



# Loving Yusuf: Conceptual Travels from Present to Past (Afterlives of the Bible)

*Mieke Bal*

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When Mieke Bal reread the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife as an adult, she was struck by differences between her childhood memories of a moral tale and what she read today. In *Loving Yusuf*, Bal seeks to resolve this clash between memory and text, using the same story, in which Joseph spurns the advance of his master's wife who then falsely accuses him of rape, as her point of departure. She juxtaposes the Genesis tale to the rather different version told in the Qur'an and the depictions of it by Rembrandt and explores how Thomas Mann's great retelling in *Joseph and His Brothers* reworks these versions.

Through this inquiry she develops concepts for the analysis of texts that are both strange and overly familiar—culturally remote yet constantly retold. As she puts personal memories in dialogue with scholarly exegesis, Bal asks how all of these different versions complicate her own and others' experience of the story, and how the different truths of these texts in their respective traditions illuminate the process of canonization.

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