

SŁAWOMIR SZKREDKA

Sinners and Sinfulness in Luke

*Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen
zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe*

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Sławomir Szkredka

Sinners and Sinfulness in Luke

A Study of Direct and Indirect References in
the Initial Episodes of Jesus' Activity

Mohr Siebeck

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Preface

This study is a revised version of my doctoral thesis presented to the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome. The thesis was submitted in October 2015 and defended in January 2016.

It is appropriate that I take the opportunity here to express my gratitude to some of the many people without whose support this study would not have been possible. In the first place, I wish to thank my doctoral supervisor, Professor Dean Béchar, SJ. With scholarly diligence as well as personal generosity and patience he both guided and inspired this work from its inception. The second reader, Professor Luca Pedroli, offered his careful and critical feedback. To them and to all at the Biblicum I remain deeply grateful.

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Camarillo, October 18, 2016

Sławomir Szkredka

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List of Abbreviations

The abbreviations for the biblical books and for ancient authors and literature, with the exception of the Gospel of Luke abbreviated here as Lk, are drawn from P. H. ALEXANDER et al. (ed.), *The SBL Handbook of Style for Ancient Near Eastern, Biblical, and Early Christian Studies* (Peabody, MA 1999). The abbreviations for periodicals and collections are as listed in S. M. SCHWERTNER, *Internationales Abkürzungsverzeichnis für Theologie und Grenzgebiete / International Glossary of Abbreviations for Theology and Related Subjects* (IATG²) (Berlin – New York ²1992), supplemented by S. BAZYLIŃSKI, *A Guide to Biblical Research* (SubBi 36; Rome ²2009) 222–232. Other abbreviations that do not appear in these works are quoted below:

AncBRL	The Anchor Yale Bible Reference Library
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
BDAG	BAUER, W. – DANKER, F. W. – ARNDT, W. F. – GINGRICH, F. W., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago – London ³ 2000).
BDF	BLASS, F. – DEBRUNNER, A. – FUNK, R. W., <i>A Greek Grammar of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature</i> (Chicago 1961).
BDR	BLASS, F. – DEBRUNNER, A. – REHKOPF, F., <i>Grammatik des neutestamentlichen Griechisch</i> (Göttingen ¹⁴ 1976).
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
BHGNT	Baylor Handbook on the Greek New Testament
EDNT	BALZ, H. – SCHNEIDER, G. (ed.), <i>Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (Edinburgh 1990, 1991, 1993) I–III.
<i>Hist. Conscr.</i>	LUCIAN, <i>Quomodo Historia Conscribenda sit</i> .
LSJ	LIDDELL, H. G. – SCOTT, R. – JONES, H. S. – MCKENZIE, R., <i>A Greek-English Lexicon</i> (Oxford – New York ⁹ 1940, 1985).
NTA.NF	Neutestamentliche Abhandlungen. Neue Folge
ÖTNT	Ökumenischer Taschenbuchkommentar zum Neuen Testament
SBLEJL	Society of Biblical Literature. Early Judaism and Its Literature
TDNT	KITTEL, G. – FRIEDRICH, G. (ed.), <i>Theological Dictionary of the New Testament</i> (Grand Rapids, MI 1964–76; Ger orig, <i>TWNT</i> , 1933–79).
WUNT 2.R	Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. 2. Reihe

Chapter 1

Introducing the Study and Its Presuppositions

This chapter briefly presents the nature and goal of the study. It situates it in the context of previous research on the subject and spells out methodological assumptions on which the study is based. It provides a reconstruction of the implied reader's pre-existing beliefs pertaining to the studied subject, and it justifies concentration on Lk 5:1–6:11 on the grounds of its place in the composition of Luke-Acts.

1.1. A Brief Presentation of the Nature of This Study

This study is about reading Lk 5:1–6:11 and examining its portrayal of sinners. It is about *reading* in that it traces the implied reader's progressive reactions to the first cycle of episodes narrating Jesus' public ministry. It is about *examining the portrayal of sinners* in that, within that cycle, it uncovers and explains the textual strategy of confronting the reader with multiple direct and indirect references to the literary characteristic of sinfulness.

Thus formulated, this study hopes to contribute to the scholarly discussion about the literary and theological roles of sinners in the Gospel of Luke. The contribution it hopes to make rests on the assumption that the role of sinners in Luke is properly assessed not just by examining sinner texts, that is, the pericopae containing the word "sinner" or its cognates, but also by uncovering and assessing all the textual strategies that prompt the reader to infer the characteristic of sinfulness, even in the absence of its direct textual referent. Motivation and justification for such a working assumption come from phenomena detectable in Luke's Gospel: upon close reading of the text, the characters known as sinners are found to be distinct from other characters such as, for instance, the disciples or the Pharisees, in that their defining characteristic is often found inadequate, rendered inapplicable, and transferred to another character. It departs from them, as it were, by attaching itself to other inhabitants of the narrative world. An eloquent example of that phenomenon is found in 5:27–39. The sinners (ἁμαρτωλοί) spoken of in 5:30 are, according to Jesus, no longer sinful; in their table fellowship with him their repentance is accomplished. They have met their physician. At the same time, however, by repeatedly directing himself to the Pharisees and by identifying himself as

the one sent to call sinners to repentance, Jesus treats the Pharisees as the sick in need of a physician. It appears that the Pharisees are marked by sinfulness, since it is to them that Jesus directs his attention. Multiple direct and indirect references to sinfulness in the Gospel reflect similar shifts in the identification of sinners and invite an inquiry into the likely effect of such operations. As a result, in this study, the Lukan portrayal of sinners is examined more as a process than as a final product. It is analyzed and explained in light of the function Luke ascribes to its various components as they emerge in the temporal unfolding of the narrative of Lk 5:1–6:11.

The assessment of Luke's presentation of sinners in Lk 5:1–6:11 is preceded by an examination of the ways in which the narrative prior to 5:1 frames the reader's understanding of sin and sinners, and it is completed by an inquiry into how Lk 5:1–6:11 conditions Luke's presentation of the sinner theme in the remaining portion of the Galilean ministry of Jesus.

In the end, what the reader understands about sinners is that he or she must discover and assimilate Jesus' perception of them. Interpretive effort implied by that task is employed productively by Luke. He deploys the references to sinfulness in a way that engages the reader in a search for the normative view of Jesus. By untangling crisscrossing viewpoints formed around sinfulness – implied, inferred, directly stated, overcome, or rejected – the reader's *coming* to know Jesus is enacted.

1.2. A Sinner in Luke and in Lukan Scholarship

The Greek term ἄμαρτωλός appears eighteen times in Luke while only five times in Matthew (9:10,11,13; 11:19; 26:45) and six times in Mark (2:15,16[twice],17; 8:38; 14:41). Of the eighteen Lukan uses, four have parallels in the other Synoptic Gospels (Lk 5:30 = Mark 2:16 = Matt 9:11; Lk 5:32 = Mark 2:17 = Matt 9:13; Lk 7:34 = Matt 11:19; Lk 24:7 = Mark 14:41 = Matt 26:45), and the remaining fourteen are uniquely Lukan. Among them one finds three elaborate scenes of encounter between Jesus and a sinner: at the beginning of his Galilean ministry, in 5:1–11, Jesus meets Simon, described as a “sinful man” in verse 8; in 7:36–50 Jesus meets the “sinful” woman characterized as such in verses 37 and 39; and at the final stage of the Travel Narrative, in 19:1–10, Jesus meets Zacchaeus, referred to as a sinner in verse 7. Apart from that, the word “sinner” (ἄμαρτωλός) is found again in the following pericopae: in the Sermon on the Plain (6:32,33,34[twice]); in the warning to repent or perish in 13:2; in the parables about the lost sheep, coin, and son (15:1,2,7,10); and the story about the Pharisee and the tax collector (18:13).

Luke's frequent mention of sinners has triggered inquiries into their literary and theological functions within his oeuvre.¹ The role of sinners in the final text of Luke's Gospel has been the object of explorations conducted by D. Neale,² H. Adams,³ and, most recently, by A. Pesonen,⁴ although in his case in combination with questions of the origin and development of the sinner texts. Many of the sinner texts in Luke have also been analyzed by G. D. Nave and F. Méndez-Moratalla in their respective works on the themes of repentance and conversion.⁵ The study of Lukan soteriology by H. J. Sellner⁶ and the investigation of Lukan anthropology by J. W. Taeger⁷ similarly overlap with many sinner texts, although without tracing their meaning at the level of the complete text's narrative strategies, but rather by locating it in the author's redactional intentions.

In terms of the function of sinners in the final form of the Lukan text, two major results emerge from these studies. Neale affirms that the sinners in Luke are an ideological category employed in order to fuel the conflict – the engine of the plot – and ultimately to exemplify “the right response to Jesus in counterpoint to the uncomprehending and bigoted ‘Pharisees.’”⁸ Luke then uses sinners to bring about a reversal of all expectations: in a bipolar world of religious discourse, it is the category of sinners, not the Pharisees, that represents those who are saved. Adams, on the other hand, concludes that the sinner theme fulfills Isaiah's promise about “all flesh” seeing God's salvation

¹ For a survey of the patristic, early modern, and modern interpretations of the “sinner” in Luke, see H. ADAMS, *The Sinner in Luke* (The Evangelical Theological Society Monograph Series; Eugene, OR 2008) 1–20.

² D. NEALE, *None but the Sinners*. Religious Categories in the Gospel of Luke (JSNT.S 58; Sheffield 1991).

³ ADAMS, *The Sinner in Luke*.

⁴ A. PESONEN, *Luke, the Friend of Sinners* (Diss. University of Helsinki; Helsinki 2009).

⁵ G. D. NAVE, *The Role and Function of Repentance in Luke-Acts* (SBL Academia Biblica 4; Atlanta, GA 2002); F. MÉNDEZ-MORATALLA, *The Paradigm of Conversion in Luke* (JSNT.S 252, London 2004). Nave stresses the ethical-social dimension of repentance relegating the religious aspect, in the sense of the change of beliefs, to secondary concerns. Méndez-Moratalla, on the other hand, puts the religious experience in the center. The belief in Jesus as Christ stands for him as the central concern of the Lukan conversion texts. Our present investigation will give further support to the conclusions reached by Méndez-Moratalla. Of limited value to the present project is the work by D. S. MORLAN, *Conversion in Luke and Paul*. An Exegetical and Theological Exploration (LNTS 464; London 2013), as its analysis of the Lukan texts is restricted to Luke 15; Acts 2; and Acts 17:16–34.

⁶ H. J. SELLNER, *Das Heil Gottes*. Studien zur Soteriologie des lukanischen Doppelwerks (BZNW 152; Berlin – New York 2007).

⁷ J. W. TAEGER, *Der Mensch und sein Heil*. Studien zum Bild des Menschen und zur Sicht der Bekehrung bei Lukas (StNT 14; Gütersloh 1982).

⁸ NEALE, *None but the Sinners*, 193.

(Isa 40:5; Lk 3:6), and prepares for the mission to the Gentiles in the Acts of the Apostles.⁹ Luke then uses sinners to illustrate the far-reaching scope of Jesus' messianic mission through which the OT promises of salvation are fulfilled. Both Neale and Adams come to their conclusions by first examining the socio-religious content of the idea of sinners detectable in the first-century Jewish and Greek cultural milieu, and then by applying the results of that examination to their study of Lukan sinner texts. Although they differ in what they see to be the meaning of the term ἁμαρτωλός in the first-century world – Neale tends to see it mostly as an ideological label, while Adams demonstrates that certain moral and religious behaviors constituted, in fact, its content – they reach conclusions that appear more complementary than contradictory. While Adams reads the sinner texts through the promise-fulfillment scheme anchored in Isa 40:5, Neale might be said to be more of a structuralist in that he focuses on elements of contrast and reversal in the conceptual system underlying Luke's story. Adams treats all of the 18 Lukan occurrences of the term ἁμαρτωλός, whereas Neale limits his study to five scenes: the Call of Levi, the Story of the Sinful Woman, the Gospel for the Lost (Luke 15), the Pharisee and the Tax Collector, and the Story of Zacchaeus. Both Neale and Adams dedicate about 90 pages each to the analysis of the Gospel passages, and they both claim to give a comprehensive view of what literary and theological values are to be ascribed to the Lukan use of the term sinner.¹⁰

That said, the theoretical tools afforded by narrative criticism prompt us to question the adequacy of Neale's and Adam's results. As it has been observed, the relative frequency with which the term "sinner" punctuates Luke's narrative deserves consideration. But what also deserves consideration is the fact that the criterion of lexicography, that is, the selection of texts that use the term ἁμαρτωλός, does not fully account for the way the narrative evokes for the reader the idea of sinners. In other words, sinners as literary characters are evoked, not only when they are directly labeled as such, but also each time the text provokes the reader to apply such a labeling to a given character in the story. Are not those who receive John's baptism of repentance in 3:6–14 to be considered sinners? Are not criminals (κακοῦργοι) mentioned in 23:32,33,39 to be counted among sinners? An adequate treatment of the sinner material in Luke must take into account numerous instances in which various textual indicators (epithet, description of

⁹ ADAMS, *The Sinner in Luke*, 195–196.

¹⁰ What Pesonen discovers about the literary function of sinners can be described as a combination of Neale's and Adams' results. Like Neale, with whom he dialogues throughout his work, Pesonen stresses the conflict-fueling function of sinners. Going beyond Neale, he notices in the sinner texts a preparation for the positive reception of Gentiles in Acts, an insight developed independently by Adams. PESONEN, *Luke, the Friend of Sinners*, 225–228.

profession, description of action, direct speech) point to the possibility of identifying a given character as a sinner. This identification may take a form of allusion, accusation, or objective narratorial description, and the subsequent narrative may affirm, deny, or leave it in suspense. Still, every occurrence of such identification always contributes to the way the text structures the reader's understanding of sinners. In other words, every emergence of the literary trait of sinfulness, that is, that characteristic by which a given character is subsumed under the category of sinners, needs to be considered.¹¹

What makes the need for such a consideration even more evident is our recognition of the degree to which the reading conventions operative among the addressees of Luke's Gospel were supportive of perceiving the *same* characteristic of sinfulness through *various* direct (epithet) and indirect (action, self-revealing expression) indications. That such support is to be expected comes, first of all, from the realization that the ability to infer characters' traits is fundamental to the process of reading in general.¹² Secondly, inasmuch as the ancient Greek reading conventions assumed that one's character (ethos), even though often amounting to nothing more than just a type, was revealed through one's actions (praxis), they encouraged inference of characteristics from that person's words and actions.¹³ Finally, to give an affirmative answer to the question of the Lukan reader's ability to infer the same characteristic from various types of indicators, we need to recall the ancient Greco-Roman perception of the way words work. Downing's study of this very problem reveals that ancient semantics was governed by the model of "naming" – meaning was thought to reside in the mind, not in the words. Word served to name, that is, to evoke an otherwise unspecified mental im-

¹¹ The same could be said, *mutatis mutandis*, with regard to the characteristic of faith. Faith as a trait of a given character is more often than not indirectly predicated. When Elizabeth describes Mary in 1:45 as "one who believed that there would be a fulfillment of what was spoken to her by the Lord," the reader is invited to see Mary's answer in 1:38 as an act of faith, even though the term "faith" does not appear in the scene of the Annunciation. It is the explicit naming of faith at some points that invites its recognition at other moments in the narrative.

¹² Chatman discerns the following correlation between a trait, which he calls a narrative adjective, and its direct textual referent, that is, an actual verbal adjective: "The actual verbal adjective, of course, need not (and in modernist narratives will not) appear. But whether inferred or not, it is immanent to the deep structure of the text. [...] We must infer these traits to understand the narrative, and comprehending readers do so. Thus the traits exist at the story level: indeed, the whole discourse is expressly designed to prompt their emergence in the reader's consciousness." S. CHATMAN, *Story and Discourse. Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca, NY – London 1980) 125.

¹³ See F. W. BURNETT, "Characterization and Reader Construction of Characters in the Gospels", *Semeia* 63 (1993) 11, who follows D. A. RUSSEL, "On Reading Plutarch's *Lives*", *Greece and Rome* 13 (1976) 144, and G. N. STANTON, *Jesus of Nazareth in the New Testament Preaching* (MSSNTS 27; New York 1974) 122.

pression. Words then were not expected to be precise.¹⁴ The widespread modern expectation of clear lines between possible connotations of particular words was foreign to ancient readers and writers.

Since the previous treatments of the sinner theme in Luke have not sufficiently explored the role of frequent direct and indirect references to sinfulness, there arises the need for a study that would remedy this omission.¹⁵ The present study answers that need and takes a step toward a fuller understanding of Luke's portrayal of sinners. That said, the investigation conducted in this study is limited by the methodological principles assumed in it, historical reconstructions exploited by it, and a single narrative cycle selected as its basis. All these factors – method of literary analysis, reconstruction of relevant historical background, and concentration on a selected portion of the Lukan text – inasmuch as they both limit and define the nature of this study, need to be explained and justified.

1.3. Methodological Assumptions Governing This Study

The present study utilizes methods of investigation developed within modern¹⁶ narrative criticism. Given the variety of approaches to the biblical text that are informed by modern narrative criticism, it is necessary to clarify the methodological assumptions on which this study is based. The following is a presentation of the basic theoretical principles we assume and of the necessary tasks they entail for this project.

1.3.1. *The Reader as Produced by the Text*

The meaning of the Gospel is understood as the sum of the effects the implied author intends for the story to have upon the implied reader, with the implied author being the subject of the narrative strategy used in the text, and the im-

¹⁴ Downing's examination of ancient theory of metaphor and allegory allows him to conclude: "if names are seen as exchangeable, and the transferred one likely as evocative as (or better than) the common one, there is nothing 'in' a name that affords precision." F. G. DOWNING, "Ambiguity, Ancient Semantics, and Faith", *NTS* 56 (2009) 152.

¹⁵ It is worth noting that Taeger's brief treatment of sinners in Luke overcomes some of the above-mentioned limitations. He investigates the notion of sinners by treating not just the term *ἁματωλός*, but the entire word group by which various dimensions of sin are lexicalized in the Gospel. Traeger does not ask about implicit references to sinners nor does he consider the effects of the sequential reading of the sinner texts. TAEGER, *Der Mensch und sein Heil*, 31–44.

¹⁶ For a criticism of the fallacious assumption that ancient literary work can be adequately judged only in terms of ancient literary criticism, see D. FEENEY, "Criticism Ancient and Modern", *Ancient Literary Criticism* (ed. A. LAIRD) (Oxford Readings in Classical Studies; Oxford 2006) 440–454.

plied reader being the ideal receiver of that strategy.¹⁷ It will be our task to uncover the narrative strategies – configurations of plot, setting, characters, point of view – by which the text elicits responses from its reader¹⁸ and to describe the effects (on the reader) which correspond to a maximal realization of these strategies.

1.3.2. *The Reader as Assumed by the Text*

If the implied author is the subject of the narrative strategy used in the text, and the implied reader is the ideal receiver of that strategy, then the task of decoding the biblical text involves the task of reconstructing “the capacities for knowledge, attitudes, preoccupations, reactions which the author (rightly or wrongly) attributes to his future reader, and which condition the development of his narrative.”¹⁹ To put it differently, the implied reader comes to engage a given pericope with knowledge, skills, and expectations formed not only by the part of the narrative prior to it, but also by the cultural milieu that frames and conditions the communication between the implied author and the implied reader even before the reading commences. The implied reader of a given pericope has both pre-existing and narrative-formed beliefs.²⁰ Thus, before we analyze the literary effects of the references to sinfulness, we must ask what notion of sinfulness was the reader expected to have before engaging the text of the Gospel. That is, we must explore the pre-existing beliefs about what made one sinful.

¹⁷ The categories of implied author and implied reader were first developed by W. ISER, *Der implizite Leser. Kommunikationsformen des Romans von Bunyan bis Beckett* (UTB 163; München 1972) [English translation: *The Implied Reader. Patterns of Communication in Prose Fiction from Bunyan to Beckett* (Baltimore 1974)]; *Der Akt des Lesens. Theorie ästhetischer Wirkung* (UTB 636; München 1976) [English translation: *The Act of Reading. A Theory of Aesthetic Response* (Baltimore 1978)]. As a matter of convenience, the name “Luke” and masculine pronouns referring to “Luke” will be used in this study as shorthand for the implied author of Luke-Acts.

¹⁸ In the words of Grilli, “il testo cerca un proprio lettore, il quale sia capace di comprendere dei riferimenti specifici, gli indici letterari, gli schemi comunicativi, gli impulsi, ecc.” M. GRILLI, “Evento comunicativo e interpretazione di un testo biblico”, *Gregorianum* 83 (2002) 675.

¹⁹ D. MARGUERAT – Y. BOURQUIN, *How to Read Bible Stories. An Introduction to Narrative Criticism* (tr. J. BOWDEN) (London 1999) 14. [Originally published in French as *Pour lire les récits bibliques* (Paris 1998)].

²⁰ On the difference between pre-existing and narrative-formed beliefs, see Booth’s observation: “As a rhetorician, an author finds that some of the beliefs on which a full appreciation of his work depends come ready-made, fully accepted by the postulated reader as he comes to the book, and some must be implanted or reinforced.” W. C. BOOTH, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago 1983) 177. For an example of further theoretical elaboration of that distinction see P. DANOVE, *The Rhetoric of Characterization of God, Jesus, and Jesus’ Disciples in the Gospel of Mark* (JSNT.S 290; New York 2005) 10–11.

1.3.3. Temporal Ordering and a First-Time Reading

The forming of the implied reader's knowledge, skills, and convictions is understood here to take place along the time-continuum of the reading process. The fact that the text is grasped successively is one of the factors determining its meaning. The segments of the narrative acquire their meaning depending on where in the text-continuum they appear: along the temporal production of the narrative's effects on the reader, what comes first (the "primacy" effect) may be subsequently frustrated, reinforced, or simply modified by what comes later (the "recency" effect).²¹ To capture adequately the temporal dynamic of effects produced by the text, our analysis will proceed sequentially through the text in an attempt to reconstruct the effects of a first-time reading by the implied reader.²²

1.3.4. Literary Form and Narrative Function

Our attempt to decipher the reading of the implied reader involves reconstruction of interpretive frameworks within which the elements of the story cohere best. Next to pieces of information regarding cultural and religious

²¹ "The nature of a literary work, and even the sum total of its meanings, do not rest entirely on the conclusions reached by the reader at the end-point of the text-continuum. They are not a 'sifted,' 'balanced,' and static sum-total constituted once the reading is over, when all the relevant material has been laid out before the reader. The effects of the entire reading process all contribute to the meaning of the work: its surprises; the changes along the way; the process of a gradual, zig-zag-like build-up of meanings, their reinforcement, development, revision and replacement; the relations between expectations aroused at one stage of the text and discoveries actually made in subsequent stages; the process of retrospective re-patterning and even the peculiar survival of meanings which were first constructed and then rejected." M. PERRY, "Literary Dynamics: How the Order of a Text Creates its Meanings", *Poetics Today* 1 (1979) 41. (A Hebrew version of this article was written in 1973 and published in Israel.). On the primacy-recency effect, see "Chapter Four" of M. STERNBERG, *Expositional Modes and Temporal Ordering in Fiction* (Baltimore 1978), 90–128.

²² The first-time reading by the implied reader differs from the actual first time reading in that, while the latter entertains multiple possibilities for further development, the former discards possibilities not supported by the development of the plot. Perry's description of his own method of reading illustrates that difference well: "The reading process described in this article is therefore from the vantage-point of the whole. It is a process of a 'reconstructed first reading'. Only from this vantage-point can one make the selection between relevant and accidental surprises. An actual first reading of a text is a gradual process of selection. The more the construction of the whole nears its completion, the more the reader is able to tell accidental surprises from functional ones" (PERRY, "Literary Dynamics", 357). G. YAMASAKI, *John the Baptist in Life and Death. An Audience-Oriented Criticism of Matthew's Narrative* (JSNT.S 167; Sheffield 1998) 53, is correct when he observes that "Perry's 'reconstructed first reading' – that is, a first-time reading with accidental surprises eliminated – is functionally equivalent to a first-time reading by the implied reader."