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Gender and the Academy Online: The Authentic Revelations of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife*

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Usually I write about dead people. Dead people cannot ostracize you, dead people cannot eviscerate you in another publication, dead people can be safer objects of inquiry than the living. This paper, however, analyzes the living—the way we as a field responded to the appearance of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* fragment (GJW), and what that says about Biblical Studies. In particular, I wish to look at issues of authenticity. The authenticity of the fragment itself lay at the center of the maelstrom. I seek to untangle more nebulous markers of authenticity as well. I argue that the debate about the authenticity of the document hinged in no small part on these *other* markers of authenticity (in addition to the traditional means of documenting an ancient text). First, GJW simultaneously exposed our society's privileging of "hard" scientific modes of inquiry to determine authenticity over traditional humanistic ones and the inadequacy of those scientific methods to provide the certainty we crave. Second, even our traditional humanist research methods proved unsatisfying in the absence of very particular political and ethical commitments—namely, transparency about provenance. Third, the debate demonstrated that deeply entrenched social markers of authenticity of individuals—status, gender, identity—affect the academic production of knowledge. Finally, the authentic revelations of this text include the deep conservatism of our field, which includes a distrust of digital scholarship and digital publishing (including the openness it enables).

The GJW affair has taught us at least as much, if not more, about how authenticity operates in the academy as about authenticating ancient manuscripts. Moreover, I argue, these two are not separate issues—debates about *personal* authenticity in academia's prestige economy directly influence scholarly work regarding the authenticity of *texts*. As scholarship becomes more digital, as our work is increasingly conducted online, our awareness of our own political and ideological commitments—and how they matter—becomes increasingly important.

When I use the terms "authentic" and "authenticity" in this essay, when I talk about the authenticity of the *fragment itself*, I do not mean authenticity in terms of authorship (i.e., is this really a Gospel written by "Jesus' Wife"?) or even if it is authentically from someone who knew Jesus, or even if it provides authentic evidence that Jesus had a wife. Scholarly consensus from the beginning dismissed this text as historical evidence that Jesus had a wife, or as a document ultimately originating from Jesus' own time. When I speak of the authenticity of the fragment, I use the benchmark set by Karen King: whether this is an ancient text, written down in this form at some point in late antiquity (according to King, around the fourth century).

Markers of Authenticity for the Manuscript

At this point, the scholarly conversation over the authenticity of the fragment itself is well documented online and in published journals, and James McGrath's essay in this same volume speaks to the role of bloggers in this conversation. I also refer readers to Michael W. Grondin's three-part timeline for a concise history.[1] I am on record stating that I believe the piece to be a forgery, or at the very least, not an ancient witness to an ancient text.[2] So I do not seek to re-argue points against or in favor of the *fragment's* authenticity here; rather, I wish to highlight the principle criteria for determining authenticity and weigh *their* significance.

The primary means of determining the authenticity of GJW proved to be related to questions about transparency regarding the collection of documents to which it belonged and provenance. Other methods for testing and studying the fragment in isolation proved inconclusive at worst and unsatisfying at best. In this section, I seek to review the primary criteria used to measure the fragment's authenticity and explore what the success or failure of those criteria says about our field. The methods and markers I will examine include scientific testing, paleography, philology and close reading, linguistics, and provenance studies.

Scientific Testing

Early press coverage of GJW quickly zeroed in on two measures of determining authenticity: the credentials of the scholars involved, and the availability of scientific testing.[3] Regarding the latter methodology, the first articles in the *New York Times* and the *Smithsonian* stated that Karen King and her colleagues believed the document to be authentic, but that scientific tests of the papyrus had yet to be conducted. Ink and carbon-dating tests, they noted, could possibly confirm or call into question King's dating of the document. Other scholars

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[1] Grondin, "Question of Content"; Grondin, "Jesus' Wife Fragment 2014"; Grondin, "Jesus' Wife Fragment 2015."
[2] Le Donne, "Interview with Schroeder."
[3] Goodstein, "Historian Says"; Goodstein, "Fresh Doubts"; Goodstein, "Papyrus"; and Sabar, "Inside Story."

(including myself) maintained that such tests could quite likely prove inconclusive: a smart forger could use a scrap of old papyrus and concoct ink that could fool such tests. Nonetheless, the question remained pressing. So pressing that in April 2014 *Harvard Theological Review* published alongside King's article about the fragment several other articles dedicated to tests and examinations of the manuscript to determine its authenticity. Of the seven articles and one response devoted to GJW in the issue, four were dedicated to "scientific testing": chemical testing of the ink, infrared microspectroscopy of the papyrus, and two reports on radiocarbon dating.[4] Although the scientists conducting the tests and writing the reports remained circumspect about their findings—maintaining that the results were not proof of the text's antiquity—nonetheless these scientific tests were marshaled in arguments defending the fragment's authenticity as a fourth-century document. King's own article made use of these findings as key evidence for her assertions that accusations of forgery were unwarranted (e.g., "Current testing thus supports the conclusion that the papyrus and ink of GJW are ancient").[5] The Harvard University website devoted to GJW still proclaims (as of 12 June 2016) as a main headline that "Testing indicates 'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' Papyrus Fragment to be Ancient" and that "scientific testing of the papyrus and ink . . . demonstrated that the material is ancient."[6] Antiquity here serves as proxy for authenticity; no mention is made of the emerging consensus regarding forgery, nor of the fact that a document could be forged while simultaneously "passing" the tests.

Even into 2016, media coverage continued to ask whether "scientific" inquiry can trump the more "fuzzy" humanities methods; can we find a test that will prove once and for all that the document was written in antiquity?[7] Although these tests have produced conclusions about the fragment, they have proven inconclusive in terms of determining authenticity.

Paleography

Another methodology applied to the fragment was paleography, the study of manuscript production and ancient handwriting. Paleography is often used to date manuscripts, although the accuracy of this methodology has come into question recently by papyrologists such as Brent Nongbri.[8] Speculation about the possible forgery of the fragment arose in no small part due to questions about the handwriting. Soon after the announcement about the text, Alin Suciu and Hugo Lundhaug on Suciu's blog, as well as others on the Evangelical

[4] Azzarelli, Goods, and Swager, "Study of Two Papyrus Fragments"; Hodgins, "Accelerated Mass Spectrometry"; Tuross, "Accelerated Mass Spectrometry"; Yardley and Hagadorn, "Characterization."

[5] King, "'Jesus said to them'," 7–8, 33–34 (quotation from p. 8).

[6] Beasley, "Testing."

[7] Baden and Moss, "Why Scientists."

[8] Nongbri, "Limits of Palaeographic Dating"; Nongbri, "Use and Abuse of P52."

Textual Criticism blog, raised questions about the shapes and strokes of the letters.[9] They simply did not look ancient.

In her original draft article entitled, "'Jesus said to them, "My wife…"': A New Coptic Gospel Papyrus," published on Harvard University's website in September 2012, King anticipated questions about paleography, noting that she had consulted experts in papyrology and addressing questions raised by the anonymous peer reviewers based on paleography. I quote the relevant passages:

> In March, 2012, she transported the papyrus to the Institute for the Study of the Ancient World in New York, where it was viewed by the Institute's director and renowned papyrologist, Roger Bagnall and by AnneMarie Luijendijk (Princeton). Our lengthy discussion about the characteristics of the papyrus (detailed below) concluded with the judgement that the papyrus was very likely an authentic ancient text that could be dated on paleographical grounds to circa 4th c. C.E. On this basis, work began in earnest on a critical edition, translation, and interpretation of the fragment.
>
> In August, 2012, a version of the present article was submitted to the *Harvard Theological Review* for consideration for publication. In the course of the normal external review process, reviewers differed in their judgments about authenticity. One accepted the fragment, but two raised questions, without yet being entirely certain that it is a fake, and suggested review by experienced Coptic papyrologists and testing of the chemical composition of the ink. The third reviewer provided detailed comments on a number of difficulties with the text's grammar and paleography. Neither of the reviewers who questioned the fragment's authenticity was aware that Bagnall had already seen the actual fragment and judged it to be authentic. Their own views were based on relatively low resolution photographs of the fragment.[10]

I will return to this passage in a moment, when I address issues of authenticity in the academy, and particularly in the academic prestige economy, but for now I wish to focus on paleography. King did her due diligence in this area, consulting with Bagnall (a papyrologyist) and Luijendijk (a papyrologist with expertise in Coptic). Doubts about the fragment, however, were raised immediately by the peer reviewers, and in her article King displays transparency in acknowledging their questions, and determination in asserting nonetheless that the fragment is likely from the fourth century. This original draft article set the stage for the paleographical debate that would ensue for the next two years. Paleography alone could not be relied upon as an "objective"

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[9] Suciu and Lundhaug, "So-Called Gospel."
[10] King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), 3–4.

measure of authenticity. Discussion continued on social media and in the blogosphere, with the handwriting on the fragment emerging as a key source of doubt regarding its authenticity.[11]

The special issue of *HTR* focusing on GJW included one article devoted entirely to paleography. The piece was authored by one of the foremost experts in Coptic papyrology, Malcolm Choat. Ultimately, it concluded that elements of the fragment could be interpreted as pointing in the direction of a forgery, while other elements evinced characteristics of ancient handwriting.[12] The evaluation was inconclusive. King's revised version of her draft article was suitably updated to take this new research into account.

Linguistics

Linguistic issues also arose as criteria for determining authenticity from the very beginning, but as with other methods, for the most part they pushed the evaluation in the direction of forgery. Leo Depuydt and Gesine Schenke Robinson immediately noted the grammatical problems with the text—errors that went beyond the possibility of a sloppy or under-educated ancient scribe.[13]

Slavomír Čéplö went so far as to conduct a computational study of the syntax of GJW back in 2012. Čéplö looked at the linguistic construction "peje-"—translated "(pronoun) said"—in GJW, and computed how many times the construction appears in the Sahidic versions of the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Thomas, and with what combinations of following words.[14] The results of his computational study are that the construction in GJW has no parallels in the other five texts, and that such a construction is not only awkward but exceedingly unlikely in the wild. Now granted, a more definitive study would include all of the Nag Hammadi corpus, but I think these five gospels proved to be a good sample. Čéplö thus confirmed the nature of the text as forgery; late antique Egyptians simply did not speak and write in the way presented in the new "gospel" fragment. Unfortunately, Čéplö's work was not really discussed much in the blogosphere, despite its importance (in my opinion).

Philology & Close Reading

The backbone of scholarly humanistic inquiry—philology and close reading—dominated early exploration of the fragment's authenticity. Everyone noted the

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[11] Suciu and Lundhaug, "So-Called Gospel."
[12] Choat, "Preliminary Paleographical Assessment."
[13] Depuydt is quoted in Farrior, "Divorcing Mrs. Jesus"; see Robinson's comment on Halton's blog post ("'Gospel of Jesus's Wife' Saga"), reposted as its own blog post: Robinson and Halton, "Gesine Robinson."
[14] Čéplö, "Tahime."

similarity of the vocabulary in the fragment to the vocabulary of the *Gospel of Thomas*. For King, the shared vocabulary corroborated the document's ancient milieu; it fit quite nicely with other fourth-century Coptic documents found at Nag Hammadi.[15] For skeptics, philological close reading provided mounting evidence of forgery. And the closer the skeptics read, the higher that mountain of evidence grew. Francis Watson of Durham University posted a number of online essays on Mark Goodacre's blog and helped launch the argument that GJW was a forgery based on snippets copied from the *Gospel of Thomas*.[16] What began with very basic questions about vocabulary—such as, what is the likelihood of all these key words (Mary, Jesus, wife, mother, disciple, gave-me-life) occurring in such a small space?—soon turned to the realization by many that the fragment copied direct phrases from the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*. Ultimately this led to Andrew Bernhard's and Mark Goodacre's discovery that the fragment even reproduces a typographical error in Michael Grondin's online interlinear translation of the Coptic *Gospel of Thomas*.[17] Philology also helped pound the final nail in the coffin for the fragment: Christian Askeland concluded that GJW was a forgery because it was copied by the same hand as a fragment of the Gospel of John that accompanied GJW in the materials presented to King by the manuscripts' owner, and the John fragment was clearly a forgery—a copy of a Coptic version of John in Cambridge known as the Qau codex.[18] Askeland's philological expertise led to this discovery; he completed his dissertation on the Coptic Bible at Cambridge and published a book on the Coptic Gospel of John and was intimately familiar with the Qau codex.

Provenance

While the traditional humanistic methodologies of philology and linguistics pointed us to a clear conclusion to the question of authenticity, one other contributing factor must be mentioned: transparency about the fragment's ownership, collection history, and provenance. As one of the conditions of studying the document, King agreed to keep the name of the owner and some of the documentation about the fragment and the rest of its collection private. Askeland was able to uncover the fraudulent John manuscript that was in the same collection *only* because an image of that papyrus was published online as part of the documentation for the scientific testing results published in *HTR*.

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[15] King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), *inter alia*.
[16] See this revised version of a report first posted 20 September 2012: Watson, "Fake Gospel-Fragment." For a full account of Watson's work on Goodacre's blog, see Goodacre's roundup "Revised Versions of Francis Watson's Articles."
[17] Bernhard, "Patchwork"
[18] Askeland, "Jesus Had a Sister-in-Law."

Only because additional information about the collection was released could we arrive at our current state of knowledge regarding the fragment.

Roberta Mazza, a papyrologist at Manchester, has been outspoken on issues of provenance for the past several years, weighing in not only on this controversy but also regarding the Green collection of biblical papyri and private collections generally. Mazza maintains that holding back information about an ancient object's provenance hinders scholarship and contributes to an unethical (and often illegal) antiquities market.[19] The war and political upheaval in the Middle East have resulted in a wave of unprovenanced, illegal antiquities for sale to predominantly wealthy Western buyers. Academics' responsibility, she argues, should be to eschew publication of private collections unless their provenance is assured and clearly documented. Doing otherwise feeds the antiquities market and undermines the production of knowledge at the heart of scholarship. Provenance and collection history lead scholars to important conclusions about the documents, and sometimes to matching fragmentary documents with their lost partner-fragments. In 2014 Mazza wrote:

> In presenting the results of research to peers and the public, academics use means of communication and follow rules that are centred on the values of trust and accountability. Good arguments in any scholarly discussion are based on a method that provides sources and data that not only proves the points, but is also reliable and verifiable . . .
>
> The lack of discussion on provenance, including acquisition history, is bad practice, and it is usually criticized by academics because it deprives the readers of important data for verifying the reliability of the arguments made in publications. It also goes against one of the principles of our profession, the advancement of scholarship and knowledge, because it denies the possibility to open (or exclude) further research on the above-mentioned manuscript's history and connections.
>
> Besides all this, to avoid discussion of provenance undermines trust: would you trust someone who conceals information?[20]

Mazza was not alone in calling on King to release all provenance information and collection history about the fragment. Certainly, if all of the collection had been released in 2012 when the existence of GJW was announced, we would have arrived at our current conclusions about the

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[19] Like many of the participants in this scholarly conversations, Mazza publishes much of her work on these issues online, in her blog and on Twitter. Mazza has a collection of essays under the topic of "provenance" on her blog Faces and Voices: https://facesandvoices.wordpress.com/category/provenance/.

[20] Mazza, "Provenance Issues."

fragment far, far sooner. Moreover, Mazza's ethical and political questions about how our work with private, secret, or unprovenanced material might aid the antiquities markets have not received enough attention in Biblical Studies. She calls on us to reckon with the political and ethical consequences of our work—not an easy conversation, but a necessary one.

Mazza frames the current state of scholarship as one in which transparency and openness about provenance and collection history are the standards.

> For those who work with artefacts reliability and access to as many details as possible related to the ancient sources under scrutiny, often published for the first time, is particularly important. Images and other key-information are provided, including a clear discussion of the archaeological provenance and acquisition history of the object in question. In the case of papyrus editions, this has become the norm.[21]

I would argue, however, that this "norm" is still not as normative as we would like. In May 2015, the University of Virginia acquired a papyrus fragment.[22] The initial announcement made no mention of provenance; on Facebook I immediately raised the question of provenance and collection history. Brice Jones and Dorothy King emailed the university's library to inquire directly. As it turns out, the University of Virginia purchased the fragment without even thinking to ask for information about provenance—this in 2015, after controversies about the Sappho papyrus, Green collection, and GJW fragment, and after countless news stories about ISIS selling looted antiquities to support its war.[23]

Transparency about provenance and collection history, I would argue, is not as normative as it should be.[24] All of us working on papyri or Coptic literature have built our scholarly reputations on stolen or looted cultural heritage (and in Biblical Studies, exhibit A is Codex Sinaiticus.) Transparency is not currently a methodology but a political and ethical commitment. Ultimately, all the scholarly methodologies applied to GJW give us only a fraction of the information a political and ethical commitment to transparency could provide.

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[21] Ibid.
[22] Whitesell, "Please Welcome P. Virginia 1."
[23] Whitesell, "Problematic Provenance."
[24] See also Robinson's mention of the *Gospel of Judas* as a similar cautionary tale in "How a Papyrus Fragment Became a Sensation."

Conclusions

Of all these potential markers of authenticity, the "fuzzy" humanities methods have proven sharper than "hard science." Moreover, I would argue that scientific testing as a measure of authenticity has proven problematic in one important way: in directing our attention away from the most human and political means of determining authenticity—i.e., disclosing full information about the collection and the provenance of the fragment. The scholarly community has expressed our disappointment about the paucity of information regarding the owner and the provenance of the collection. However, King promised the fragment's owner anonymity, thus putting her in a strange bind: questionable for agreeing to keep the owner's identity private but laudable for keeping her promise in the face of enormous pressure.[25]

Unless a legal non-disclosure agreement has been signed, in the face of competing ethical obligations, the scholar's primary obligation should be to transparency of knowledge in the field. There are two issues here: 1) the continued secrecy about the identity of the owner, especially when a fraud has possibly been perpetrated not only on our scholarly community, but on the general public; and 2) the pursuit of expensive scientific testing that diverts both financial resources and scholarly attention away from other pursuits. As I have argued, such transparency has *not* been the norm in the field, and I find myself forced to consider that were I in King's position, I too might have agreed to non-disclosure, as well, at that time. Now, however, we are past that point. One of the revelations of the GJW controversy is that in the academic production of knowledge, our political commitments matter as much as our methodological expertise. As we move forward as a scholarly community, we need to apply self-scrutiny when we use the "pursuit of knowledge" to rationalize what we now know to be ethically murky work.

Scholarly Status and Authenticity

Equally important over the last three years, I argue, have been markers of authenticity that adhere to the participants in the conversation. Markers of authenticity in the academic prestige economy influenced the scholarly conversation in both predictable and surprising ways. In particular I am interested in the traditional peer review process compared to the digital publication cycle, the status markers of academics' physical and social locations (both institutions and social networks), and gender. These markers of personal authenticity intersected and at times conflicted in interesting ways, with some actors in the GJW controversy privileging some measures of

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[25] Andrew Bernhard ("Call for Closure"), who has called on King to release all the documents, has written: "I also respect that she has maintained her personal commitment not to the identity of the owner of the *Gospel of Jesus' Wife* for so long."

authenticity, and other actors privileging different measures. In particular, Harvard and King proceeded according to fairly traditional markers of personal and institutional authenticity, while in the blogging world and in social media, those markers held little weight. Gender, I will argue, cut across all of them.

The Traditional Publishing Cycle vs. Digital Publishing/Blogging

King's research on the papyrus fragment followed a traditional model of scholarly production. The initial essay adhered to a predictable process of authentication. King, the author, worked on her edition, translation, and article, consulting with known experts in the field, and submitted her work for peer review by *HTR*. King then responded to criticisms levied in the peer reviews and the article was accepted for publication. This is a fairly traditional publication cycle, and although one might think that the referees' criticisms were rather serious, one cannot argue that the process was entirely flawed: King was transparent in her initial *HTR* pre-publication essay regarding the major criticisms of the referees.[26]

I want to compare the subsequent online modes of scholarship with this process. One might be tempted to argue that they existed in conflict, or that they represented two distinctive modes of scholarly inquiry: blogging/social media in a digital ecosystem compared to traditional scholarly peer review, versus a more "democratic" or unregulated free-for-all online. However, I posit that the digital conversation online represented a kind of telescoping of traditional scholarly publication practices. Research and scholarly conversations that would normally have taken years to unfold occurred over the course of weeks or months online. Although particular *actors* in this scholarly conversation occupied different social and physical locations, and disseminated their work in these different locations, nevertheless, the online work in some ways mimicked traditional scholarship, except that it operated at a speed heretofore unseen in Biblical Studies because it was not bound by administrative structures of traditional peer reviewed publishing. Blogs such as Evangelical Text Criticism and Mark Goodacre's NT Blog published research on the fragment, and the online scholarly community functioned essentially as crowd-sourced peer review in comments on the blogs and in social media discussion about the blog posts on Facebook and Twitter.[27]

The work that Watson, Grondin, Robinson, Bernhard, Goodacre, and Askeland conducted was in many cases the quality of work one would expect from traditional peer-reviewed scholarship. In fact, much of this work was later revised into peer-reviewed articles in *New Testament Studies* in 2015, of which Watson is the editor. The impact of their work, however, peaked long before

[26] King, "'Jesus said to them'" (draft), 3-4.
[27] Note James McGrath's discussion of the speed and quality of this conversation in his contribution to this volume.

the publication of the *NTS* volume; the peer review process lent the articles a patina of official authenticity, but the argumentation within these pieces had already been accepted by the scholarly community as authentic.

Returning to King's publication cycle, as online scholarship accumulated, King chose to continue publishing in traditional modes. Rather than engage with the blogosphere and social media by publishing responses online on Harvard's Gospel of Jesus' Wife website or on the blogs (ETC, Goodacre's blog) and social media sites (Twitter and Facebook), King chose to follow the path of peer review. The 2012 *HTR* essay was pulled—by whom I do not know, whether by King, *HTR*, Harvard, or by mutual agreement—and King pursued the route of scientific testing and private consultation with experts. This research culminated in the *HTR* issue in 2014, at which point King's article "'Jesus said to them, "My wife…"'" was finally officially published. Although King gave papers and talks on the fragment, and conducted media interviews with the *New York Times* and *Smithsonian*, she chose not to engage on social media or blogs. The *HTR* issue addressed some of the concerns that had been raised online, but in the context of a traditional peer-reviewed journal article. Therefore, digital scholarship and traditional scholarship continued along somewhat parallel but separate tracks until this point.

One small adaptation to the new norms of digital scholarship ultimately led to the uncovering of the document as a fraud. When *HTR* published the articles on paleography, scientific testing, and King's own work, Harvard and King also released online the original reports and data from the ink and papyrus tests, including images of the aforementioned Gospel of John papyrus in the collection along with supplementary documentation. These materials appeared as a digital companion of sorts to the traditional journal release.

Since the *HTR* issue appeared, all of the significant analysis of the fragment has taken place on blogs, email lists, and social media. As mentioned, *New Testament Studies* published a recent issue with several articles arguing for forgery, almost all of which were once non-peer-reviewed, digital publications. Thus, the traditional peer-reviewed record recapitulated the original work of new media. One of the most remarkable turning points that signaled the shift in the location of scholarly knowledge production from the traditional to the digital occurred when renowned Coptologist Stephen Emmel posted a pdf on Alin Suciu's blog, documenting all the reasons he believed GJW to be a forgery.[28] In format and style, Emmel's essay resembled a traditional journal article, not a blog post or social media conversation; nonetheless, the fact that even Emmel, known for his cautious, traditional peer-reviewed scholarship, entered the online conversation signaled that scholarly knowledge production had moved online.

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[28] Emmel, "Codicology."

Professional Status

The academic currency of peer review goes hand in hand with other aspects of the academic prestige economy. Academic gossip has long held that the status of the institution rubs off on the status of a scholar, with a somewhat unofficial recognition that outstanding scholars may exist outside of elite institutions, but the reputation of an elite institution contributes further to the reputation of its scholars. Recent work on the prestige economy of higher education has revealed that the status of one's institution is indeed a factor in determining the career trajectory of individual scholars. One particular study of PhD programs has demonstrated that most hires at the most elite universities—so-called "Research 1" universities—come from a pool of PhD candidates at a few elite universities' graduate programs.[29] We all know that the resources at elite institutions—research funding, lower teaching loads, the ability to teach seminars in one's research area, etc.—also contribute to the academic prestige economy; faculty at these institutions produce more publications in part because they have more resources to do so.

During the GJW controversy, the status of most of the scholars producing new knowledge in online communities and the status of scholars working in the traditional peer review realm were quite distinct. With the exception of Mark Goodacre and Francis Watson, most of the bloggers and participants on social media producing new knowledge about the fragment were not established scholars at elite research universities.[30] Grondin and Bernhard are independent scholars, and Christian Askeland was teaching at the Kirchliche Hochschule Wuppertal, a very small theological school in Germany. James McGrath is at Butler. Anthony Le Donne, one of the editors of the Jesus Blog who blogged about the document and then wrote a book about it, was an adjunct instructor at the University of the Pacific for a time before moving to a tenure-track position at the United Theological Seminary.[31] Gesine Schenke Robinson also circulated criticisms of the GJW publication process over email and blogs; Robinson is a well-known Coptologist with a contract position at Claremont Graduate University. The experts consulted for King's original article, on the other hand, most definitively came from the realm of the academic elite: tenured or tenure-track faculty at premier research universities. King consulted with Roger Bagnall of New York University, AnneMarie

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[29] Clauset, Arbesman, and Larremore, "Systematic Inequality"; see also Oprisko, "Superpowers."

[30] Candida Moss, as professor at the University of Notre Dame, is also quite high status by traditional metrics. Moss's work significantly influenced the public dissemination of GJW scholarship being produced online. In what follows, I examine the status of the scholars producing new knowledge about the fragment itself, rather than scholars producing knowledge about the controversy.

[31] Le Donne, *Wife of Jesus*.

Luijendijk of Princeton, and Ariel Shisha Halevy of the Hebrew University of Jerusalem before going public.

Moreover, Harvard's stature as "Harvard" enabled the massive publicity machine that accompanied the original press release about the document: a front page *New York Times* article appeared the day after King's first presentation on the document at the International Association of Coptic Studies Congress. Reporters also swarmed the Congress the day after the presentation, putting microphones in front of bewildered scholars who had come to discuss their own latest arcane research. And a Smithsonian Channel documentary was arranged. The publicity roll-out for this fragment reflected the importance of Harvard as much as it did the fragment, possibly even more so. In all, the initial publicity surrounding the announcement of the fragment reflected the high status of the scholar, her institution, and her network.

New Media as a Platform for Knowledge Production

This division in status between the scholars writing online and those producing traditional peer-reviewed publications is not unique to Biblical Studies. Bonnie Stewart's work on academic social media has demonstrated that markers of authenticity on academic social media differ from those in traditional scholarship.

On social media (including academic circles on social media) authenticity is not measured using the same criteria as in the traditional academic prestige economy. Social media participants judge authenticity by level of engagement, not traditional status markers. This holds true especially on so-called "academic Twitter," where Stewart's research has shown that the "the impression of capacity for meaningful contribution" to a conversation carries more weight than credentials such as university ranking or tenure status.[32] Stewart writes,

> How do scholars within open networks judge whether another scholar's signals are credible or worthy of engagement? . . . [they employ] complex logics of influence to assess the networked profiles and behaviors of peers and unknown entities. Significantly, these logics of influence depart from the codified terms of rank and bibliometric indexing on which conventional academic influence is judged. While some are numeric—participants recognized relatively large-scale accounts as a general signal of influence—recognizability and commonality are as important as or more important than quantifiable measures or credentials.[33]

[32] Stewart, "Open to Influence."
[33] Ibid., 287. The quotation is taken from the article's abstract.

Perceptions of engagement, shared interests, and shared viewpoints contribute to influence and status on social media.

Stewart's research on networked scholarship was vindicated in two ways during the GJW controversy. First, the logics of engagement and shared interests were at work on the Evangelical Text Criticism blog, where Askeland published his research proving GJW was a forgery. The Evangelical Text Criticism blog is a community that is exactly what it says it is: a site for evangelical Christians with interests in text criticism to come together and discuss the Bible. A shared religious commitment is a key factor in this community's identity; the tagline reads, "A forum for people with knowledge of the Bible in its original languages to discuss its manuscripts and textual history from the perspective of historic evangelical theology." The vast majority of contributors to the blog are also male; of the 18 contributors currently listed on the website, only one is a woman.

When Askeland posted his "smoking gun" blog post, he originally titled it "Jesus's Wife had an ugly sister-in-law"; by sister-in-law he was referring to the aforementioned fragment of the Gospel of John in the same collection of materials as GJW. Eva Mroczek, Meredith Warren, and other feminist scholars began to question the title of Askeland's post. Mroczek stated that it "plays on old tropes that have long alienated and shamed women—not just scrutinizing them for their appearance, but allegorizing them to make negative points." Additional comments were made in support of her initial post but some were removed by Askeland, who characterized them as "combative."[34] Some of the factors Stewart has identified as relevant for social networking and perceptions of authenticity online are operating here, in particular shared gender and religious identities. Askeland's status as a reputable Coptic scholar contributed to his authority in determining authenticity, but within this online community, so did his gender and religious commitments. Mroczek, Warren, and their allies (some of whom were men writing in support of the women scholars) were feminist outsiders and critics of evangelical Christian biblical interpretation. Noteworthy in this regard also is an email sent by Brown University's Leo Depuydt to journalists and scholars stating his support of Askelend's findings and making serious accusations against King: "When is this papyrological pantomime, this Keystone Coptic, this academic farce, this philological burlesque finally going to stop? Is this academic misconduct or is this not academic misconduct?"[35]

[34] Mroczek, "Sexism," examines the discussion and reproduces some of the deleted comments.

[35] The email, dated 24 April 2014, was posted to Gregg W. Schwendner's blog What's New in Papyrology (online: http://papyrology.blogspot.ca/2014/04/christian-askeland-jesus-had-ugly.html). Depuydt is similarly brusque in the final volley in an exchange with King that began with his own contribution to the *HTR* volume ("Alleged Gospel"), continued in King's response ("Response to Leo Depuydt"), and concluded with a further response by Depuydt posted on Mark Goodacre's NT Blog ("Papyrus Fragment"). In this last response, Depuydt marshals evidence to refute King's statement that Depuydt had made an "error of analysis" and

Simultaneously on Twitter and Facebook, the views of scholars such as Alin Suciu, Hugo Lundhaug, Andrew Bernhard, Michael Grondin, Mark Goodacre, and myself gained traction. As I have noted already, with the exceptions of Watson and Goodacre, most of us commenting held low status positions in the academy. Yet our views were held in high regard, I would argue, either because we already had credibility on social media due to perceptions of "engagement and shared interest," or because the networked credibility of one scholar rubbed off on the others (e.g., Goodacre's reputation as a dynamic, responsive tweeter rubbed off on Grondin and Bernhard when he tweeted about their posts on his blog). Grondin and Bernhard also had reputations as digital scholars in Coptic due to their own websites, where Grondin's edition and translation of the *Gospel of Thomas* proved crucial in the argument that GJW was a forgery.

Two other social and digital media phenomena also deserve mention here. Candida Moss of Notre Dame published extensively in *The Daily Beast*, CNN, and *The Atlantic* about the GJW controversy.[36] Moss's writing brought a greater awareness to the general public of the scholarly conversations online. Without her work, arguably the world outside of "academic Twitter" would have little awareness of the contours of the scholarly controversy. Likewise, Eva Mroczek's article in *Religion Dispatches*, "'Gospel of Jesus' Wife' Less Durable than Sexism Surrounding It," earned quite a bit of attention. This piece likely had a substantial number of readers outside the Biblical Studies community and was widely shared and discussed by academics online.

The conversations on Twitter and Facebook contributed to the scholarly consensus on GJW's status as inauthentic, as a forgery. This coheres with Stewart's research on Twitter as a platform for the production of knowledge: scholarship produced in networked online communities is indeed scholarship. Scholars heavily invested in traditional markers of status in the academic prestige economy might dismiss digital platforms, but the scholars on networked media regard it as a legitimate and primary medium for knowledge production. Networked participatory scholarship takes multiple forms, including discovery:

> Participants appeared to carve out regular areas of discussion and investigation for which they become known, in their Twitter circles; peers would then send them links on those topics due to their expressed interests, and signal them into conversations in those areas, thereby extending participants' network reach and visibility. A majority of

in the process implies King is merely "a budding little grammarian" and concludes in a rather patronizing fashion with "So, my little friend, sleep soundly and dream sweetly because there has been no 'error of analysis'" (ibid., 4).

[36] A few examples: Baden and Moss, "New Clues"; Baden and Moss, "Curious Case"; Moss, "Still as Big a Mystery."

> participants reported that this circulation of ideas and resources not only helped them build new knowledge and become aware of new literature in their fields, but also broadened their understanding of alternate viewpoints in their areas of expertise. Twitter was a site of learning and public scholarly contribution.[37]

Moreover, Twitter facilitates interdisciplinary work, because scholars encounter other modes of research online.[38] Finally, digital networks disproportionately engage scholars marked as lower status by various traditional academic criteria of authenticity; they comprise "a means by which women, minorities, and junior scholars could engage openly as public thinkers and experts," whereas senior scholars often eschew the platform.[39]

Gender

The last, but to my mind one of the most important, features of this debate has been gender. Although some of what I have had to say here may appear to be a critique of King, in particular, for choosing not to engage in the digital scholarly conversation, in fact her response (or lack of response) can be understood only when we examine gender as one of the primary markers of authenticity in the academy and in online scholarly communities. We can unpack gender's influence on the scholarly conversation by examining two ways gender operates as a marker of authenticity: women academics in Biblical Studies face pervasive, structural discrimination, and women encounter harassment online at a much higher rate than men.

Charles Haws of the Society of Biblical Literature has conducted several studies of demographic data available from the SBL and national surveys of student degree completion.[40] Women who earn undergraduate degrees in Religious Studies and Biblical Studies go on to complete PhDs at a lower rate than men. And although the raw ratio of women earning PhDs compared to men has increased since the 1990s, the data shows that fewer women than expected are completing their doctorates. In other words, despite an overall increase in women PhDs, the field exhibits a leaky pipeline. Haws took the data on the number of men and women earning Bachelors degrees in Religious Studies as a base cohort of people prepared to go on to graduate work in the field. Then he looked at PhD completion as a percentage of that cohort. The proportion of *prepared women* who go on to complete PhDs has *decreased* compared to *prepared men* who complete PhDs. Somewhere along the way over the past decade and a half, fewer women who are interested in Religious

[37] Stewart, "In Abundance," 323
[38] Ibid., 323.
[39] Ibid., 330.
[40] Haws, "Women Earning Doctorates."

Studies and capable of doing graduate research in the field are completing doctorates compared to men. Women are being squeezed out of our field on a systematic basis.

Another data point on structural inequality involves publication. For two years, Ellen Muehlberger of the University of Michigan tracked the number of female authors in the *Review of Biblical Literature* (of both books and their reviewers), and the percentage of women contributors is consistently and significantly lower than the percentage of women in the Society.[41] Even the *Journal of Early Christian Studies*, whose senior editor was a self-identified feminist, in 2014 published only two articles by women; less than 10% of 2014 *JECS* article authors were women. In other words: even for women who have survived the leaky pipeline, their voices are marginal to the field. [42] For scholars of color, this problem is further magnified. Some of this data, such as the *JECS* statistics, shows that the problem cannot be conveniently blamed on the population of more politically or theologically conservative biblical scholars.

Women on social media and women scholars who publish or appear in interviews in popular media outlets experience also a high degree of harassment and discrimination in the digital realm. In 2014, Pew released a major study about online harassment and concluded that while "men are more likely to experience online harassment," women experience more severe and sustained abuse. Men are called names more frequently, but women online are more likely to experience stalking, sexual harassment, and physical threats. Forty percent of women who had been harassed online reported that it was "extremely or very upsetting," compared to only 17% of men.[43] The sexism and trolling that Classics scholar Mary Beard experiences provides the clearest example of this phenomenon in academia. In one of the most egregious episodes, television critic A. A. Gill opined that Beard was too old and ugly to be on television. Beard, of course, fought back, charging him with clear and blatant misogyny.[44] Beard's response, however, did not end the torrent of sexist abuse sent her way; writers on the internet continued to disparage her for her age, appearance, clothing, and style of speaking.[45] Beard's encounters with her sexist detractors in the media, on blogs, and on Twitter have been documented in a 2014 profile in the *New Yorker*. Beard fights back on social media (by retweeting and responding to even some of her most craven trolls), and in private, by emailing and messaging her detractors. The *New Yorker* profile reveals the amount of labor a high-profile woman academic on social media expends simply in

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[41] Muehlberger, "Review of Biblical Literature"; Muehlberger, "Thoughts after Two Years."
[42] For an explanation of how institutional sexism affects the individual academic, see Bond, "Sexism and NT Scholarship."
[43] Duggan, "Online Harassment."
[44] Rojas, "Mary Beard."
[45] Gill's column in *The Spectator* provides just one example. A Google search will uncover many more, such as Liddle, "It's Not Misogyny."

combating misogyny. This time and the emotional labor constitute expenditures not faced by male academics, or at least not to such a degree.

The risks are high for women academics to engage their critics online. The costs run even higher—their emotional equilibrium, their productivity derailed. These two factors combined (sexism in the academy and online harassment) create a climate that encourages women not to engage in public scholarship, especially in popular online media venues, such as blogs and social media. The risks and costs for women of color run even higher, as Tressie McMillan Cottom has documented in her article, "'Who do you think you are?': When Marginality Meets Academic Microcelebrity"; McMillan Cottom cites the substantial harassment and threats against several Black women academics, including history of Christianity professor Dr. Anthea Butler.[46]

The Responsibilities of Universities

Finally, I wish to note how academic institutions affect these personal markers of authenticity. In the case of the GJW fragment, Harvard leveraged its status and reputation in order to "signal boost" King's scholarship on the manuscript. However, after Askeland and others raised questions about the manuscript's authenticity, King and Harvard both became silent, reacting to virtually none of the news circulating on Facebook, Twitter, and blogs about the manuscript. Harvard also did not publish the *HTR* article as originally planned. King was left in a bit of a lurch: on the forefront in the media about this controversial topic, yet unable to publish her work in *HTR.*

Tressie McMillan Cottom has written about higher education institutions' desire for their faculty to produce public, accessible scholarship, and their simultaneous discouragement of such work. In her blog post, "Everything but the Burden," McMillan Cottom charges that institutions essentially fatten up their faculty before throwing them to the wolves. Public scholarship, media appearances, and public engagement bring prestige and accolades to an institution. They also bring controversy. McMillan Cottom writes, "Basically, the scale of current media is so beyond anything academia can grasp that those with agendas get a leg up on pulling the levers of universities' inherent conservativism." When the inherent conservatism of the university kicks in, the public academic feels vulnerable and censured.[47] The stakes are higher for women and especially women of color than other faculty. And as Anthony Le Donne noted in his book, the online outrage machine was primed to react due to the very title given the papyrus. Writing about his participation on a panel I organized at the University of the Pacific, Le Donne reflects, "What I learned from this experience is that the topic of 'the wife of

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[46] McMillan Cottom, "'Who Do You Think You Are?'"
[47] Ibid.; see also McMillan Cottom, "Everything But The Burden."

Jesus' brings a host of expectations with it. This topic has been sold as a scandal for so long that people can't help but be scandalized by it."[48]

Harvard bears no small amount of responsibility in this controversy—for winding it up and exposing King to the resulting maelstrom. As Eva Mroczek observed, King was subject to derogatory remarks about her appearance and her character.[49] Although I do not know what happened at Harvard, I submit that Harvard did King a disservice by not publishing the *HTR* article right away alongside the work of some of the critics, by not releasing the collection history and provenance information, by neither encouraging King to participate in the online digital scholarship about the fragment nor providing some mechanism for other university representatives to engage (and then supporting those who did), and by not addressing the ongoing social media conversation on the official Harvard GJW website and on social media itself.

From an outsider's perspective, it appears that Harvard did protect King in the ways McMillan Cottom argues all institutions must: by providing resources to deal with the wave of inquiries, academic freedom protections, and generally not throwing King under the bus (as arguably other institutions have done to their controversial faculty). However, Harvard protected its professor at a price, the price of privileging a model of academic knowledge production based on scarcity rather than one based on openness and abundance.[50]

Conclusion: Ceding the Territory

Bonnie Stewart's research suggests that scholarship will increasingly happen online, including in social media circles, because scholars find these venues useful and productive.[51] The groups of scholars who are practicing online scholarship do not always line up with the metrics of traditional academic credentialing. Research is happening online. In this case, it grew primarily on social media and on blogs, particularly on a more conservative, evangelical blog, but that was not the only location: on Facebook and Twitter, scholars who did not identify as evangelical exchanged theories about the document. Academics who dismiss social media and digital publishing do so at their own peril—especially scholars who dismiss the conservatism or tone of the blogs. To dismiss this work is to cede the territory of future scholarly conversation. The transformation of blog posts into the *New Testament Studies* issue on GJW proves that the landscape is shifting, and that the digital production of knowledge bears fruit in the more traditional academic publishing pipeline. For

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[48] Le Donne, *Wife of Jesus*, x.
[49] Mroczek, "Sexism."
[50] Here I take language from Stewart's analysis of online networked scholarly practices ("In Abundance").
[51] Stewart ("In Abundance") does note that academics on Twitter have expressed concerns that institutions and other pressures are beginning to constrain the networked participatory scholarship they value.

women scholars, the territory can be a treacherous one, but I would argue that that is all the more reason for self-identified feminist, progressive scholars of early Christianity and the New Testament to engage online and support their female colleagues online, especially senior scholars. To leave this responsibility to women themselves or to early career scholars is unethical and does not contribute to the growth of knowledge in our field.

Finally, digital scholarship is pushing back against the habits of secrecy, seclusion, and private ownership upon which humanities scholarship is currently built: the scholar working in isolation until "ready" to present his/her work to the world, the anonymous peer review system, and mystery and dread about where many of our sources—especially in Coptic—come from. Many of us have made our names studying colonized and/or stolen material. I know I will never look at newly-published and newly-discovered manuscripts in the same way again, and many of my colleagues have shared with me the same sentiment.

The digital, of course, is not synonymous with openness. In *The Immanent Frame*, Kathryn Lofton argues that the digital is often "a place to hide." She presses, "We may see the Internet as an openness, an availability, a potential divulgence of privacy and overexposure of self. But what if it all is just song and dance relative to its basic proposition, namely that none of us never ever get to know what is really going on?"[52] Lofton has a point: digital records are easily confused, altered, and used to misdirect. The digital, as I have argued here, is also a place to bully, a place to force someone (especially a woman) into hiding. We delude ourselves, however, if we believe that the pillars of traditional academic work do not also frequently obscure "what is really going on." The leaky PhD pipeline and our field's publication records show that the traditional apparatus of the academic prestige economy has hidden quite a bit from our view. At this moment, I argue, to hide *from* the digital is to cede the territory to others who will then shape the contours of our field without us.

[52] Lofton, "Digital."

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