

Transtextuality and the Lukan Nativity Prefix¹

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Abstract: This article applies transtextuality theory to the nativity narrative prefix in the Gospel of Luke. After briefly explaining the theory, the article examines how the Lukan storytelling plan moulds the Markan-inherited tradition. As opposed to the historical-critical approaches that seek to differentiate the authentic traditions from the inauthentic, as in form criticism, transtextual theory aims to understand and appreciate how the various components mutually interact to form a unified whole that functions on the synchronic plane in its present shape. As opposed to redaction criticism, the Gospel of Luke is not viewed as a mere embellishment of Mark but as an original story version to be considered in its own right. Transtextuality theory explains the inner workings between the individuating textual components that animate the Lukan story and how the resulting version creates a differing image of the *dramatis personae* therein.

Keywords: transtextuality; literary theory; nativity prefix; Gospel of Luke

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Introduction

It is held today that the Gospel of Luke was written “between 80 and 90 CE”², that is, after the Gospel of Mark, on which it relied, assuming Markan priority. “Many³ have undertaken to compile a narrative of the things...”⁴ Then, the author of the Gospel of Luke continues, saying that he, too, decided to write “an orderly account”.⁵ Whether orderly refers to temporal, narrative, theological or any other sequence may be a matter for debate. Nonetheless, in Luke, we have a written account of Jesus’ life that both depends on a Markan

1 The study was supported by Charles University, project GA UK 386021. This article may bear a resemblance in places to the wording and argument as found in the conference proceedings expected to be published [the conference *Transformations of Religious Identity in Judaism and Christianity* was held at the HTF UK (November 22, 2021), with my following conference contribution: “Jesus – John the Baptist relation as depicted in Luke 1–2 (with relation to 3–4)”].

2 François Bovon, *Luke 1: A Commentary on the Gospel of Luke 1:1–9:50*, trans. Christine M. Thomas (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2002), 9.

3 As per the Farrer theory, Luke was aware of Mark and maybe even of Matthew.

4 Lk 1:1a, Revised Standard Version (RSV).

5 *καθεξῆς* – “pert. to being in sequence in time, space, or logic, in order, one after the other”; Walter Bauer, “*καθεξῆς*,” Frederick W. Danker (ed.), BDAG 490.

narrative template and is innovative enough to be taken on its own terms. The textual relationship can be viewed as an encounter between the narrative tradition (Mark) and its literary innovation (Luke). This article will focus on Luke's innovative features for two reasons as indicated below.

The first reason concerns the literary context of the gospel writers, who may have been in competition with one another. Let's suppose that the Matthean and Lukan accounts had been designed not only to fill the gaps in Mark, which could have been perceived as silence on key points of interest (such as the nativity scene and Jesus' early life) but also to replace Mark as the primary narrative about Jesus, an assumption maintained throughout this paper. If this is true, Luke should be regarded as a literary innovation in its own right and not simply as an extension. As a new literary construct, Luke's story is predicated on innovative features. These include his novel prefixing, which compels the reader to appreciate both the literary qualities of the writing and the newly told story. Luke picks up where Mark ends and reconstructs Jesus' story in a way that moves beyond mere embellishments to develop a more intriguing narrative that provides an alternative account.

The second reason for prioritising the narrative of Luke as a newly constructed literary product over its indebtedness to Mark, is the fascinating construct of a new story world that the reader is invited to enter. The construct of this imaginative world, which differs from Mark's, is of particular interest in this paper.

To appreciate the story world that Luke creates requires an approach that focuses on the interrelationships of the narrative components. Therefore, this article aims to identify the distinctive textual features contributing to constructing the Lukan story world. Transtextual literary theory, as conceptualised by the French literary theorist, Gérard Genette, serves as an explanatory model for understanding Luke's composition process.

This article is divided into two parts. The first explains Genette's theory of transtextuality, while the second applies the theory through the observation of coordinates depicted in a diagram in the form of arrow icons that make up the Lukan story architecture.

Explaining the Theory

According to Genette, transtextuality (or textual transcendence) is "everything that brings it [the text] into relation (manifest or hidden) with

other texts.”⁶ The theory is closely related to intertextuality, a term (*l'intertextualité*) first coined by Julia Kristeva, a Bulgarian literary critic, within the context of structuralism and its criticism in the post-structuralist period.

Further differentiation of the transtextuality can be provided. Genette frequently uses the terms “intertextuality,” “metatextuality,” “paratextuality,” and “hypertextuality,” which are essential for understanding the following: the text in its present shape is a reaction to a pre-existing text; the text is a composite product, a sum of its individuating textual parts, which all participate in meaning creation.⁷

According to Genette, the key terms are defined as follows. “Intertextuality [...] is the literal presence (more or less literal, whether integral or not) of one text within another. [...] Metatextuality [is] [...] the transtextual relationship that links a commentary to the text it comments on.”⁸ The most common intertextual relational occurrence is, for example, in the form of citations, allusions and echoes that are present within a final text, whereas the metatextual relations may be encountered through referential literature (commentaries, textbooks, dictionaries), enabling a better understanding of the text in question.

Paratextuality is a category that is used to observe an interplay between a main text and its surrounding paratext, which Genette defines as “those liminal devices and conventions, both within the book (*peritext*) and outside it (*epitext*), that mediate the book to the reader: titles and subtitles, pseudonyms, forewords, dedications, epigraphs, prefaces, intertitles, notes, epilogues, and afterwords.”⁹ Genette delineates that paratext is a “threshold, vestibule and an undefined zone between the inside and the outside [of text].”¹⁰ Finally, Genette uses the term hypertextuality, which is defined as “the superimposition of a later text on an earlier one that includes all forms

6 Gérard Genette, *The Architext: An Introduction*, trans. Jane E. Lewin (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1992), 81.

7 This realisation is vital when compared with the fragmentary historical-critical approaches that, by separating the in/authentic traditions, assume the possibility of looking behind the text into a putative real “past”. However, as a construct, the text is a self-enclosed object and a literary representation in its entirety that may not necessarily correspond to a reality outside itself but, rather, seeks to tell a unique story wherein each component proves indispensable in such a storytelling task.

8 Genette, *The Architext*, 81–83.

9 Richard Macksey, foreword to *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, by Gérard Genette, trans. Jane E. Lewin (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), xviii.

10 *Ibid.*, xvii.

of imitation, pastiche, and parody.”¹¹ Hence, we have a word pair combining hypertext and its corresponding hypotext; that is, an overlying text and the underlying text.

The main reason for drawing attention to all of these terms is that they explain the process of transtextuality, which assumes a relational and referential architecture of various inter/para/hyper/hypo-textual aspects that make up the text in its current form, that is, the process of narrative construction concerning initially external influences that were transtextually drawn into the construction process.¹²

Contemporary Discussion

This section provides a brief overview of contemporary discussion on the problems of transtextuality theory, with a specific focus on one of its distinctive components: paratextuality. Given that Genette’s theory remains a touchstone, this section focuses primarily on how contemporary authors engage with his work.

Stanley E. Porter,¹³ a textual critic, when commenting on Patrick Anderson’s literary-critical remarks, finds Genette’s definition of paratext problematic for several reasons, which can be subsumed under the following headings: text definition, modern situation, and problems of authorship.

- a) Text definition: to understand the paratext, one must define the notion of the text, which is problematic, as there is no clear definition of what the text is.
- b) Modern situation: Genette defines paratext as applying to modern published books,¹⁴ a situation that can hardly be utilised with regard to ancient literature.

11 Macksey, foreword, xix.

12 Michael Riffaterre holds that the text cannot be understandable without recognising its intertext. See Jiří Lukeš, “Leviticus 19,18 v recepci Nového zákona – Text, který žije ‘novým životem’. O intertextualitě v prostředí biblických textů,” in Jiří Beneš (ed.), *Otevřené dveře – Leviticus 19* (Chomutov: Pontes Pragenses, 2012), 164.

13 Stanley E. Porter, “What Is Paratext? In Search of an Elusive Category,” in *Studies on the Paratextual Features of Early New Testament Manuscripts* (Leiden: Brill, 2023), 13–32.

14 Genette seems to avoid the conceptualisation of the text as something functioning beyond the realm of the book. For more about the problems of his lack of interest concerning text functionality in other types of media, see the criticism in Georg Stanitzek, “Texts and Paratexts in Media,” *Critical Inquiry* 32/1 (2005), 35.

c) Problems of authorship: Andrist regards the concept of paratext as problematic, as Genette links paratext to authorial control.

As will be shown, the above points are mutually linked. For example, one cannot satisfactorily address the problem of text definition, and hence the question of what the text-related paratext might actually entail, when operating within the conceptually anachronistic coordinates of modern categories without further reflection. (However, the present article takes a positive view of utilising Genette's categories of transtextuality, merely as "working categories".) Moreover, the problem of authorship looms even larger, if modern concepts of copyright, or authorial self-consciousness as sanctioned by the modern intellectual property law, were non-existent; for this reason, the distinction between an actual author, an authorial community, and the reception of a given work through its rewritings by the subsequent readers/authors renders the task of pinpointing the blurred distinction between authorship and readership increasingly difficult.

Touching upon text definition (a), Porter provides his readers with seven conceptions of text: ontological, phenomenological, philological, literary, linguistic, semiological, and text-critical conceptions, which correspond respectively to seven text dimensions: text as reflective of a reality, text as experienced, text as an established idealisation through a linguistic code, text as a medium, text as an interplay of signs and signification, and text as a physical representation. Since there is no single definition of text, Porter seeks to problematise that which Genette calls paratext, understood as everything standing outside the author's control or, at least, as somewhat sanctioned by the author.¹⁵

Here, we have touched upon the problem of the modern situation (b), wherein "Genette considers everything but the text (which he attributes to the author) as paratext, including epitext and peritext, even if he later differentiates between authorial and publisher epitext. However, it must be noted that Genette is concerned with a published work, not a handwritten manuscript."¹⁶ As Porter points out, "[t]his is highly problematic, even for a published book, as the published text, as a literary text, is itself merely a representation of the authorial text; that is, it is a printed version of the text written by the author. In that regard, every published book, and by

¹⁵ Porter, "What Is Paratext?," 15.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 26.

implication every copied manuscript, is entirely paratext or epitext.”¹⁷ To press the argument further, if one adopts the conception of text, in its physical dimension, as a physical representation (the text-critical conception), rather than as a mere reflection of an elusive reality standing outside or beyond its physical reality (the ontological conception), nothing can be deemed an authorial text. What remains, instead, is the work of later scribes, editors, compilers, and recipient readers, who, by definition, co-author or participate in text creation, (c) problem of authorship, whose “authorial presence” can equally be found grafted upon the text. Porter is entirely dismissive of the idea of defining text and paratext, let alone of relating them to each other. Admittedly, Genette’s theory is rightly seen as problematic by critics if the transtextual categories are taken beyond the immediate questions of “Paratext for whom and in what context?”¹⁸ One may speak consciously of “received text” or “received paratext” without presupposing an authorial presence in “an earliest reconstructable text”. In its current shape and form, the text stands outside putative authorial control, yet still somewhat fleetingly participates in it through its various receptions and multiple transmissions as a communally sanctioned text tradition. Our understanding of Genette’s categories will, therefore, inevitably differ, as linking the text definition to authorial control in order to make the distinction between text and paratext is not possible in the situation of an absent autograph. For that reason, the physical gospel text (as in the text-critical conception) cannot be considered, *stricto sensu*, an authorial text, but only its received or reconstructed representation. Nonetheless, Genette’s theory still has its merits if the categories are used cautiously, as will be demonstrated later.

Applying the theory

Given the rich presence¹⁹ of the Markan tradition in Luke,²⁰ by carefully using Genette’s categories, we can refer to the textual relationship as a Luke–Mark hypertext–hypotext, whereby Mark as the hypotext is superimposed by

17 Ibid., 15.

18 Porter, “What Is Paratext?,” 32.

19 Anthony M. Honoré, “A Statistical Study of the Synoptic Problem,” *Novum Testamentum* 10 (Leiden: Brill, 1968), 95–147.

20 The gospel writings, or their composite parts (e.g., Lk 1–2), are termed here under the conventional names without implying anything specific about their actual authorship.

Luke, the hypertext. As a result, the strong Markan literary position within the territory of the Lukan gospel architecture draws our intertextual focus. By supposing Luke's connection with Mark, the nativity scene in Lk 1–2 can be deemed a paratext that acts as a vestibule and threshold or a corrected reading that fills Mark's "void". Nonetheless, as Géza Vermes points out, "[...] if the two chapters had been lost, their disappearance would not be felt by the readers of the main story [as] [...] the latter never refers back to events already recounted in the opening section [...] as the bond linking them to the rest of the gospel narratives appears extremely flimsy."²¹ However, in contrast to the above citation, the theory may demonstrate how the paratext and the immediate text mutually interact and are, by no means, strangers to one another.

If Luke 1–2 is considered a paratext, it is not only a vestibule but also a form of preparatory introduction, a literary device that functions to develop the story's *dramatis personae* as it is "the clearest case of ['authorial'] invention."²² As opposed to an external metatextual "story-poster" that would disclose the role distribution (the starring), Luke opted to prefix the Markan story using a highly dramatised²³ paratextual story stage-setting, which, as a liminal literary device, is not necessarily an inherent part of the story on the temporal plane as it stands outside of where the fictive present begins.²⁴ However, as demonstrated further,²⁵ the prefix plays a crucial role, as it informs the enfolding story. The reader's appreciation of the entirety of the narrative lends the Lukan story version a notion of unity as, according to Barthes (who views any literature as inevitably intertextual), "unity lies not in its [the story's] origin but in its destination".²⁶ In contrast, from a historical-critical perspective, the Gospel of Luke is viewed more like a "receptacle" containing

21 Géza Vermes, *The Nativity: History and Legend* (London: Penguin Books, 2006), Kindle Location 1883.

22 Ed P. Sanders, *The Historical Figure of Jesus* (London: Penguin Books, 1993), p. 85, in Vermes, *The Nativity*, Kindle Location 278.

23 Raymond E. Brown, *The Birth of the Messiah: A Commentary on the Infancy Narratives in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke* (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 253.

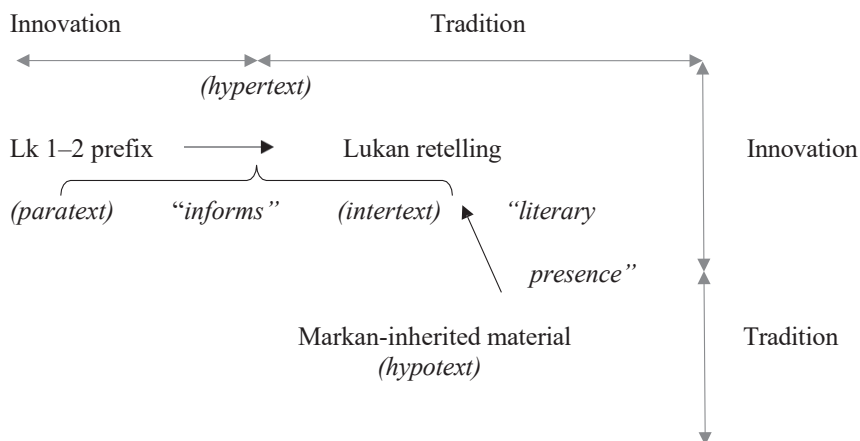
24 The fictive present is "the state of affairs at the starting point of what is perceived as the primary narrative action." Eyal Segal, "Beginnings and Endings," in John Frow (ed.), *Oxford Encyclopedia of Literary Theory* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2022), 8.

25 See *Envisioning the Transtextual Model*.

26 Roland Barthes, "Image – Music – Text," in Stephen Heath (ed.), *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, vol. 37 (New York: Hill and Wang, 1977), 148.

various traditions, some of which may have independently circulated before being embedded within the gospel.

Envisioning the Transtextual Model



The above diagram envisions how the transtextual model operates concerning the textual inner workings of the Gospel of Luke. Based on the diagram, we can better visualise the following two-step process. First, the Markan “inherited” material is referenced in the form of literary presence in the Lukan retelling via an arrow as illustrated in the hypotext-to-intertext relationship. Thus, Mark is subsumed as a received tradition within the process of the Lukan individuating innovation. Second, the Lukan retelling is informed or influenced by the prefixed paratext, which, in itself, is the most innovative element (as well as the most unstable one)²⁷ among the three transtextual constituents. Therefore, when discussing the paratext as informing the intertext, the two constituents form a “unified” hypertext vis-à-vis the Markan story, which lacks any such prefixual vehicle. However, to observe the unity in contrast to Vermes’ claim that the Lukan prefix is not dependent on the rest of Luke, one may need to imaginatively integrate the prefix into the rest of the story within both the meaning-making and coherence-creating processes on the side of the reader. However, despite an

²⁷ For example, the Matthean prefix is an entirely different predication, equally a product of the imaginative narrative plotting.

awareness of there being yet another story version (the Markan hypotext, which had not been replaced as may originally have been intended),²⁸ the reader can still engage with the entirety of the Lukan hypertextual story by focusing on its individuating qualities,²⁹ as well as the art of Luke's storytelling as a competing account that conveys a distinct point of view.³⁰

Informing the Tradition: From Paratext to Intertext

Primacy Effect

To understand how the paratext animates the storytelling, we will now focus on its effect on the narrative "ascendence", as the Lukan storytelling does not start abruptly but has to be slowly accelerated. Menachem Perry states, "In literary texts, there is the exceptional and enduring importance of the narrative's opening in establishing the ground rules of the [...] transaction."³¹ To grab the reader's attention, the primacy effect with its affective qualities must be carefully arranged. Nonetheless, "[t]here is never anything inevitable about the way a narrative begins: a narrator may start anywhere, and where to begin is, therefore, a matter of choice."³² To underline, the prefix, thus, establishes the primacy effect, the impact of which is felt across the entirety of the storytelling, given the privileged position it occupies, as it is the very first component the reader encounters.

The Lukan nativity prefix, as a paratext, puts a particular emphasis on establishing the ground rules concerning the *dramatis personae*, as will be

28 Petr Pokorný, *Od Evangelia k evangeliům: Dějiny, teologie a působení biblického výrazu "evangelium"* (Praha: Academia, 2016), 188.

29 The qualities in question: setting (the temporal and spatial context of the story; §2.2.2 Narrative Past), plot (the order of the narrative, sequential relations, breakthroughs, development and resolution; see Different Predication), characters (their drives, changes and developments; see Transmotivation), rhetoric (the ways an author uses the features of narrative to persuade readers to enter into and accept the world of the story; see Narrative Imprimatur). See David E. Aune, "Literary Criticism," in David E. Aune (ed.), *The Blackwell Companion to the New Testament* (Chichester: Blackwell Publishing Ltd., 2010), 128.

30 A key narrative vehicle for establishing the point of view is the role of the narrator, whose voice "reflects the beliefs and values of the story". See Aune, *Literary Criticism*, 128.

31 Menachem Perry, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings," *Poetics Today* 1 (1979), pp. 35–64 and 311–361, in Mark Coleridge, *The Birth of the Lukan Narrative: Narrative as Christology in Luke 1–2* (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1993), 29.

32 Coleridge, *The Birth*, 29.

addressed in the section on transmotivation.³³ The prefix is a liminal space wherein the action trajectory and the distribution of roles are implied or defined. Here, it can be argued that the author innovatively compensates for Mark's perceived shortcomings; if this is the case, Luke can be observed as engaging in unrestrained compositional activity in the appropriation of the received tradition. There is no need to pursue source critical analysis in this instance, as has been customary for years in Lukan studies. The hypothetical proposals of the special Lukan source material behind the prefix text are not relevant to the purpose of this study, which focuses on the function of the prefix within the context of competitive writing. The only connection with source material within the parameters of this paper concerns the Marcan-inherited tradition, which lies outside the prefix.

Narrative Past

Another function of the prefix is that it establishes what is called a narrative past, which creates a situation that guides the reader to look back in time to a memorable past. According to Coleridge, the narrative past allows us "to understand the events filling the Lukan narrative [in that the] readers must begin by looking backwards".³⁴ In Luke's case, the narrative past is linked with the Jewish scriptural stories of Abraham and Sarah, as well as Elkanah and Hanna. In other words, the intriguing aspect at play here is that Luke innovatively frames Jesus' story by referring to the figures of Israel's past.

Narrative Imprimatur

Luke's literary innovation has a legitimising effect, establishing a so-called narrative imprimatur, which, in Coleridge's words, means "placing the key opening [...] in the mouth of an angel to give the hermeneutic an authority transcending the narrator".³⁵

Excursus: Angelic Pronouncement Tradition

Given the tradition of angelic apparitions, which highlights the birth of a patriarch-like figure in the Tanakh and play a critical role in various Second Temple-period literature, it is no surprise that a Lukan narrative should contain an angelic, authoritative validation of a sort. The book of Genesis features two miraculous angelic/divine messenger birth announcements (Ishmael, Gen. 16; Isaac, Gen. 18); Judg. 13 contains an angel

³³ See Transmotivation.

³⁴ Coleridge, *The Birth*, 35.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 36.

announcing the birth of Samson. The book of Jubilees, itself a hypertext of Genesis, has, for example, the angelic appearance as being instrumental in marking the crucial events of salvation history on Sinai (Jub. 1:38nn).

Other prominent Second Temple-period texts with extensive angelology include the Enoch literature, which conceptually overlaps with the Synoptic material, albeit in a theologically downplayed manner,³⁶ and the second-century Book of Daniel – interestingly, part of the Tanakh – which features an angel representing a theophanic manifestation (Dan. 10:5–6).³⁷

It is likely that by inserting an angel – an extraterrestrial revealer of the divine plans – into the Lukan narrative prefix, Luke sought to underline the births of the two dramatis personae as crucial events in salvation history, marking them with an authoritative salvific twist imagery known and expected by the readership familiar with the Old Testament and the then-contemporaneous Second Temple-period literature traditions, functioning as intelligible frames of reference.

Additionally, as touched upon earlier, an innovative peritext may have required an officially identified “author”. What may have at one point been an anonymously penned gospel could have much later (during the second century AD) required an authoritative label (i.e., *Κατα Λουκᾶν*). This may have been conveyed by appending material in the form of an attachment to the prefix introit. When discussing the question pertaining to pseudonymity, Judith Lieu observes the reason for it as having “the earliest Apostle regenerated textually to authorise particular understanding of the teaching, and perhaps to deny other understandings or structures”.³⁸ This highlights two key takeaways. First, a narrative imprimatur requires the elevation of a particular understanding set forth by the prefix. Second, a narrative imprimatur implies rejecting other readings that run contrary to the receiver’s perceptions.³⁹ In the new competing narrative, the writer seeks to establish authority against other understandings of a similar story concerning the Jesus–John relationship, predicated on different terms.⁴⁰ With the prefix addition, the Lukan writing

36 Kelley Coblenz Bautch, “Heavenly Beings in the Enoch Traditions and Synoptic Gospels,” in Loren T. Stuckenbruck, Gabriele Boccaccini (eds.), *Enoch and the Synoptic Gospels: Reminiscences, Allusions, Intertextuality* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2016), 106–107.

37 Ibid., 117.

38 Judith M. Lieu, *Christian Identity in the Jewish and Graeco-Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 50.

39 To say that the reader participates in meaning creation within the literary exchange process puts the latter supposition into an interesting interpretative tension. By making up an appeal to the authority (angelic or apostolic), the narrative imprimatur, thus, can be said to narrow down or channel the possible surplus of meanings, rather than cause the collapse of the reader’s imaginative participation.

40 See Different Predication.

opts for a two-fold, *ad intra*–*ad extra* validation strategy. The text gets authenticated through an angelic pronouncement (*ad intra* appeal–from within the narrative) and an appeal to a putative apostolic authorial quality in the peritext (*ad extra* appeal–external to the narrative).

Retelling the Tradition: From Hypotext to Hypertext

Different Predication

By having the hypertextual story set on a different predication through the use of the individuating prefix, which is not found in the hypotextual story, a situation akin to a change in the key-tuning of a song; in this way, the author creates a new story world by changing what the hypotext signifies. To demonstrate how a different predication could be achieved, the Diatessaron can be used as an example because it is not simply a compilation of canonical gospels available to Tatian, but, rather, as Matthew Crawford explains, it is a “new, authoritative, and singular written instantiation of the Jesus tradition to replace the diversity of written sources existing at the time [...] [and thus] a legitimate gospel in its own right”,⁴¹ the creation of which “[...] must have involved thousands of interpretative decisions”.⁴² The Diatessaron, with its different predication, profoundly influenced how, for example, Ephrem read and understood the nativity story. By combining the Johannine material with those of the Synoptics, “he [identifies] the ‘voice [of John the Baptist]’ and the ‘star’ as hypostasized entities [of Christ] through whom the eternal divine Word accomplishes his mission [...]”.⁴³ “Tatian’s juxtaposition of once separate pericopae created the opportunity for novel interpretive moves [...] [i.e., new storytelling, as] it invited interpretations that [...] [otherwise] would have been impossible.”⁴⁴

Similar to the Diatessaron, with the displacing of Markan narrative order in the form of an anachronism,⁴⁵ Luke creates a new story world by having the Jesus–John relation predicated on different terms. The story of John in prison had to be excised from the Markan narrative order and inserted

41 Matthew R. Crawford, “Reading the Diatessaron with Ephrem: The Word and the Light, the Voice and the Star,” in *Vigiliae Christianae* 69/1 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 70.

42 Ibid., 71.

43 Ibid., 73.

44 Ibid., 72.

45 Other terms of Genette pertaining to the order (the temporal sequence within the narrative) are *analepsis* (flashback) and *prolepsis* (anticipation). See Aune, *Literary Criticism*, 123.

within the liminal immediacy of where the paratext meets the third Lukan chapter. Luke obscures (and in doing so, runs contrary to the existing meaning as previously found in Mark) any notion of a relationship between the Baptiser (John) and the Baptisee (Jesus). In Luke, Jesus begins his mission independently from John.

Apart from the immediacy related to chapters 3 and 4 concerning Jesus' (non-)baptism under John, the nativity prefix appears to influence the remainder of the gospel narrative in the following ways.

The remainder of the non-baptism plot: John is almost nowhere explicitly called "the Baptist" across the Luke–Acts writings;⁴⁶ Jesus still expects his baptism to be, on the narrative plane, a future event: "*βάπτισμα δὲ ἔχω βαπτισθῆναι, καὶ πῶς συνέχομαι ἕως ὅτου τελεσθῇ.*"⁴⁷ (Lk 12:50b; trans., "I have a baptism to be baptised, and how I am anxious until it is done.") This passage likely refers to Jesus' suffering, death and resurrection, which may reflect a Pauline motif, as seen, for example, in Romans: "*συνετάφημεν οὖν αὐτῷ διὰ τοῦ βαπτίσματος εἰς τὸν θάνατον, ἵνα ὥσπερ ἠγέρθη Χριστὸς ἐκ νεκρῶν διὰ τῆς δόξης τοῦ πατρὸς, οὕτως καὶ ἡμεῖς ἐν καινότητι ζωῆς περιπατήσωμεν.*" (Rom. 6:4; trans., "We, together, were put to the grave, thus, with him through the baptism into death; just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so that we too may walk in new life.") By situating Jesus' baptism outside the immediacy of John the Baptist's event, the author juxtaposes the theological concerns with an innovative shift on the narrative level. With theological concerns having the upper hand over the narrative order in Luke, the early Christian readers/hearers may have found this detail instructive for neophyte praxis, akin to the situation as depicted in the book of Acts (see Transmotivation).

Lastly, the prefix reframes the relationship between the two *dramatis personae* (Jesus and John the Baptist) according to social frames of reference

46 "The Lukan double work has 32 occurrences all together of the baptizer's name as 'John', whereas the figure is called 'John the Baptist' only three times, and this is not from the narrator's perspective." See the "Abstract" in Chauchot, C. M. (2021). Luke's presentation of John's identity (Lk 3:2), in *John the Baptist as a Rewritten Figure in Luke-Acts* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2021), 84–98.

47 The Greek text snippets herein and throughout the article are taken from: Nestle-Aland, *Novum Testamentum Graece*, 28., revidierte Auflage, hg. v. Barbara und Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini und Bruce M. Metzger in Zusammenarbeit mit dem Institut für Neutestamentliche Textforschung, Münster, © 2012 Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, Stuttgart, <https://www.die-bibel.de/en/bible/NA28/>.

in the form of an amalgam of multiple Old Testament narratives. One may almost speak of an overkill of frames-of-reference imagery, in that the miraculous births may resemble, as said, unlikely conceptions of the great Old Testament matriarchs (Sarah, Rebekah, Rachel), and mother figures of Samson (Judg. 13) and Samuel (1 Sam. 1). With a Lukan-specific focus on the temple, it is the latter that the author may have in mind when patterning the Jesus–John the Baptist relation as depicted in the nativity opening. In such a case, John would represent a Samuel-like figure, born to a priestly father, giving way, in the form of a ‘leaping’ approval (Lk 1:41), to Jesus, a Davidic-like figure. One may speak of imagery overkill ‘incited’ by Luke’s literary creativity, wherein the amalgamation of Old Testament motifs creates an abundance of interpretative possibilities that are left to the reader to integrate imaginatively into the remainder of the gospel reading experience.

Transmotivation

Throughout the Gospel of Luke, the *dramatis personae* take on different roles in conformity with the narrator’s point of view. “Transmotivation” refers to giving the *dramatis personae* in the hypertext characteristics or properties that are lacking in the hypotext. Precisely, the transmotivation, a term Genette specified, concerns how the *dramatis personae* are rewritten in the hypertext. Genette differentiates the term followingly: motivation (“introducing a motive where the hypotext offered [...] none”⁴⁸), demotivation (“consists of suppressing or eliding an original motivation”⁴⁹), remotivation (“substitution [...] by a new motive”⁵⁰).

Luke also consistently exhibits a tendency to round out the flat characters. According to Edward Forster, an English novelist, differentiation can be made between the *dramatis personae* as follows: flat characters “[...] are sometimes called types, and sometimes caricatures. In their purest form, they are constructed [a]round a single idea or quality”⁵¹ whereas the round characters, as reviewed by Alan Culpepper with regards to Forster’s differentiation,

48 Gérard Genette, *Palimpsests: Literature in the Second Degree*, trans. Channa Newman and Claude Doubinsky (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 1997), 324.

49 Ibid., 325.

50 Ibid.

51 Edward M. Forster, *Aspects of the Novel* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Company, 1927), 103.

“are complex in temperament and motivation.”⁵² The critical function of the *dramatis personae* is that they often “serve to draw out Jesus’ character by providing a series of individuals with whom [Jesus] interacts.”⁵³ Accordingly, by having the paratext prefixed towards the third chapter, Luke is able to round out otherwise flat characters.

Excursus: Dramatis Personae in Luke (Examples)

The Lukan propensity for rounding the original Markan flat figures is a consistent trend throughout the entire gospel writing. Presented here are three brief examples demonstrating the contrast when Mark and Luke are given a side-by-side comparison:

a) The Call of the Disciples (Mk 1:16–20, cf. Lk 5:1–11)

Mark’s austere statement placed on Jesus’ lips “*δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων*” (Mk 1:17; trans., “Follow me and I will make you to become fishers of people”), is entirely reworked into a dialogue through the insertion of the dramatic fishing scene miracle culminating in Peter’s confession “*ἔξελθε ἀπ’ ἐμοῦ, ὅτι ἀνὴρ ἁμαρτωλὸς εἰμι, κύριε*” (Lk 5:8; trans., “Leave me, for I am a sinful man, Lord!”). That is, only after Jesus demonstrates his power and Peter confesses his unworthiness does Luke return to the call of the disciples: “*ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἀνθρώπους ἔσῃ ζωγρῶν*” (Lk 5:10b; trans., “From now on you will be catching people.”)

b) The Pilate scene (Mk 15:1–15, cf. Lk 23:1–26)

Luke has the originally Markan single Pilate scene interrupted by a Herod detour to achieve a double attestation of Jesus’ innocence. Neither Pilate nor Herod could find a reason to have Jesus executed. Thereby, the case for Jesus’ innocence finds an unlikely ally in the form of a literary representation of Herod.

c) The Thieves Mocking Jesus scene (Mk 15:27–32, cf. Lk 23:39–43)

A striking example of the pliability of the *dramatis personae* in Luke is found in the thieves-on-the-cross scene. The Markan original mentioning of “*οἱ συνεσταυρωμένοι σὺν αὐτῷ ὀνειδίζον αὐτόν*” (Mk 15:32b; trans., “Those crucified with him cursed him”), is modified into a moving confession scene, with the penitent thief upholding Jesus, saying: “*οὗτος δὲ οὐδὲν ἄτοπον ἔπραξεν*” (Lk 23:41b; trans., “He [Jesus] did not do anything wrong.”)

This excursus aims to demonstrate how Luke’s literary creativity serves his narrative ends, wherein the originally one-dimensional *dramatis personae* (flat figures) are transformed, through the addition of temperament and interactivity (round figures), to create an occasion for Jesus’ status to be upheld, via literary techniques.

52 R. Alan Culpepper, *Anatomy of the Fourth Gospel: A Study in Literary Design* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983), Kindle Location 1339.

53 The above citations concern the *dramatis personae* as depicted in the Gospel of John. The same can be said about the character as portrayed in the synoptics. See Aune, *Literary Criticism*, 130.

Looking at the two portrayals of John the Baptist in the two Gospels conveys the difference. In Mark, John's baptism functions more overtly in the preparation of Jesus' ministry; in Luke, John the Baptist is entirely absent. This *dramatis personae* construction pattern (of Jesus' independence from John) is maintained throughout Luke's two volumes. For example, in Acts, John's disciples are baptised by the Spirit (Acts 19:2–7) and thereby integrated within the community of Jesus' followers, even though the community may have originated from the followers of John. Nevertheless, when discussing the relation between how the New Testament shaped early Christianity and an actual extratextual reality, Judith Lieu warns against the notion of "looking for some essential and abiding reality independent of the texts."⁵⁴

Conclusion

Transtextuality theory can help the reader appreciate the architecture or composition of a given text. The reader can observe the literary presence of or intertextual reliance on the Markan material (hypotext) as contained and moulded within the entirety of Luke (hypertext), creating a situation that allows for the newly added prefix (paratext) to guide the reader's imagination. The prefix sets an authoritative beginning by providing a primacy effect, achieved by using culturally significant frames of reference, invoking Israel's glorious past and instituting a narrative imprimatur (*ad intra*, from within the narrative in the form of angelic approval; *ad extra*, external to the narrative, via the peritext⁵⁵ claiming apostolic authority). The Lukan hypertext is not simply an enhancement of Mark but a multi-varied innovation. It is a "new product" wherein the relationship between Jesus and the Baptist is re-imagined. Mark's version of this relationship is left behind and replaced by the Lukan version, which sets the foundation for a new story world about Jesus. The hypertext, as opposed to a more primitive hypotext, is richly transmotivised in that John, originally a flat figure in Mark, is rendered complex in temperament and character to draw out the character of Jesus, with whom he interacts, as a literary device to assist the readers in

⁵⁴ Lieu, *Christian Identity*, 8.

⁵⁵ Specifically, the peritext is inside the book (as opposed to the epitext, e.g., an interview with the author or a review, an entity completely removed from the writing) but outside the narrative.

making sense of the two *dramatis personae*. Finally, the construction of the meaning of the text is realised within the transtextual sum, a literary whole, of its various composite parts, rather than within each part individually, as is often the case in isolationist form-critical approaches.

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