixion and burial (15.40-41, 47). As a result, the audience experiences the young man's words as addressed to them. The climactic imperative addressed to the audience is the command to "go, tell. . ." (16.7). Their response of flight and saying nothing to anyone completes the cycle of wrong responses by the characters with whom the audience has been invited to identify. In each instance, the impact of this story experience is to be implicated in these wrong responses and implicitly invited to reflect on this response and to do its opposite:

³¹ The terms that Mark uses to describe Barabbas would have had the implications of revolutionary activity for Mark's audiences in the aftermath of the Roman-Jewish war. This is evident from Josephus' usage of these same terms to refer to the insurgents. For documentation and an excellent discussion of this dimension of Mark's language in the arrest and trial stories, see Marcus, *Mark*, 1029.

staying awake, staying with Jesus in times of persecution, openly confessing being a disciple, choosing Jesus as Messiah rather than the insurrectionists, and telling the story. This final address to the audience is consistent with the performance function of the addresses to the audience throughout the story. These addresses involve the audience in direct interaction with the characters and events of the story.

The Characteristics of Mark's Audiences

The instances and patterns of the Markan storyteller's addresses to the audiences of the story as various characters in the story are a source of direct information about the characteristics of Mark's audiences.

- 1) The audiences are almost always addressed as various groups of Jews. The sequence of Jewish groups can be seen on the chart and can be summarized here: the people of Judea and Galilee, the scribes and scribes of the Pharisees, the disciples of John the Baptist and the Pharisees, the Pharisees at several points in the story, the scribes from Jerusalem, the crowd at several points in the story including the Pilate trial, the group sitting around Jesus, those around Jesus with the twelve, the people in the Nazareth synagogue, the twelve and the disciples many times, the crowd with the disciples, Peter/Andrew/James/John, the chief priests/scribes/elders, the Sadducees, the crowd in the Temple, the Sanhedrin, and Mary Magdalene/Mary/Salome. By far the most frequent character embodied by the storyteller in these addresses to the audience is Jesus. No other character has more than one major address to the audience. Thus, the primary dynamic of address by the storyteller of the audience as characters in the story is wide-ranging spectrum of Jewish groups.
- 2) Non-Jews are addressed as a minor but integral part of Mark's audiences. At one point in the story (7.3-5), Gentiles are addressed directly by the storyteller and are thereby included in the projected audiences of the Gospel.
- 3) The translations of Hebrew and Aramaic terms by the storyteller are an indication that the audiences are addressed as Greek speaking Jews and Gentiles who may not know Hebrew or Aramaic.
- 4) Mark's audiences are addressed as Jewish persons who are invited to move from identifying with groups who are opposed to Jesus to identifying with Jesus' disciples. This pattern is present in progressive sections of the Gospel (2-4; 7.1-22; 8.11-21; 10.1-12; 12-13) and in the majority of stories before and after the Messianic confession. Before the Messianic confession, the audience is addressed most of the time as groups who are opposed to Jesus. After Peter's moment of recognition, the audience is predominantly addressed as disciples.
- 5) The audiences are addressed as persons who are implicitly asked to move gradually from being identified as part of crowds interested in listening to Jesus to being identified as Jesus' disciples. This movement in audience address from

being addressed as “those outside” to “those inside” is carefully nuanced in incremental steps. These include addresses to the audience in relatively long discourses by Jesus as, for example, “those around Jesus with the twelve” and “the crowd with the disciples.” The addresses to the audience as those “inside” are sometimes located in a story space where Jesus is alone or inside a house. This storytelling location is also a sign that these talks are quieter, smaller in gesture, and more intimate than the public discourses.

This data has implications for our reconstructions of the actual historical audiences of Mark’s Gospel. The data of audience address in Mark’s Gospel indicates that the story was structured for predominantly Jewish audiences who did not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. Mark’s purpose is evident in the structure of audience address in the story. The story is structured to move the audiences from identifying themselves as Jesus’ opponents to identifying themselves as Jesus’ disciples. Furthermore, those who are interested in Jesus, as are most of those who would have begun listening to Mark’s story, are invited by the storyteller to move from a relationship of interest on the periphery of the story to a place “inside” the community of those who have an intimate relationship with Jesus.

There is nothing in this data that would indicate that Mark’s story was directed to those outside the nascent Christian communities to the exclusion of those who were already members of believing communities. However, believers are *addressed as* Jews who are either opposed to Jesus or are only interested in his teaching from a distance. That is, the structure of audience address does not support the assumption that Mark was composed for performances to audiences that were either an individual believing community as Joel Marcus envisions or the network of *Christian* communities in the Greco-Roman world as Richard Bauckham has proposed. The story may have been told in *believing* communities but those believers are addressed as persons who are either outside or on the periphery of discipleship communities. The audiences are addressed as disciples but only after a long period of storytelling invitations to move from a position of identification with opponents or with a supportive crowd on the outer perimeters of the communities of disciples. Thus, there are many allusions in Jesus’ apocalyptic discourse to the experience of communities of Jesus’ followers. But that only happens after a long process of audience inclusion in which the audience is invited by the dynamics of audience address to move from a position of opposition to the interested periphery to the inner circle of the twelve and then the four and three disciples closest to Jesus.

The Gospel of Mark has a radically different structure of audience address than the letters of Paul that are addressed to small communities of believers. Mark is addressed to the great community of Jews throughout the Greco-Roman world all of whom were seeking for a way forward in the aftermath of the war. A major theme implicit in the structure of audience address is an appeal to the audience to reject the way of insurrection and to believe in a Messiah who taught and practiced healing and feeding of both Jews and Gentiles. A dimension of Jesus’ teaching was a critique of the purity laws that were a barrier to Jews having virtually any relationship with Gentiles. However, while Gentiles are the object of Jesus’ actions in several stories, the audience is addressed as Gentiles only once in the story. The Gospel of Mark is addressed to Jews and Gentiles in a manner

that assumes they are fully cognizant of the realities of hostility between Jews and Gentiles. This relationship is, however, addressed from a Jewish perspective. The Gentiles are those on the other side of the sea (5:1ff), those who are appropriately called “dogs” (7:27), those who will mock, spit on and kill the Messiah (10:34), and those who practice leadership by domination rather than service (10:42), Gentiles are, therefore, invited to be part of the audiences of the Gospel but only as they are willing to enter into the Jewish world of Mark’s story. As one might expect in the aftermath of the war, the Gospel of Mark addresses audiences in which the relationships between Jews and Gentiles are even more highly polarized than in the letters of Paul.

The analysis of the dynamics of audience address requires that Markan scholarship reexamine the conclusion that the Gospel of Mark was anti-Jewish. The central fact that requires this reexamination is that the audiences of the story were, with one exception, addressed as Jews. Furthermore, for the first hour of the story the storyteller presents Jesus addressing the audiences as Jews who are opponents and critics of Jesus. This is a structure of audience interactions that is characteristic of *intra-Jewish* conflict rather than *anti-Jewish* conflict. In its original context, the Gospel of Mark is no more anti-Jewish than the book of Jeremiah or the book of Exodus. In both of those books, the audience is addressed as members of Israelite communities by storytellers who embody characters such as Moses and Jeremiah who are in steady conflict with the people of Israel. The literature of Israel is full of violent intra-Jewish conflict in which various authors are appealing to Jews to reject the policies and actions of other Jewish groups.

What is distinctive about Mark’s story in the context of the literature of Israel is the inclusion of Gentiles in the projected audiences of the story. Gentile members of Mark’s audiences were invited to join audiences of Jews and to experience the story of Jesus as an integral part of the wider Jewish community. The storytellers of Mark’s Gospel did not address their audience as Gentiles for whom Jews are “the others,” as would be required if the story’s purpose was anti-Jewish. The audiences of Mark are addressed as Jews for whom Gentiles are “the others.” The structure of audience address in Mark requires that we imagine a social and political context in which non-Jews were invited to join Jews in listening to a Jewish story of which they were an integral part both in the story itself and in their participation in the audiences for whom the story is performed. This is congruent with the social and political context of the Jewish community in the immediate aftermath of the war outlined by Joel Marcus.³² But the data of audience address indicates that the audiences of Mark were not addressed as communities in which either Gentiles or members of believing communities were the majority. The audiences of Mark were addressed as Jews and Gentiles who were invited by the story to move from a position of opposition to Jesus to a position of identifying with Jesus’ disciples. The audiences of Mark are, therefore, primarily addressed repeatedly as Jews who do not believe that Jesus is the Messiah. The historical probability is that this was the dominant character of the audiences for which the Gospel was performed. The primary purpose of the story was to move its listeners from opposition to Jesus to belief in Jesus as the Messiah, the Son of God.

³² See n. 28 above.

In conclusion, the process of the investigation of Mark as a narrative initiated in public discussion by the publication of *Mark as Story* has been a complex process that is already evolving in new directions. Performance criticism is a logical and historically appropriate methodological development that is more congruent with the original character of Mark than narrative criticism with its assumption of Markan readers as developed in *Mark as Story*. The recognition that Mark was not a book read by readers but was a composition performed by oral performers, initially storytellers, is of primary importance for the interpretation of Mark in its original historical context. Oral performance encourages identification with characters and the experience of being addressed by a character in the story that is easily jettisoned when other strategies of reception, such as silent reading of a mute text, replace those of the oral storyteller. Silent reading in particular allows the reader to remain an observer on the outside of the events being narrated, especially when the events involve characters with whom the reader does not readily identify. Mark as a storyteller, on the other hand, utilizes a panoply of resources for engaging the audience in a dynamic identification with the characters of the story. Mark's story creates a story world that connected with the real world of both Jewish and Gentile 1st century audiences. We have described the moves of audience address in which the same central speaker, Jesus, addresses the audience as a series of characters. These characters are predominantly Jewish and the listeners' experience in the course of the story moves from negative to more positive engagements with Jesus. Hearing and performing Mark provides new data that will change our perceptions of Mark's audiences and the meaning of Mark's story for those audiences.