TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism 28 (2023): 149–165

Doubled Recycling: The Gospel according to Mark in Late Ancient Catena Commentary

Jeremiah Coogan, Jesuit School of Theology of Santa Clara University (Berkeley, CA)

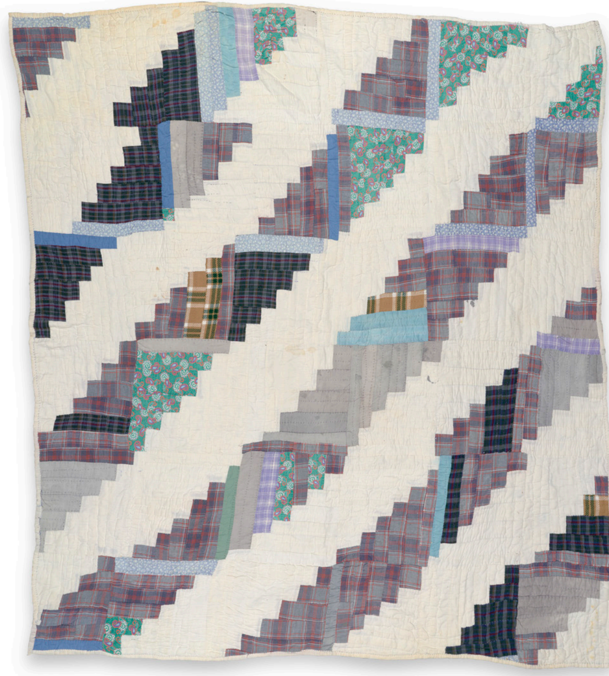
Abstract: In the late ancient Mediterranean, biblical commentary often took citational form through the creation of catenae. The citational gesture of such projects deployed the authority of tradition and embedded the biblical lemma within an interpretative frame. Late ancient catenae for Matthew, Luke, John, and other biblical texts reconfigured prior commentary. Yet because Mark lacked a commentary tradition, one could not use existing commentaries on Mark to construct a catena. The absence prompted an innovative form of recycling: the sixth-century *Catena in Marcum* repurposed commentary on Matthew, Luke, and John in order to create a novel catena for Mark. This double act of recycling reappropriated existing commentary for a new text. The resulting catena embedded Mark within a fourfold tradition of gospel commentary, underscoring narrative and theological tensions between Mark and other gospels. Since similar tensions and ruptures attend other commentarial projects as well, the *Catena in Marcum* illuminates the broader practice of recycling in commentary.

1. Introduction

"Log Cabin"—"Straight Furrows" is a quilt crafted by Lucy Mingo from Gee's Bend, Alabama. Diagonal bands of white alternate with colorful bands composed of small fabric strips, predominated by reds, blacks, and browns. The quilt's deceptively simple alternating bands reveal exceptional intricacy upon closer inspection. Mingo has combined the textures and patterns of existing fabric to offer something new, evoking the variegated rows of a garden plot or a cabin's weathered sides. This stunning example invites us to consider the creativity involved in recycling.

When a person constructs a quilt, they repurpose existing fabric. The pieces are selected, shaped to size, and assembled in order to produce a new pattern. Yet the artistry of quilting

This project was funded in part by the European Commission's Horizon 2020 research and innovation program through the projects MATTHEW (grant agreement no. 891569), which supported my research, and CATENA (grant agreement no. 770816), which sponsored the Birmingham workshop "The Decentralising of the Biblical Text in Manuscript Formation." I am also grateful to the Oxford Centre for Hebrew and Jewish Studies and Keble College for their support. Earlier versions were presented for the Working Group in Book Culture and Early Christianity at the University of Notre Dame (November 2019); in the series "What Is Commentary?," organized by Constanze Güthenke and Hindy Najman at the University of Oxford (March 2022); and at the workshop "The Decentralising of the Biblical Text in Manuscript Formation," organized by Clark Bates and Andrew Patton at the University of Birmingham (March 2022). For critical engagement, I am grateful to these audiences, and especially to Clark Bates, C. Michael Chin, Matthew R. Crawford, Constanze Güthenke, Alexander Ong Hsu, Hugh Houghton, David Lincicum, Blake Leyerle, Peter Montoro, Candida Moss, Hindy Najman, Andrew Patton, Aaron Pelttari, Samuel Pomeroy, and Pranav Prakash.



"Log Cabin"—"Straight Furrows" by Lucy Mingo (1962). © 2023 Lucy Mingo / Artists Rights Society (ARS), New York. Used with permission.

depends on preserving difference. The expert quilter transforms disparate material into a new whole in which fragments work together as distinct and contrasting pieces. The quilter uses the details and textures of existing fabric to create new patterns. While techniques and aesthetics vary, practices of textile reconfiguration appear across cultures, historical periods, and geographical regions.

The practice of biblical commentary known as catena involves creative reconfiguration that resembles the innovative recycling of quilting.[1] Commentary is created by excerpting, modify-

[1] On the phenomenon of catena, see, inter alia, Hans Lietzmann and Hermann Usener, *Catenen: Mitteilungen über ihre Geschichte und handschriftliche Überlieferung* (Freiburg im Breisgau: Mohr, 1897); Robert Devreesse, "Chaînes exégétiques grecques," *DB* 1 (1928): 1084–1233; Gilles Dorival, *Les chaînes éxégetiques grecques sur les Psaumes: Contribution à l'étude d'une forme littéraire*, DB 43–46, 4 vols. (Leuven: Peeters, 1986–1995), 1:1–98; Mathilde Aussedat, "Une pratique érudite de lecture des textes bibliques: Les chaînes exégétiques grecques," *REG* 121 (2008): 547–69; Aussedat, "Les chaînes exégétiques: Une forme littéraire et une pratique d'érudition florissantes dans le domaine de l'exégése de la langue grecque," in *Le païen, le chrétien, le profane: Recherches sur l'Antiquité tardive*, ed. Benjamin Goldlust, Françoise Ploton-Nicollet, and Sylvain J.-G. Sanchez (Paris: PUPS, 2009), 169–79; William R. S. Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum*: A Byzantine Anthology of Early Commentary on Mark*, TENTS 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 3–110; Gilles Dorival, "The Bible, Commentaries, Scholia, and Other Literary Forms," in *On the Fringe of Commentary: Metatextuality in Ancient Near Eastern and Ancient Mediterranean Cultures*, ed. S. H. Aufrère, Philip S. Alexander, and Zlatko Pleše, OLA (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 163–74; Dorival, "Biblical Catenae: Between Philology and History," in *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition*, ed. H. A. G. Houghton, TS 13 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2016), 65–81; H. A. G. Houghton and D. C. Parker, "An Introduction to Greek New Testament Commentaries with a Preliminary Checklist of New Testament Catena Manuscripts," in Houghton, *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition*, 1–35; William R. S. Lamb, "Catenae and the Art of Memory," in Houghton, *Commentaries, Catenae and*

ing, and compiling existing material. The new commentary reflects the insights of its creators while also invoking the authority of the previous interpreters whose works have been appropriated. This form of recycled commentary was widespread in the late ancient and medieval Mediterranean world.[2]

The Latin term *catena* refers to the "chain" of quotations created through this process of anthological recycling. The term calls attention to a central element of the catena project: the gesture of citation. Yet the metaphor of the chain is not how late ancient Greek scholars described these projects; instead, our manuscripts bear descriptions such as "extracts of various interpreters" (ἐκλογαὶ διαφόρων ἑρμηνευτῶν).[3] While the metaphor of the catena might imply the linearity of a tradition (a chain of succession), this idiom is not reflected in the late ancient evidence.[4]

Late ancient and medieval scholars generated new commentaries by arranging extracts of earlier commentaries around the frame of a continuous biblical text. Many catena manuscripts are constructed as paratexts in which marginal commentary surrounds and presents a biblical text at the center of the page.[5] Other layouts interweave biblical text and commentary even

---

Biblical Tradition, 83–98; William R. S. Lamb, "Conservation and Conversation: New Testament Catenae in Byzantium," in *The New Testament in Byzantium*, ed. Derek Krueger and Robert S. Nelson (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2016), 277–300; Richard A. Layton, "Catenae," in *The Oxford Handbook of Early Christian Biblical Interpretation*, ed. Paul M. Blowers and Peter W. Martens (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), 221–29; H. A. G. Houghton and D. C. Parker, eds., *Codex Zacynthius: Catena, Palimpsest, Lectionary*, TS 21 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2020); Gilles Dorival, *The Septuagint from Alexandria to Constantinople: Canon, New Testament, Church Fathers, Catenae* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2021), 135–70.

2 For a catalog of Greek New Testament catenae, see Georgi R. Parpulov, *Catena Manuscripts of the Greek New Testament: A Catalogue*, TS 3/25 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2021); cf. Houghton and Parker, "Introduction." Similar projects appear in Latin, Syriac, Armenian, Arabic, Georgian, and other languages.

3 See Devreesse, "Chaînes exégétiques grecques," 1087–89; Lamb, "Conservation and Conversation," 277; Layton, "Catenae," 221.

4 I am grateful to Constanze Güthenke for her insights on this point.

5 Describing the varied physical layouts, see, e.g., Dorival, *Chaînes éxégetiques*, 2:2–4; Layton, "Catenae," 221, as well as Patton's essay in this volume of *TC*. Gérard Genette's work on the paratext offers a rich conceptual framework: *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. Jane E. Lewin, Literature, Culture, Theory 20 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997). Especially when it surrounds or intersperses with the main text, the commentary becomes a "threshold of interpretation," mediating the reader's encounter. Applying Genette's theory of the paratext to manuscripts, compare Patrick Andrist, "Toward a Definition of Paratexts and Paratextuality: The Case of Ancient Greek Manuscripts," in *Bible as Notepad: Tracing Annotations and Annotation Practices in Late Antique and Medieval Biblical Manuscripts*, ed. Liv Ingeborg Lied and Marilena Maniaci, Manuscripta Biblica 3 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2018), 130–50. Andrist offers a useful taxonomy, but he assumes that readers always regard *text* and *paratext* as distinct and have a clear sense of which is which. This is often not the case. See Jeremiah Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist: Rewriting the Fourfold Gospel in Late Antiquity*, Cultures of Reading in the Ancient Mediterranean (New York: Oxford University Press, 2023), 91 n. 141. We find similar *mise en page* in Homeric scholia and in the medieval and modern Babylonian Talmud. On the layout of the talmudic page, see David Stern, "The Topography of the Talmudic Page," in *The Visualization of Knowledge in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Marcia Kupfer, Adam S. Cohen, and J. H. Chajes (Turnhout: Brepols, 2020), 137–62; on similar layouts for the Hebrew Bible, compare Stern, *The Jewish Bible: A Material History*, Samuel and Althea Stroum Lectures in Jewish Studies (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2017), 77–83.

more closely. These decisions about *mise en page* integrate the authority of text and commentary. They make it impossible to encounter one without the other, while at the same time often visually distinguishing the two by location or script. The material form of the recycling is part of the hermeneutics of the text. Juxtaposition between text and commentary invites the reader to read each in light of the other and facilitates practices of moving back and forth between commentary and text. The *mise en page* marks text and commentary as distinct but at the same time encourages reading practices that challenge such a clear boundary.[6]

As Christina Kraus and Christopher Stray write, the history of commentary is one of fragmentations, dislocations, and new meanings created by repeated physical remediation. Focusing on commentaries for Greek and Latin literary works from the ancient Mediterranean, Kraus and Stray highlight transformations over time—from *ὑπομνήματα* in separate bookrolls to scholia in codex margins to separate codex commentaries.[7] These media transformations alter the conditions of reading for both text and commentary in nontrivial ways; moreover, transformations in medium often correspond to other reconfigurations in the material presented. Recycling is so thoroughly embedded in many commentary practices that we might see recycling as intrinsic to commentary itself. Practices of recycling reflect the vitality both of the texts at the center of these commentarial practices and of the traditions of scholarship manifested in these projects.[8]

In this article, I focus on an unusual example that casts this history of recycling and transformation into sharp relief. The late ancient Greek *Catena in Marcum* creates new commentary on one text (Mark) by repurposing material from commentaries on *other* texts (Matthew, Luke, and John). This project of doubled recycling reflects the broader dynamics of reconfiguration that characterize catena commentary while also introducing further complexities and new possibilities. In what follows, I interrogate how this task of double recycling was performed, analyze what was at stake, and demonstrate several unexpected ways that this doubly recycled commentary shapes the reading of Mark as part of a fourfold gospel. This extraordinary late ancient project illuminates the recycling that characterizes late ancient biblical philology and the centrality of reconfiguration and reuse to the practice of commentary.

2. Context and Attribution

The early catena for the Gospel according to Mark is associated with the sixth-century bishop Victor of Antioch.[9] Based on the sources included, the catena was probably produced in the

---

6 In line with Genette, we observe that the media transformations of commentary are not just changes in format or layout; they also transform the possibilities of reading. As Agnès Lorrain has recently argued, the *mise en page* of catena manuscripts facilitates both linear and nonlinear reading. Lorrain examines how these varied "reading logics" might reflect the agency of copyist, client, or catenist. See Agnès Lorrain, "Autour du Vaticanus gr. 762: Notes pour l'étude des chaînes à présentation alternante," *Byzantion* 90 (2020): 67–95. On the differing modes of readerly engagement created by varied layouts, see also Dorival, *Chaînes exégetiques*, 2:3–4.

7 Christina S. Kraus and Christopher A. Stray, "Form and Content," in *Classical Commentaries: Explorations in a Scholarly Genre*, ed. Christina S. Kraus and Christopher A. Stray (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), 1–7.

8 I borrow the term *vitality* from the work of Hindy Najman. As she writes, some "texts have an excess of vitality that expresses itself in the fact that they provide the basis for new texts." See Hindy Najman, "The Vitality of Scripture within and beyond the 'Canon': Transformations in Second Temple Judaism," *JSJ* 43 (2012): 497–518, 516.

9 The most recent edition remains that of J. A. Cramer, ed., *Catenae in evangelia S. Matthaei et S. Marci, ad fidem codd. mss.* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1840), 259–447 (mixing *CPG* 125.1 and *CPG*

sixth century CE.[10] Two major forms of this *Catena in Marcum* circulate in the manuscript tradition, designated in modern scholarship as *CPG* 125.1 and *CPG* 125.2.[11] These two forms are similar to each other and are best understood as different streams within the same overarching tradition.[12] The recent catalog of Georgi Parpulov identifies a total of forty-eight manuscripts containing CPG 125.1 or *CPG* 125.2, some dating as early as the tenth century.[13]

Victor of Antioch provides a quasi-authorial coherence to this catena, yet we know little about Victor as a historical figure, and no form of the catena can be attributed with confidence to a person named Victor in the sixth century.[14] Rather, "Victor" is a bibliographic label that

125.2). In this article, I identify texts from the *Catena in Marcum* using the page and line numbers of Cramer's edition. Cf. the more nuanced editions of Petrus Possinus, ed., *Catena graecorum patrum in Evangelium secundum Marcum* (Rome: Typis Barberinis excudebat Michael Hercules, 1673) (*CPG* 125.2) and Christian Friedrich Matthaei, ed., Βίκτωρος πρεσβυτέρου Ἀντιοχείας καὶ ἄλλων τινῶν ἁγίων πατέρων ἐξήγησις εἰς τὸ κατὰ Μάρκον ἅγιον εὐαγγέλιον (Moscow, 1775) (*CPG* 125.1). On these editions, see Joseph Reuss, *Matthäus-, Markus- und Johannes-Katene: Nach den handschriftlichen Quellen untersucht*, NTAbh 18.4–5 (Münster: Aschendorff, 1941), 136–38; Maurice Geerard, ed., *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (Turnhout: Brepols, 1974–2018), 4:235–36; Adela Yarbro Collins, *Mark: A Commentary*, Hermeneia 62 (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 823. Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, translates Cramer's edition, with an introduction and notes; for critiques of Lamb's project, see the review of Reinhart Ceulemans (*ETL* 94 [2015]: 745–49). An index of the sources used by the catena was compiled more than a century ago by Harold Smith: "The Sources of Victor of Antioch's *Commentary on Mark*," *JTS* 19 (1918): 350–70. Nonetheless, this catena tradition remains understudied. The most important study of gospel catenae is that of Joseph Reuss, who devotes a chapter to the manuscripts and sources of this *Catena in Marcum* (*Katene*, 118–47). Reuss identifies a set of interconnected late ancient catenae that covered Matthew (*CPG* 110.1), Luke (*CPG* 130), and John (*CPG* 140.1); the *Catena in Marcum* seems to have been produced to fill the gap left by this set of gospel catenae (see discussion below). Important recent work on gospel catenae includes Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum; Houghton, *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition*; Michael Allen Clark, "The Catena of Nicetas of Heracles and Its Johannine Text" (PhD diss., University of Birmingham, 2016); H. A. G. Houghton, Panagiotis Manafis, and Amy Myshrall, eds., *The Palimpsest Catena of Codex Zacynthius: Text and Translation*, TS 3.22 (Piscataway, NJ: Gorgias, 2020); Andrew J. Patton, "Greek Catenae and the 'Western' Order of the Gospels," *NovT* 64 (2021): 115–29.

[10] Reuss, *Katene*, 140–41. Lamb proposes a date between circa 490 and 553 CE, based on the authors included and on how he sees the catena participating in late ancient christological debates (*The* Catena in Marcum, 32–58, 71–73).

[11] This follows the classification of major types of catenae in the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* (Geerard, *CPG*, 4.235–36); the classification derives from the groundbreaking work of Georg Karo and Hans Lietzmann, "Catenarum Graecarum Catalogus," *Nachrichten von der königlichen Gesellschaft der Wissenschaften zu Göttingen. Philologisch-historische Klasse* 135 (1902): 1–66, 299–350, 571–72. Patton has recently proposed a refined classification of catenae for Matthew, Luke, and John ("Greek Catenae"); future work may lead to a refined classification for Markan catena.

[12] See Reuss, *Katene*, 135–38; Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 52–53; Patton, "Greek Catenae," 123.

[13] Parpulov, *Catalogue*, provides the most comprehensive list of Greek New Testament catena manuscripts. Parpulov includes thirty-three manuscripts containing CPG 125.1 and fifteen manuscripts containing *CPG* 125.2. Parpulov also catalogs manuscripts from the eight other known subtypes of Markan catena (*CPG* 126.1–8), each represented by only one or two manuscripts. The later catena of Theophylact of Ohrid (eleventh century), which covers all four gospels, incorporates the earlier *Catena in Marcum* but extensively reworks the material.

[14] Only some manuscripts attribute the catena to Victor; others associate it with Origen of Alexandria, Cyril of Alexandria, or Leontius of Byzantium (Reuss, *Katene*, 135, 140). The attribution to Victor is the most common and goes back to our earliest extant manuscripts; this was ob-

medieval and modern scholars attach to this cluster of related texts.[15] Manuscript variation indicates that readers continued to expand and adapt the *Catena in Marcum* over time.[16] As a result, in what follows I refer to "the catenist" rather than "Victor." The catenist is the unattributed, background voice of this commentarial tradition. We should not assume that an individual scholar can be isolated behind this voice.[17]

Despite the variation between manuscripts of the *Catena in Marcum*, and especially between the two major subtypes (*CPG* 125.1 and *CPG* 125.2), several practices structure this tradition as a whole. An overarching pattern and technique hold this pluriform work together. These are central to the Markan catena from its earliest recognizable form. My argument about doubled recycling centers on these shared features.

3. Construction

To understand the innovative strategy of the *Catena in Marcum*, we begin by examining the phenomenon of catena itself. Catena reflects a late ancient habit of "archival thinking," an aesthetic and epistemological aspiration to assemble existing knowledge and structure it in new ways.[18] At a practical level, there were already commentaries for most biblical books and thus often no need to write a new commentary. One could simply collect existing scholarship. Yet assembling prior commentary had benefits beyond economy of effort.

To assemble existing knowledge is an authorizing gesture that reinforces and extends existing commentarial traditions. Many catena manuscripts identify the sources of individual extracts.[19] Others offer a tissue of anonymized citations, woven into a composite work. In either

served by Reuss (*Katene*, 140) and is confirmed by Parpulov's recent *Catalogue*. Reuss regards the attribution to Victor as plausible (*Katene*, 140, *pace* Layton, "Catenae," 225), while Devreesse ("Chaînes exégétiques grecques," 1177) and Lamb have questioned the attribution (*The* Catena in Marcum, 32–58, 71–73).

15 On how scholars—ancient, medieval, modern—often organize knowledge around authors and sometimes even invent or demand authors for this purpose, see the recent critical interventions of Ellen Muehlberger, "On Authors, Fathers, and Holy Men," *Marginalia Review of Books* (2015); Peter Martens, "Classifying Early Christian Writings: Boundaries, Arrangements, and Latent Dynamics," *Early Christianity* 12 (2021): 431–46; Ellen Muehlberger, "Vast Lessons: Jacob of Edessa's *The Six Days* and the Tools of Knowledge," *Hug* 25 (2021): 9–42.

16 This is noted already by Devreesse ("Chaînes exégétiques grecques," 1171) and Reuss (*Katene*, 141) and has been recently emphasized by Lamb.

17 This anonymous voice is comparable to the *stam* of the Babylonian Talmud. In both cases, while scholars discern compositional tendencies and social contexts, the attempt to identify a singular figure behind the text is futile.

18 I adopt the phrase *archival thinking* from Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh, "Ordering Knowledge," in *Ordering Knowledge in the Roman Empire*, ed. Jason König and Tim Whitmarsh (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 30. More than thirty years ago, Michael Roberts influentially described these late ancient dynamics of accumulation and reconfiguration as "the jeweled style." See Michael Roberts, *The Jeweled Style: Poetry and Poetics in Late Antiquity* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1989). Moving beyond aesthetics, recent work has focused on the epistemological implications of this tendency: C. M. Chin, *Grammar and Christianity in the Late Roman World*, Divinations (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008); Blossom Stefaniw, *Christian Reading: Language, Ethics, and the Order of Things* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2019); Muehlberger, "Vast Lessons."

19 This is attested already in the oldest preserved New Testament catena manuscript, the Lukan catena in Codex Zacynthius. See Houghton, Manafis and Myshrall, *Palimpsest Catena*; Houghton and Parker, *Codex Zacynthius*.

case, however, catena is a practice of self-conscious citation.[20] This constitutive gesture involves what we might call an authority function.[21] Citation invokes the authority of past interpreters; the transmitted texts are (presented as) authoritative tradition. Integrating disparate voices on the biblical page both claims the authority of past interpreters and articulates these varied voices as "the tradition." Citationality offers a way to manage interpretive difference, creating univocity—or at least a perception of harmonized difference—of earlier interpreters.

These dynamics of citation, tradition, and authority also constitute the *Catena in Marcum*.[22] The Gospel according to Mark structures the project; that is what it means for it to be a catena on Mark. As the catenist pulls in material from existing commentaries and homilies, they rearrange it around the frame of Mark's narrative. Yet anyone trying to create a catena on Mark in late antiquity encountered a problem: the catenist was not able to draw from commentaries on Mark. Commentaries and homilies on Mathew, Luke, and John were available to be used and adapted; this is how catena commentaries on Matthew, Luke, and John were created. By contrast, Mark had received scant attention from late ancient homilists and commentators.[23]

The catenist adapts existing practices, excerpting existing material and reassembling it around the lemma text. But the catenist addresses the novel problem of creating a catena for a text that lacks commentaries, drawing instead from commentaries and catenae on other gospel texts. These included especially homilies of John Chrysostom on Matthew, commentaries of Origen on Matthew and John, homilies of Cyril of Alexandria on Luke, and homilies of Titus of Bostra on Luke.[24] Almost all of the recycled material derives from these sources,

[20] Accuracy is not required for this citational practice. The authority function persists even though catenae often shorten, abbreviate, and edit the cited material. This transformation of material has been emphasized especially in the work of Dorival (*Chaînes exégetiques*) and has been followed by more recent work on catena commentary, e.g., Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 279–80; Lamb, "Conservation and Conversation," 58–65; Layton, "Catenae," 222; Jeremiah Coogan, "The Reception of Jubilees in Catena Manuscripts of Genesis," *JSP* 31 (2022): 264–86.

[21] I use this phrase in allusion to and differentiation from Michel Foucault's "author-function." See Michel Foucault, "What Is an Author?," in *Textual Strategies: Perspectives in Post-structuralist Criticism*, ed. Josué V. Harari (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1979), 141–60.

[22] While I think it is most fruitful to describe this project as a catena, it differs from most other late ancient projects that go by this name. The reliance on doubled recycling means that the *Catena in Marcum* is not a catena *of* Markan commentary even though it is a catena commentary *on* Mark. Moreover, the work includes a significant amount of new material created for the *Catena in Marcum* (discussed below). This second reason leads Ceulemans to suggest that the work should not be considered a catena at all (*ETL* 94 [2015]: 749). Yet the project presents itself as a catena (especially via the ὑπόθεσις discussed below) and is transmitted as a catena alongside other gospel catenae. Moreover, it exhibits the pervasive citationality that characterizes other late ancient and medieval catena. I am grateful to John T. Fitzgerald for his insights on this point.

[23] The *Catena in Marcum* is the first extended commentary on Mark. On the lack of Markan commentary in late antiquity, see Markus Bockmuehl, "The Making of Gospel Commentaries," in *The Written Gospel*, ed. Markus Bockmuehl and D. A. Hagner (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 288–89.

[24] Many of the sources are identified in Smith, "Sources of Victor of Antioch's *Commentary on Mark*"; several additional identifications are proposed by Lamb in the notes accompanying his translation and summarized in an appendix (*The* Catena in Marcum, 461–78). For discussion of the sources, see Reuss, *Katene*, 138–41; Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 65–71. Reuss emphasized the dependence on excerpts from John Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* and proposed that the *Catena in Marcum* depends on an earlier collection of excerpts (especially from Chrysostom) structured as a Matthew catena (Reuss, *Katene*, 138). He describes the construction of the Markan catena as the result of combing through homilies and commentaries on Matthew and Luke

although a handful of other texts appear occasionally. None of the material derives from an existing commentary or homily on the Gospel according to Mark. As I discuss below, passages composed by the catenist fill the gaps.

The catenist's reliance on existing gospel commentary works because Matthew, Mark, and Luke share material. Few passages appear in Mark that lack parallels in Matthew, Luke, or both. Both ancient and modern *instrumenta* have been devised to help readers map these correspondences. Yet although Matthew, Mark, and Luke (and, to a lesser extent, John) share substantial amounts of material, they diverge in ways large and small, not least in the arrangement of their material.

To construct this new commentary on Mark, the catenist used a system of gospel cross-references that had been devised by the fourth-century bishop and scholar Eusebius of Caesarea.[25] The Eusebian apparatus provided a textual map, enabling the catenist to identify relevant commentary on Matthew, Luke, and John and to rearrange that material around the textual frame of Mark. The Eusebian apparatus thus provided a technology for organizing knowledge of parallel gospel texts and for constructing new gospel commentary.[26] The catenist does not explicitly acknowledge the Eusebian apparatus; rather, they simply put Eusebius's textual map to work. This should not surprise us. Most late ancient users of Eusebius's system simply used it, without describing their working methods or crediting Eusebius.[27]

In the introduction to his translation of the *Catena in Marcum*, William Lamb was the first to suggest that the catena was constructed using the Eusebian apparatus.[28] Lamb bases his argument on how the *Catena in Marcum* manages the complicated parallels for the anointing of Jesus. This is one of the few places where Eusebius juxtaposes the same passage (John §98 = 12:2–8) using two different canons.[29] Eusebius breaks the typical rules of his system in order to

---

but does not offer a hypothesis about how the catenist did this searching and assembling (Reuss, *Katene*, 140).

25 On the Eusebian apparatus, see especially Matthew R. Crawford, *The Eusebian Canon Tables: Ordering Textual Knowledge in Late Antiquity*, OECS (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); and Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, as well as the critical edition and commentary of Martin Wallraff, ed., *Die Kanontafeln des Euseb von Kaisareia: Untersuchung und kritische Edition*, Manuscripta Biblica 1 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2021). On the use of the Eusebian apparatus for the *Catena in Marcum*, compare Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 157–58; Coogan, "Mapping the Fourfold Gospel: Textual Geography in the Eusebian Apparatus," *JECS* 25 (2017): 355–56. Coogan builds upon and critiques Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 147–49. Patton has recently proposed that the Eusebian apparatus was occasionally used to identify commentary on parallel passages in the late ancient catenae for Matthew, Luke, and John (Patton, "Greek Catenae," 124 n. 37). This would suggest that the *Catena in Marcum* develops an existing practice into a central, structuring feature.

26 On the Eusebian apparatus as a textual map, see Coogan, "Mapping the Fourfold Gospel." Describing the apparatus as an information technology, see Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 28–58.

27 On the frequently uncredited use of the Eusebian apparatus, see Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 35, 138–39. Present-day scholars, like their late ancient and medieval predecessors, often use tools without explicitly acknowledging them.

28 Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 147–49. As Lamb writes, "the compilers of the *Catena in Marcum* … used the Eusebian apparatus to search existing *catenae* and commentaries on Matthew and Luke so that they could find the relevant extracts for the equivalent passages in Mark" (Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 147).

29 Eusebius assigns John §98 = 12:2–8 to two canons, canon I and canon IV. In canon I, material from all four gospels is juxtaposed: Matthew (§276 = 26:6–11), Mark (§158 = 14:3–7), Luke (§74 = 7:36–50), and John (§98 = 12:2–8). In canon IV, the same section from John (§98 = 12:2–8) is juxtaposed with further sections from Matthew (§277 = 26:12– 13) and Mark (§159 = 14:8– 9),

map the complex relationships of similarity and difference between gospel accounts. Based on this example, Lamb proposes that the method of the catenist is shaped by Eusebius's sophisticated exegetical decisions about what counts as a parallel. Yet Lamb does not demonstrate the catenist's dependence on Eusebius. At most we can say that the catenist recognizes that the anointing involves complex overlaps and differences among gospel narratives. But they did not need Eusebius for this. We find the same observations in commentaries that the catenist used.[30] This is no smoking gun for Eusebian influence. Yet, while this argument is unpersuasive, Lamb is correct to propose the catenist's dependence on the Eusebian apparatus.

A closer analysis of the *Catena in Marcum* offers a structural argument for the catenist's use of the Eusebian apparatus. Rather than depending on how the *Catena in Marcum* treats any particular set of parallel passages, my argument depends on the patterns of intertextual relationship that characterize the work as a whole. Eusebius's distinctive decisions about juxtaposition and nonjuxtaposition provide strong evidence that the catenist used the Eusebian apparatus. To illustrate these consistent patterns throughout the *Catena in Marcum*, I analyze how the catenist treats the material that Eusebius assigned to canon X as distinctively Markan, without parallels in other gospels. Table 1 lists these nineteen passages where Eusebius identifies distinctive Markan material. For none of these passages does the *Catena in Marcum* seek out commentary on gospel parallels, even when such commentary is available in the catenist's regularly used sources.

The catenist's dependence on Eusebius becomes especially visible where Eusebius does not juxtapose a Markan passage with potential parallels from other gospels. In these cases where Eusebius does not juxtapose Mark with other gospels, the catenist invents new material rather than drawing on existing commentary.[31] One such example occurs at Mark 6:15–16 (Mark §58), where Herod worries that the beheaded John the Baptist had been raised as Jesus. Eusebius identified this material as unique Markan material and assigned it to canon X, despite potential parallels in Matthew (14:1–2) and Luke (9:7).[32] As a result, the catenist drafts new commentary rather than drawing from available commentaries on the parallels from Matthew and Luke.[33] In every such case, the *Catena in Marcum* follows Eusebius.

---

but not from Luke. On how Eusebius treats the anointing narratives, see Harvey K. McArthur, "The Eusebian Sections and Canons," *CBQ* 27 (1965): 253, 255; Walter Thiele, "Beobachtungen zu den eusebianischen Sektionen und Kanones der Evangelien," *ZNW* 72 (1981): 101–2; Claudio Zamagni, *L'extrait des* Questions et réponses sur les évangiles *d'Eusèbe de Césarée: Un commentaire*, BEHER 171 (Turnhout: Brepols, 2016), 249–50; Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 109. On Eusebius's creative juxtapositions more broadly, see Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 94–122, with cited literature.

[30] E.g., Origen, *Comm. ser. Matt.* 77; cf. the texts cited by the *Catena in Marcum* on Mark 14:3–9, attributed to Chrysostom, Origen, Apollinaris, and Theodore of Mopsuestia (Cramer 417.25–419.30). Lamb himself notes this point (*The* Catena in Marcum, 148).

[31] Previous discussions of the *Catena in Marcum* have paid more attention to its use of sources than to the new material created for this catena (e.g., Reuss, *Katene*, 138–41).

[32] On this nonjuxtaposition, see Thiele, "Beobachtungen," 109, who proposes that it is an oversight resulting from Eusebius's working method (Matthew > Luke > Mark); cf. McArthur, "Eusebian Sections," 256; Carl Nordenfalk, "The Eusebian Canon-Tables: Some Textual Problems," *JTS* 35 (1984): 103; Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 120 n. 90. In the notes to his translation, Lamb suggests that Eusebius has made a mistake at this point but does not recognize the implications for the catenist's working methods (Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 295 n. 30).

[33] For further examples in which Eusebius's nonjuxtaposition leads to the catenist's nonuse of parallel commentary see table 1 below.

Table 1: Eusebius of Caesarea's Canon X (Mark) in the *Catena in Marcum*

Eusebian §	Modern Reference	*Catena in Marcum*	Cramer
19	1:45	The catenist drafts new commentary rather than incorporating existing commentary on the Lukan parallel (Luke 5:15).	283.16–26
31	3:20–21	The catenist drafts new commentary on this distinctive Markan material.	297.18–298.2
43	4:26–29	The catenist drafts new commentary on this distinctive Markan parable.[34]	308.25–310.23
46	4:34b	Eusebius had isolated this brief phrase as distinctive Markan material. The extract of Chrysostom that continues from the previous Eusebian section briefly addresses the distinctive Markan material (311.17–25 = *Hom. Matt.* 47.1 [PG 58:481.26–46]). The catenist then drafts a section of new commentary (311.25–312.7).	311.17–312.7
58	6:15–16	The catenist drafts new commentary rather than incorporating existing commentary on parallels (e.g., Matt 14:1–2; Luke 9:7).[35]	325.7–326.19
62	6:31	Transitional narrative in Mark. The catenist skips the passage entirely.	326 (no citation)
70	7:1–4	The catenist drafts new commentary for the distinctive Markan material rather than incorporating existing commentary on parallels in Matt 15:1; Luke 11:37–39.	333.19–26
74	7:31–36a	The catenist drafts extensive new commentary for the distinctive Markan material. The passage is introduced with a framing theological comment from Chrysostom on John 11:41 (338.22–25 = *Hom. Jo.* 64.1 [PG 59:353.46–51]), which is not an arguably parallel passage.	338.15–339.21
81	8:22–26	The catenist drafts extensive new commentary for the distinctive Markan material rather than incorporating existing commentary on partial parallels in Matt 9:27–31; 20:29–34.	343.30–345.9
88	9:10	The catenist drafts new commentary for this short section of distinctive Markan material.	357.6–11

[34] Smith ("Sources of Victor of Antioch's *Commentary on Mark*," 358, 368) observes that portions of the longer comment (Cramer 309.12–19, 26–28) are attributed to Theodore of Mopsuestia in some catena manuscripts and proposes that "possibly Theodore supplies all or the bulk of Victor's long comment here" (358). This passage is also printed in PG 66:713–16. Yet this material is not attested outside the *Catena in Marcum*, and the attribution is uncertain. Reuss excludes the material from his edition of fragments of Theodore's Matthew commentary: J. Reuss, ed., *Matthäus-Kommentare aus der griechischen Kirche*, TUGAL 61 (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1957), 96–135. If these comments derive from Theodore or another commentator prior to the *Catena in Marcum*, this would be the only example where the catenist seeks out parallel gospel commentary for material that Eusebius identified as distinctively Markan (canon X).

[35] Lamb (*The* Catena in Marcum, 295 n. 22) proposes Cramer 325.9–12 as material from Eusebius, *Steph.* (PG 22:885.49–51). While both Eusebius and the catena passage paraphrase the Markan text, the relationship between the two passages is not close enough to identify this as an extract from Eusebius.

90	9:14–15	The catenist drafts new commentary for distinctive Markan material. The catenist treats the Eusebian section as a distinct unit rather than discussing in the context of surrounding parallels with Matthew and Luke.	359.5–18
92	9:28–29	The catenist continues to excerpt from the same homily of Chrysostom used for the previous Eusebian section (361.6–16 = *Hom. Matt.* 57.3 [PG 58:562.36–44, 563.20–27]). The catenist then drafts a further extensive section of new commentary (361.16–362.21) for the distinctive Markan section.	361.3–362.21
94	9:33	The catenist drafts new commentary for this distinctive Markan section (Mark 9:33) rather than incorporating existing commentary on Matthean and Lukan parallels (Matt 18:1–5; Luke 9:46–48; 18:17) to the closely related following section (Mark 9:34–37a).	363.17–364.11
101	9:48	Brief quotation from Jewish scriptures (Isa 66:24), found only in Mark. The catenist searches out material from Eusebius's *Commentary on Isaiah* (GCS 2.58.196–208) rather than incorporating commentary from parallels in Matthew and Luke. The catenist frames this excerpt with further brief comments (368.10–11, 22–25).	368.11–22
104	10:10	Brief transitional narrative. The catenist drafts new commentary on the distinctive Markan material.[36]	374.22–27
123	11:19–21	Second half of Markan intercalation (following 11:12–14). The catenist drafts new commentary rather than incorporating existing commentary on parallel material in Matt 21:19. Eusebius had juxtaposed Matt 21:19 with the first half of the intercalation.	394.25–395.25
132	12:32–34a	The catenist does not excerpt or draft a separate section of commentary for this unit of distinctive Markan material but continues excerpting the passage of Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* (*Hom. Matt.* 71.1 [PG 58:661.31–54, 663.4]) used for the previous Eusebian section. Chrysostom carefully compares the texts of Matthew and Mark. The catenist intersperses their own brief comments between the excerpts from Chrysostom.	403.3–404.17
186	14:51–52	The catenist skips this distinctive Markan material altogether.	429 (no citation)
213	15:25	The catenist drafts new commentary for this short section of distinctive Markan material, paying attention to the divergent chronologies of Mark and John. The discussion of Mark 15:25 is situated in the larger discussion of Mark 15:24–28, which incorporates extracts from existing commentary on parallels in Matthew and Luke.	438.3–6, 9–15

[36] The discussion of Mark 10:10 is positioned as an afterthought, following a section of material (Cramer 374.15–22) used to comment on Mark 10:11–12, excerpted from Apollinaris's discussion of Matthew (frag. 94.1–7, ed. Reuss, *Matthäus-Kommentare*, 30). The new commentary drafted by the catenist compares Mark 10:10 with divergent details in Matt 19:3.

4. Canonical Logic

The *Catena in Marcum* reconfigures Mark's earlier history of reception in order to present Mark as part of a fourfold canonical gospel. As we have seen, Mark lacked a commentary tradition. Without a catena, Mark's text stands alone; we observe this absence in a number of the manuscripts cataloged by Parpulov that include catenae for Matthew, Luke, and John but lack comparable material to guide the reader of Mark. Some other catena manuscripts exclude Mark altogether. The absence of commentary emphasized Mark's tenuous position in the history of gospel reading, reflecting a tension between fourfold gospel and ecclesial tradition. Yet a catenist could not construct a Markan catena from earlier commentaries on Mark: they did not exist. The *Catena in Marcum* remedies this lacuna with its novel strategy. It provides Mark with commentary to mirror those for Matthew, Luke, and John. By reading Mark within a longer history of interpretation, the catena articulates Mark as part of a fourfold gospel and a fourfold tradition of gospel commentary. One can now read Mark in parallel to the other gospels and their catenae.

This canonical logic is explicit in the initial ὑπόθεσις of the *Catena in Marcum*.[37] This ὑπόθεσις justifies the distinctive construction of the catena and relates it to earlier gospel commentary. The catena has been constructed "so that [Mark] should not alone seem overlooked among the books of the New Testament." The neglect of Mark contrasts with the abundance of commentary on other gospel texts: "Many have composed commentaries on the [Gospel] according to Matthew and on the [Gospel] according to John … and … a few [have composed them] on the [Gospel] according to Luke." Yet "absolutely no one, I think, has expounded the Gospel according to Mark."[38] As the catenist argues, this neglect is incongruous with Mark's scriptural status as one of "the books of the New Testament"; the catenist rejects the idea that Mark "did not require any investigation." In order to remedy the problem, the catenist has "assembled the partial and scattered sayings on [Mark] from the teachers of the church" in order to "compose a concise interpretation." The catenist is concerned to preserve the distinctiveness of Mark. As they write, readers are not able "from the interpretation of the others to work out the meaning of this one as well." Mark deserves commentary of its own.

The prefatory ὑπόθεσις deploys a clever sleight of hand. The catenist does not explicitly acknowledge that the assembled "partial and scattered sayings" come from discussions of other gospels. If one cannot "work out the meaning of [Mark]," as the ὑπόθεσις states, "from the

[37] Πολλῶν εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ματθαῖον καὶ εἰς τὸ κατὰ Ἰωάννην τὸν υἱὸν τῆς βροντῆς, συνταξάντων ὑπομνήματα, ὀλίγων δὲ εἰς τὸ κατὰ Λουκᾶν, οὐδενὸς δὲ ὅλως, ὡς οἶμαι, εἰς τὸ κατὰ Μάρκον Εὐαγγέλιον ἐξηγησαμένου (ἐπεὶ μηδὲ μέχρι τήμερον ἀκήκοα, καὶ τοῦτο πολυπραγμονήσας παρὰ τῶν σπουδὴν ποιουμένων τὰ τῶν ἀρχαιοτέρων συνάγειν πονήματα) συνεῖδον τὰ κατὰ μέρος καὶ σποράδην εἰς αὐτὸ εἰρημένα παρὰ τῶν διδασκάλων τῆς Ἐκκλησίας, συναγαγεῖν, καὶ σύντομον ἑρμηνείαν συντάξαι. Ὅπως μὴ μόνον ἀπὸ τῶν τῆς καινῆς διαθήκης βιβλίων δόξῃ παρεωρᾶσθαι, ἢ ὡς μηδὲ μιᾶς ἐπιστάσεως δεομένου, ἢ ὡς δυναμένων ἡμῶν ἐκ τῆς τῶν λοιπῶν ἑρμηνείας καὶ τούτου τὴν διάνοιαν ἀνεξευρίσκειν. Μηδεὶς δὲ προπετείας ἢ θράσους γραφὴν ποιείσθω τοῦ ἐγχειρήματος, ἀλλὰ μᾶλλον ταῖς εὐχαῖς συνεργείτω ἄξιον τῆς προθέσεως ἐπιθεῖναι τὸ πέρας (Cramer 263.3–17). The ὑπόθεσις goes on to provide the sorts of introductory material that we find in late ancient gospel prefaces. The full ὑπόθεσις is printed as Cramer 263–65; cf. the English translation of Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 215–19. It appears in many, but not all, manuscripts of the *Catena in Marcum*. Some manuscripts (followed by Cramer) ascribe the ὑπόθεσις to Cyril of Alexandria.

[38] The catenist emphasizes their scholarly efforts in searching out commentary for Mark: "I have heard of none [sc. who have written commentaries on Mark] until now, even though I have inquired from those who have made it their business to gather together the books of more ancient writers."

interpretation of the others," then how can one recycle commentary on those other gospels to construct this Markan catena? Furthermore, the ὑπόθεσις elides the fact that the catenist has composed numerous passages de novo. These artful omissions in the ὑπόθεσις reflect the authority function of citation. Even though the catenist produces substantial new commentary, to author a new commentary on Mark would not match the authority that catena affords. Because catena borrows authority from prior commentary, such irregularities are best not advertised.

The genius of this citational project is that it works retroactively.[39] The *Catena in Marcum* deploys the authority of earlier interpreters in order to position Mark as *already* part of the ecclesial tradition of gospel commentary. Indeed, this was true to a limited extent; despite the absence of direct commentary, earlier commentators had often read Mark in conversation with other gospels. Yet the *Catena in Marcum* reconfigures the history of gospel scholarship in order to locate Mark within a tradition of ecclesial interpretation.

This citational project intersects with the affordances of catena as an "exegetical technology."[40] The Markan catenist uses an existing technology of recycled commentary in a novel way, crafting a commentary for a previously uncommented text. The distinctive approach generates new possibilities for reading gospel texts, especially when it results in mismatch between text and commentary. The catena locates Mark in conversation with the texts and commentary traditions of the other New Testament gospels. Doubled recycling reflects and invites a practice of reading gospels with and against one another.

5. Creative Mismatch

A peculiar hermeneutics animates the creative mismatch between text and commentary. The act of doubled recycling—excerpting from existing commentaries and structuring those comments around a different text—offers rich networks of repetition and difference.[41] This mismatch generates tensions and possibilities.

First, it highlights gospel difference.[42] We have already seen this in the catena's prefatory ὑπόθεσις, which argues that Mark cannot be conflated with other gospels. Even though the catenist lacks commentaries *on* Mark, they still have commentaries that *discuss* Mark. Existing commentaries on Matthew, Luke, and John often compared divergent gospel narratives. The catenist privileges this material. For example, discussing the scribe's exchange with Jesus about the "first commandment of all," the catenist uses a passage from Chrysostom's *Homilies on Matthew* that centers on reconciling differences between Matthew and Mark and that emphasizes the key Markan phrase not found in other gospels: "You are not far from God's kingdom" (Mark 12:34). The *Catena in Marcum* consistently compares Mark with other gospels. As the catenist constructs a commentary for Mark, they recycle existing commentary that already addresses the themes of Mark and that contrasts Mark with Matthew, Luke, and John. This is

---

39 For a parallel observation about how catenae offer "representations of the past," see Panagiotis Manafis, "The Sources of Codex Zacynthius and Their Treatment," in Houghton and Parker, *Codex Zacynthius*, 98.

40 I borrow this phrase from Layton, "Catenae," 221.

41 This language alludes to the "difference and repetition" of Gilles Deleuze, *Difference and Repetition,* trans. Paul Patton, Athlone Contemporary European Thinkers (London: Continuum, 2001); cf. Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 88–89.

42 As Lamb writes, "the fact that the compilers of the *Catena in Marcum* consulted material on the gospels of Matthew, Luke and John, perhaps made them peculiarly aware of the similarities and the discrepancies between the gospels" (Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 149).

an effect of the compositional process: to privilege existing explicit comment on Mark was also to privilege comparison between gospels. Yet the comments composed de novo by the catenist also often focus upon gospel similarity and difference. In both ways, the catenist produces a commentary that emphasizes comparative reading between gospels.

Second, doubled recycling can conflate Mark with other gospels.[43] This point stands in some tension with the first, but both are features of the project. The catenist does not always find commentary that explicitly discusses the details of the Markan text; Mark often has distinctive features that differ from parallels in Matthew, Luke, or John. As a result, one must read the commentary with a critical eye. The commentary often assumes different details than appear in Mark. For example, according to Mark 14:65a, "Some began to spit on [Jesus], to blindfold him, and to strike him, saying to him, 'Prophesy!'" Here the catena incorporates a passage of Cyril of Alexandria's *Commentary on Luke*, which focuses on an expansion in Matthew and Luke: "Who is it that struck you?"[44] This expansion is one of the so-called minor agreements between Matthew and Luke but does not appear in Mark's text. Mark instead connects the mocking command to prophesy with Jesus's preceding Danielic statement that "you will see the Son of Man, seated at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven" (Mark 14:62).[45] Reading Mark through commentaries on a different gospel thus not only imports external details into Mark's narrative but also overlooks the distinctive theological fabric of Mark's account. Matthew and Luke are both already reinterpreting Mark's narrative in their gospels—and the *Catena in Marcum* extends that process.

This tension between text and commentary is part of Mark's ongoing vitality, as the text continues to absorb possibilities from other gospels. This recycling guides readers toward a synthetic reading of Mark as part of a corpus with Matthew, Luke, and John. The details and logics of those other texts subtly populate (the margins of) Mark as well. These gospels are, of course, themselves already projects that rewrite and reimagine Mark.[46] Eusebius's system is vital to the way that the catena reshapes Mark. As Jeremy Schott writes, "by providing a cross-referencing system for parallel material in the gospels, [Eusebius] asks … readers to colonize the text of Mark with the text of Matthew, to populate Luke with John, and so forth."[47] The catena thus reads Mark through the details and narratives of Matthew, Luke, and John. At the same time, as we have seen, the *Catena in Marcum* often emphasizes tensions and disagreements between these gospels. Mark is surrounded by discussions of Matthew, Luke, and John—and by comparisons between these differing gospel texts. As a result, the *Catena in Marcum* makes readers intensely aware of how Mark diverges from Matthew, Luke, and John.

Third, doubled recycling leaves gaps that invite the catenist to intervene. What does the catenist do about passages where Mark stands alone, without parallel in the other three gospels? All readers agree that there is not much of this material, although ancient and modern scholars have identified and quantified it in differing ways. As we have seen (table 1), Eusebius's system

---

43 While Lamb observes that gospel difference is a constant theme throughout the *Catena in Marcum*, he is less attentive to the conflations created by the catenist's method (Lamb, *The* Catena in Marcum, 147).

44 Cramer 431.21–26, citing Cyril, *Comm. Luc.* (PG 72:929.4–12). This passage is attested only in catena manuscripts, where it is not always attributed.

45 For discussion of these related passages, see Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 79.

46 On how the Eusebian apparatus extends dynamics of rewriting within a Markan gospel tradition, see Coogan, *Eusebius the Evangelist*, 61–93. The *Catena in Marcum* further extends these dynamics.

47 Jeremy M. Schott, "Textuality and Territorialization: Eusebius' Exegeses of Isaiah, and Empire," in *Eusebius of Caesarea: Tradition and Innovations*, ed. Jeremy M. Schott and Aaron P. Johnson, Hellenic Studies 60 (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2013), 186. While Schott does not have the *Catena in Marcum* in view, his insights are apropos.

of gospel cross-references identified nineteen such passages. One might assume that a catena comments on the entire text. Yet, as with other forms of commentary, a catenist can skip any section of the text, discussing only part of the lemma. We see just such habits of omission in the *Catena in Marcum*. Sometimes the catenist bypasses a section of Mark. For example, Eusebius identified Mark 6:31 ("come rest awhile") as distinctive to Mark. The catenist skips this transitional narrative. We also find more substantial omissions. Eusebius correctly identified Mark's story of the fleeing naked man (Mark 14:51–52) as having no parallels in other gospels. (It is easy to understand why other gospel writers chose not to include this strange story. After all, gospel writers, like commentators, can choose to omit.) Without a parallel identified by Eusebius, the catenist skips this puzzling passage entirely.

Yet omission is not the catenist's typical approach. In most passages where Eusebius had identified distinctive Markan material, the catenist composes new commentary. We have already considered Mark 6:15–16, where the catenist composes new material rather than adopting commentary on related material in Matthew or Luke. Similarly, we note the catenist's discussions of Mark 7:1–4, where Jesus argues with Pharisees and scribes about hand-washing; Mark 11:19–21, where Jesus and his disciples discuss the "shriveled fig tree" that Jesus had cursed;[48] or Mark 8:22–26, where Jesus heals a blind man in multiple stages. On such occasions, the catenist supplies substantial commentary—whole squares of fabric, so to speak—in order to complete the pattern. The catenist attends not only to the longer passages in Mark that (according to Eusebius) are without parallels in other gospels but also to shorter passages, sometimes writing their own commentary to ensure they do not neglect even a single key verse. For example, the catenist produces a section of new commentary for Jesus's question in Mark 9:33 about why the disciples were squabbling while walking on the road; only then does the catenist incorporate existing commentary on the much more famous narrative about "who is the greatest."[49] In each case, the catenist ignores existing gospel commentary for parallels not mapped by Eusebius. Yet the catenist's composition of new commentary extends beyond these distinctive Markan sections. Throughout the work, the catenist offers transitions, frames the discussion, comments on Markan features, and compares parallel material from other gospels.[50] The pieces of recycled commentary are stitched to each other and to the text of Mark by new material that helps the whole pattern, the new commentary, fit together.

As we have observed, the prefatory ὑπόθεσις to the *Catena in Marcum* presents this commentary as a composition based on the work of others. The catenist writes that they "have assembled the partial and scattered sayings on [Mark] from the teachers of the church." Perhaps as a result of this sleight of hand, modern scholars have sometimes failed to observe the extent of the new material that the catenist produces for the distinctive aspects of Mark. Recycling reaches its limits, even as the project presents itself as one of citation and tradition. The limits of recycling blur the line between catena and other forms of commentary even as they bring into focus the significance of the citational gesture.

48 Mark 11:19–21 (§123) is the second half of a Markan intercalation, describing the shriveled fig tree. Eusebius juxtaposes the first half of the Markan intercalation (Mark 11:11–14 = §120) with the whole Matthean fig tree passage (Matt 21:17–20 = §214) in canon VI and treats the second half as a distinctive Markan passage. As a result, the catenist drafts new commentary on this passage rather than appropriating commentary from Matthew's discussion of the fig tree incident.

49 Cramer 364.19–30, citing Chrysostom, *Hom. Matt.* 58.2 (PG 58.568.54–569.1).

50 This explains why a substantial portion of the material in the *Catena in Marcum* cannot be traced to prior works, although it is also probable that some passages derive from prior works that are no longer extant.

6. Conclusion

Recycling has long been part of commentary. Commentators—from antiquity to the present, from China to Ireland and beyond—have refashioned prior works of commentary for fresh readings of their texts. My thinking about catena throughout this article is interwoven with the insights of Roland Barthes, who describes every human utterance as a "fabric of quotations" that combines and reworks previous utterances. Working with an expansive notion of *text* that encompasses cultural production broadly, Barthes writes, "the text is a fabric of quotations, resulting from a thousand sources of culture.… The writer can only imitate an ever anterior, never original gesture; his sole power is to mingle writings, to counter some by others, so as never to rely on just one."[51] Reading and writing are always quilting.

For readers located within an ongoing tradition, commentary often reshapes both the lemma and previous commentary. This is what we observe in catenae from the late ancient Mediterranean. Recycling takes citational form, with commentary as a "fabric of quotations" from previous scholars. The catenist rereads a biblical text using fragments of earlier commentary in order to express the meaning (as the catenist sees it) of that biblical text and of the reading tradition. The constitutive citational gesture of such projects provides the new commentary with the authority of tradition.

In this article, I have examined a late ancient project that extends this citational logic even further through a doubled practice of recycling. In late antiquity, one could not construct a Markan catena from earlier commentaries on Mark. Yet the absence of catena emphasized Mark's peculiar position in the history of gospel reading. This absence prompted an innovative form of recycling. The sixth-century *Catena in Marcum* reconfigured commentary on Matthew, Luke, and John in order to create a novel catena for Mark. Existing comments were repurposed for a new commentary on a different text altogether. The double act of recycling embedded Mark within a fourfold tradition of gospel commentary, inviting deeper engagement with the tensions—in narratives, details, and themes—between Mark and other gospels.

The *Catena in Marcum* thus illuminates the recycling that is central to the practice of commentary. Similar tensions and ruptures attend other commentarial projects. These broader patterns and practices warrant sustained attention from scholars of catena commentary and of late ancient and medieval biblical reception.

First, catena commentary reflects late ancient Mediterranean epistemologies and aesthetics of the excerpt that extend across different corpora—scriptural, literary, legal, philosophical, theological—and across religious boundaries. We might think, for example, of the anthological antiquarianism of Aulus Gellius and Athenaeus of Naucratis, of the synthesizing codification in the *Digest* of Justinian, or of the compositional practices visible in the Babylonian Talmud.[52] Even more significantly, we should juxtapose catena commentary on biblical texts with the scholia that surround authors such as Homer or Sophocles.[53] Despite conventional terminol-

---

[51] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," in *The Rustle of Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 53.

[52] E.g., Daniel Boyarin, "Talmud and the 'Fathers of the Church': Theologies and the Making of Books," in *The Early Christian Book*, ed. William E. Klingshirn and Linda Safran (Washington, DC: Catholic University of America Press, 2007), 69–85. One might also compare catena with late ancient and medieval Jewish commentaries such as Midrash Rabbah and Midrash Tanḥuma. Cf. Marc Hirshman, "The Greek Fathers and the Aggada on Ecclesiastes: Formats of Exegesis in Late Antiquity," *HUCA* 59 (1988): 137–65.

[53] Cf. Nigel Wilson, "A Chapter in the History of Scholia," *ClQ* 17 (1967): 244–56; Alan Cameron, *Greek Mythography in the Roman World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), 164–83 ("Myth in the Margins"); Nigel Wilson, "Scholiasts and Commentators," *GRBS* 27 (2007): 39–70; Fausto

ogies, scholia and catenae reflect shared scholarly practices of reconfiguration and recycling.[54] In this article, I have focused on late ancient examples that are Christian and Greek, but catenae reflect the broader intellectual culture of the late ancient Mediterranean world.

Second, quilting takes many forms, with different aesthetics and different techniques. It appears in a wide range of cultural and historical contexts, and these do not require spatiotemporal proximity or genealogical continuity. We might say the same about the citational practices of commentary that I have discussed in this article. We observe comparable practices of excerpting, anthologizing, and reconfiguring in the book cultures and scholarly traditions of other geographies and historical periods. For example, Alexander Ong Hsu has analyzed how Mahāyāna Buddhist scholars in Tang China managed their sprawling corpora of scriptures and commentaries through a variety of comparable anthological techniques and citational gestures.[55] We might further juxtapose late ancient practices of excerpting and compilation with early modern humanist scholarship—dominated, as Ann Blair, Anthony Grafton, and others have shown, by sophisticated practices and epistemologies of "commonplacing"—or, again, as Fan Wang has shown, with late imperial Chinese intellectual culture.[56] As scholars of late ancient and medieval Christian textuality devote renewed attention to catena, these broader phenomena of textual recycling invite us to think more critically and capaciously about how cantenae are made and how they work.

Montana, "The Making of Greek Scholiastic Corpora," in *From Scholars to Scholia: Chapters in the History of Ancient Greek Scholarship*, ed. Franco Montanari and Lara Pagani, Trends in Classics Supplements 9 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 105–61; R. F. MacLachlan, "The Context of Commentary: Non-biblical Commentary in the Early Christian Period," in Houghton, *Commentaries, Catenae and Biblical Tradition*, 37–64.

[54] Some scholars argue for nuanced distinctions between biblical catena and scholia on other texts (e.g., Aussedat, "Une pratique érudite"). Yet these differentiations depend on significant overarching continuities; a sharp distinction does not exist. On the varied histories of commentary for Greek and Latin literature, compare Kraus and Stray, eds., *Classical Commentaries*; Marco Formisano and Christina S. Kraus, eds., *Marginality, Canonicity, Passion: Classical Presences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

[55] Alexander Ong Hsu, "Making Canon Practicable: Scaling the Tripiṭaka with Medieval Chinese Buddhist Anthology," *HR* 61 (2022): 313–61.

[56] Ann Blair, *Too Much to Know: Managing Scholarly Information before the Modern Age* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2010); Anthony Grafton, *Inky Fingers: The Making of Books in Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2020); Fan Wang, "How Late Imperial Chinese Literati Read Their Books: Inscribing, Collating, Excerpting," *Book History* 24 (2021): 320–51.

© Copyright TC: A Journal of Biblical Textual Criticism, 2023