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THE GOSPELS AS DIEGETIC TRANSPOSITION:  
A POSSIBLE SOLUTION TO THE APORIA “DID JESUS EXIST?”

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*Did Jesus really exist? – The Jesus of history in debate*  
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Until little more than two centuries ago nobody questioned the historical existence of Jesus. This was put in doubt by the Enlightenment. The reason given is that Jesus only appears in the Gospel and that there are no certain references in the historiography of the time. On the other hand, the appearance itself of Christianity demands the historical existence of its author. These two arguments neutralize each other reciprocally and, from the French Revolution to today, we attend a trench warfare between the defenders and detractors of the historical existence of Jesus. Between those who consider the Gospel to be true history and those who think that it is mere diegesis: the latter exposing the incongruences of the Gospel, and the former replying that if it had been invented it would have been done with less incongruences.

*Is there a third possibility which overcomes the contradiction?*

Let us suppose as in algebra that the problem is solved and see under what conditions that is the case. Let's formulate the hypothesis of a diegetic transposition of the evangelical account. Actually, if the historical person had lived one century earlier elsewhere and the account of his story had been relocalized then both trends would be right. This would explain why the historians of the time do not speak of him—because they knew him under another name—and also explain the appearance of Christianity as a universal fact—which would be inconceivable without an historical founder. The contradictions, in turn, would be natural, since they inevitably insinuate themselves as a secondary effect of a transposition.

We want to quickly verify the hypothesis of a diegetic transposition using the terminology introduced by Gérard Genette in “*Palimpsestes. La littérature au second degré*”.<sup>1</sup> The fundamental law of the diegetic transposition is the proximization principle, that is to say, the story which is retold moves closer to the new public, to its audience. This principle has three aspects:

*Geographical, chronological and social approximation.*

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1 For expository purposes. For a precision and reformulation of the hypothesis, in particular on the author of the supposed transposition, see below.

- The *geographical approximation* implies that an event which originally developed in another place, in another geography, is being relocalized to the place where it is rewritten. The consequence is often a change of language, a change of nationality of the characters, and a change of location. For example, when Bulgakov in *The Master and Margarita* rewrites the German *Faust*, the action develops in Russia and the story is written in Russian. When James Joyce rewrites the *Odyssey*, the action is transferred to Ireland and the Greek *Ulysses* ends up being a Hebrew in Dublin. In the American remake of the well-known film by Akira Kurosawa, *The Seven Samurai* end up being cowboys.

- The *chronological approximation* is necessary in order that the historical event, which occurred long ago, may seem to have happened at an almost present time. For example, the saga of the real Johann Faust, who presumably lived between 1466 and 1538, was published by Johann Spies in 1587—that is more than a century after his birth—and updated at different times, by Goethe in 1808 and 1832, by Thomas Mann in 1947 and Bulgakov's version was published in 1967.

- The *social approximation* often resets stories starring kings and emperors into popular ambits. The princess becomes Cinderella. The aim of this social resetting is to turn the historical figure into “one of ours” and therefore to appropriate the story and revive it. In this case Ulysses who was king of Ithaca arrives as an Irish medic. Etc.

Applying this hypothesis to the aporia of Jesus' existence leads us to posing the question: Which historical figure, man-God, lived a sufficient time before Jesus so that his story could have been relocalized and rewritten? It could not be Alexander the Great because, apart from the fact that his life was different and he lived much earlier, his rewritten story is well-known: the *Alexander Romance*. If it was not Alexander, which other man-God, closer in history, could it be? Perhaps Julius Caesar, born 100 years before Christ, assassinated and divinized, and of whom we do not have any novel or hagiography? Could we verify that?

A characteristic of the diegetic transposition is that in the new account one often finds similar names of persons and places. E.g. in Bulgakov appears the name of *Margarita* because in *Faust* it is *Gretchen* which is the German diminutive of *Margarete*.

Observe that someone who does not know German does not realize that Gretchen and Margarita are the same name.

GRETCHEN : MARGARITA

In order to notice it we must observe the derivation:

MARGARETE > MARGARETCHEN > GRETCHEN

*Do similar names appear in the two accounts of Caesar and Jesus?*

Comparing the history of Caesar from the Rubicon to his assassination and funeral with the Gospel of Mark which relates the story of Jesus from the Jordan to his passion and resurrection, we observe that:

- Both Caesar and Jesus start their respective careers in neighboring countries in the north: *Gallia* and *Galilea*.
- Both have to cross a *fateful border river*: the *Rubicon* and the *Jordan*.
- Both *descend along the sea*: Caesar along the *Adriatic Sea*, Jesus along the *Galilean Sea*.
- Both then enter into a city: *Corfinium* and *Cafarnaum*. Caesar finds the city *occupied* by the enemy, takes it by *siege* and *expels* him; Jesus meets one *possessed* by a daemon, which he *expels*.

Both narratives seem to follow the same sequence:

a) country to the north; b) fateful border river; c) sailing along the coast; d) entrance into an occupied city; e) expulsion of the enemy.

Next we are surprised by the similarity and correspondence of certain names: *Gallia*  $\approx$  *Galilaea*, *Corfinium*  $\approx$  *Cafarnaum*.

GALLIA : GALILAEA

CORFINIVM : CAFARNAVVM

Others however are dissimilar: *Rubicon*  $\neq$  *Jordan*; *Adriatic Sea*  $\neq$  *Galilean Sea*; *occupied* and respectively *besieged*  $\neq$  *possessed*.

This is interesting and crucial: if the differences turned out to be insurmountable would they annul the similarities and parallelisms? Let's take a closer look at them:

*Rubicon*  $\neq$  *Jordan*: Caesar does not mention the crossing of the Rubicon, however he speaks of the recruitment carried out by Pompeius. But Mark does not name the Jordan either, and when he does he links it to the name of John the Baptist. However, he speaks of the *Sea of Galilee*.

*Adriatic Sea*  $\neq$  *Galilean Sea*: The coast of the Adriatic sea which runs from Rimini to Ancona was called *Ager Gallicus* (cf. *Sena Gallica*, the current *Senigallia*). Comparing we then have the acoustic and graphical near-coincidence:

MARE GALLIAE : MARE GALILAEAE

Note that the so-called “Sea” of Galilee is not a sea, but a freshwater lake, and therefore the term *thalassa* is not adequate. And in fact, Luke has corrected it to *limnê*, “lake”. However, the presence of “sea” in Mark, the proto-Gospel, is not necessarily a mistake, but may be the trace of an occurred diegetic transposition.

*Occupied or besieged* ≠ *possessed*: nevertheless, the terms are synonymous, because they happen to be the translation of a Latin word: *obsessus*.

*OBSESSVS : OBSESSVS*

Mark's diegesis offers us here the opportunity to check whether this parallelism, *obsessus* = *obsessus*, is accidental or systematic: Does the next occupation and siege on the part of Caesar correspond to the next possessed one of Jesus?

Caesar crosses the stormy sea and disembarks on the breakwater of the *Ceraunians*. Afterwards he tries, to no avail, to lay *siege* to Pompeius and his *legions*, who remains in his *trenches*. Jesus also crosses the stormy "sea" and lands in the country of the *Gerasenes*. Ditto, he fights another *possessed one*, who is called *Legion*, and whom nobody can bind because he stays in the *tombs*.

Here also, we have the same sequence and similar names: to the already known *obsessus* = *obsessus* is now added *legion* = *Legion*.

*LEGION : LEGION*

And once again we have different terms: *trenches* and *tombs*. Which, however, in Latin sound similar and confusable:

*MVNIMENTA : MONVMENTA*

As for the *Ceraunians* ≠ *Gerasenes*, the copyists of Mark realize that Gerasa is far from the "Sea" of Galilee, located more than 30 miles away, inside the Decapolis. And therefore we find the early variant *Gadarenes*. This way, with Gadara, we're approaching, even if we are still five miles off the so-called "sea". So far that other copyists have preferred to switch to *Gergesenes*, with the possibility of referring Gergesa to certain ruins on the edge of the lake.

*CERAVNII : GERASENI*

*CERAVNII : GADARENI*

*CERAVNII : GERGESENI*

(Note that the three New Testament variants are not phonetically and graphically closer to one another than they are distant from the classical source respectively).

And here we touch upon a typical problem of diegetic transpositions. The choice of names to replace is based on consonance, but the names of places that most resemble the original ones do not always fall in a topographically logical place, but out of the way. The fact that the geography and topography of Mark are notoriously incoherent, with a Jesus jumping from here to there, without a logical route, can be evidence that a diegetic transposition has been carried out.

The most discussed problem, the very long and useless detour, which Mark has Jesus take by passing through Tiro, Sidon and the Decapolis

in order to go from one village to another located relatively nearby on the shore of the Sea of Galilee—as if in order to go from Madrid to the Escorial one would make the loop through Valencia, Barcelona and the Basque Country—is so obvious that modern commentators consider it a Markan construction. But these seemingly absurd places are, in the logic of the diegetic transposition, the more probable ones, the residual *lectiones difficiliore*s. And, lo what a coincidence, they are the only places through which Caesar passed—notoriously when he moved from Alexandria (*bellum Alexandrinum*) to Pontus, against Pharnaces (*veni vidi vici*). And therefore the “foreign bodies” *Tire* and *Sidon* would actually be the hinges which made it possible to anchor the diegetic transposition in its new geographical context: from *Gallia* to *Galilea*.

Of all the matches we have investigated this is just a first example. However, continuing comparing the two diegeses forward to the end of the Gospel of Mark, one continues observing the same parallels:

To *Bithynia* corresponds *Bethany*, to *Nicomedes Nicodemus*, to *Mária Mary*, to Cassius *Longinus* corresponds the centurion *Longinus*, etcetera.

BITHYNIA : BETHANIA

NICOMEDES : NICODEMVS

MARIA : MARIA

LONGINVS : LONGINVS

Of course there are also differences: e.g. Cassius *Longinus* pierced Caesar with a dagger, the centurion *Longinus* instead used a lance. But as philologists have already noted, there is a relationship between the name of *Longinus* and lance, which in Greek is called *lonchê*, *Longinus* being interpreted as “the one of the lance”.

(By the way, a test in passing: Caesar was stabbed by the dagger of Cassius *Longinus* on the Ides of March, i.e. the 15th. The other *Longinus*, the one who pierced the side of the Lord with the lance, was canonized and sainted (sic!). Question: When could be his feast day? Yes, exactly on the 15th of March: *Saint Longinus*, martyr ... another coincidence!)

We will again find other names that do not match at first glance, for example the traitor, which both have, but Caesar’s is called *Brutus*, and in the Gospel instead *Judas*.

If we look more closely, we note that the traitor is called *Decimus Iunius*, that his family name *Iunius* can be called *Iumas* in Greek (analogous to *Lucius* > *Lukas*), and that therefore we have:

IOYNAC : IOYΔAC

– the only difference being in the direction of the last stroke of the Δ with respect to the N.

Judas is being called “*one of the twelve*”; Brutus was called *Decimus*, and the “tenth” is “one of the twelve”. As if in the process of re-writing they had thought: The first was Peter, the second Andrew ... the tenth Judas ... : “one of the twelve”.

As far as the well-known dicta of Caesar are concerned we find them as well in the Gospel again, each of them, and in the structurally corresponding place. Often literally, sometimes with slight misunderstandings:

‘*Who is not on any side, is on my side*’ is found as: ‘*Who is not against us, he is for us*’;<sup>2</sup>

‘*I am not King, I am Caesar*’ : ‘*We have no king but Caesar*’;<sup>3</sup>

‘*The best death is a sudden death*’ : ‘*What you will do (i.e. lead me to death) do quickly*’;<sup>4</sup>

‘*Oh, have I saved them, that they may destroy me?*’ : ‘*He saved others, himself he cannot save*’.<sup>5</sup>

Only in two cases the modifications, albeit minimal, change the meaning:

‘*Alea iacta est(o)*’, “cast the die”, is converted into ‘*casting out (the nets), they were (actually) fishermen*’<sup>6</sup> (confusion of the Latin *alea*, “dice”, with the Greek (*h*)*aleeis*, “fishermen”) and ends up being ... the miraculous fishing!

ΑΛΕΑ : ΑΛΕΕΙC

‘*Veni vidi vici*’, “I came, I saw, I conquered”, rendered as ‘*I came, washed myself, and saw*’<sup>7</sup> (confusion of *enikisa*, “I conquered”, with *enipsa*, “I washed myself”) converts into ... the healing of a blind one!

ΕΝΙΚΗΣΑ : ΕΝΙΨΑ

It is noteworthy that the place where Caesar goes to give battle is called *Zela* (pronounced “*zila*” like “e” in the English word “be”, by itacism) and the place where the blind one goes to wash himself is called *Siloam* and is a *κολυμβήθρα*, which we translate as “pool”, but in the Latin Vulgata is called *natatoria*. *Zela* is located in the region of *Pontus*, on the Black Sea, because the Greek word *pontos* means “sea”, and therefore the region of *Pontus*, a place of “natantes” (swimming or

2 Suet. *Jul.* 75. CAES. *Civ.* 1.33 u. 1.85. PLUT. *Caes.* 33; *Pomp.* 61. DIO CASS. *HR* 41.6.2. APP. *BC* 2.37.148. Mc 9:40, Lc 9:50; cf. Mt 12:30 y Lc 11:23.

3 Suet. *Jul.* 79. PLUT. *Caes.* 60. APP. *BC* 2.108.450. Jn 19:13–15.

4 APP. *BC* 2.115.479–480. PLUT. *Caes.* 63. Jn 13:21–27.

5 Suet. *Jul.* 84. APP. *BC* 2.146.611. Mc 15:31.

6 Suet. *Jul.* 32. APP. *BC* 2.32.133; 35.140. Mc 1:16.

7 Suet. *Jul.* 37. PLUT. *Caes.* 50. APP. *BC* 2.91.384. DIO CASS. *HR* 42.48.1. Jn 9:7; Jn 9:11.

floating ones), of ships, of boats, is interpreted as a bathing place. Transposition by reduction.

ZELA : SILOAM

PONTVS : NATATORIA

The changes of meaning in these six sentences are evidence of Mark's method of transposing: The miraculous victories of Caesar become the victorious miracles of Jesus. Thus the social proximization brings about a change of profession: emperor turns into thaumaturge.

Following the same procedure Caesar's conflict with various *Caecilii* and *Claudii* transforms into the healing of the *blind* (lat. *caecus* = blind) and *lame* (lat. *claudus* = lame). The most exquisite transformation is undergone by *Asinius Pollio*, Caesar's *legate* (in Spain and Sicily), who is being transformed into a *tied ass's colt* (by confusion of *legate* with *ligated*).

CAECILII : the blind

CLAVDII : the lame

ASINIVS POLLIO : ass's colt

LEGATVS > LIGATVS : ligated (tied)

This move from a proper name to a common one reveals to be a constant in Mark. Thus *Pontifex* is to be found as *carpenter*—as if it was analyzed into *ponti-fex*, the *bridge builder*:

PONTIFEX > PONTI-FEX > bridge builder > carpenter

Both *narratives of the passion* follow the same sequence as well:

With respect to Caesar we have: (a) the conspiracy, (b) the assassination, (c) the posthumous trial, (d) the cremation.

With respect to Jesus: (a) the conspiracy, (b) the capture, (c) the trial, (d) the crucifixion.

The main discrepancies are first that Caesar was assassinated at the time of the attack, whereas Jesus was arrested only: but there was a clash with blank weapons.

As far as the trial is concerned Jesus is supposed to be alive, but strangely silent, and when he finally opens his mouth, what does he say? Essentially only this: 'Thou sayest it'—that is, he says nothing.

Another discrepancy is that Caesar was cremated and Jesus crucified, but it is noteworthy that in Latin *cremo* means "to burn" and the homophonous Greek *kremô* instead means "to hang", "to crucify".

CREMO : KREMÔ – KPEMΩ

The *pyre* is not found in the Gospel, but oddly enough in its place we find a useless and unstable *myrrh* of the crucifixion, seeing that it is offered—with wine? with vinegar? converted into gall?—but he rejects it: If nothing happened, wherefore is it reported? However, it should be

noted that *pyre* and *myrrh* resemble each other in Greek and therefore are typically confusable because of the similar shape of the *Π* and *Μ*:

*ΠΥΡΑ : ΜΥΡΑ*

There is even a manifest diegetic transposition here, which is revealed by the evangelist himself: the myrrh and other spices are used ‘as the manner of the Jews is to bury’.<sup>8</sup> Indication that the story was adapted to the custom (that is, to a new one: it was not necessary to describe the original one, because everybody knew it).

However, it is known that exactly during the period from the death of Caesar through to the redaction of the Gospel, the custom of cremation gradually ceded its place to inhumation. The first one of the imperial family was the “pious” Poppea Sabina, the wife of Nero. And it was Constantine himself, the first Christian emperor, who introduced inhumation for the Caesars as well.

As far as the crucifixion is concerned, it is ignored, but the first one occurred with Caesar himself. At his funeral his body lay in a shrine made after the model of the temple of Venus Genetrix, placed on the rostra, with a *tropaemum* at its head, on which hung his blood-stained robe; the consul Antony lifted it with his lance making it flutter; and a wax effigy of his martyred body was hoisted above the bier and shown to the people who, seeing the wounds, revolted against the murderers.<sup>9</sup> This was considered his posthumous victory, his resurrection, if we judge by the coin minted to celebrate the event:<sup>10</sup>



1.a *Ov*: Venus Genetrix; *Rv*: Cremation of Caesar; 1.b Figures of Good Friday

(We note that it shows the same structure as we have in the Lying Christ).

8 Jn 19:40.

9 Suet. *Jul.* 84; App. *BC* 2.146.610; 2.147.612.

10 Denarius of Buca, 44 B.C.; *B.M.C. R* 4161 (*Crawford* 480/1). Cf. BATTENBERG, C. (1980). *Pompeius und Caesar – Persönlichkeit und Programm in ihrer Münzpropaganda*, Dissertation, Marburg/Lahn, p. 168–71.



What a *tropaeum* looked like in the time of Caesar, we know that from coins ...



2.a, 2.b Denarii of Caesar, 48 B.C.



3. Denarius of Caesar, 46 B.C.

(Note on the obverse Venus Genetrix, the divine ancestral mother of the Julians, with her son Amor on her shoulder, or, in his place, the number LII (52): the age of Caesar, who is presented as her son).

... and some little figures ...



4. Miniature Tropaeum (Berlin Charlottenburg)

: ... like a cross.

How a *tropaeum* was hoisted can be observed on a cameo:



5. Cameo (detail) – Augustean age

Graphic reconstruction of what one could see on the Forum:<sup>11</sup>



6. Sketch for a reconstruction of Caesar's funeral – Pol du Closeau

11 Antonius acting on the rostra during the funeral oration. View to the south-west from the Basilica Aemilia; in the background temple of Saturnus and Capitolium. Drawing: Pol du Closeau, Utrecht.

Scenic reconstruction:<sup>12</sup>



7.-11. Reconstruction of the funeral of Caesar.



12 Rehearsals for a documentary, by the Brotherhood of the Memory, Rascafría: in studio in Madrid, and in the Town Hall Plaza in Rascafría.

© Photos: Daniel Martín, Madrid (7-10); Tommie Hendriks (11), Utrecht.  
Sculpture of Christ Caesar: Agustín Sanz De La Fuente, Rascafría.

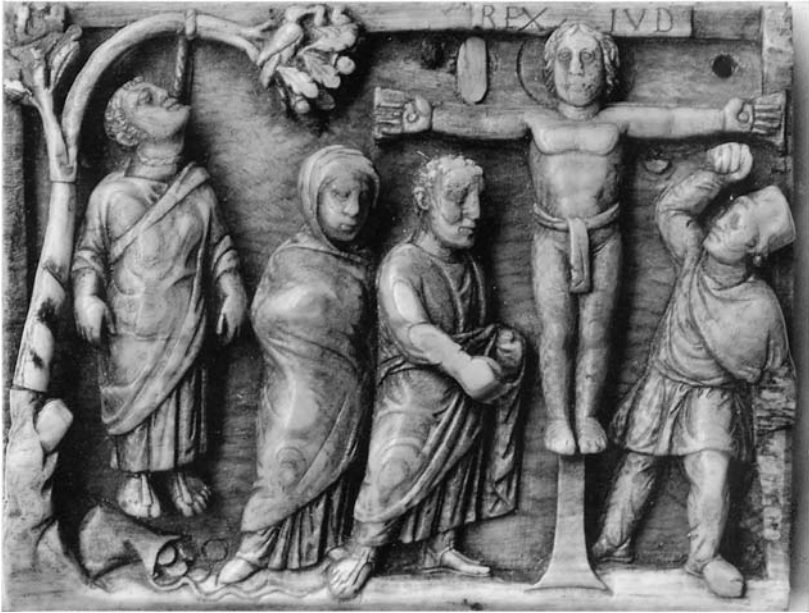




12. Good Friday in Bercianos de Aliste – © Photography by Xavier Ferrer Chust

For those who know the rituals of the *Semana Santa* (Holy Week), particularly in rural environments, these are not strange images.

Let us confront them with what is considered the most ancient image of the crucifixion in a narrative context we have, the famous ivory box conserved in London, of the Vth cent.



13. Relief of ivory (London), Italic, 420/430 A.D., Crucifixion of Christ: (right) blow of Longinus to the heart; (left) suicide of Judas.

At first glance some anomalous elements surprise: Longinus gives his lance blow in a position as if it were a dagger thrust, and to the left side, into the heart, not to the right as several centuries later it would be represented according to the idea that Longinus did not kill Caesar, but only wanted to see if he was dead.<sup>13</sup> Here Longinus seems to be killing Christ. He wears a *pileus*, the cap symbolizing liberty, on his head, the same that Marcus Brutus and Cassius Longinus put on their coins between two daggers in order to boast about having murdered Caesar.

Christ does not hang, but seems to float, without a *suppedaneum*, suspended only on two nails through the hands defying the force of gravity. Which, however, the artist knew well as can be seen with Judas

13 Vladimir Gurewich, 'Observations on the Iconography of the Wound in Christ's Side, with Special Reference to Its Position'. *Journal of the Warburg and Courtauld Institutes*, Vol. 20, No. 3/4 (Jul. - Dec., 1957), pp. 358-362.

who hangs (look at the difference in the feet). Naturally one can explain this anomalous position of Christ on the cross by seeing it as an anticipation of the resurrection. But if its origin was the exposition of a wax effigy on a *tropaeum*, the position would be logical since the wax figures were supported by an internal structure of wood, which allows suspending it from only two points—as we have verified with the effigy of Caesar (see above).

This anomalous manner of a “floating crucifixion” is not unique, but rather conserved throughout the whole first millennium:



14. Carolingian, IXth cent.; 15. Xth cent.; 16. miniature, 975 A.D.



17. San Damiano, XIIth cent.; 18. Giotto, 1305; 19. Rubens, 1620

The Christ on the cross does not begin to hang until the Renaissance, and at once hangs more and more—despite the fact that in antiquity they knew how to represent really crucified ones, whom they let hang, as we can see on this orphic signet stone and gems from the IIIrd cent. (see fig. 20-21, next page).

But notice that the traditionally structured Christs of Good Friday continue not to hang, till today (see above fig. 12).

The crucifixion of Christ remained anomalous and contested. The Creed of the Council of Nicaea, in its original form only recites ‘suf-



20. Orpheos Bakkikos, signet stone, IIIrd cent.; 21. Crucified one, gem, IIIrd cent.

ferred'; and the crucifixion and Pontius Pilate do not appear until the Constantinopolitan Council.<sup>14</sup> The Gospel of Peter, middle of the 2nd century, speaks, yes, of crucifixion, 'but he remained silent, as if he did not suffer pain'.<sup>15</sup> The Koran has retained the memory of those Christian diatribes when it says: '... they did not crucify him, but it only appeared to them ...'.<sup>16</sup> And we can ask ourselves whether the rejection of the crucified one—and strangely not of the cross—which endures to this day, is not the continuation of that old disagreement.

If the hypothesis of a diegetic transposition can explain the anomaly of the crucifixion of Christ, how could it be explained that in the case of Caesar one could think of a crucifixion?

Several concomitant factors acted in favor of the perception of the exposition of Caesar's body as crucifixion.

The first was without a doubt that the murderer Cassius Longinus had a reputation for having crucified a defector in Judea (Pitholaos), eight years earlier, after the defeat of Crassus. Thus, the representation of Caesar's body covered in blood, murdered by the same crucifier, raised above the bier and fastened to a *tropaeum*, evoked the crucifixion.

14 *Symbolum Nicaenum*, original form, A.D. 325: παθόντα – *passus est*; *Symbolum Constantinopolitanum*, forma recepta, A.D. 381: σταυρωθέντα τε υπερ ημων επι Ποντίου Πιλάτου, και παθόντα και ταφέντα. – *et crucifixus est pro nobis sub Pontio Pilato [passus et sepultus est]*.

15 *Evangelium Petri*, 3. Και ηνεγκον δυο κακουργους, και εσταυρωσαν ανα μεσον αυτων τον κυριον αυτος δε εσιωπα, ως μηδενα πονον εχων.

16 Koran, Sura 4, 157.



The second crucifixion, not imaginary, but real, came few days after the funeral of Caesar when the same Mark Anthony who had recited the *laudatio funebris* for Caesar under the conditions we have seen, had some of the fervent ones crucified, who attempted to lynch the murderers of Caesar still present in the city, whom however he, as consul, had assured amnesty. The two crucifixions could not help but be confused in the collective imagination. The one of Caesar, a *crucifixio imaginaria*, as well as the *funus imaginarium*, in which a wax figure was used in place of the absent or not visible body, was confused with the actual crucifixion of the Caesarians who demanded the punishment of the assassins, both carried out by the same Mark Anthony immediately one after another.

Clearly, we have here the precedent of the crucifixions carried out a century later by Titus in Jerusalem. Those also allowed the anchoring of the later diegetic transposition after the Jewish war in the definitive redaction of the gospels. Though Antonius had crucified in Rome, he was also active in Jerusalem where he built the Tower Antonia.

The main reason, however, seems to be judicial-technical: the triumvirs walled up the place where Caesar had been murdered and declared the Ides of March *dies parricidii, dies ater, nefastus*, and prohibited all celebrations on that day. The consequence was that in this manner the day and place of the death were removed from the memory of Caesar and the veneration of the Divus Iulius, and had to be moved to another day and place: the exposition of the martyred body in form of a wax figure then lent itself to a reinterpretation as crucifixion, in substitution of the negated murder. This was the fundamental preparation of the ground for a successive diegetic transposition.

In addition, we rarely find the name Rome written in the ancient texts: the *urbs* was enough. But *urbs* means city: which city? Jerusalem, too, was a city, even also “the city”. And there were Romans who crucified there as well. And there were Jews in Rome as well, and notoriously at the funeral of Caesar, where they were mourning beside the pyre.<sup>17</sup> For this reason the transposition of the crucifixion from one city to the other was totally credible.

The diegetic transposition applied to the texts does not to the same extent affect the iconography which proves to be more resistant to changes because it is more closely tied to tradition. Despite the fact that Matthew and Luke attribute two Old Testamentary genealogies (by the way: two different ones!) to Jesus, in the Christian iconography Jesus is constantly represented with classical features. If we had the time we

17 Suet. *Jul.* 84.

could present the Christian iconography in relation to its so-called pagan predecessors. We could show how there has not only been a use of columns and capitals of Roman temples in the Christian churches (fig. 22), but a reutilization of all the iconographic themes of the cult of *Divus Iulius* and *Divi Filius*.



22. Temple of Antoninus and Faustina in the Forum Romanum, converted into the church of Saint Laurence in Miranda.

The verified parallelisms in the texts and in the iconography with respect to Caesar and Jesus do not annul the differences. These differences are, however, a requirement of the laws of diegetic transposition:

- *Geographical approximation*: the scene is moved from Gallia to Galilea, however the names remain similar.

- *Chronological approximation*: it makes Jesus born not long before the writing of the gospels, but exactly 100 years after Caesar; and makes him die on the same day: the 15th of March and the 15th of Nisan.

- *Social approximation*: Jesus is no longer a warrior-politician like Caesar, but a preacher thaumaturge like those who preached him. But he continues to expel demons which is the theological and absolute form of warfare, and he continues to be the son of God.

The diegetic transposition hypothesis allows to explain the contradictions found in the Gospel. To the contradictions already seen, the following can be added. The inexplicable baptism of Jesus, which cannot be due to penance because He had neither sin nor reasons for repentance, explains itself if we know that the origin of the baptism were the improper recruitments of Pompey; he had to repent his sin, and do penance: they cut off his head (John's and Pompey's ... another coincidence!)

The result of this investigation is that *the original Jesus was Divus Iulius*, a “popularis”, who had to make civil war against the oppressive Rome in order to create a more just world for all the oppressed people, and who for this reason was murdered, and that is why they deified him and all the people considered him to be “one of ours”, which set the stage for transposition: because being “one of ours” for all, he could assume any nationality, even the Galilean, if not the Jewish one: what actually happened under the Flavians a century later.

Setting the attention on the usually ignored cult of Divus Iulius will allow us to solve the problem of discontinuity, the alleged sudden passage from paganism to Christianity. Even the supposed sharp break with paganism made by Constantine can only be explained from the cult of Divus Iulius from which it adopted the symbols.

This underlying continuity will help us to also affirm that the tradition is more resistant to rewriting and has preserved original elements, as we can verify in the rural rites of the Holy Week. If scripture reveals itself as a rewriting, it is less reliable than the tradition. Then, the maxim of *sola Scriptura* in the past four centuries has led to devaluing tradition, the other and more trustworthy “pillar of the faith”.

Demonstrating that the Gospel is not an invention, nor a forgery, but a transposition, we also save the honor of the evangelists, who did nothing else than to reupdate a remote story, adapting it to the changing conditions of their time, but trying to save the essential message which is “love your enemies”.

Everybody thinks that Julius Caesar, the hard military leader did not practice this. The *clementia Caesaris*, well known to the ancients, even to the Church Fathers,<sup>18</sup> is forgotten. And Jesus is thought to have preached peace. So, who said this sentence?

18 OROSIO, *Hist.* 6.17.1, presents as known fact that Julius Caesar died assassinated for having founded a political system based on clemency, against the example of his predecessors: «*Caesar Romam rediit: ubi dum Reipublicae statum contra exempla maiorum clementer instaurat, auctoribus Bruto et Cassio, conscio etiam plurimo senatu, in curia viginti et tribus vulneribus confossus interiit*».

‘Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a *sword*’.<sup>19</sup>

And, who forgave his enemies saying this?

‘Let us, therefore, Senators, remain united with confidence, forgetting all past events as if they had been brought to pass by a divine plan, and begin *to love each other* without suspicion as if we were new citizens. So that you will treat me *as a father*, enjoying my care and protection without fearing anything unpleasant, and I will take thought for you as for my children, praying that all your deeds may always be the best, and yet enduring perforce the limitations of human nature, rewarding the good citizens with fitting honors and correcting the rest as far as that may be possible’.<sup>20</sup>

If the verified matches are not casual, this investigation proves both camps right: the Gospel proves to be real history, which underwent a diegetic transposition.

Did Jesus really exist? Yes, and he was diegetically transposed.

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The diegetic transposition as it appears to have taken place in the Gospel, is *sui generis*, in the sense that the author of the Gospel does not seem to be a person, a unique and identifiable author, who wrote a new text, a story inspired by a preexisting history, but rather *a process of re-writing (réécriture)*<sup>21</sup>, which goes from the *Historiae* of *Asinius Pollio*—the original text is lost, but preserved through being used by other historiographers—to the *Gospel of Mark*, which constitutes the canonical, Christian form of the *Life of Divus Iulius*: incomplete translations with Latin terms left in the Greek text, which were then taken as Greek ones at the time of the act of copying—a process similar to the one observed by F. Wutz for the translation of the Septuagint;<sup>22</sup> hence the rewriting, which makes the copying process start again, new “mistakes” that will accumulate, new rewriting, and so on: until the fixing of the canonical text. The name itself of the protoevangelist, *Mark*, not by chance typically Roman, would not indicate the author, but the patron, *Marc Anthony, Flamen Divi Iulii*, the high priest of the divinized Caesar, whose

19 Mt 10:34.

20 DIO CASS. HR 43.17.4-5.

21 Comparable to those observed in the medieval hagiographies, cf. Goulet, M. / Heintzelmann, M. (Hg.) (2003). *La réécriture hagiographique dans l'Occident médiévale. Transformations formelles et idéologiques*. Beihefte der Francia, Bd. 58, Herausgegeben vom Deutschen Historischen Institut Paris.

22 Wutz, F. (1925). *Die Transkriptionen von der Septuaginta bis zu Hieronymus*, Berlin/ Stuttgart/Leipzig.

tendency he sheds light on—Mark’s counterpart, *John*, on the contrary presents the bias of the “young” Caesar, *Divi Filius*, “Son of God”: Caesar Augustus, the exclusive heir: ‘All things that the Father hath are mine’ (John 16:15).

That process was necessary because the primitive community, the “Urgemeinde” of Mark, was apparently formed by the children of the children of the veterans, settled in colonies by Caesar (and later by Caesar Augustus). A bilingual community in the East, where the Greek resisted the Latin more than the Gallic did in the West, gradually replacing it, and the Latin only survived as language of command of the legions. That is what is observed in the Gospel of Mark, whose evident and latent latinisms reveal to be *sermo castrensis*, the language of the military camp.<sup>23</sup>

According to our analysis the latinisms of Mark belong to the oldest layer of the text, while the aramaisms belong to the last layer. And because the hebraisms of Matthew and the septuagintisms of Luke are later, it can be concluded that the historical journey of the text went from Rome to Jerusalem and not vice versa.

This conforms to the tradition, which has always claimed that the Gospel of Mark was written in Latin in Rome 12 years after the ascension of the Lord.<sup>24</sup> And as chance would have it, 12 years after the death of Caesar, Asinius Pollio wrote his *Historiae*, the basis for the re-writing of Mark.

Well then: *in dubiis stat traditio*—in doubt, let’s stay with the tradition.

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(Translation: Joseph Horvath)

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- 23 BLASS, F., DEBRUNNER, A. & REHKOPF, F. (171990). *Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch*, Göttingen, p.6–9. COUCHOUD, P.-L. (1926). ‘L’évangile de Marc a-t-il été écrit en Latin?’, *Revue de l’Histoire des Religions*, 94. CANCIK, H. (1975). ‘Christus Imperator’. In H. v. STIETENCROON (Ed.), *Der Name Gottes*, Düsseldorf, p. 120.
- 24 *Εὐαγγέλιον κατὰ Μάρκον. ἐγράφη ῥωμαϊστὶ ἐν Ῥώμῃ μετὰ 12 ἔτη τῆς ἀναλήψεως τοῦ κυ.* Fam. 13 of the “Datumsvermerke”, cited by ZUNTZ, G. (1984). ‘Wann wurde das Evangelium Marci geschrieben?’ In H. CANCIK (Ed.), *Markus-Philologie*, Tübingen, p. 60.

