

Daniela De Panfilis, *Il racconto doppio nel Libro di Samuele* (Analecta Biblica 235; Roma: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2022). Pp. 552. € 45. ISBN: 979-12-5986-007-1

Artur Malina

University of Silesia in Katowice
artur.malina@us.edu.pl

 <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2830-9902>

The book under review is a doctoral dissertation in biblical studies, defended at the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome on 5 November 2021 and slightly revised for publication in the main text and bibliography. The research, the results of which it presents, was carried out first under the direction of Fr Prof. Stephen Pisano S.J. and, after his death, under the scientific supervision of Fr Prof. Peter Dubovský S.J. as first supervisor and Fr Prof. Dariusz Dziadosz of the Catholic University of Lublin as co-supervisor.

Appearing in the title of the dissertation, the Italian expression “il racconto doppio” literally means “a double narrative.” The subject of the research, precisely defined in chapter one, falls into a broader and more diverse category than the colloquial understanding of the modifier “double” suggests. Indeed, the phenomenon of repetition falls under a much broader concept: one of the most common ways of organising speech. The double or multiple occurrence of the same or similar elements characterises primarily poetic texts, and this stylistic device is the most typical feature of poetry alongside two of its other marks: the ambiguity of content and the imagery of language. Repetition, although less common in ordinary speech, is no stranger to literary and even utilitarian prose.

What is striking, however, is the asymmetry in the researchers’ approach to the two categories of repetition. The multiple occurrence of small elements within short stretches of speech is readily recognised and well studied. The frequency of this type of repetition and its variety attest to its use in mutual communication not only spontaneously, but intentionally. This ubiquity encourages research to discover their rhetorical and aesthetic functions. Although intensive study of these figures continues both in the wider field of literary studies and within biblical studies itself, considerable consensus has already been reached in both spheres, as evidenced by the use of research findings by both biblical and literary scholars.¹

¹ Descriptions and systematisation of these speech devices are given in numerous dictionaries of literary terms and in propaedeutic studies. An example of their concise presentation can be found in the fourth chapter of Stanisław Bazylewski’s textbook (*A Guide to Biblical Research*, 2 ed. [Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press 2009] 157–185), which has been translated into many languages. Discussing basic literary figures, he distinguishes

The situation is different with the repetition of longer stretches of statements carrying some complete meaning within the books of the Bible or collections of its writings. In this case, there is no similarly agreed nomenclature or established typology for the double or multiple presentation of content. Where such interpretations do appear, they are not always substantiated by research leading to results backed by a similar consensus as in the case of repetitions of the first type. This paucity in studies contrasts with the need for explanations of the function and meaning of these repetitions. Indeed, even novice readers of the Bible are struck by repeated stories concerning the same or very similar events or persons. When reading the Septuagint or the Old Testament in the arrangement of books familiar to most modern editions, after reading the Second Book of Kings, which concludes with the story of the fall of the kingdom of Judah and the Babylonian exile, one will find in the First Book of Chronicles, at the beginning, the names of Adam and Seth, and texts reiterating figures and events already known. The same is true for the continuous reading of the first four books of the New Testament. It is only the prologue of the third that gives the rationale behind the re-telling of events already known from previously passed on and recorded stories. Even in the case of texts from the same author, the reason for recounting the ascension of Jesus twice at the end of the first book and at the beginning of the second may not be obvious.²

There are many more examples of repetition in the Old Testament. The books of Joshua and Judges portray the beginnings of the Israelites' time in Canaan and their entry into possession of the promised land differently. The Book of Joshua shows a military streak of success, culminating in the complete conquest of the land and the removal of the earlier inhabitants (Josh 10:40). The Book of Judges reveals from the outset the less favourable position of the Israelites, who failed against the inhabitants of Canaan (Judg 1:19–21, 27–36). Some events are repeated in the story, which seems to unfold linearly: Moses draws water out of the rock twice during the Israelites' rebellion (Exod 17:1–7; Num 20:1–13). Other stories are repeated more than twice: Abraham presents Sarah twice to the rulers of the land as his sister (Gen 12:9–20; 20:1–17); Isaac does the same with Rebekah (Gen 26:1–11). Essentially the commandments of the Decalogue are repeated as the same, albeit non-literally (Exod 20:2–17; Deut 5:6–21). The most well-known repetition is found in the first three chapters of the Bible, which speak twice of the creation of man and the subjection of part of creation to him.

between repetitions based on sound (alliteration, assonance, paronomasia, rhyme or rhythm) and the much more numerous lexical ones (anadiplosis, anaphora, anastrophe, antimetabole, epanadiplosis, inclusion, epanorthosis, epiphora, epimone, climax, anticlimax, symploche, chiasmus and other parallelisms). Each case is illustrated with examples from the texts of Scripture, many of which are further cross-referenced with bibliographic items, and the chapter as a whole starts with an extensive bibliography.

2 If one assumes that the rationale for the repetition is the importance of the event, then the question arises why the event closer to the resurrection is not recounted twice; cf. W. Wasiak, "Two Accounts – One Ascension: Luke 24:50–53 and Acts 1:9–11," *The Biblical Annals* 12/3 (2022) 370.

Where do the repetitions come from? What is their function and purpose? The answers to these questions depend on the dominant paradigms in exegesis. Repetitions are most often seen as evidence of a conflict between sources that has not been mitigated by an inattentive editor, or simply as an expression of the belief that something is worthy of re-presentation. While the former explanation proves insufficient to understand the genesis of the repeated elements, the latter is too general to convince one of the value of re-presenting events in the same macro-story.³

Daniela De Panfilis identifies the two books appearing in editions of the Bible under the name of Samuel as one. Indeed, the stories of Saul and David form a whole that is clearly distinct from what precedes and follows it. Compared to other biblical narratives, they are a fairly complete macro-story focused on these two protagonists. Probably because of this, the reader is quicker to notice the numerous repetitions in these stories: Saul's attempt on David's life (1 Sam 18:10–11; 19:9–10); the appearance at Achish of David fleeing from Saul (1 Sam 21:11–16; 27:1–28:2; 29:1–11); the sparing of the king's life by the pursuer (1 Sam 24; 26); David's appearance as a stranger before Saul (1 Sam 16:14–23; 17:55–18:5). An attentive reader will also recognise the inconsistencies in the linear development of the story of Saul, who, despite his double rejection by God as king (1 Sam 13:3–15; 15:1–35) is still victorious (1 Sam 14:47–48) and in power until his death (1 Sam 31:1–6). The introduction to the monograph gives a convincing rationale, although it also recognises it as subjective, for the delimitation of the macro-story framed at the beginning by Saul's election as king (1 Sam 9) and at the end by the news of Absalom's death (2 Sam 19).

The essential body of the dissertation consists of two parts. The first presents theoretical reflections on the phenomenon of double narratives (pp. 29–84). It is supported by the much more extensive second part, which consists of analyses of texts belonging to this category (pp. 85–478).

The first chapter of the theoretical part, which builds on the earlier analyses contained in the second part, describes – also by giving examples – six characteristics of a double narrative. A double narrative consists of exactly two elements, which are short stories. Such linked narratives feature the same protagonist and deuteragonist (or antagonist). They share the same theme or motif. They do not presuppose each other in the sense that one would be necessary as an anticipation or continuation of the other. Linked to this two-sided independence is a fifth feature, which is the sheer superfluity of repetition for the development of the plot in the macro-story. The final feature necessary for narratives to be considered

3 In the case of the repeated stories about the wives of the patriarchs, the stories in chapters 12 and 26 were considered to come from the J source, while a variant of the story in chapter 20 from the E source. As this hypothesis further fails to explain the genesis of the repetitions in J, further divisions were introduced within this source; cf. R.S. Briggs, "The Theological Function of Repetition in the Old Testament Canon," *Horizons in Biblical Theology* 28 (2006) 95–96. The fact that the sheer importance of a story as a reason for its repetition is an unper-
suasive argument is evidenced by the once very popular edition of the abridged Bible, which omits such repetition of stories: B.M. Metzger (ed.), *Reader's Digest Bible. Condensed from the Revised Standard Version Old and New Testaments* (Pleasantville, NY: Readers' Digest Association 1982); cf. G.J.R. Kent, *Say It Again, Sam. A Literary and Filmic Study of Narrative Repetition in 1 Samuel 28* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press 2012) 2.

double is their occurrence in the same macro-story. Chapter two provides the distinctions between the components of double narratives in relation to the macro-story. The primary story presents elements essential to the development of the plot in the macro-story, whereas the secondary story does not have such necessary elements. However, the omission of this second story would impoverish the whole in terms of not only aesthetics, but also communication and interpretation. The third chapter presents the typology of a double narrative, which is derived from analyses of the Book of Samuel, distinguishing between doubled, combined, extended and reduced narratives.

Part two of the book, entitled “Analysis,” consists of 21 chapters. The sheer number of texts, their varying length and the inclusion in the titles of the relationships between them show the complexity of the problem. For this reason, it is worth listing them all here: 1. Saul, God’s chosen one (1 Sam 9:3–10:16 and 10:17–27); 2. The lost donkeys and the anointing of Saul (1 Sam 9:3–10:16); 3. Saul and the Spirit (1 Sam 10:10–12 and 19:18–24); 4. The congregation at Mizpah (1 Sam 10:17–27); 5. The rejection of Saul (1 Sam 13:3–15 and 15:1–35); 6. David in the court of Saul (1 Sam 16:14–23 and 17:55–18:5); 7. The covenant between Jonathan and David (1 Sam 18:1b–34 and 23:16–18); 8. Assassination with a spear (1 Sam 18:10–11 and 19:9–10); 9. David son-in-law of Saul (1 Sam 18:17–19 and 18:22–27); 10. Jonathan between David and Saul (1 Sam 19:1–7 and 20:30–33); 11. Michal between David and Saul (1 Sam 19:11–17); 12. Saul deceived by his children (1 Sam 19:11–17 and 20:1–21:1); 13. David and Achish of Gath (1 Sam 21:11–16 and 27:1–28:2; 29:1–11); 14. David escapes Saul’s pursuit (1 Sam 23:7–13 and 23:25–28); 15. The denunciation of the Ziphites (1 Sam 23:19^{aa} and 26:1); 16. Life spared (1 Sam 24 and 26); 17. Samuel’s death (1 Sam 25:1a and 28:3a); 18. Saul’s death (1 Sam 31:1–6 and 2 Sam 1:5–10); 19. David king of Israel (2 Sam 5:1–5); 20. The beginning of Absalom’s rebellion (2 Sam 15:1–6 and 15:7–12); 21. The two messengers (2 Sam 18:19–19:1).

Finally, two important points about the key strengths of the study as a whole. One is related to its structure, the main parts of which are arranged exactly inversely to the research stages (p. 25). This gives the reader the opportunity to verify the theory concerning the existence of double narratives on the basis of meticulous and consistent analyses of biblical texts according to the principles of the diachronic and synchronic approach.

The second point is also a strong recommendation. The book is an excellent example of a way of interpreting a text that is defined by the principle of the hermeneutic circle. The order adopted in the book helps to make fuller use of the analyses in the second part. Although the analyses of the biblical texts contained in the second part have served the author to justify the theoretical considerations and allow readers to verify the proposed theory, by placing these considerations in the first part, the correct approach to the phenomenon of the double narrative is delineated from the outset. This opens up possibilities both for a more in-depth reading of the texts analysed in the book, and for extending it to texts outside the macro-story under study. This first part can serve as a textbook for those who are interested in repeated stories in the Bible, which demonstrates the enduring value of the monograph under review.