Introduction

Interpretation of early Christian literature has often revolved around the figure of the author, with readers asking questions such as: who wrote this text? In what historical context(s) were they writing? What knowledge were they trying to transmit, and how should we interpret their words? The assignment of authors has at times functioned to solve the ambiguity of literary interpretation, allowing for statements like "this is what Paul says/thinks." Especially in the case of texts that have been labeled orthonymous (that is, correctly attributed to a named author), authorial attribution offers a sense of confidence that the author allows readers a window into a person's worldview or experiences.

In this Element, I argue in favor of contemplating the "window" of the author itself rather than rushing to look through it. We might see the author as a literary figure and a container for ideas, arguments, and relationships. The figure of the author is made useful for delineating the boundaries of acceptable knowledge, placing a text within a larger storyworld, or persuading an audience through demonstration of textual and authorial expertise. Authors can be added, omitted, overlooked, emphasized, and weaponized for different constructions of Christian history, polemic, and theology.

We tend to divide claims of authorship based on the presence of a name and the supposed historical accuracy of attaching the name to a specific text. Texts are labeled "orthonymous," "pseudonymous," or "anonymous" depending on whether the scholarly consensus holds that a particular historical figure did or did not write a given text. This tripartite division has cascading effects: for example, the proliferation of scholarship that explains why a writer would attribute their writing to someone else, or debates over authenticity (texts as "genuine" versus "forged"). The impulse to author-ize everything for the sake of modern classification leads to the attribution of tentative authors to anonymous texts; meanwhile, orthonymous texts and their authorial claims are often treated as an unexamined default.

My goal with this Element is to encourage further examination of authorship in the ancient Mediterranean world with an eye toward the obvious. The historical-critical and theological impulses to author-ize need not be the only approach to authors within early Christian studies. No less important, the reasons for *any* attribution of authorship deserves deeper scrutiny. I argue that orthonymity in particular needs to be explored in more depth to uncover who (whether in antiquity or modernity) chooses the "correct" author and what is at stake is that decision. While it is often taken for granted that it is "normal" to write in one's own name or attribute a text to the person who one believes to have written it, that normalcy is culturally determined and culturally contingent.

I do not aim to be comprehensive by any means in this Element, but rather to offer brief insights into a range of early Christian texts and into how orthonymity might affect the study of authorship and attribution in the ancient Mediterranean.

This Element has four sections. After a brief introduction to the study of authorship and orthonymity in the ancient Mediterranean, three case studies explore how debates over the "correct" author play out in antiquity and modernity through: (1) Paul's epistolary corpus; (2) Irenaeus and Tertullian's interaction with cento poetry; and (3) Eusebius's second-hand citations of Hellenistic Jewish authors via Alexander Polyhistor. These case studies highlight how the goals and assumptions of modern scholarship regarding authorship have often obscured the functions of orthonyms in early Christian literature.

Before going further, three caveats: The first is that my goal in this Element is by no means to historically verify the authenticity of any authorial claims, nor to claim that orthonymous attribution is the "best" or "right" way to organize and make sense of literature. I instead want to interrogate why orthonymity has often stood at the center (whether explicitly acknowledged or not) of modern scholarly interests, as well as complicate our treatment of such authorial figures. The second is that authorship – even "correct" authorship like (orth)onymity, defined in more depth in this Element – is not a monolithic phenomenon. Rather, we encounter a spectrum of possibilities and rationales for claiming that authorship has been rightly attributed. Sometimes an author writes something and attaches their own name to it; sometimes someone attaches the name of the person dictating a text; sometimes names or co-authors or collaborators are included or omitted; sometimes writers borrow or reuse textual material from other authorial figures; sometimes attribution of a text as orthonymous is done for apologetic, historical, or bibliographical purposes. The third point is related: what is deemed "correct" attribution of a text to an author is dependent upon the aims of those doing the work of attributing. As Jeremiah Coogan puts it in his analysis of early Christian conceptualizations of Gospel authorship: "authorial attributions are never independent, but are networked into broader imaginaries that develop in this transactional space."[1] As texts, readers, and their reading environments (and interpretative needs or hermeneutical frameworks) shift over time, attribution becomes "correct" or "incorrect" for different reasons. This Element is offered as an opportunity to consider how the relationship between orthonymous authorial attribution and correctness – whether historical or rhetorical – has been naturalized and might be disrupted by considering how all forms of attribution are a choice that someone makes.

[1] Coogan, "Imagining Gospel Authorship," 206.

1 Authorial Choices in the Ancient Mediterranean

Before exploring how authority plays out in early Christian literature, some historical and theoretical context is needed. What are the range of authorial possibilities in the ancient Mediterranean? What defines authorship, and how have various scholars theorized the role it plays in the production, interpretation, and circulation of texts? What, if anything, is so special about *orthonymity* – that is, the practice of attributing a text to the authorial figure deemed to have composed or dictated it? This first section lays the groundwork for understanding the variety of authorial attributions used by ancient writers, including a delineation of how the term and concept of "orthonymity" is used throughout this Element. The goal here is not to claim that each of these scholars offers the same understanding of authorship, but rather to demonstrate how the conversation has shifted within and beyond the field of early Christian studies as scholars critically analyze a range of authorial practices and norms.

Classical and early Christian studies have traditionally been invested in the determination of historically correct or incorrect attribution of authorship. Ostensibly, the goal was to prove that prominent figures of Mediterranean antiquity were involved in the literary production attributed to them – and, conversely, to prove if an individual had forged documents under a false name. As neatly stated by Eva Mroczek:

> We ask questions that reflect modern desires to establish authoritative texts, trace authorial attribution, and define relationships and hierarchies between texts. We want to fill in the blanks in our own knowledge of these texts, and complete our own fragmentary bibliographies; but we also project these interests onto ancient people themselves.[2]

While Mroczek is speaking here of modern scholarly concerns about the category of "scripture," her observation is relevant to how traditional historical-critical investigations are concerned with establishing "real" authors and valuing texts according to their assigned authorial status.

This historical argumentative framework can be found in biblical studies. For example, Bart Ehrman's *Forgery and Counterforgery* explored how early Christian writers produced texts under the names of prominent figures like Peter and Paul to justify their theological positions and gain an audience.[3] In response to scholars and the public who held that authorial claims of New Testament texts were historically accurate, Ehrman examined how and why early Christians resorted to "literary deceit" in their literary production – differentiated from what others have labeled as a "pious

[2] Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination*, 9–10. [3] Ehrman, *Forgery.*

fraud."[4] Such scholarship in New Testament and early Christian studies often gravitates toward demonstration or rebuttal of particular historical claims: that Paul was or was not the author of Colossians, that Mark was or was not the author of the Gospel of Mark, that Peter was or was not the author of 1 Peter.

As David Brakke has rightly pointed out, scholarship that attempts to uncover the "historical author" is only one approach to authorship in antiquity, particularly if more recent discussions of the death and rebirth of the author are taken into consideration.[5] The French theoretical work of Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault, and Gérard Gennette have helped set the stage for new interventions in the study of ancient authorship and attribution and have allowed for questions beyond proving or disproving the accuracy of an authorial claim.

Roland Barthes's "The Death of the Author" combats the assumption in literary criticism that we can best understand any text through reconstructing the biography and original intentions of its author. This assumption proliferates in biblical studies, assuming that if we, for example, knew Luke's historical context and intentions in writing Luke–Acts, we would access to its most important interpretive layer. Against this assumption, Barthes suggests that the author is a fairly recent figure in the history of literature about which we are almost "tyrannically centered." He argues that this figure is unnecessary and nearly theological: the author is too often a god whose thoughts are taken as the final word.[6] Barthes's reader-response approach claims that it is the historical, biographical, and psychological context of the *reader*, not the *author*, where meaning is found. In other words, a text's unity is not "in its origin but in its destination" and an author can only ever return to a text they've written as a "guest."[7] Some argue that Barthes goes too far in rejecting the figure of the author without deeper analysis of the author's role in the production and interpretation of a text. Nonetheless, Barthes's attempt to "kill the author" highlights how texts can act and have meaning beyond the confines of their attributed authorial figures.

The death of the author is not without faults. Perhaps most notably, as Mark Jordan discusses in his work on Michel Foucault, the death of the author can dangerously mask the context in which the writer wrote.[8] To eradicate the author runs the risk of decontextualizing a text to such a degree that the author's

[4] See Speyer, *Die literarische Fälschung*, who proposed that an early Christian writer could genuinely believe they represent the thoughts of the figure whose name they wrote under.
[5] Brakke, "Early Christian Lies."
[6] Barthes, "Death of the Author," 277; Burke, *The Death and Return*, 22–25.
[7] Barthes, "Death of the Author," 280; Barthes, "From Work to Text," 239.
[8] Jordan, *Convulsing Bodies*, 6.

positionality is overlooked. Authors are also people; their embodiment and set of experiences impact what, how, and why they produce texts.[9]

Michel Foucault's 1969/1970 "What Is an Author?" is a counterbalance to Barthes's work, particularly through the coinage of the term *author function.* Foucault argued that an absolute death of the author would upend literary criticism, because even a core concept like a "work" could never be determined without the use of an author-figure or some other organizational feature to determine a text's boundaries and provide some meaningful context for encountering it.[10] Likewise, Foucault suggested that the concept of "writing" has subtly replaced the author without actually changing anything. In biblical studies and cognate disciplines, this approach is visible when the concept of authorial intent is quietly transferred to an anonymous "writer" or an idealized reader, to whom all interpretative authority is granted. For Foucault, the author often plays some role or function in how a text is interpreted, and urges readers to pay close attention to the particularities of an authorial figure.[11]

In short, Foucault argued that the attribution of a specific author both contextualizes texts and produces their boundaries. For example, attributing a text to Paul may activate author function to connect it to other "Pauline" texts, suggest that it falls under the epistolary genre, and place it within a mid-first-century Mediterranean itinerant preacher's storyworld. By "storyworld," I mean the narrative(s) that accumulate around particular individuals – especially through both textualized stories and attribution of texts to them – that shape how later generations of people perceive that individual.[12] Whether an *orthonym* or *pseudonym*, the authorial name of Paul is capable of linking one text to another and accumulating for the production of an authorial figure. The authorial "Paul" is never the same as the historical Paul or anyone else who writes in Paul's name: the figure of the author is born within and from the text itself.[13]

Foucault's analysis is unfortunately hindered since he thought that author function emerged only in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a side-effect of the development of modern publication rights.[14] While such legal definitions of authorship and propriety differed in the ancient Mediterranean, concern over the authorship of a text and the implications was often evident. Galen's *On My Own Books*, for example, attest to such concerns. In this treatise, Galen takes aim at those who attribute books to him by attaching his name to

[9] Burke, "The Ethics of Signature," 237–244.
[10] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 207.
[11] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 211.
[12] See Lundhaug, "Pseudepigraphy," who deploys "biblical storyworld" for a similar purpose: To describe how Coptic pseudepigraphy functions to create and maintain particular narratives of individuals in the Bible for late ancient audiences.
[13] Birke, "Author, Authority, and 'Authorial Narration'."
[14] Foucault, "What Is an Author?" 212–213.

them, as well as those who received Galenic texts "without inscription" for friends or students who eventually pass his texts off as their own.[15] Galen's anxiety regarding the relationship between *text* and *authorial attribution* reveal the slipperiness of the publication process in the ancient Mediterranean: the possibility of multiple editions of texts circulating simultaneously, transferal of material deemed "wrong" via dictation or copying of manuscripts, or some texts (e.g., lecture notes) being treated as less ready for viewing or hearing by particular individuals than others.[16] Foucault's *author function* and Galen's concern over what he deems "improper" attribution of Galenic books both highlight two core questions for this Element: what work does a name do when attached to a text, and for whom do these attributions matter?

Literary theorist Gérard Genette's 1997 *Paratexts* further informs my approach to authorship, attribution, and orthonymity in early Christian literature. Genette focuses on names, titles, and paratexts (i.e., material on the margins or apart from a text's main body). Like Foucault, Genette did not eradicate the figure of the author from the interpretative framework; rather, he asks that we consider the *function* of an author's name at the physical borders of a text.[17] Genette points to antiquity to demonstrate that there was often no location in which one could place an author's name besides the *incipit* of a text (e.g., "Herodotus" in *Histories* 1.1.pref). Eventually, writers begin to record their names elsewhere, often as part of distinct titles at the beginning or end of a text; for example, in the Hellenistic and Roman eras with the *sittybos* or *titulus* upon scrolls (a tag-like piece of papyrus attached to the scroll) that contained information about the text's title, number of books, and/or an authorial attribution.[18] Such tags – as paratextual information – contributed to the history of author function and organization of texts, allowing for easier arrangement of texts *by author* and requiring *some* authorial attribution in order to be "properly" stored. Genette also notes the importance of genre: some genres, like autobiography, require heavy-handed (orth)onymous authorial practices to be convincingly and meaningfully autobiographical; fiction, in contrast, does not require the same degree of onymity.[19] This approach is applicable also to biblical studies: the gospels are anonymous, epistles tend to have the names of sender(s) and recipient(s), apocalypses tend to be pseudepigraphic with some prominent exceptions (e.g., Revelation).[20]

While Genette focused primarily on the use of the author's name in modern books and did not take much interest in paratextual or authorial features in

[15] Galen, *Lib. prop.* K xix 9–10. Translation from Singer, *Selected Works*, 3.
[16] See Hanson, "Galen"; Singer, "New Light and Old Texts." [17] Genette, *Paratexts*, 37.
[18] Bond, "It's on the Sillybos." [19] Genette, *Paratexts*, 41.
[20] See Tóth, "Autorschaft und Autorisation," 11; Janßen, "Was ist ein Autor?" 98–100.

ancient or nonprint media, he offered a key term for my analysis of authorship: *onymity*. Genette splits this term into three concepts: a name that is not the author's own (*pseudonymity*), no name at all (*anonymity*), or their own name (*onymity*).[21] Genette pointed out that onymity is often overlooked because of how ordinary it is in Western literary culture, but that "to sign a work with one's real name is a choice like any other, and nothing authorizes us to regard this choice as insignificant."[22] We can apply this insight to ancient Mediterranean literature, since the decision to attach to a text one's own name or the purportedly "correct" name of another is a choice that impacts by whom and how the text is read, collected, preserved, and incorporated into storyworlds.

Scholarship of the last fifty years in early Christianity, early Judaism, and Classics have been influenced by French literary theory. Some recent works informs my approach to orthonymity across the range of authorial possibilities (i.e., pseudonymity, anonymity, onymity), and this scholarship has increasingly focused on why and how authorial attribution impacts the way that we read texts and organize literature.

Developments in technologies of attribution in the Hellenistic and Roman eras impacted how readers and libraries organized knowledge *by author*. Organization-by-author has been so normalized in our treatment of ancient literature that we often struggle to imagine other ways of classifying texts or knowledge. As noted by Ellen Muehlberger, classicists and religionists still "have an archive problem" because "the architecture of the knowledge we have inherited constrains what we think and write about."[23] She points in particular to the *Clavis Patrum Graecorum* system used by scholars to search for Greek Christian texts and its arrangement by author: in this framework, so-called pseudonymous texts enter an authorial limbo and can be overlooked. The commonality of our modern arrangement of early Christian literature by author is, in part, built upon a historical-critical desire to uncover and understand the "real" authors behind ancient texts. It highlights our normalization of orthonymity. The arrangement of encyclopedias, indices, and other search engines around orthonymous authorship both privileges scholarship on texts for whom we believe know the "real" author, and also presumes that early Christian writers ideally should have attached "real" names to texts.

This author-based classificatory scheme is attributed by Peter Martens to Jerome and his fourth-century *On Famous Men* (also entitled *On Ecclesiastical Writers* [*De scriptoribus ecclesiasticis*]). Jerome sets out to mimic non-Christian writers by providing a list and brief biography of "all those who have published

[21] Genette, *Paratexts*, 39–42 on onymity, 42–46 on anonymity, 46–54 on pseudonymity.
[22] Genette, *Paratexts,* 39. [23] Muehlberger, "On Authors, Fathers, and Holy Men."

any memorable writings on the holy scripture from the time of our Lord's passion until the 14th year of Emperor Theodosius (i.e., 393 CE)."[24] Jerome's biographical list spotlights those he deemed *authors* as prominent and memorable Christian writers, who need to have produced a text of some value beyond their initial audience or intent (by late fourth-century standards) as well as exist within a constructed "orthodox" ecclesiastical tradition. The centrality of (orth)onymity and authorial attribution as the conceptual scaffolding upon which Jerome categorized early Christian figures carried over to the modern era, where early Christian texts are still primarily classified based on authorial attribution, whether correct or incorrect (e.g., Pseudo-Ephrem, Pseudo-Chrysostom, Pseudo-Paul).

Building upon Muehlberger, Martens suggests that our current archive and its origins as a late ancient construction of an orthodox lineage of Christian authors simultaneously serves to help us "find what *special authors* wrote" and that "authorship also serves as a *hiding aid*" of texts and authors deemed heretical.[25] What Jerome and modern scholars who organized the *Clavis* have in common is a preference for "special authors" whose names are attached to texts that we believe were written by them. Authorship functions as a "hiding aid" not only in how it obscures other possible modes of classification (e.g., by genre), but even obscures how authorship generally and orthonymity in particular are treated as the classificatory norm. I want to extend Muehlberger and Martens's work on the normalization of authorship classification: it is particularly *orthonymity* that plays such a role, and so we must ask what would change if we place orthonymic practices and norms in the spotlight.

Before turning to orthonymity, it is worthwhile to note the important contributions regarding pseudonymity and anonymity that shape my understanding of authorship. The study of pseudonymity is something of a cottage industry.[26] Some scholarship on pseudepigraphy has sought to explain the rationale behind such authorial attribution. Rather than placing a value judgment upon a forged text,[27] some ask what function(s) the attached names serve in giving the text meaning or placing it within a particular tradition. Hindy Najman and Irene Peirano Garrison have suggested that we ought to disambiguate terms like "pseudepigraphy" from "forgery," given that the latter has a stronger negative connotation and involves an intent to deceive.[28] In its place, they suggest that pseudepigraphic literature might be better understood as "creative acts of

[24] Jerome, *On Famous Men*, pref. See Joost-Gaugier, "The Early Beginnings."
[25] Martens, "Classifying Early Christian Writings," 441, emphasis original. See also Breu, *Autorschaft in der Johannesoffenbarung*, esp. 152–241.
[26] For overviews, see Janßen, *Unter falschem Namen*; Waller, "The Erotics of Authenticity."
[27] Cueva and Martínez, ed., *Splendide Mendax*; Hopkins and McGill, ed., *Forgery beyond Deceit.*
[28] Najman and Peirano Garrison, "Pseudepigraphy," esp. 335n9, c*ontra* Ehrman, *Forgery.*