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THE SECRETARY: ENSLAVED WORKERS, STENOGRAPHY, AND THE PRODUCTION OF EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE

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Abstract

This article examines the evidence for the role of enslaved and formerly enslaved secretaries in the production of the New Testament. While secretaries have formed part of the conversation around the authorship of the Pauline epistles, secretaries and ancient literary culture have not featured in conversations about the composition of early Christian literature in general. Drawing upon recent scholarship in Classics (Reay, Blake, Howley, Johnson, and Geue), this paper traces the reasons why secretaries have been marginalized in ancient and modern conversations about authorship. It further suggests that, rather than unwittingly rehearsing ancient slaveholder discourses that seek to erase enslaved contributions, we should take seriously the ways in which a broader range of actors was involved in the production of ancient literature. Using the technologies of shorthand and theological abbreviations as examples, it tentatively suggests that enslaved workers contributed to the formation of early Christian texts and theology far beyond the mistakes that are sometimes attributed to them. The reasons for entertaining these possibilities, it argues, are both historical and ethical: the distribution of agency across a wider range of characters invites us to reflect upon the ethics of reading and the communities with whom we read.

In first-century Rome, the celebrated poet Martial wrote, with no small degree of satisfaction, of his skilled likely enslaved stenographer that 'though words run fast, the hand is faster/ tongue's work is not yet done when hand is finished'.[1] In sixteenth-century

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[1] Martial, *Ep.* 14.208.

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Antwerp, the great humanist publisher Christopher Plantin wrote, in a letter of recommendation for his son-in-law for the position of 'corrector', that 'he will correct loyally, carefully and faithfully whatever is entrusted to him, without ever seeking to parade his learning or show off before others'.[2] In 1905, George Carl Mares's *The Art of Typewriting* described secretarial workers as 'illiterate operators… who know more about Pitman's shorthand and typewriting than they have ever known, or are ever likely to know about the composition of the English language'.[3] As recently as 1973, even as he proclaimed the death of the author, Roland Barthes worried about the relationship between author and typist as 'an alienated social relationship: a person, the typist, is confined by the mastery in an activity I would almost call enslavement, when writing is precisely the field of liberty and desire!'[4]

All four of these statements afford a glimpse at the relationship between author and literary assistant in a particular historical moment. In each instance, the assistant is stripped of agency and autonomy. Martial's imagery blends the bodies of the dictating author and transcribing enslaved worker into a single actor: the scribal hand realizes the vision of the authorial head.[5] Plantin tacitly acknowledges the possibility of impetuous correction and insists that this corrector will faithfully ensure that the printed text will match the handwritten manuscript of the author. Mares turns the typist into a mindless automaton whose facility with language should not be confused with a mastery of composition, while a self-aware Barthes recoils from the metaphorical enslavement of the typist.[6] The construction of the literary assistant in these descriptions gestures to a role that, in the words of Anthony Grafton 'called for a meticulous attention to detail, expert knowledge of

[2] Quoted by Colin Clair, *Christopher Plantin* (London: Cassell, 1987), p. 258 n.16.

[3] George Carl Mares, *The Art of Typewriting* (London: Guilbert Pitman, 1905), p. 12.

[4] Roland Barthes, 'An Almost Obsessive Relation to Writing Instruments', in *The Grain of the Voice* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1985), pp. 177–9 at 179.

[5] The pentameter here shows how the hand wrests control from the tongue (*nondum lingua suum, dextra peregit opus*), an element that speaks to anxieties about agency of the *dextra*. See the elegant discussion in William Fitzgerald, 'The Slave, Between Absence and Presence', in Tom Geue and Elena Giusti (eds.), *Unspoken Rome: Absence in Latin Literature and Its Reception* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 239–49.

[6] See Pamela Thurschwell, 'Supple Minds and Automatic Hands: Secretarial Agency in Early Twentieth-Century Literature', *Forum for Modern Language Studies* 37 (2001), pp. 155–68; Leah Price and Pamela Thurschwell, *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005).

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[language], and a complete absence of thought'.[7] Theoretically, all of these individuals were conduits through whom the will of another could be realized. They are akin to a stylus or to a typewriter key: they are the fleshy medium through which the thought of another was impressed onto written matter.

These characterizations of mindless servile assistants speak to a persistent, even transhistorical anxiety: as hard as we might try to patrol the practicalities, authorship is not a solitary activity and is, thus, always collaborative. Renaissance correctors did more than correct printer's errors: they both introduced mistakes into manuscripts and silently saved authors from career-ending errors. Ancient secretaries drafted letters, corrected stylistic and grammatical mistakes, and improved manuscripts. And the young women who flooded the workplace as secretaries in the *fin de siècle* were more than capable of improving the words of their employers. Improvements were made silently and without credit, while the introduction of or failure to correct errors drew attention. The second-century miscellanist Aulus Gellius displaces the blame for a grammatical error from the authorial Cicero, who had made it, to the secretarial Tiro, who failed to catch it.[8] The power differential between the assistant and the author meant that—culpable or not—the lowly secretary, copyist, typist, or corrector was unlikely to voice criticism directly and was unable to defend themselves.

The reality of collaborative labour, and of the power dynamics embedded within it, are almost entirely overlooked in conversations about the authorship of early Christian texts. New Testament scholarship, following broader cultural conventions like the ones surveyed above and Romantic-era models in particular, tends to imagine the composition and writing of scripture as a solitary activity, undertaken by a lone inspired authorial genius.[9] Yet recent work in Classics, under the influence of book historians, has become increasingly interested in the broader range of actors

[7] Anthony Grafton, *Humanists with Inky Fingers: The Culture of Correction in Renaissance Europe* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2011), p. 38.

[8] See Joseph A. Howley, 'Intellectual Narratives and Elite Roman Learning in the *Noctes Atticae* of Aulus Gellius', unpublished PhD Thesis, University of St. Andrews, UK, 2011. While Howley published much of this in his recent monograph, the section on Tiro and Gellius (pp. 192–213) was not included.

[9] On modern constructions of the author, see Jack Stillinger, *Multiple Authorship and the Myth of Solitary Genius* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), in which he scrutinizes the ways in which many works attributed to a single author (e.g. John Stuart Mill's *Autobiography*) are in fact the product of two or more individuals. For the ways in which the unmediated figure of the Romantic genius affects

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who were involved in the production, reading, writing, editing, and copying of ancient literature.[10] Roman book culture, like Roman society broadly, utilized the uncredited labour and expertise of enslaved literate workers, whose contributions go unacknowledged and obscured. That these often invisible workers were partially responsible for the *production* of texts should invite us to consider that they contributed to the *meaning* of the texts they produced, far beyond the mistakes that are occasionally attributed to them by modern scholars.

The fact that much of the 'reading' and 'writing' in the Greco-Roman world was performed by enslaved secretaries has ramifications for how we think about the production of early Christian literature. Paul names several of his textual collaborators; early Christian writers sometimes position evangelists as apostolic secretaries; and key thinkers like Origen used secretaries, research assistants, and notaries in their work. Each moment of dictation, transcription, editing, and copying—as is well known to text critics—presents the opportunity for development and expression. The purpose of this article is to suggest that, rather than continuing to rehearse Enlightenment models of solitary authorship or unwittingly reproducing ancient Roman slaveholder despotics,

constructions of ancient authorship see Robyn Faith Walsh, 'The Influence of the Romantic Genius in Early Christian Studies', *Relegere: Studies in Religion and Reception* 5 (2015), pp. 31–60, in which she builds upon Stanley K. Stowers, 'The Concept of "Community" and the History of Christianity', *Method and Theory in the Study of Religion* 23 (2011), pp. 238–56. See also Jordan Alexander Stein, *When Novels Were Books* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2020), which argues that the modern author first emerges in seventeenth-century conversion narratives.

[10] Formative for this project is the work of William A. Johnson, *Reading and Reading Culture in the High Roman Empire: A Study of Elite Communities* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010). On enslaved workers in particular see Rex Winsbury, *The Roman Book* (London: Duckworth, 2009), pp. 79–85; R. J. Starr, 'Reading Aloud: *Lectores* and Roman Reading', *Classical Journal* 86 (1991), pp. 337–43; William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000); Robert Darnton, 'What is the History of Books?', *Daedalus* 111 (1982), pp. 65–83; Thomas Habinek, 'Slavery and Class', in Stephen Harrison (ed.), *A Companion to Latin Literature* (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), pp. 385–93; Joseph A. Howley, 'In Ancient Rome', in Matthew Rubery and Leah Price (eds.), *Further Reading* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), pp. 15–27.

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New Testament and early Christian scholarship should consider the role of enslaved or formerly enslaved secretaries in the production of Christian texts. Our literature and artwork imagine that New Testament authors worked alone, often using writing technologies that did not exist in the ancient world.[11] I will argue that imagining a compositional process that takes into account all of the hands that contributed to a text is more historically and ethically responsible. The purpose of this article is to reset default assumptions about the monographic ways in which early Christian texts were written.[12] We may not be able to speak definitively about the specific contributions made by enslaved workers, but this does not mean that we should continue to work with a model of solitary authorship that does not take their collaboration into an account.[13] Before turning to the evidence for enslaved authorial collaboration, however, we will first revisit both the history of New Testament scholarship on ancient secretaries and the ideological forces that shaped that history.

Secretaries in Scholarly Analysis and Intellectual History

In scholarship on the New Testament and early Christianity, discussion of the role of secretaries is largely confined to two overlapping conversations: the study of the Pauline epistles and debates about pseudepigraphy and forgery in early Christianity. Paul used secretarial workers to write his letters. This much is clear from the reference to Tertius in Romans 16:22 and can be inferred from Paul's statements about 'writing with [his] own hand' in Gal. 6:11

[11] I think here, in particular, of Rembrandt's *St. Paul at his Writing Desk* (1629–30). On the use of desks, see Jocelyn Penny Small, *Wax Tablets of the Mind: Cognitive Studies of Memory and Literacy in Classical Antiquity* (London: Routledge, 1997), pp. 150–55. I am grateful to Ellen Muehlberger for this reference.

[12] In this sense this piece is written in the same spirit as other default-setting work such as P. J. Achtemeier, 'Omne Verbum Sonat: The New Testament and the Oral Environment of Western Antiquity', *JBL* 109 (1990), pp. 3–27; James D. G. Dunn, 'Altering the Default: Re-Envisaging the Early transmission of the Jesus Tradition', *NTS* 49 (2003), pp. 139–75. The language of monography is gleaned from Alice Savoie, 'The Women Behind Times New Roman: The Contribution of Type Drawing Offices to Twentieth Century Type-Making', *Journal of Design History* 33 (2020), pp. 209–24. I am grateful to Jeremiah Coogan for this reference.

[13] The practical consequences of this are that wherever authorial intent is in view so too is a broader range of actors and motives. For a specific attempt to imagine enslaved contributions to a specific manuscript see Candida R. Moss, 'Between the Lines: Looking for the Contribution of Enslaved Literate Laborers in a Second-Century Text (*P. Berol*. 11632)', *SLA* 5 (2021), pp. 432-52.

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(cf. 1 Cor. 16:21; Col. 4:18). Paul's use of secretaries and inelegant large handwriting have generated considerable academic conversation about why and to what extent he dictated his letters. In general, as Steve Reece's recent survey has demonstrated, explanations focus on Paul's body.[14] Referring to elements of Paul's biography—in particular the incident on the road to Damascus (Acts 9:1–19) and the reference to a thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:1–6)—a number of scholars have suggested that either vision loss or damaged hands account for Paul's use of scribes.[15] Not only do these diagnostic explanations explicitly tie Paul's use of scribes to events in his missionary journeys, they imply that Paul only used scribes because of his impairments. It is noteworthy that both ordinary vision loss and the prevalence of scribes in letter writing in general are often overlooked.[16]

When Paul's scribes, most commonly Tertius, are discussed at length, it is often to diminish their importance to the textual product itself. In noting the role of Tertius, for example, Adolf Deissmann describes Tertius as an 'associate'. In Tertius's greeting, he sees evidence for 'the impress of the great man's creative

[14] Steve Reece, *Paul's Large Letters: Paul's Autographic Subscriptions in the Light of Ancient Epistolary Conventions* (LSNT 561; London: T&T Clark, 2016). On Paul's literacy, see Chris Keith, '"In My Own Hand": Grapho-Literacy and the Apostle Paul', *Bib* 89 (2008), pp. 39–58.

[15] For flogging, see Theodor Zahn, *Der Brief des Paulus an die Galater* (Leipzig: A. Deichert, 1905), p. 278. For attempted crucifixion, see Nigel Turner, *Grammatical Insights into the New Testament* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1965), pp. 93–4. For vision loss as a result of the Damascus road incident, see J. T. Brown, 'St. Paul's Thorn in the Flesh: What Was it?' in idem, (ed.), *Horae Subsecivae* (Edinburgh: Thomas Constable, 1858), pp. 99–127; G. J. Gwynne, *A Commentary, Critical, Exegetical, and Doctrinal, on St. Paul's Epistle to the Galatians* (Dublin: University Press, 1863), pp. 313–14, 331–4; F. W. Farrar, *The Life and Work of St. Paul* (New York: E. P. Dutton, 1879), pp. 652–61; J. R. W. Stott, *Only One Way: The Message of Galatians* (London: InterVarsity, 1968); A. J. Hisey and J. S. P. Beck, 'Paul's 'Thorn in the Flesh': A Paragnosis', *JBR* 29 (1961), pp. 125–9; Ben Witherington III, *Grace in Galatia: A Commentary on Paul's Letter to the Galatians* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998), pp. 309–10, 441; J. Ponessa and L. Manhardt, *Prophets and Apostles* (Steubenville: Emmaus Road Publishing, 2004), pp. 64–6. Reece traces the popularity of the impairment model to the influence of the 1909 Scofield Reference Library (*Paul's Large Letters*, pp. 73–110).

[16] On 'ordinary' vision loss, see Nicolas Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', *G&R* 42 (1995), pp. 49–56; L. De Libero, 'Dem Schicksal trotzen: Behinderte Aristokraten in Rom', *AHB* 16 (2002), pp. 75–93; Lisa Trentin, 'Exploring Visual Impairment in Ancient Rome', in Christian Laes, C. F. Goodey, and M. Lynn Rose (eds.), *Disabilities in Roman Antiquity: Disparate Bodies a Capite ad Calcem* (Leiden: Brill, 2013), pp. 89–114; Candida R. Moss, 'Disability', in Jeremiah Coogan, Joseph Howley, and Candida Moss (eds.), *Writing, Enslavement, and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

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soul on the soul which the great man had awakened in the insignificant brother' and 'a type of the people who were elevated by Paul the missionary from their dull existence in the mass to the sphere of new-creative grace'.[17] Although Tertius is the scribe, Paul has effectively reformed Tertius's very soul in his own image.[18] For others, the impact of secretaries is apparent only in the introduction of errors or 'corruptions' into the manuscripts themselves. In his widely read *Daily Study Bible*, William Barclay speculates that Tertius 'struggled to write down' Paul's words and uses this assessment to reorganize the sequence of Romans 16:13–16 on the basis of Tertius's supposed confusion.[19]

The social status of Tertius and of others like him is only occasionally addressed and is read, instead, through the lens of modern employment, education, or friendship.[20] While he is sometimes

[17] Adolf Deissmann, *St Paul: A Study in Social and Religious History*, trans. L. R. M. Strachan (London and New York: Hodder and Stoughton, 1912), p. 225.

[18] As we will see, Deissmann's model is an eerie echo of how Roman enslavers thought about their secretaries as extensions of or shaped by their will. As Ward Blanton has put it, in order to speak 'from the place of, in the name of, or in the spirit of the authentic apostle Paul', both Deissmann and his reader Heidegger have to bracket 'out a particular form of writing', that of the secretary. See Blanton, *Displacing Christian Origins: Philosophy, Secularity and the New Testament* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2007), p. 112.

[19] William Barclay, *The Daily Study Bible: The Letter to the Romans* (3rd edn., Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 2002), p. 52. Barth suggests that interpretive difficulties in Rom. 5:1 can be traced to Tertius: Karl Barth, *The Epistle to the Romans: Translated from the Sixth Edition by Edwyn C. Hoskins* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1933), p. 149 n. 1.

[20] On the tendency of scholars of early Christianity to overlook enslavement, see Richard A. Horsley, 'The Slave Systems of Classical Antiquity and Their Reluctant Recognition by Modern Scholars', *Semeia* 83–84 (1998), pp. 19–66. More common is the tendency to treat the (debatably) metaphorical use of slavery; see, for example, John Byron, *Slavery Metaphors in Early Judaism and Pauline Christianity: A Tradition-Historical and Exegetical Examination* (WUNT 2.162; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003). There is now a wealth of literature on slavery in general; in particular see the important work of J. Albert Harrill, *The Manumission of Slaves in Early Christianity* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1995); Jennifer Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002); Harrill, *Slaves in the New Testament: Literary, Social, and Moral Dimensions* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); Bernadette J. Brooten and Jacqueline L. Hazelton (eds.), *Beyond Slavery: Overcoming Its Religious and Sexual Legacies* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010); Katherine A. Shaner, *Enslaved Leadership in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018). For a discussion of Paul's use of slavery metaphors to describe his own position, see Angela N. Parker, 'One Womanist's View of Racial Reconciliation in Galatians', *Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion* 34 (2018), pp. 23–40 at 35–7. For a rereading of Gospel parables in light of enslavement, see Mitzi J. Smith, *Womanist Sass and Talk Back: Social (In)Justice, Intersectionality,*

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identified as an enslaved worker from the household of Phoebe, he is more regularly portrayed as a volunteer.[21] With only a very few exceptions, when tradition and scholarship describe Tertius he is labelled a 'scribe', 'professional', or 'associate'. Language like this suggests that Tertius was an educated volunteer or friend, someone who willingly lent his skills to his spiritual mentor, but the realities of ancient secretarial work suggest that this was not the case. Moreover, it reproduces what Tom Geue has called the ancient 'fiction of voluntarism' in which enslaved workers gladly toil for their 'masters'.[22]

For some, however, Paul's use of secretaries bridges the gap between authentically Pauline epistles and later deutero-Pauline and pastoral epistles. As is now well established, the style, content, and tone of Colossians, Ephesians, 2 Thessalonians, 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus differ to varying degrees from those of the 'undisputed' Paulines. These discrepancies raise questions about the authorship of these texts.[23] In his work on this subject, E.

and Biblical Interpretation (Eugene, OR: Cascade, 2018). For enslavement in the writings of John Chrysostom, see Chris L. De Wet, *Preaching Bondage: John Chrysostom and the Discourse of Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oakland, Calif.: University of California Press, 2015).

[21] E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* (WUNT 2.42; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1991), p. 152: 'The unpolished aspects of Paul's letters remained uncorrected because his secretary (or secretaries) was an amateur—probably a member of the apostolic band'. For similar assessments, see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, 'Tertius was more a friend and collaborator than an employee', *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, Minn.: Liturgical Press, 1995), p. 6. These models are sometimes mixed such that even if Tertius was enslaved he is still a volunteer.

[22] Tom Geue, 'Soft Hands, Hard Power: Sponging Off of the Empire of Leisure (Virgil, *Georgics* 4)', *JRS* 108 (2018), pp. 115–40 at 125.

[23] Until relatively recently, the majority of scholarship assumed that composing in the name of other more authoritative figures was an innocent and widely accepted practice. The sheer volume of Second Temple Jewish and early Christian accounts composed in the name of other individuals might suggest that this is one mode by which a text might be distributed. In the past 50 years, a reexamination of ancient Greek and Roman discourse about publication and false writing has led a growing number of scholars to characterize pseudepigraphy as forgery or literary deceit. See, in particular, Wolfgang Speyer, *Die litterarische Fälschung im heidnischen und christlichen Altertum* (Munich: Beck, 1971); David G. Meade, *Pseudonymity and Canon: An Investigation into the Relationship of Authorship and Authority in Jewish and Earliest Christian Tradition* (Tübingen: J. C. B. Mohr, 1986), p. 8; Bart D. Ehrman, *Forgery and Counter-Forgery: The Use of Deceit in Early Christian Polemics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Like all scholarship, the conversation surrounding pseudepigraphy is grounded in related assumptions about the stability of ancient texts, the ways in which texts grow, and the nature of authorship and writing.

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Randolph Richards has suggested that the varying styles of the epistles attributed to Paul might be the result of Paul's employment of different secretaries.[24] Richards reviews the ancient evidence for secretarial work and concludes that 'Paul's letters were a team project, but not a team of near-equals'.[25] The 'Secretarial Thesis', as it is sometimes called, is an ancient one. Origen reportedly explains the superior writing style of Hebrews with reference to Paul's secretary who, Origen assumes, was a well-educated aristocratic pupil of Paul's in the mould of Arrian, the elite student of the formerly enslaved philosopher Epictetus.[26] Modern variants of this argument can be found in the work of Roller, Moule, de Lestapis, Feuillet, and Murphy O'Connor—all of whom welcome secretaries to the proverbial table in order to authorize the pastorals and deutero-Paulines only to dismiss them from their interpretation of the text.[27]

These are worthy subjects that we cannot deal with in full here. On the instability of ancient texts, see, in particular, Brennan Breed, *Nomadic Text: A Theory of Biblical Reception History* (ISBL; Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2014), pp. 1–14 and Eva Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). On the Enlightenment roots of the construction of pseudepigraphic authorship, see Annette Yoshiko Reed, 'The Modern Invention of "Old Testament Pseudepigrapha"', *JTS* 60 (2009), pp. 403–36. For the discursive role of attribution see Hindy Najman and Irene Peirano, 'Pseudepigrapha as an Interpretive Construct', in M. Henze, and L. I. Lied (eds.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Fifty Years of the Pseudepigrapha Section at the SBL* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2019), pp. 331–55. For the growth of texts, see Jeremiah Coogan on 'bibliographic thinking' in Jeremiah Coogan, 'Reading (in) a Quadriform Cosmos: Gospel Books in the Christian Bibliographic Imagination', *JECS* 31 (2023), pp. 85–103.

[24] E. Randolph Richards, *The Secretary in the Letters of Paul* and idem, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing. Secretaries, Composition and Collection* (Downers Grove, Il.: InterVarsity Press, 2004). For a similarly positive assessment of secretarial work see Ian J. Elmer, 'I, Tertius: Secretary or Co-Author of Romans', *ABR* 56 (2008), pp. 45–60.

[25] Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, p. 33.

[26] Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.25.13–14. It is noteworthy that Origen himself benefitted from a cohort of enslaved literate workers gifted to him by his patron Ambrose (Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61 and Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.23).

[27] Otto Roller, *Das Formular der paulinischen Briefe: Ein Beitrag zur Lehre vom antiken Brief* (BWANT 58; Stuttgart, 1933). Roller is distinctive in as much as he thinks that Paul neither wrote nor dictated any of his epistles but merely corrected and signed them afterwards. C. F. D. Moule, 'The Problem of the Pastoral Epistles: A Reappraisal', *BJRL* 47 (1965), pp. 430–52; A. Strobel, 'Schreiben des Lukas? Zum sprachlichen Problem der Pastoralbriefe', *NTS* 15 (1969), pp. 191–210; Stanislas de Lestapis, *L'énigme des Pastorales de Saint Paul* (Paris: Libraire Lecoffre, 1976), pp. 130–32; A. Feuillet, 'La doctrine des Epîtres Pastorales et leurs affinités avec l'oeuvre lucanienne', *RevThom* 78 (1978), pp. 181–225; Jerome Murphy O'Connor, *Paul the Letter-Writer: His World, His Options, His Skills* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1995), pp. 6–15.

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In his rebuttal of the Secretarial Hypothesis, Ehrman repeatedly asserts that there is 'no evidence' for the idea that secretaries performed authorial work in antiquity.[28] Roman elites do not say that their secretaries wrote letters for them, even though they do describe dispatching enslaved workers to commit a sudden thought to paper, recognize the ways in which secretaries were responsible for editing a variety of genres of texts, and acknowledge the role of readers in the production of textual artefacts and the generation of textual meaning. Ehrman may be correct that there is insufficient evidence to parse the contributions of enslaved workers, but this is hardly the end of the story. As we shall see, there were a number of ideological and practical reasons that Roman elites erase their secretaries from their work.

In general, it is fair to say that academic conversation about secretaries and the New Testament has been potted and opportunistic. It has focused either on passages in which scribes are explicitly mentioned or on the ways in which the involvement of secretaries can help reconcile problems—whether textual or authorial—that modern readers identify in the text. Gordon Bahr's suggestion, more than 50 years ago, that 'in view of the influence which the secretary could have had on [Paul's] letters, it would be well to speak with caution on topics such as Pauline terminology or Pauline theology' has not been taken up.[29] Secretaries are rarely never credited with improving or correcting a text nor are they in view when it comes to the production of early Christian literature in general.[30] The unspoken agenda, in philological analysis of ancient texts, is to protect the text that is under study, but the resulting portrait of the secretary mischaracterizes the work that they performed.[31]

[28] Ehrman, *Forgery and Counter-Forgery*, pp. 660, 661, 663, 666. Compare Adolf von Harnack's dismissal of co-authorship in *Die Briefsammlung des Apostels Paulus und die anderen vorkonstantinischen christlichen Briefsammlungen* (Leipzig: J. C. Hinrichs, 1926), p. 12: 'sie ist abzulehnen, da zureichende Gründe für sie durchaus fehlen'. For very different reasons and on different grounds the secretarial hypothesis is also challenged by Alan Cadwallader, 'Tertius in the Margins: A Critical Appraisal of the Secretary Hypothesis', *NTS* 64 (2018), pp. 378-96.

[29] Gordon J. Bahr, 'Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century', *CBQ* (1966), pp. 465-77, at 477.

[30] See, however, Kim Haines-Eitzen, *Guardians of Letters: Literacy, Power, and the Transmitters of Early Christian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), pp. 41–52.

[31] See David Parker on the quest for origins and the original text in *The Living Test of the Gospels* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), p. 211.To be fair to the guild of New Testament scholars, the manipulation of the secretary to solve textual problems happens in Classics as well. See, for example, the theory

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Secretaries become machines: they are subhuman in their mindless utility and superhuman in their unerring skilfulness.

Part of the reason for the invisibility of secretaries in historical accounts of early Christian writing is the literary, technological, and theological culture within which these conversations took place. Beginning with Martin Luther, the category of the 'scribe' began to include two groups: the Jewish scribes who schemed against Jesus during his lifetime and the monastic papist scribes who had corrupted and imprisoned the Bible.[32] That both these groups were allegedly motivated by sinister monopolizing agendas only served to tarnish the character of the scribe.[33] If any secretaries were involved in the production of scripture, then it was the apostles themselves who served as assistants to the Holy Spirit. As Calvin puts it, 'there is this difference between the apostles and their successors, [the apostles] were sure and authentic amanuenses (*certi et authentici amanuenses*) of the Holy Spirit; and, therefore, their writings are to be regarded as the oracles of God'.[34]

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that the disorder in Cato's *De agri cultura* is the result of a dictated text remaining unedited in W. V. Harris, *Ancient Literacy* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1991), p. 173 n. 115. This is particularly true with respects to copyists. In post-Lachmann philological analysis, making scribes as mechanistic as possible served a larger project of mapping manuscript relationships. For a discussion of Lachmann's influence on New Testament study, see Yii-Jan Lin, *The Erotic Life of Manuscripts: New Testament Text Criticism and the Biological Sciences* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016), pp. 42-65.

[32] See Martin Luther, *Address to the Christian Nobility of the German Nation*, in Henry Wace and C. A. Buchheim (eds.), *Luther's Primary Works* (London: John Murray, 1896), pp. 169–71. Compare Thomas Cartwright, *The Answere to the Preface of the Rhemish Testament* (Edinburgh: R. Waldegrave, 1602), p. 113, who calls monastic scribes 'ordinary jaylors' of the Bible.

[33] The new processing technology of the printing press—God's preaching device—inspired and disturbed; it forced reflection about the transmission of the Gospel from one medium to another. On the question of oral tradition in the Reformation period, see Robert Preus, *The Inspiration of Scripture: A Study of the Theology of the Seventeenth Century Lutheran Dogmatics* (Mankato, Minn.: Lutheran Synod Book Co., 1955), p. 5. The question of medium was also relevant; on the aesthetics of paper and cheap Bibles during the Reformation, see Joshua Calhoun, 'The Word Made Flax: Cheap Bibles, Textual Corruption, and the Poetics of Paper', *PMLA* 126 (2011), pp. 327–44.

[34] John Calvin, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, 4.8.9. Compare *Institutes* 4.8.6, in which he describes Old Testament prophecies as 'compositions (*lucubrationes*) of the prophets, but framed (*compositae*) at the dictation of the Holy Spirit (*dictante spiritu sancto*)'. We might fruitfully compare here seventeenth-century Lutheran Abraham Calov's interpretation of 2 Pet. 1:12, in which he similarly describes the biblical authors as 'amanuenses' of God (*Biblia Novi Testamenti Illustrata*, vol. 2 [Wittenberg: Chirstopher Wust, 1976], p. 1034).

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Secretarial labour is a persistent theme in Reformation constructions of scripture, but the potency of the image required that the apostolic authors themselves serve as assistants to the divine author and that others be excluded from the conversation.[35]

The idea of the authors of the New Testament as faithful stenographers is set against the backdrop of contemporaneous secretarial practices. Thus, the nineteenth-century commentator Robert Haldane sharply rebukes Tholuck's characterization of Luke as a 'confused and unfaithful reporter, very inferior to many, both in fidelity and accuracy, [of those] we meet in modern times'.[36] The status and perception of secretarial labour is in many ways the hermeneutical key to understanding the representation of early Christian secretaries in later generations of scholarship. In the late nineteenth century, and as a direct consequence of the influx of 'lady typists' into the workforce, stenography and typing were recategorized.[37] In the 1851 British census, stenographers were classed alongside journalists, authors, lawyers, and doctors, but by the time of the 1901 census, shorthand writing and typing had been reconceived as a form of mercantile labor.[38] From the second half of the nineteenth century, therefore, there was a gendered reconceptualization of certain kinds of secretarial work as mindless. These gendered depictions of the secretary were coupled with racially coded theories of enslavement and post-Reformation (post-print) understandings of inspiration mechanistically 'impressing' itself on the secretary. One consequence of

[35] See also Francis Turretin, *Institutes of Elenctic Theology*, 1.13.13; Edward Leigh, *A System or Body of Divinity*, vol. 1 (London: William Lee, 1654), p. viii; Leonard van Rijssen, *Summa Theologiae Elencticae*, vol. 2 (Amsterdam: Georgi Sonnleitneri, 1676), p. xix, controversy I. This is not to say that understandings of the apostles as divinely inspired cannot incorporate the existence of additional workers. See, for example, Norman L. Geisler who writes 'we can accommodate the fact that amanuenses were used in [scripture's] production, without attributing inspiration to the amanuenses' (*Inerrancy* [Grand Rapids, Mich.: Zondervan, 1980], p. 190).

[36] Robert Haldane, *Exposition of the Epistle to the Romans* (9th edn., Edinburgh: Murray and Knibb, 1874), p. 724.

[37] Price and Thurschwell, 'Introduction', *Literary Secretaries/Secretarial Culture*, p. 3.

[38] In 1893, Edward Murphy wrote in defence of his class of reporters and court-room stenographers that they 'are not manufactured… as are typewriters, clerks and bookkeepers' and goes on to assert, in true Roman fashion, that unlike their lowly female counterparts the male stenographer must possess all the learning of a good 'liberal arts education': Edward V. Murphy, 'Stenography as a Skilled Profession', *National Stenographer* 4 (1893), pp. 301–7, at 305.

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these cultural shifts was a broader understanding of ancient secretaries as agentless conduits for the will of another.[39]

The repeated re-conceptualization of secretarial work and workers sits alongside the more imposing history of the emergence of the 'Author' and the construction of that author as a figure who was male, self-sufficient, *sui generis*, and solitary. It was in the eighteenth century, and in Romantic circles in particular, that the term author began to be associated with individualism and genius.[40] The roots of this idea, however, are found earlier and in a variety of intellectual circles. As *Spectator* founder Joseph Addison noted in 1711, 'There is no Character more frequently given to a Writer, than that of being a Genius'.[41] Generally speaking the authorial genius was seen to work without assistance or learning: his skills were the gifts of either God or Nature. Of the many candidates for the role, two—Shakespeare and Homer—stood above the rest. For German Romantic aesthetics, Shakespeare channelled in plain speech the 'soul of the nation' or *Volksgeist*.[42] Debates about the status of other geniuses served as a means of debating and defining the nature of genius: was education (sometimes parsed as discipline) a hindrance or a help?; and what roles did imagination, innovation, originality, and effortlessness play in the identification

[39] On the printing press and its influence on the Reformation, see Elizabeth E. Eisenstein, *The Printing Revolution of Early Modern Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), pp. 148–86.

[40] For an overview of the emergence of the figure of the authorial genius, see Christine Haynes, 'Reassessing "Genius" in Studies of Authorship: The State of the Discipline', *Book History* 8 (2005), pp. 287–320. Important studies on the emergence and categorization of authorship include Roger Chartier, 'Figure of the Author', in *The Order of Books: Readers, Authors, and Libraries in Europe between the Fourteenth and Eighteenth Centuries*, trans. Lydia Cochrane (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1994), pp. 25–60; Mark Rose, *Authors and Owners: The Invention of Copyright* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993); Martha Woodmansee, *The Author, Art, and the Market: Rereading the History of Aesthetics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Carla Hesse, *Publishing and Cultural Politics in Revolutionary Paris, 1789-1810* (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1991).

[41] Joseph Addison, *The Spectator* 160 (3 September 1711) in Donald F. Bond (ed.) *The Spectator*, vol. 2 (5 vols.; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 126–30.

[42] Gregory Moore, 'Introduction', in Johann Gottfried Herder, *Shakespeare*, ed. and trans. Gregory Moore (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2008), p. xxx. For a discussion of German Romanticism and the ways that the Author-Genius was viewed as spokesperson of the people, see Robyn Faith Walsh, *The Origins of Christian Literature: Contextualizing the New Testament within Greco-Roman Literary Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021), pp. 78–84.

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of these individuals?[43] For our purposes, it is noteworthy that wherever conversations about the 'work' of the genius emerge, its foil is described using the language and imagery of servility. Reason and education seek to discipline, break, bridle, and curb the will of the genius.[44] The spirit of imitation, wrote John Stuart Mill, could productively be engaged without devolving into 'slavish' copying, but others argued that anything that 'falls short' of innovation and invention 'is servile imitation'.[45] Kant, like Mill, could create space for emulation, but only in the context of freedom: 'the product of genius is an example, not for imitation…but for emulation by another genius, who is thereby awakened to the feeling of his own originality, to exercise freedom from coercion in his art'.[46] In this way the Author-Genius is defined against and in opposition to writing practices that are constructed as servile, mediated, constrained, and low status.

Even before the secretarial class was culturally coded as female, anxieties about certain forms of collaboration had emerged in the shape of accusations of sexual deviance.[47] The first folio edition of the works of Shakespeare's contemporary dramatists Francis Beaumont and John Fletcher was produced in 1647. Longtime collaborators, one poet described them as those 'whose strange unimitable Intercourse/ Transcends all Rules'.[48] The thinly veiled

[43] For a survey and analysis of these debates, see David Cook, 'On Genius and Authorship: Addison to Hazlitt', *The Review of English Studies* 64 (2013), pp. 610–29. An important essay in the evolution of this idea was Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (London: Miller, 1756).

[44] For an array of examples, see Cook, 'On Genius and Authorship', pp. 614–15.

[45] J. S. Mill, signed 'Antiquus', in 'On Genius', *Monthly Repository*, ns 6 (1832), pp. 649–59. On Gerard, see Elizabeth Larsen, 'Re-Inventing *Inventio*: Alexander Gerard and "An Essay On Genius"', *Rhetorica* 11 (1993), pp. 181–97. Herder conceptualized the imitator as 'devoid of soul' (Moore, 'Introduction', 15). The categorization of imitation as servile and soulless may draw upon theories of enslavement that pictured African enslaved people as 'soulless' and only capable of imitation. On this latter point, see Riggins R. Earl, Jr., *Dark Symbols, Obscure Signs: God, Self, and Community in the Slave Mind* (Maryknoll: Orbis, 1993), p. 5.

[46] Immanuel Kant, *Critique of the Power of Judgment*, trans. Paul Guyer and Eric Matthews (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), pp. 195–6.

[47] Alan Stewart, *Close Readers* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. xxviii: 'humanism—in its constant lip service to equality between patron and patronized who are by definition socially unequal—signals an alternative economy of social relations, which produces anxiety; sodomy, too, signals an alternative economy of social relations which produces another anxiety'.

[48] For a discussion of Beaumont and Fletcher, see Jeff Masten, 'My Two Dads: Collaboration and the Reproduction of Beaumont and Fletcher', in Michael Moon (ed.), *Queering the Renaissance* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1993), pp. 280–309. There is a certain irony to the fact that Fletcher collaborated with Shakespeare on two plays as well.

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accusations of sexual impropriety paralleled the growing understanding of the author as patriarchal and self-sufficiently masculine. As was also true for the ancient Romans, to collaborate with someone is to lean on them, both figuratively and literally: The dependency makes the collaborator vulnerable, effeminate, and queer.[49] If individual autonomy cannot be parsed, then words and bodies alike are inextricable.[50]

Accompanying these Enlightenment and Romantic theories of literature and aesthetics, however, were socio-economic and technological innovations such as the printing press, state censorship, and, most important, the birth of copyright law that solidified the author as a person who not only created but, more importantly, also owned their work.[51] Nascent notions about intellectual property echo through history, but it was only with the birth of the printing press and the ensuing lawsuits between authors and publishers that the concept sprang to life. It was in this context that an author's 'original expression' came to have legal weight.[52] Copyright normalized and naturalized the power dynamics and hierarchical structures between different kinds of writers and textual producers.[53] As a consequence, *auctoritas* and 'authorship'

[49] Within a century of his death, Cicero's dependence on Tiro had been sexualized; see Pliny, *Ep*. 7.4.

[50] The situation is even more complicated when texts are seen as parts of the body, which in ancient texts and certain modern contexts they often are. For Beaumont and Fletcher the fact that they share clothes plays into the image of interchangeable subjectivity, bodies, and texts.

[51] On state censorship see Hannah Marcus, *Forbidden Knowledge: Medicine, Science, and Censorship in Early Modern Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2020).

[52] As the early twentieth-century New Testament scholar B. H. Streeter put it, 'When books were copied by hand… no kind of injury would be done either to author or publisher by any one who made and sold copies… [with the printed book] work has been done and risk has been incurred' (B. H. Streeter, *The Four Gospels: A Study of Origins, Treating of the Manuscript Tradition, Sources, Authorship, and Dates* [1924], p. 155). Streeter's work is important both for the ways that it connects authorship to copyright and the manner in which he envisions labour. On this, see Ekaputra Tupamahu, 'The Stubborn Invisibility of Whiteness in Biblical Scholarship', *Political Theology*, November 12, 2020: <https://politicaltheology.com/the-stubborn-invisibility-of-whiteness-in-biblical-scholarship>. It is worth noting that Streeter's model does allow for a broader understanding of authorship as he connects the value of the object with the work of the copyist and the materials.

[53] On the importance of copyright, see Paul K. Saint-Amour, *The Copywrights: Intellectual Property and the Literary Imagination* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2003).

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were squarely located, both conceptually and legally, in a singular figure. His status as a 'professional dependent upon a reading public, a commercial marketplace, and other external agents' was effectively elided.[54] Other figures—secretaries, editors, publishers, pressmen, and correctors—were necessary figures whose autonomy was only relevant in so far as it threatened the autonomy and vision of the author.

It is this naturalizing of a particular historically contingent view of authorship, ownership, and power, coupled with a decline in the status of secretaries at the end of the nineteenth century that has led to the erasure of secretarial contributions from our account of early Christian writing. We too are heirs to a hierarchical system of categorization that designates certain actors as 'authors' and others as agency-less non-authorial assistants who help the author realize their vision smoothly and without dissent.[55] It seems natural to us to assume that the author reigned supreme, and it is typical for us to identify that high-status powerholder as the 'author'. Luke Timothy Johnson's recent proposal about Pauline authorship is a case in point: he argues that what matters is not whether Paul physically wrote his letters but that he 'authorized all the letters that bear his name'.[56] The ability to authorize something, however, should not be confused with the process of textual and conceptual production or divorced from the structures that grant certain individuals that power. This is as true of the first-century Roman Mediterranean world as it is of our post-Enlightenment industrialized society.

What is often missed in academic conversations about collaboration is the way that social status affects both the compositional dynamic and the nature of the evidence. Writing letters in the name of someone else was more socially acceptable for enslaved

[54] Cook, 'On Genius and Authorship', p. 610. The professionalization of writing contributed to the reimagining of the author as exclusively male. See Linda Zionkowski, *Men's Work: Gender, Class, and the Professionalization of Poetry, 1660–1784* (New York: Palgrave, 2001), who parses the ways in which eighteenth-century aristocratic concerns about a new class of bourgeoise writers led to the construction of some professional authors as 'prostitutes', 'mechanics', and 'laborers'—a move that anticipates the recategorization of secretarial labour at the end of the nineteenth century. The genius and the mechanic emerge alongside one another.

[55] See Ellen Muehlberger, 'On Authors, Fathers, and Holy Men', *Marginalia Review of Books*, September 20, 2015, accessed June 1, 2021, https://themarginalia-areview.com/on-authors-fathers-and-holy-men-by-ellen-muehlberger/.

[56] Luke Timothy Johnson, *Constructing Paul* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2020), p. 72.

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secretaries than it was for freeborn aristocrats.[57] Indeed, one might say that revising and editing manuscripts were expected of enslaved literate workers. At the same time, as is well established in studies of enslavement in general, the archives of slavery do not reproduce the stories of enslaved workers themselves.[58] As we will see, Roman secretaries were often enslaved or formerly enslaved agents whose work was deliberately erased from the texts to which they contributed. The liminal and marginalized social status of enslaved workers means that they must be sought out, and that we should scrutinize our sources more carefully for evidence of their presence. In order to do that we will begin with the despotic rhetoric that shaped practices of ancient textual production before attempting to produce an admittedly and inevitably fragmentary account of the work performed by ancient secretaries.

Secretaries in Roman Discourse

The primary reason that secretaries are absent from our accounts of ancient authorial work is that ancient discourse about enslaved labour renders those responsible for it largely invisible. Descriptions of enslaved bodies portray them as tools, body parts, or prosthetic devices by which the wealthy liberated themselves from labour.[59] In one letter, Seneca can picture his excursions on a

[57] In *Forgery and Counter-Forgery*, Ehrman writes that the lone example of someone writing a letter in the name of someone else produced by Richards is of Atticus writing for Cicero. Ehrman notes that it is clear that Cicero thinks that the practice is 'deceitful' (p. 221). We should note, however, that Cicero does not have similar concerns about his secretary Tiro writing for him. Ehrman describes Tiro as 'assist[ing Cicero] in stylistically shaping his letters' (p. 219), but argues that Cicero's lofty social status divorced him from the world and praxis of Paul the sub-elite. Papyrological evidence suggests that houseguests, acquaintances, and children would often have been conscripted into the role of secretary.

[58] See Saidiya Hartman, 'Venus in Two Acts', *Small Axe* 12 (2008), pp. 1–14, at 10: 'The archive of slavery rests upon a founding violence… this violence determines, regulates and organizes the kinds of statements that can be made about slavery and as well it creates subjects and objects of power' and Marisa J. Fuentes, *Dispossessed Lives: Enslaved Women, Violence, and the Archive* (Early American Studies; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016).

[59] Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.* 1161a30–b6. See discussion in Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), pp. 119–22. Varro famously recounts that some people distinguished enslaved workers from other kinds of tools by describing them as the 'speaking sort' (Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.1). The idea of the enslaved worker as a kind of prosthetic device akin to a stylus has been thoughtfully explored by Sarah Blake, 'Now You See Them: Slaves and Other Objects as Elements of the Roman Master', *Helios* 39 (2012), pp.

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litter as physical exercise even though he is being carried around by enslaved workers.[60] In his work on Roman agrarian writers, Reay has called this phenomenon 'masterly extensibility'. Enslaved workers are presented as prosthetic extensions of the body of the slaveholder.[61] They are, for the elite, conceptually both a part of his body and the tools with which he works.

The image of the enslaved person as tool appears in the context of literacy and book culture.[62] Cicero famously notes that without Tiro his work is silent, and Martial, as already noted, absorbs his stenographer into his body as his hand.[63] The construction of the enslaved literary worker as a part of the body of the elite author explains why secretaries do not receive credit for their intellectual work. That our modern constructions of authorship mirror ancient ones makes it easier for us to accept, quite thoughtlessly, the erasure of enslaved individuals from the literary record. Though no one thinks that Cato oversaw the shovelling of manure on his estate, we are inclined to believe elites when they describe themselves as the authorial voice and their secretaries as mouthpieces or hands.

Arguably, the best objection to the idea that enslaved workers collaborated and co-authored the New Testament is the fact that the Roman elite writers who serve as our sources for ancient literary culture rarely blame their enslaved secretaries for their mistakes. It makes sense that they would not credit their secretaries for their contributions, but ancient literary performance could be humiliating.[64] Given the public embarrassment that surrounded poor displays of

193–211; idem, '*In Manus:* Pliny's Letters and the Arts of Mastery', in A. Keith and J. Edmondson (eds.), *Roman Literary Cultures: Domestic Politics, Revolutionary Poetics, Civic Spectacle* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016), pp. 89–107. The imagining of collaborators as parts of a single body resurfaces, flipped, in the Victorian period when some envisioned the newspaper as an 'organ' in which individuals played roles. William Morton Payne, 'Anonymity in Literary Criticism', *Dial: A Semi-Monthly Journal of Literary Criticism, Discussion, and Information* 15.177 (1 Nov. 1893), pp. 249–51, at 249.

[60] Seneca, *Ep.* 84.1.

[61] B. Reay, 'Agriculture, Writing, and Cato's Aristocratic Self-Fashioning', *CA* 24 (2005), pp. 331–61; John Bodel, 'Villaculture', in Jeffrey A. Becker and Nicola Terrenato (eds.), *Roman Republican Villas: Architecture, Context, and Ideology* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2012), pp. 45–60, at 51.

[62] Pliny, *NH* 9.36.1–3 with Blake, '*In Manus*', pp. 89–107.

[63] Cicero, *Ad fam.* 16.10.2; Martial, *Ep.* 1.10; 14.208.

[64] For examples of humiliation see Quintilian, *Inst.* 6.3.21; Catullus, 22. There are examples in which authors blame their co-workers.

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literacy, why did elites not outsource responsibility for errors? It would be easy enough to do: the failings of one's manuscript could be attributed to a servile collaborator. As no enslaved person would have dared to disagree with his slaveholder, the truth would never have been discovered. And yet, Roman writers hardly ever offer this explanation, and never of their own workers. Instead, they blame accidental publication: if a manuscript seems faulty, it is because it is a draft that was prematurely copied and distributed—usually by a well-intentioned friend—before the final version was ready.[65]

Elite men relied on enslaved workers to run their farms, dress their bodies, cook and serve their meals, act as bodyguards, read to them, serve as passive sexual partners, and play a host of other roles, but there were some things that enslaved workers could not do for male elites without threatening their manliness and reputation. When it comes to literate workers and the silence surrounding their contributions, the issue seems to be intellectual dependence. Marcus Cicero cautioned his brother Quintus that even being *seen* to be reliant upon one's freedmen for advice would cause scandal and talk.[66] Quintilian criticizes Seneca for being led astray by the errors of his enslaved research assistants, an accusation that (for Quintilian) explains the puerile quality of Seneca's writing and its appeal to adolescents.[67] Seneca himself states that others would see being intellectually influenced by one's enslaved workers to be utterly debasing.[68] As he lampoons a *nouveau riche* Syrian in the *Ignorant Book Collector*, Lucian portrays the man as intellectually incompetent and dependent on the assistance of enslaved workers.[69] Just as in the realm of education, intellectual malleability was suggestive of sexual penetration.[70] It might have been more

[65] It may have been the case, however, that dictation was one of the reasons for erroneous copies of Galen's work. Galen might allude to this in *Lib. Prop*. 6, though he does not explicitly say it. On accidental publication, see Matthew D. C. Larsen, *Gospels before the Book* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), pp. 37–58. We should consider the possibility that complaints about accidental publication and descriptions of texts as drafts are a rhetorical device to protect the author from criticism. See Roy Gibson, 'Starting with the Index in Pliny', in Laura Jansen (ed.), *The Roman Paratext* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), pp. 33–55.

[66] Cicero, *QFr*. 1.1.17; 1.2.1.

[67] Quintilian, *Inst*. 10.1.128.

[68] Seneca, *Ep*. 15.2.

[69] Lucian, *Ind*. 6.

[70] See Amy Richlin, 'Old Boys: Teacher-Student Bonding in Roman Oratory', *Classical World* 105 (2011), pp. 91–107. Compare the figure of Cephisophon, an enslaved worker and literary collaborator in the household of Euripides, in Aristophanes fr. 594 K-A; *Frogs* 1407–10.

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acceptable to manumit an enslaved person, as Trimalchio does (Petronius, *Sat*. 54.5), than concede that one had been harmed by them. It is thus not clear if the conceptual universe and self-fashioning of a Roman enslaver would allow him to admit to his reliance on secretaries.[71]

The social opprobrium that surrounded intellectual dependence on enslaved workers gestures to broader anxieties about enslaved skills. Readers, secretaries, notaries, and copyists were generally more competent literary agents than those who had pressed them into service. They could quickly navigate book rolls, read fluently, perform numerical calculations, act as research assistants, edit texts, and polish writing. As many of these skills were culturally coded as elite, slaveholders had to manage the perception of this work. In his work on this subject, Howley labels these infrastructures of control 'despotics'.[72] The problem identified by Howley lies with the intermediary figure of the *vilicus*, or overseer, who acted in the stead of the slaveholder, possessed all of the knowledge required to manage a household or estate, and yet remained himself enslaved. Howley argues that in order to deal with the threatening nature of the competency of the *vilicus* and to reinscribe the distinction between the freeborn aristocrat and enslaved overseer, ancient authors constructed an 'epistemic firewall' between them.[73] The *vilicus* might be competent and possess the relevant information, but he was also intellectually sluggish and deficient. Just like the *lector* or the secretary, the *vilicus* executed the vision of the slaveholder. While it might seem as if elites could have performed any aspect of literary work if they chose, there were, as we shall see, enslaved skills fundamental to the production of literature that lay

[71] In the literature of the Principate, as one moves farther away from intellectual intimacy from secretary to copyist, there is more room for error. Copyists, unlike secretaries, are known to steal, sell, prematurely publish, and introduce errors into texts. Among Classicists it is widely acknowledged that Roman elite authors worried about and masked their dependence on workers. See, for example, Joy Connolly, 'Mastering Corruption: Constructions of Identity in Roman Oratory', in Sandra R. Joshel and Sheila Murnaghan (eds.), *Women and Slaves in Greco-Roman Culture: Differential Equations* (London: Routledge, 1998), pp. 134–156.

[72] Joseph A. Howley, 'Despotics: The Subjugation of Workers in the Ancient Agronomists', unpublished paper delivered at the Work/Life Workshop, University of Pennsylvania, October 26, 2020 and 'Despotics', in Jeremiah Coogan, Howley, and Candida Moss (eds.), *Writing, Enslavement, and Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, forthcoming).

[73] Howley, 'Despotics: The Subjugation of Workers in the Ancient Agronomists'.

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outside of the world of elite education. The important thing to note, Howley argues, is that the casting of the high-status enslaved worker as intellectually inferior was part of a larger set of structures that sought to oppress and control enslaved persons. It should not be read as a straightforward account of enslaved education, skills, or labour. At the same time, this ancient construction of authorship has real and lasting effects for the subsequent attribution of texts and reconstructions of textual production.

Secretaries and Roman Textual Production

In turning to the evidence for what Roman secretaries did, we should note, at the outset, that we are still enmeshed in the biases and interests of ancient slaveholding elites. In retrieving the work of enslaved secretaries we are trying to render visible the people that elites worked to make invisible. We are attempting to look at those that Roman discourse encourages us to look through.[74] As a result our account will always be fragmentary and always be minimalist. From what we can ascertain, many Roman secretaries and stenographers were enslaved or formerly enslaved people.[75] Though the evidence varies from region to region, there were, alongside readers, a cohort of schoolteachers, grammarians, notaries, and copyists whose work was indispensable to the administration of the Roman household and empire. Navigating one's way around a book roll and writing by hand was hard work.[76] Enslaved

[74] This phrase is adapted from Joseph A. Howley, *Aulus Gellius and Roman Reading Culture: Text, Presence, and Imperial Knowledge in the* Noctes Atticae (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), p. 175.

[75] The work of the *secretarius* or *amanuensis* overlapped with that of the *notarius*: Cicero refers to Diphilus as the 'scriptor et lector' of Crassus (Cicero, *De Orat*. 1.136). See Howley, 'In Ancient Rome', pp. 15–27.

[76] P. Oxy. LVI.3860. *Rhet*. *Her*. 4.6 portrays writing by hand as somewhat dishonourable, even though some, like Quintilian, recommended it. The physical discomfort of writing by hand for long periods of time has been noted by many and, in other periods of time, is known to have caused extreme discomfort and even long-term injury. A fourteenth-century manuscript of Lucan's *Pharsalia* copied by Martino da Trieste (of the school of Bonaventura da Verona) includes the well-known an amusing epigraph 'dextra scriptoris careat gravitate doloris/ Detur pro penna scriptori pulcra puella' ('I can't feel my hand, my head's in a whirl/ I'd swap for my pen a beautiful girl'). The idea that the secretary or clerk's work could lead to paralysis was explicitly noted in Bernardino Ramazzini, *Diatribe de morbis artificum supplementum* (1713) in Ramazzini, *Opera Medica*, vol. 2 (Leipzig: Vossii, 1828), p. 192, but the 'discovery' of writer's cramp emerged simultaneously in Britain, France, and Germany in the 1830s. Treatment plans, including

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secretaries were educated either at urban 'slave schools' or alongside freeborn children in the household.[77] Some percentage of literate enslaved workers might go on to learn the technical skill of shorthand, which required special training, but others might not have. If manumitted, some, like Cicero's secretary Tiro, might occupy lofty positions in politically influential households and graduate to literary careers after their manumission, but others would end up as teachers, and others still would end up as marketplace or village scribes, whose services were commissioned on an ad hoc basis and for a variety of purposes. Even the most successful freedman, however, was unable to escape his roots: Nero's wealthy manumitted secretary Epaphroditus, for example, was executed by Domitian for helping Nero commit suicide.[78] Wealth and manumission had not truly set Epaphroditus free; to Domitian he represented the threat of enslaved and formerly-enslaved power and rebellion.

The success of these workers should be considered unambiguous evidence for their ability, learning, and talent.[79] Even Mohler's

massage, were prescribed by the end of the nineteenth century. For example, see A. De Watteville, 'The Cure of Writer's Cramp', *British Medical Journal* 1.1259 (1885), pp. 323–4. When the typewriter was first introduced in the nineteenth century, it was described at the World's Congress of Stenographers as a medical device that would help ease the pain of Scrivener's palsy, or 'Writer's Cramp' (H. E. Joel, 'The Stenographer and the Typewriter', *National Stenographer* 4 [1893], pp. 259–63). On writer's cramp in the nineteenth century, see Eve Rosenhaft, 'Hands and Minds: Clerical Work in the First "Information Society"', *International Review of Social History* 48 (2003), pp. 13–43.

[77] For references to the education of enslaved people, see Forbes, 'The Education and Training of Slaves in Antiquity', pp. 321–60, which should be read with attentiveness to its apologetic agenda; and, more generally, Raffaella Cribiore, *Gymnastics of the Mind: Greek Education in Hellenistic and Roman Egypt* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2011); Teresa Morgan, *Literate Education in the Hellenistic and Roman Worlds* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

[78] Suetonius, *Domitian* 14. See also the death of Macedo, whose father had been enslaved, in Pliny, *Ep.* 3.14.5. To be read with Niall McKeown, 'The Sound of John Henderson Laughing: Pliny 3.14 and Roman Slaveowners' Fear of their Slaves', in Anastasia Serghidou (ed.), *Fear of Slaves – Fear of Enslavement in the Ancient Mediterranean*, Actes du XXIXe colloque international du groupe international de rescherches sur l'esclavage dans l'antiquité (Besançon: Presses universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007), pp. 265–79. The elite Roman distaste for wealthy imperial freedmen bubbles to the surface of all of these accounts.

[79] The (occasional) professional success and social ascent of formerly enslaved secretaries are often cited as evidence of the comparative kindness of Roman slavery or the efficacy of the *paedagogium*. See, for example, Clarence A. Forbes, 'The Education and Training of Slaves in Antiquity', *TAPA* 86 (1955), pp. 321–60. Even in the twentieth century, enslaved actors continue to be put to apologetic work in defence of despotic Roman social hierarchies.

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now outdated study concedes that those educated in Roman 'slave schools' had learned 'to write perfect Latin and Greek, and had mastered the mathematical knowledge necessary to administer the finances of rich provinces'.[80] This is worth noting because, as Howley has argued, it is likely that in any gathering of educated Roman aristocrats the enslaved literate workers—who had followed their charges to school and later 'university' in Athens or Alexandria and now spent their days reviewing, copying, and editing texts—were the most educated people in the room.[81]

The work of literary assistants varied widely. They were known to find references and read them aloud, to take dictation in longhand and shorthand,[82] to correct manuscripts,[83] to copy texts in private households and public libraries,[84] to take notes at reading events or public declamations,[85] and to act as curators of manuscripts themselves. They would also accompany slaveholders while

[80] Samuel L. Mohler, 'Slave Education in the Roman Empire', *TAPA* 71 (1940), pp. 262–80, at 277.

[81] Howley, 'In Ancient Rome', pp. 15–27.

[82] Dio, *Or.* 18.18; Pliny, *Ep.* 9.36; Lib. *Or.* 1.232. See P. E. Arns, *La technique du livre d'après saint Jérôme* (Paris: E. de Boccard, 1953), pp. 37–62; N. I. Herescu, 'Le mode de composition des écrivains (dictare)', *REL* (1956), pp. 132–46; E. Norden, *Die antike Kuntsprosa* (Stuttgart: Teubner, 1958), pp. 953–9; J. Schlumberger, '*Non scribe sed dicto*' (HA, T 33,8). Hat der Autor der *Historia Augusta* mit Stenographen gearbeitet?' in G. Alfoldy, E. Badian, R. Syme (ed.), *Bonner Historia Augusta Colloquium 1972–1976* (Bonn: R. Habelt, 1976), pp. 221–38; Nicholas Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', *G&R* 42 (1995), pp. 49–56; Myles McDonnell, 'Writing, Copying, and Autograph Manuscripts in Rome', *CQ* 46 (1996), pp. 469–91; G. Cavallo, 'Écriture et pratiques intellectuelles dans le monde antique', *Genesis* 15 (2000), pp. 97–108; Tiziano Dorandi, *Le stylet et la tablette: Dans le secret des auteurs antiques* (Paris: Les Belles lettres, 2000), pp. 51–75. The range of possibilities captured by the Latin 'dictare' is explicated in Jerome, *Gal.* 3.6. Augustine dictated marginal notes as well as original texts (*Retract.* 1.1.58).

[83] While some elite Romans are known to have corrected their works in their own hands (Gellius, *NA* 15.6.2; Martial, *Ep.* 7.17.7; 7.22; Pliny, *Ep.* 4.26.1), they would often leave this task to their secretaries (Gellius, *NA* 13.21). R. Sommer, 'T. Pomponius Atticus und die Verbreitung von Ciceros Werken', *Hermes* 61 (1926), pp. 389–422, at 403–15; T. Kleberg, 'Commercio librario ed editorial nel mondo antico', in G. Cavallo (ed.), *Libri, editori e pubblico nel mondo antico: guida storica e critica* (Rome: Bari, 1975), pp. 25–79, at 49; R. J. Starr, 'The Circulation of Literary Texts in the Roman World', *CQ* 37 (1987), pp. 213–23, at 213–14.

[84] See discussion in Starr, 'Circulation of Literary Texts', p. 213; Matthew Nicholls, 'Galen and Libraries in the Peri Alupias', *JRS* 101 (2011), pp. 123–42. Galen's statement in *Peri alupias* 6 that he copied manuscripts himself is more the exception than the rule.

[85] Galen, *Lib. prop.* 6.

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they travelled,[86] exercised,[87] and visited others so that they could take notes or dictation at a moment's notice or even return home to write down details they had committed to memory.[88]

The question, for our purposes, is whether secretarial workers were expected or permitted to make changes to the manuscripts with which they worked.[89] Tiro's role in Cicero's writing process was both constructive and generative.[90] Marcus Cicero's brother, Quintus, evidently had his secretary Statius reply to letters on his behalf (Cicero, *QFr.* 1.2.8); Rufus had scribes (*operarii*) keep the literary account of goings-on in Rome for Cicero and protested that he did not have enough time even to cast an eye over the version the scribes produced (Cicero, *Fam.* 8.1.1); according to a second-century source, Brutus too employed someone to write his letters for him (Philostratus of Lemnos 2.28). At least some trusted secretaries were permitted free rein when it came to the composition of texts. Origen's statement that an educated secretary had improved the style of Hebrews assumes that secretaries had considerable latitude.[91]

At the other end of the social hierarchy, those who wrote letters on behalf of socially disadvantaged people were known to improve the content and style of their client's work. Though it is often unclear if these scribes were enslaved or formerly enslaved, the letters of illiterate women in particular seem to have experienced this

[86] Pliny the Younger, *Ep.* 3.5 (describing the working style of his uncle).
[87] Seneca, *Ep.* 15; 84.1.
[88] Horace, *Sermones* 1.10.92.
[89] Certain kinds of work—for example, correcting manuscripts—inherently presuppose change, but this kind of alteration is constructed as being in line with the intent of the author-slaveholder and, thus, acceptable. Even if the secretary exercises his or her powers of discernment and intellect, the will and vision at work here are still understood to be those of the author-slaveholder even while the skills involved are those of the secretary. The idea persists in historical-critical work on the New Testament that characterizes bad scribes as those whose agency muddies the waters of authorial intent. See, for example, Sanday and Headlam who write 'some scribes would be more expert than others and would reproduce what was dictated to them more exactly… An inferior scribe would get down the main words correctly, but the little connecting links he may have filled in for himself', *Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1895), p. lx.
[90] Bahr, for example, writes 'Tiro took part in the composition of the letter', in Gordon J. Bahr, 'Paul and Letter Writing in the First Century', *CBQ* 28 (1966), pp. 465–77, at 470; Cf. Otto Morgenstern, 'Cicero und die Stenographie', *Archiv für Stenographie* 56 (1905), pp. 1–6.
[91] Jerome, *Vir. ill.* 61; Eusebius, *Hist. eccl.* 6.23.

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kind of correction.[92] The emendation of women's writing draws attention to two important points: first, that the power differential between scribe and author varied based on the educational level, social status, and gender of the author. It seems probable that scribes felt at greater liberty to edit the words of authors who could not read the text. Second, that for those whose educational or bodily limitations prevented them from transcribing texts themselves, secretarial bodies were the technologies by which the functionally illiterate were able to write.[93]

One problem in assessing the ways in which secretarial workers might have contributed to the texts they produced is the disparate nature of the evidence. Most literary descriptions of secretarial work emerge from the households of ancient Italy's most wealthy and should not be taken as paradigmatic for everyone who lived around the ancient Mediterranean. By contrast, much of papyrological evidence originates in Egypt (a region with a lower proportion of enslaved workers) and involves a low-status illiterate worker paying for secretarial work. While some Christian authors, like Origen, exploited the skills of enslaved literate workers, what can we say about Christians authors in general who, by and large, seemed to have belonged to what Hopkins calls the 'sub-elite' class?[94]

The evidence for those who were neither members of the senatorial class nor impoverished is less conspicuous, but this does not mean that we should conclude that they did not have access to secretaries or that those secretaries did less work. Manumitted freedmen and *nouveau riche* foreigners like Petronius's Trimalchio and Lucian's ignorant book collector are shown relying on well-educated enslaved members of their households.[95] Voluntary

[92] P. Oxy. VI 6.932 and discussion in Roger S. Bagnall and Raffaella Cribiore, *Women's Letters from Ancient Egypt, 300 BC–AD 800* (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2000).

[93] On bodily impairment, scribes, and writing, see Horsfall, 'Rome without Spectacles', pp. 49–56. See also the examples of Fronto and Libanius, whose arthritis forced them to use scribes (Fronto, *Ep.*2.3; Lib. *Or.* 11.1; 3.5).

[94] On 'sub-elites', see Keith Hopkins, 'Conquest by Book', in J. H. Humphrey (ed.), *Literacy in the Roman World*, (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1991), pp. 133–58, at 145 n. 33. The contrast between the status of early Christian authors and elite authors is highlighted in Ehrman, *Forgery and Counter Forgery*, p. 222.

[95] See Calvisius Sabinus in Seneca, *Ep.* 27.5; cf. Thomas Wiedemann, *Greek and Roman Slavery* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 26.

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associations, to which Paul's communities have fruitfully been compared, used secretarial workers to transcribe letters and institutional histories for them.[96] A number of followers of Paul and members of the Jesus movement are identified with the imperial household, a connection that suggests there may have been higher-status enslaved workers in Paul's circles.[97] It seems probable that secretaries were loaned to Paul by wealthier members of his churches just as they were later donated to Origen by his patron Ambrose.[98]

Given the evidence for the collaborative nature of ancient authorship and the crowded nature of the figurative ancient writing desk, all reconstructions of the writing process and attempts to ascribe intellectual credit are—by definition—imaginative.[99] Paul does not appear to have worked alone, and we should not assume that other early Christian authors did either. We may not have autographs of his letters or papyri from Rome that reveal a change in hand, but this

[96] On voluntary associations and enslaved membership, see John Kloppenborg, *Christ's Associations: Connecting and Belonging in the Ancient City* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2019), pp. 29–32. On voluntary associations and writing see, idem, 'Literate Media in Early Christian Groups: The Creation of a Christian Book Culture', *JECS* 22 (2014), pp. 21–59; Richard Last, 'The Social Relationships of Gospel Writers: New Insights from Inscriptions Commending Greek Historiographers', *JSNT* 37 (2015), pp. 223–52. This is a useful model for thinking about situations of corporate authorship (e.g. *1 Clement, Martyrdom of Polycarp*, *Letter of the Churches of Lyons Vienne*), where an unnamed secretary would have had to synthesize the voices of a group into a single text.

[97] Phil. 4:22. Imperial slaves appear repeatedly in early Christian apocrypha and martyrdom accounts. In his work on this, Flexsenhar argues that these later references are largely mythical devices with which Christians thought. See Michael Flexsenhar, III, *Christians in Caesar's Household: The Emperor's Slaves in the Makings of Christianity* (University Park, PA: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 2019). Flexsenhar does not question the accuracy of Phil. 4:22.

[98] Jewett describes Tertius as 'Phoebe's slave or employee' and raises the important possibility that not only Tertius but also his slaveholder Phoebe were therefore 'engaged in the creation, the delivery, the public reading, and the explanation of the letter' (Robert Jewett, *Romans* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2006], pp. 22–23). The influence of slaveholders over enslaved workers created the opportunity for divided loyalties. These are readily apparent in the works of Plautus and should inform our understanding of Paul's language in Romans 6. See Katherine H. Burgett, 'Choosing the Right Master: Negotiating Liminal Ownership in Plautus and Romans 6', unpublished paper presented in the 'Early Christianity and the Ancient Economy Section' of the Annual Meeting of the Society of Biblical Literature, December 10, 2020.

[99] The idea of the crowded writing desk is borrowed from Laura Nasrallah, '1 Corinthians', in Margaret Aymer, Cynthia Briggs Kittridge, and David A. Sánchez (eds.), *Fortress Commentary on the Bible: New Testament* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014), pp. 427–72 at 432.

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does not mean that we should assume that elite or sub-elite men are the sole authors of their ideas. Everything that we know about ancient literary production reveals a collaborative enterprise that involved a host of actors whose agency and contributions are masked by hierarchical structures of power. This insight should change the way that we discuss not only the authoring of texts but also how we discuss the construction, ethics, and practice of 'forgery' and 'pseudepigraphy' in antiquity.[100] The near omnipresence of enslaved literate workers destabilizes modern notions of lone authorship. We can never be certain who is responsible for what interpretively consequential turn of phrase, and thus we are always working in the realm of the speculative. Critically informed speculation, while in many ways unsatisfying, is preferable to defaulting to a model of authorship that is both unhistorical and rooted in the exercise of despotic power.

Shorthand and Signs

One undertheorized venue in which secretaries exercised agency was in taking dictation. Ancient dictation could be performed in two primary ways: using longhand, which in the ancient world was often dictated syllable by syllable, or using shorthand, a system of symbols that enabled the scribe to keep pace with the speaker.[101] The latter system was used to write down speeches,

[100] Texts were literary progeny for ancient elites, and familial language shaped the concept of legitimate and illegitimate authorship. For enslaved secretaries, who could not produce legal biological offspring, was authorial status something to which they could aspire? Moreover, what does it mean to accuse an enslaved secretary of forgery when they spent most of their time writing in the name of another and were not empowered to write in their own name? The game of authorship was one that enslaved writers were not empowered to play in the ancient world. On the 'game' of authorship and the rhetoric of forgery, see Irene Peirano, *The Rhetoric of the Roman Fake: Latin Pseudepigrapha in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), pp. 74–116 and Tom Geue, *Author Unknown: The Power of Anonymity in Ancient Rome* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2019), p. 11. For the gendering of the "Author" and the ways in which it might preclude female authorship see Karen King, "'What is an Author?': Ancient Author-Function in the *Apocryphon of John* and the Apocalypse of John," in W.E. Arnal, R. S. Ascough, R. A. Derrenbacker Jr. and P. A. Harland (eds.), *Scribal Practices and Social Structures among Jesus Adherents. Essays in Honour of John S. Kloppenborg* (Leuven: Peeters, 2016), pp. 15–42.

[101] For dictation by syllable, see Cicero, *Ad Att*. 13.25.3; *Ad Luc*. 119. Compare Herm. *Vis*. 2.1.4. in which the Shepherd tries to copy syllable by syllable but is instead forced to write letter by letter. For the view that Paul dictated in longhand, see C. E. B. Cranfield, *The Epistle to the Romans*, vol. 1 (ICC; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1980), p. 3; for the view that he dictated via shorthand, see William Sanday and Arthur C. Headlam, *The Epistle to the Romans* (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1895), p. lx.

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letters, and original compositions as well as to place notes and commentary in the margins of written texts.[102] Unlike longhand, however, stenography involved translation and, like other forms of ancient translation, depended on the labour of enslaved workers.[103] Spoken words were translated and condensed into signs that were subsequently retranslated and expanded into written words. It was the most complicated part of a broader semiological literary world in which signs were used to edit, comment upon, or add meaning to a text.[104] Stenography was not learned as part of elite paideutic education.[105] Though theories of shorthand's origins vary, the mythology of tachygraphy coded it as 'slave knowledge' and placed its origins outside the domain of *paideia*. The system may have had its origins in Greece, but the most popular theory since Jerome is that Cicero's secretary Tiro was responsible for the invention of a multiple-thousand-sign system of abbreviations—later known as the Tironian Notes—that condensed and expanded spoken Latin.[106]

[102] For the origins of shorthand in legal contexts, see Revel A. Coles, *Reports of Proceedings in Papyri* (Papyrologica Bruxellensia, 4; Fondation égyptologique: Brussels, 1966).

[103] Rachel Mairs, '*Hermēneis* in the Documentary Record from Hellenistic and Roman Egypt: Interpreters, Translators and Mediators in Bilingual Society', *Journal of Ancient History* 7.2 (2019), pp. 1-53. For discussion of translating theory and its colonialistic impulses see Claudia Moatti, 'Translation, Migration, and Communication in the Roman Empire: Three Aspects of Movement in History', *Classical Antiquity* 25 (2006), pp. 109–140.

[104] On text critical sigla in antiquity, see Francesca Schironi, 'The Ambiguity of Signs: Critical *σημεῖα* from Zenodotus to Origen', in M. R. Niehoff (ed.), *Homer and the Bible in the Eyes of Ancient Interpreters* (Leiden: Brill, 2012), pp. 87–112.

[105] The term 'paideutic' is borrowed from Alexei V. Zadorojnyi, 'The Ethico-Politics of Writing in Plutarch's Life of Dion', *JHS* 131 (2011), pp. 147–63. The exception is in military contexts, in which cryptography of one kind or another could prove useful in situations where the enemy might learn one's plans. On military application of stenography, see John Robert Gregg, 'Julius Caesar's Stenographer', *Century Magazine* (May 1921), pp. 80–88.

[106] Dio Cassius credits a freedman of Maecenas with its invention (*Hist*. 55.7.6). For the traditional view that the Romans copied the system of tachygraphy from the Greeks, see H. J. Milne, *Greek Shorthand Manuals* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1934), p. 1. For the view that it was first developed by enslaved Romans, see H. Boge, 'Die Tachygraphie—eine Erfindung römischer Sklaven', in H. von Scheel (ed.), *Altertumwissenschaft mit Zukunft dem Wirken Werner Hartkes gewidmet* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973), pp. 52–63. Jerome, *Orig*. 1.22. For the view that Tiro invented shorthand, see P. G. Mitzschke, *M. Tullius Tiro* (Berlin, 1875) and H. Boge, 'Die Tironischen Noten—die römische Tachygraphie', *Das Altertum* 12 (1966), pp. 39–50, at 43. For a healthy rebuttal of this Tironian hypothesis and conventional interpretations of *Fam*. 10.8, see W. C. McDermott, 'M. Cicero and M. Tiro', *Historia* 21 (1972), pp. 259–86, at 271–2.

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Elites learned to write by taking longhand dictation, but there is no evidence that most affluent people used shorthand writing themselves. The system is uncompromisingly difficult to learn and required specialized training, usually by a literary freedman or in a particular household. One second-century-CE contract from Oxyrhynchus informs us that it took two years to become fully proficient in the skill.[107] After at least basic instruction in reading and writing, the student moved on to a two-stage shorthand curriculum.[108] The first stage began by memorizing three sets of basic signs: the 'syllabary' (signs for vowels, diphthongs, and syllables), the '*monobolai*' (whole words and short phrases), and the 'endings' (signs for inflectional endings).[109]

After completing this step, the student moved on to the *Commentary*, a table of compound signs. Six hundred to 800 numbered base signs culled from the syllabary, *monobolai*, and endings were augmented with dots or dashes that modify the sign's meaning. Each sign, therefore, contained an additional set of meanings: the meaning of the base sign and a tetrad of additional meanings that were identified by the marks placed around the sign.[110] With the exception of the sign known as Milne 466, a slightly curved cross, which contains *stauros* in its tetrad of meanings, the system is not pictographic, which is to say that the meaning of the sign cannot be guessed by the untrained eye.[111] To add to the student's troubles, the tetrads were not connected to the base meaning of the sign. Learning to write using shorthand involved brute memorization. This process was assisted through the use of sentences that served as mnemonic devices for the student.[112] While some of the

[107] P. Oxy. IV.724.

[108] Learning to write often preceded learning to read. It is possible that all parts of this instruction took place at a 'slave school', with a stenography teacher or even in the household by the same instructors who prepared students for liberal education. See R. Cribiore, *Writing, Teachers, and Students in Graeco-Roman Egypt* (American Studies in Papyrology, 36; Atlanta: Scholar's Press, 1996), pp. 13–26.

[109] For fuller discussion, see A. Mentz, 'Die Entzifferung einiger Texte in griechischer Tachygraphie', *Archiv* 13 (1939), pp. 61–75.

[110] Up to eight additional elements could be added to the sign: see Milne 3 and discussion in Kathleen McNamee, 'A Plato Papyrus with Shorthand Marginalia', *GRBS* (2001), pp. 97–116 at 103.

[111] Although there are some connections between shorthand and letters see Milne, *Greek Shorthand*, p. 2 and A. Mentz, *Ein Schülerheft mit altgriechischer Kurzschrift* (Bayreuth: Gauverlag Bayerische Ostmark, 1940), pp. 24–27.

[112] The system developed over time and became increasingly complicated. Evidence for the systematic *Syllabary* and *Commentary* appears as early as 50 CE but only becomes regularized (though it is never fully standardized) by the third century CE. The use of abbreviations and basic shorthand, however, predates the appearance of the *Syllabary* and *Commentary*. By 103 CE it was found on an inscription in Egypt (*CIG* 4763). See Mentz, *Ein Schülerheft mit altgriechischer Kurzschrift*, pp. 39–40 and pp. 52–53.

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phrases are memorable philosophical maxims or statements, others are lists of synonyms, place names, body parts, or ethnicities.[113]

The primary point here is the active role the scribe played in the transcription of the text. The technology of shorthand created the opportunity for interpretive slippage and for secretarial expression. Beyond the clear differences between Greek and Latin shorthand, tachygraphic systems varied from region to region, 'school' to 'school', household to household, and perhaps even from scribe to scribe.[114] What all of this suggests, more importantly, is that many, though not all elites—by which I mean those who received a good liberal education and could afford to employ secretaries—could not read tachygraphy. It was illegible. As McNamee has put it, 'the notes [ancient stenographers] took had to be transcribed into legible Greek by the note-takers *themselves* if anyone else was to have access'.[115] In practical terms, the secretary himself was irrevocably bound to the text: the same scribe who took dictation had to interpret and transcribe their text. They were not interchangeable fungible workers; they were an inextricable part of the writing process without whom the text was unreadable.[116] Ironically, for

[113] There is some overlap between the subject of the mnemonic *sententiae* and the writings of early Christians. As early as 1936, C. H. Roberts noticed the parallel between sentence 305 and Matthew 27:59. Sentence 305: 'A prophet puts a shining piece of cloth around himself'. C. H. Roberts, 'Review of H. J. Milne, B.A.: *Greek Shorthand Manuals (Syllabary and Commentary)*', *The Classical Review* 50 (1936), p. 24. And sentences 260 ('a slanderous [man] hangs, [and] laments up above. Marsyas') and 361 ('he is stripped, he is examined, he is tortured, he is crucified on a plank') could serve as summaries of the passion narrative. Threats of torture, sexual violence, and death are a feature of the *Commentary* and may well serve as a window into the concerns of enslaved people in antiquity. Though suggestive, the overlap between the content of the *Commentary* and early Christian narrative is not our focus here.

[114] For one example of idiosyncratic tachygraphy, see P. Oxy. XV 1808 and discussion in Kathleen McNamee, 'A Plato Papyrus with Shorthand Marginalia', *GRBS* 42 (2001), pp. 97–116. Some ancient and medieval tachygraphy is still illegible to modern readers and is described in cryptographic language by academics. See, for example, the description of a Greek tachygraphic manuscript from Wadi Murabba'at in Pierre Benoit, Józef T. Milik, and Roland de Vaux, *Les grottes de Murabba'ât* (DJD II; Oxford: Clarendon, 1961), pp. 275–7 and plates CIII–CV.

[115] McNamee, 'Plato Papyrus', p. 99. Italics are my own. The same was true for simpler text critical sigla: see Schironi, 'The Ambiguity of Signs', p. 99.

[116] The importance of this relationship and the intimacy and complicated dynamics of dependence that it produces are beautifully illustrated in an epitaph to the enslaved stenographer Xanthias who was 'skilled at abbreviating', was 'his master's closest ear' and (had he not died) 'alone would have known his master's intimate thoughts' (*CIL*. 13.855, trans. Courtney 1995 no.131). See discussion in Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination*, pp. 14–15. The closely held intimacy described here may gesture to the fact that Xanthias alone would have been able to translate the thoughts of his enslaved from abbreviations to text.

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all the conversations about discernment, judgement, and *paideia* that surrounded reading comprehension in antiquity, there was a parallel technology of literacy that was unintelligible to elites yet fundamental to the production of knowledge in the ancient world.

The illegibility and ambiguities of shorthand to those schooled only in *paideia* erase what might be said to be the 'record' of the author's words. In his *Greek Shorthand Manuals*, Milne described the 'equivocation' of Greek tachygraphy—that is to say, its ambiguous interpretive structure—as '*the* weakness of the system'.[117] But this equivocation creates the space for expression, resistance, improvement, and correction. Certain aspects of the configuration, structure, and language of a text and particular elements of its contents would have been set, but tachygraphy required that the scribe use his or her own judgement in contracting and subsequently expanding the text. Even assuming that the author would have reviewed the legible version themselves, the process of expansion creates the possibility for the insertion of what ancient historian Dan-el Padilla Peralta has called 'floating fragments' of enslaved subjectivity and resistance into the text.[118] What sociologists have called the 'hidden transcript' is, in this case, not hidden but cryptographic.[119] If, once expanded, these fragments of agency were questioned or corrected, it would be difficult to consult the 'original' record. The ambiguous nature of the system provided a certain amount of cover and afforded the scribe the possibility of tachygraphic escape.[120] Even without destruction or erasure, therefore, the record of what was said was illegible to most and could only be accessed using hermeneutical translational skills that were culturally coded as servile.[121]

In other words, the archive of elite knowledge that has been passed down to us rests in large part on writing technologies developed by or in conjunction with servile workers in non-paideutic contexts. This was not only the case in situations of taking

[117] Milne, *Greek Shorthand Manuals*, p. 5 (italics original).

[118] Dan-el Padilla Peralta, 'Epistemicide: The Roman Case', *Classica* 33 (2020), pp. 151–86, at 167.

[119] For the concept of the hidden transcript see James C. Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance: Hidden Transcripts* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1990).

[120] The phrase "tachygraphic escape" emerged out of conversation with Jeremiah Coogan.

[121] By the fourth century, it appears that shorthand had begun to fascinate aristocrats. Libanius grieves over aristocratic students who preferred this somewhat 'slavish' practice over a good liberal education in Lib. *Or.* 18.131.

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dictation in shorthand but also in the production of tables, scientific symbols, and technical abbreviations. While other readers of shorthand, not all of whom would have been enslaved, could be consulted to verify a transcription, there is an epistemological reversal: the intellectual elite have become *illiterati* who are obligated to take things on trust. This functional illiteracy inverts the despotic dynamics and epistemic firewall aristocratic elites tried so hard to maintain.[122] The technologies of ancient writing destabilize the power dynamics between author and scribe, for early Christians as well as for elite Romans.[123] Tertius and his peers were social subordinates, but the practicalities of their work required that they exercise their own judgement in transcribing and editing

[122] One reason we have overlooked the illegibility of shorthand is that in more recent history shorthand writing was more standardized and traversed social divides. The forms of shorthand that emerged in seventeenth-century England, for example, were said to have emerged among educated men before spreading to 'country folk'. Thus, while shorthand takes on a kind of national character that sets the English apart from foreigners, it was almost quotidian in nature. See Kelly Minot McCay, '"All the World Writes Short Hand": The Phenomenon of Shorthand in Seventeenth-Century England', *Book History* 24 (2021), pp. 1–36.

[123] Richards is correct that Paul and his secretaries were not equals (Richards, *Paul and First-Century Letter Writing*, p. 33), but the technology of shorthand writing destabilizes this dynamic. See, for example, Seneca who attributes shorthand to the 'lowest' grade of enslaved workers: *Quid verborum notas, quibus quamvis citata excipitur oratio et celeritatem linguae manus sequitur? Vilissimorum mancipiorum ista commenta sunt; sapientia altius sedet nec manus edocet, animorum magistra est* (*Ep*. 90.25–26). He also notes that banausic skills are performed more competently by those lacking in wisdom (*inprudentissimis*) in *Ep*. 90.33. See also Galen's description of abbreviations in manuscripts of Hippocrates's *Epidemics* as akin to divination (*Hipp. Epid. III* 1.5 [XVIIA. 528K]), and his reference to an illegible symbolic recipe in Galen mentions a recipe for an anti–hair loss drug recorded only in symbols in a leather notebook that belonged to a since deceased physician. Galen and his unnamed collaborators had to work through the recipe and decipher it in *De. comp. med. per gen*.1.1 (XII 422-XIII.426 K). An awareness of the way that shorthand signs empowered the stenographer may be present in some patristic texts. See Augustine, *De doctrina* 2.26, in which he states that there is nothing unlawful about stenographic notes and that they are not *superstitio*. The association of stenographic symbols with magic persists into the medieval period and focuses on the illegibility of the signs to most people. It highlights the inaccessibility of stenographic signs as a language system and the ways in which that illegibility is interpreted as clandestine and threatening. On the use of shorthand signs in magical papyri, see Victor Emil Gardthausen, *Griechische Palaeographie* (Leipzig: Teubner, 1879). On medieval associations between magic and shorthand, see John Haines, *The Notory Art of Shorthand* (Ars notoria notoarie): *A Curious Chapter in the History of Writing in the West* (Leuven: Peeters, 2014).

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texts attributed to others. If we recognize that efforts to copy manuscripts directly without alteration result in improvements, corrections, and mistakes, we should also recognize the expressionistic space created by the use of shorthand. My point is not that the text is less reliable or 'authentic', but rather that it is the product of multiple authors, only one of whom is currently credited for their work.[124]

To give a tangible example, we might reconsider the origins, invention, and audience of abbreviations and paratextual signs in early Christian manuscripts. The most famous example is the abbreviations in early manuscripts known as *nomina sacra*.[125] Though they were introduced long after the stenographer's work was done, these distinctive signs abbreviated key Christian terms and marked them with a bar above the letters. The marks give them a distinctive visual and symbolic quality that is often understood as a kind of condensed 'outline of theology'.[126] We should not assume, however, that this symbolic theology was initially recognizable to those who did not habitually work with manuscripts. Larry Hurtado argues that the *nomina sacra* are part of a proto-creedal schema.[127]

[124] Medieval manuscripts, however, are known for crediting a larger circle of authors with responsibility for the Pauline epistles. See the ninth-century Mount Athos, Monastery of the Lavra A.88, fol. 99 verso (INTF 049): 'Letter to (the) Romans written from Corinth through (*dia*) Phoebe the deacon' and the fourteenth-century Paris, Bibliothèque nationale de France, grec 47, fol. 244 recto (INTF 18): 'The letter to (the) Romans written through (*dia*) Tertius and sent through (*dia*) Phoebe from Corinth'. These examples are taken from Brent Nongbri, 'The Manuscript Tradition', in Ryan S. Schellenberg and Heidi Wendt (eds.), *T & T Handbook to the Historical Paul* (London: T & T Clark, 2022), pp. 55–68.

[125] B. M. Metzger, *Manuscripts of the Greek Bible* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1981), pp. 36–37; C. H. Roberts, 'Books in the Graeco-Roman World and in the New Testament', in P. R. Ackroyd and C. F. Evans (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Bible*, vol. 1 (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 6; Harry Y. Gamble, *Books and Readers in the Early Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), pp. 74–78; David Trobisch, *Die Endredaktion des Neuen Testaments* (NTOA 31; Gottingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1996), pp. 16–31; Malcolm Choat, *Belief and Cult in Fourth Century Papyri* (Studies Antiqua Australensia; Turnhout: Brepols, 2006), pp. 119–25; AnneMarie Luijendijk, *Greetings in the Lord* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), pp. 57–60.

[126] Roberts, *Manuscript, Society and Belief*, p. 47.

[127] Larry W. Hurtado, 'The Origins of the Nomina Sacra: A Proposal', *JBL* 117 (1998), pp. 655–73. For a possible example of an illegible or mistranslated *nomina sacra* abbreviation, see Mark Goodacre, 'A Walking, Talking Cross or the Walking, Talking Crucified One?', <https://ntweblog.blogspot.com/2010/10/walking-talking-cross-or-walking.html> (Monday, October 18, 2010) to be read with Paul Foster, 'Do Crosses Walk and Talk? A Reconsideration of *Gospel of Peter* 10.39-42', *JTS* 64 (2013), pp. 89–104.

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In this context, their existence provides scaffolding for theological claims about the emergence of orthopraxy and orthodoxy. There is, of course, an antecedent for abbreviating the name of God in manuscripts of the Hebrew Bible and Septuagint, but this does not fully explain, as Gamble has noted, the 'origin and significance of the system' for early Christians.[128] While some have claimed that the use of abbreviations is a distinctive feature of early Christian manuscripts, this position seems to be overstated.[129] The specific combination of form and content may be distinctively Christian, but the technology of abbreviating or marking important central terms with bars can be found in other ancient texts such as mathematical treatises.[130] Academic debate has focused on the religious and ethnographic origins of *nomina sacra*, but perhaps we should consider its social origins.[131] More specifically, we should entertain the possibility that it is a mechanics of writing adopted from contexts that were collaborative or servile in nature.

There is much more to be said on this question and the material evidence relating to it, but perhaps we should at least consider the possibility that *nomina sacra* emerged among and was developed by anonymous literate workers. These workers utilized

[128] Gamble, *Books and Readers*, p. 75. Over time early Christian use of abbreviations widens and includes terms like 'human being' and 'heaven'.

[129] For the argument that this use is distinctive, see Hurtado, 'Origins of the Nomina Sacra', p. 659. As Malcolm Choat has argued, the same phenomenon is at work in Manichean texts *(Belief and Cult*, pp. 122–5). Luijendijk observes that *nomina sacra* appear in copies of both 'orthodox' and 'heretical' texts including the Gospel of Luke, the *Gospel of Thomas*, and some magical papyri (e.g. P. Oxy. VI.924); see *Greetings in the Lord*, p. 60. We should also note that while many early Christian manuscripts utilize the *nomina sacra*, they do agree neither upon the canon of words that should be abbreviated, nor the ways in which they should be abbreviated.

[130] See Roger S. Bagnall and Alexander Jones (eds.), *Mathematics, Metrology, and Model Contracts: A Codex from Late Antique Business Education (P. Math.)* (New York: New York University Press, 2019). See also Andrew Riggsby's important work on diagrams and charts as non-elite textuality in *Mosaics of Knowledge: Representing Information in the Roman World* (Classical Culture and Society; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), p. 164: 'Diagrams are workmanlike in a world in which elites value speech above manual labor'.

[131] The debate revolves around the question of Jewish antecedents. Hurtado considers the possibility that *nomina sacra* was appropriated from 'profane Greek practice' but cites only Alan Millard's work on Phoenician sources. See Hurtado, 'Origins of the Nomina Sacra', p. 660 and Alan Millard, 'Ancient Abbreviations and the Nomina Sacra', in C. Eyre, A. Leahy, and L. M. Leahy (eds.), *The Unbroken Reed: Studies in the Culture and Heritage of Ancient Egypt in Honour of A. F. Shore* (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1994), pp. 221–6.

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technologies of writing that had been developed by other servile workers in writing contexts that were both scriptural and secular. Given the historic importance of these abbreviations in shaping scriptural reading and—eventually—liturgy and art, the distinction and credit seems important. It removes secretaries and copyists from the periphery of Christian intellectual praxis and places them at the heart of the late ancient authorial coterie. This should not diminish the importance of the *nomina sacra* in Christian history or theology, but rather prompt us to rethink where, how, and in what contexts we think theological speculation was taking place. Non-paideutic practices of copying created an agentive space in which meaning making took place. Though *nomina sacra* were introduced later in history of the text, they gesture to the ways that non-paideutic writing technologies like shorthand created opportunities for theological reflection and textual interpretation in a semiological universe that was located outside of elite literary production.

Conclusion

As we have seen, enslaved or formerly enslaved workers were constant and much-overlooked participants in the literary culture of the Greco-Roman world. While there are debates about the extent to which ancient authors utilized dictation as a form of composition, it was a typical form of writing in the ancient world. The authors of the New Testament are likely to have collaborated with secretaries to produce their work. This raises a concrete problem: how might we identify contributions made by an enslaved worker? The problem is especially acute when the mark of the good secretary was the ability to mimic the style and thought of their slaveholder. At a certain point, surely, we are trapped in an endless cycle in which trusted secretary and author simply produce an improved version of an authorial voice that 'belongs' to neither party? Faced with these problems, it is tempting to default to standard, yet historically contingent, constructions of authorship that privilege a single elite author.

The mechanics of shorthand, however, make it impossible for enslaved workers to have been uninvolved in the generation and shaping of early Christian thought. Though we may not always be able to identify the intermediaries, they are omnipresent collaborators. To pretend otherwise and rehearse traditional authorial attributions means uncritically reproducing the slaveholder discourse

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that sought to strip enslaved people of agency.[132] The historical-critical search for ancient authorial intent presupposes a solitary worker and demands that we clear the room of the others who produced the text. Though we might never speak about enslavement, the myopic interest in the 'intent' of the solitary author renders the work of other figures invisible and inadvertently re-dresses despotic slaveholder discourses in the new garb of 'authorship'. From purely a historical perspective there is an advantage to revisiting authorship and allowing for a notion of collaborative plural authorship that, while linguistically inelegant, is closer to ancient practice.

The agency of secretarial figures has been a source of anxiety for at least two millennia, but this anxiety is heightened in theological contexts in which the stakes are higher. The acknowledgement that enslaved secretarial workers produced scriptural texts and theological ideas may raise additional concerns about the coercive means by which they were put to work. Rightly so, Christianity's involvement in the history of slavery should always be kept in view; but the involvement of enslaved workers in the production of these texts does not make these collaborators complicit in the subsequent use of scriptural texts and slavery. Rather, the involvement of enslaved secretaries challenges us to reflect upon the ethics of reading and how we attribute credit. There is an ethical advantage to recognizing people who have not been afforded agency by the historical record. It opens up the possibility for a kind of ethical reading that is reparative and attentive to those voices.[133] The distribution of agency across a more diverse group of actors presents theological possibilities as well: It offers an opportunity to think more expansively about the nature of scriptural inspiration. The capacious notion of inspiration proposed by John Webster can embrace this broader account of scriptural writing.[134] This,

[132] Padilla Peralta calls this 'epistemicide', a system that silences many perspectives while 'selecting only those perspectives and knowledge that were already legible within its own system' ('Epistemicide', p. 167).

[133] On ethical reading see Hindy Najman, 'Ethical Reading: The Transformation of the Text and the Self', *JTS* 68 (2017), pp. 507–29.

[134] John Webster, *Holy Scripture: A Dogmatic Sketch* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and idem, '*ὑπὸ πνεύματος ἁγίουφερόμενοι ἐλάλησαν ἀπὸ θεοῦ ἄνθρωποι*: On the Inspiration of Holy Scripture', in J. Gordon McConville and Lloyd K. Pietersen (eds.), *Conception, Reception, and the Spirit*: *Essays in Honour of Andrew T. Lincoln* (Cambridge: Lutterworth Press, 2015), pp. 236–50. Webster's proposal draws from a longer theological tradition that can accommodate both Catholics like Cardinal John Henry Newman and Protestant ideas about the perspicuity of scripture. In these formulations, scripture can speak perspicuously in ways that are unconstrained by initial constructions of authorship.

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in turn, widens the range of readers: it creates opportunities for the creation of meaning by inviting us to reflect further upon the imagined community of readers with whom we read the texts. The communities and social location of readers empowered to make meaning and activate the text are more expansive than traditional accounts of credit concede. Moreover, it should make us attentive to the labour that goes into the production of the texts held as sacred. Attentiveness to power, the erasure of certain kinds of agents, and the ways in which we distribute agency should affect the ways that texts are read.

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