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PREFACE

Up to the middle of the previous century, philology—in its broadest sense—focused on the literary productions of the ancient world.¹ Scholars painstakingly produced critical editions comparing dozens of manuscripts. They analyzed manuscript genealogies and produced theories of transmission history. Most importantly, they concentrated on determining the *original* text with little attention to the actors who actually transmitted these texts in the forms we have received them. Other paratextual elements such as margin glosses, commentaries, or comments resulting from collations with different copies were largely ignored. Scribes were relegated to a secondary position. Users, readers, and owners held a tertiary position. Their only hope of appearing in our stories was to produce an interesting factoid in a colophon or to scribble a date or a name that is of interest. As such, we only heard part of the story.

This is not to say that eighteenth and nineteenth century philology did not recognize the role of the scribe. Johann Jakob Griesbach (1745–1812) is a case in point. His first canon in resolving the synoptic problem of the Gospels defined the maxim *brevior lectio*,

Brevior lectio, nisi testium vetustorum et gravium auctoritate penitus destituatur, praeferenda est verbosiori. Librarii enim multo proniores ad addendum fuerunt, quam ad omittendum.

A shorter reading, unless it stands completely without the support of ancient and important witnesses, is to be preferred to a

¹ James Turner, *Philology, The Forgotten Origins of the Modern Humanities* (Princeton, 2014).

more verbose one. *Copyists* [italics ours] were much more inclined to add than to omit.²

Griesbach was not the first to recognize scribes as literary actors. During the seventh century, Jacob of Edessa (640–708) was quite strict with his own scribes,

I prohibit all those who copy the books which I have translated or composed from changing, in their own will, anything, either in the writing or in the dotting.³

But it is not only until the 1960s when we begin to hear of *scribal habits* giving the scribes the spotlight that they deserve. This was advocated first by the New Testament textual critic E. C. Colwell and then followed by J. R. Royse.⁴ We began to hear of “scribal behavior” and how that affected text transmission. Is the scribe disciplined or sloppy? Is the scribe concerned with transmitting the meaning of the text or a literal, formal representation of the exemplar at hand? Colwell and Royse laid the foundations of our modern understanding of scribal habits. Yet, they too focused solely on the primary literary element found in the manuscripts, the literary text in question.

During the past few decades, there has been an increased interest in scribal habits. Firstly, the subject is no longer exclusively connected to New Testament textual criticism. But more importantly, scribal habits scholarship began to consider paratextuality. The manuscript—as material culture—and its actors (plural) now stand in the spotlight. The original author of the literary work being transmitted, when we speak of scribal habits, is now relegat-

² Translation from P. J. Williams, *Brevior lectio - history of the concept*, post (Nov. 12, 2005) at <http://evangelicaltextualcriticism.blogspot.com/2005/11/brevior-lectio-history-of-concept.html>.

³ Jacob of Edessa, Letter on Orthography ⲙ.

⁴ E. C. Clowell, “Scribal Habits in Early Papyri: A Study in the Corruption of the Text” in J. P. Hyatt (ed.), *The Bible in Modern Scholarship* (Nashville, 1965; republished in 1969) 370–389; J. R. Royse, “Scribal Habits in the Transmission of New Testament Texts” in W. D. O’Flaherty (ed.), *The Critical Study of Sacred Texts* (Berkeley, 1979) 139–161.

ed to a tertiary position. This gave rise to New Philology whereby the entirety of the manuscript content formed the scholar's opinion about any text.⁵

The manuscript, as an object, becomes the stage. Its nonliterary elements—medium (tablet, scroll, papyrus, codex) and constitutive facets (sheets, quires, columns, ink color)—become the set. But how about the actors? The original scribe, the readers who left annotations, the commentators who provided marginal notes and sometimes longer commentaries, and the dotters who disambiguated readings. Then there are the illuminators, binders, and a chain of users, all of whom left traces in colophons and added other paratextual elements. Obviously, the original author wrote the play but it is these actors who performed it. This is how the manuscript became a living document.

It is the play that we aim to bring to the spotlight in this volume. The papers presented here are the result of two workshops held at the Institute of Advanced Study, Princeton, in 2018 and 2019. The first focused on paratextual elements, in other words, everything but the main texts; the second focused on the main texts but from the point of view of our actors, the scribes and the paratext contributors, not the original author. Our aim in both workshops was, in the words of J. R. Royse, to “virtually look over the scribe's shoulder” in order to bring out the full story of the manuscript.

The volume consists of fourteen papers. They span various cultures of the Middle East and demonstrate a cross cultural collective of scribal habits. Linguistically, the current authors cover Arabic, Hebrew, Persian, Syriac, and Turkish—one paper even Sumerian. With regards to the paratextual objects under discussion, they range from macro-elements (chapter headings and chapter divisions) to micro-elements (dotting and diacritical marks) and anything in between (marginalia and supralinear annotations).

⁵ For New Philology, see, e.g., *Snapshots of Evolving Traditions: Jewish and Christian Manuscript Culture, Textual Fluidity, and New Philology*. Edited by Liv Ingeborg Lied and Hugo Lundhaug (Texte und Untersuchungen zur Geschichte der altchristlichen Literatur 175. Berlin: De Gruyter, 2017).

The long discussions during our workshops demonstrated that scribal habits transcend language and faith. The main literary authors are distinctly Jewish, Christian, or Muslim. But the acts of *our* actors—the scribes, readers, owners, and users—transcend faith and linguistic traditions.

Our actors performed. Their craft allowed an interdisciplinary band of scholars—the paratext critics—to produce this volume.

George A. Kiraz and Sabine Schmidtke