LAURA J. HUNT

Jesus Caesar

Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 506

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A Roman Reading of the Johannine Trial Narrative

Mohr Siebeck

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In memory of my father, James Rhen Vance
duo corda habuit, quod duo linguas percalluit, Americam Belgicamque
(adapted from Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 17.17.1)

Preface

This book is an edited version of my PhD thesis, written under the supervision of Catrin H. Williams at the University of Wales, Trinity Saint David, and completed in 2017. It is essentially the same, except that the last chapter (which addressed suggestions for future work in the areas of social identity and power relations) has been removed, and some interaction with Bayes' Theorem has been added. Also, the feedback from my examiners, Professor Helen Bond and Dr. Cornelis Bennema, has been taken in. I am extremely grateful for their careful reading and assistance.

Anyone who has engaged in research knows the immense value of libraries and those who work in them. Without the libraries of the University of Michigan, Spring Arbor University, Moody Theological Seminary, and the Milan Public Library my thesis could not have been written. Special thanks to Joe Cataio from Crowell Library and Kami Moyer from White Library who worked miracles to get me any book or article I asked for. I am also particularly grateful to the many people working in the ILL system at Milan Public Library. I appreciated your work and your smiles more than you could know.

The ideas presented in this book are infused with the influence of two key scholars. J. Brian Tucker encouraged my early ideas and provided an environment where I, and they, could flourish. He has been a gracious exemplar of a scholar, and a source of encouragement throughout. More directly involved in this work, Catrin H. Williams has been the best of all possible supervisors. I enjoyed our time together, yet she has drawn me on to more and better work than I knew I could accomplish. She is knowledgeable, insightful, and unfailingly kind. I gratefully acknowledge my indebtedness and take full responsibility for any and all shortcomings.

Proofreading is a thankless but essential task, and I am endebted to Kristyn Woodworth, William Beachy and Clayton Blackwell for their kindness.

To my family, I love you each and all. Kevin, thank you especially for the weekly writing meetings that kept me on track. Josh, thank you for your eagle-eye editing. And last because you are not least, Doug, thank you for your steadfast, 1 Corinthians 13 kind of love.

Willis, Michigan, September 2019 Laura J. Hunt

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List of Abbreviations

All abbreviations in this work follow Billie Jean Collins, Bob Buller, and John F. Kutsko, eds. *The SBL Handbook of Style: For Biblical Studies and Related Disciplines*, 2nd edn., Atlanta: SBL Press, 2014. Additions and corrections are listed below.

Furthermore, semiotic discussions accord with the following conventions: 'Single slashes indicate something intended as an expression or a sign-vehicle, while guillemets indicate something intended as content. Therefore, *//automobile//* is the object corresponding to the verbal expression /automobile/, and both refer to the content unit «automobile»'.[1]

Note that all Bible and foreign language translations are the author's unless otherwise marked.

BKT	Berliner Klassikertexte
CAH	Cambridge Ancient History
ChLA	*Chartae latinae antiquiores*. Edited by Albert Bruckner and Robert Marichal. 49 vols. Dietikon-Zurich: Graf, 1954–1998.
CII	See *CIJ*
CIJ	*Corpus inscriptionum judaicarum*. Edited by Jean-Baptiste Frey. 2 vols. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1936–1952.
CLA	*Codices latini antiquiores*
CLA Addenda 1	'Addenda to *Codices latini antiquiores*'. Bernhard Bischoff and Virginia Brown. MS 47 (1985): 317–66.
CLA Addenda 2	'Addenda to *Codices latini antiquiores* (II)'. Bernhard Bischoff, Virginia Brown, and James J. John. MS 54 (1992): 286–307.
ClQ	*Classical Quarterly*
CLSCC	Cognitive Linguistic Studies in Cultural Contexts
C.P.	*Collected Papers*. Charles Sanders Peirce
C. Pap. Jud.	*Corpus papyrorum judaicarum*
CPL	*Corpus papyrorum latinarum*
CPR	*Corpus papyrorum Raineri*
DELG	*Dictionnaire étymologique de la langue grecque: Histoire des mots*. Pierre Chantraine. 4 vols. Paris: Klincksieck, 1968–1977.
EAGLL	*Encyclopedia of Ancient Greek Language and Linguistics*. Edited by Georgios K. Giannakis. Brill Online, 2013.
EAH	*The Encyclopedia of Ancient History*. Edited by Roger S. Bagnall, Kai

[1] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), xi.

	Brodersen, Craige B. Champion, Andrew Erskine, and Sabine R. Huebner. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2013.
EDH	'Epigraphic Database Heidelberg'. Heidelberger Akademie der Wissenschaften. http://edh-www.adw.uni-heidelberg.de/home
ELL	*Encyclopedia of Language and Linguistics*. Edited by Keith Brown. 2nd edn. Oxford: Elsevier, 2006, online.
FALS	*A Latin Dictionary: Founded on Andrews' Edition of Freund's Latin Dictionary*. Charlton T. Lewis and Charles Short. Oxford: Clarendon, 1879, online, Perseus Digital Library.
GE	*The Brill Dictionary of Ancient Greek*. Franco Montanari. Leiden: Brill, 2015.
IAph2007	*Inscriptions of Aphrodisias*. Edited by Joyce M. Reynolds, Charlotte Roueché, and Gabriel Bodard. London: King's College London, 2007, online. http://insaph.kcl.ac.uk/iaph2007
IEph	*Die Inschriften von Ephesos*
IGLS	*Inscriptions grecques et latines de la Syrie*
ILS	*Inscriptiones latinae selectae*
IMagnMai	*Die Inschriften von Magnesia am Mäander*
L&S	*A Greek-English Lexicon*. Henry George Liddell and Robert Scott. 9th edn. Oxford: Clarendon, 1968.
LDAB	'Leuven Database of Ancient Books'. Edited by Willy Clarysse et al. http://www.trismegistos.org/ldab/index.php
Mostra[2]	'Papiri letterari e paraletterari'. Pages 81–172 in *Scrivere libri e documenti nel mondo antico: Mostra di papiri della Biblioteca Medicea Laurenziana, Firenze, 25 agosto – 25 settembre 1998*. Edited by Guglielmo Cavallo and Roger S. Bagnall. Papyrologica Florentina 30. Firenze: Gonnelli, 1998.
MP[3]	'Le fichier Mertens-Pack 3'. Edited by Marie-Hélène Marganne and David Linotte. This database is a continuation of previous editions of *The Greek and Latin Literary Texts from Greco-Roman Egypt*. Roger Ambrose Pack. 2nd edn. Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1965. The numbering system used in this second edition has been taken over and expanded for the online database, but the numbers from the first edition (1952) are different. These last are not referenced in this book. http://promethee.philo.ulg.ac.be/cedopalMP3/indexanglaisMP3.aspx.
NA[28]	*Nestle-Aland Novum Testamentum Graece, Greek-English New Testament*. Edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Bruce M. Metzger, Eberhard Nestle, Erwin Nestle, and Carlo M. Martini. 28th edn. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2012.
O. Bodl.	*Greek Ostraca in the Bodleian Library at Oxford and Various Other Collections*
OCCL	*The Oxford Companion to Classical Literature*. Edited by M. C. Howatson. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011, online.
ODB	*The Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium*. Edited by Alexander P. Kazhdan. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005, online.
ODE	*Oxford Dictionary of English*. Edited by Angus Stevenson. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, online.

ODLT	*The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*. Chris Baldick. 3rd edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008, online.
OEAGR	*The Oxford Encyclopedia of Ancient Greece and Rome*. Edited by Michael Gagarin. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010, online.
OLD	*Oxford Latin Dictionary*. Edited by P. G. W. Glare. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982.
O. Wilck.	*Griechische Ostraka aus Aegypten und Nubien*
PC	*Brill's New Pauly: Antiquity Volumes*. Edited by Hubert Cancik and Helmuth Schneider. Brill Online, 2006.
PHI	*Searchable Greek Inscriptions: A Scholarly Tool in Progress*. Packard Humanities Institute. http://epigraphy.packhum.org/inscriptions/
PL	*Papiri latini: Appunti delle lezioni di papirologia*. Aristide Calderini. Milano: Società editrice 'Vita e pensiero', 1945.
PLL	Paul Collart. 'Les papyrus littéraires latins'. *RevPhil* 3.15 (1941): 112–28.
PLP	*Paläographie der lateinischen Papyri*. Richard Seider. Vol. 2.1. Stuttgart: A. Hiersemann, 1978.
P. Masada	*Masada II: The Yigael Yadin Excavations 1963–1965: Final Reports. The Latin and Greek Documents*. Hannah M. Cotton, Joseph Geiger, and J. David Thomas. Jerusalem: Israel Exploration Society, 1989.
P. Mil.	*Papiri milanesi (P. Med.) I. nn. 1–12*. Edited by Sergio Daris. Milano: Società editrice 'Vita e pensiero', 1967.
P. Oxy.	*The Oxyrhnchus Papyri*
P. Lond.	*Greek Papyri in the British Museum*
P. Ross. Georg.	*Papyri russischer und georgischer Sammlungen*
P. Ryl.	*Catalogue of the Greek and Latin Papyri in the John Rylands Library*
PSI	Pubblicazioni della Società Italiana per la Ricerca dei Papiri Greci e Latini in Egitto. *Papiri greci e latini.*
P. Théad	*Papyrus de Théadelphie*
P. Wisc.	*The Wisconsin Papyri*
SEG	*Supplementum epigraphicum graecum*
SEP	*The Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. Edward N. Zalta. Stanford: Stanford University, 2011. http://plato.stanford.edu/
THEMAM	Textes, histoire et monuments de l'Antiquité et du Moyen Age
TM	'Trismegistos'. Edited by Mark Depauw, online. http://www.trismegistos.org/index.html
Typ.	*The Typology of the Early Codex*. Eric G. Turner. Haney Foundation Series 18. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977.
UBS^5	*The Greek New Testament*. Edited by Barbara Aland, Kurt Aland, Johannes Karavidopoulos, Carlo M. Martini, and Bruce M. Metzger. 5th edn. Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2014.

Chapter 1

The Romans, Their Language, and the Gospel of John

This book argues that in the Johannine trial narrative, John presents Jesus in the guise of Caesar.[1] He does so by using words and phrases that signal to those of his auditors who are aware of Roman cultural references, first, that Jesus is worthy of being a Caesar.[2] Second, Jesus is presented in the attire of a Caesar, acclaimed by Roman soldiers, as well as by Pilate who refers to Jesus with a quote from *Aen.* 6.791 describing Augustus Caesar. Third, in this Roman reading of John 18:28–19:22, the character of Pilate emerges as neither strong nor weak but rather as weak *vis à vis* Caesar and strong *vis à vis* the Jews; his character is ultimately concerned with issues of loyalty. These conclusions will develop from the detailed exegesis in Chapters 4–6.[3]

Before turning to exegesis, however, some relevant historical and theoretical foundations must be laid. Chapter 3 will demonstrate that the Roman cultural information necessary for the author of the Gospel of John to make Roman references, and for his auditors to understand them, was available in all three of the geographical locations associated with the production of the Fourth Gospel. Even though they are more visible in Ephesus, indications of the presence of Romans using Latin exist in Antioch and Alexandria as well. More importantly, the inscriptional evidence in these cities are reminders that in the

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[1] The authorship of John is beyond the scope of this study, and the use of 'John' throughout the book should not be construed as implying that authorship is singular or known. For the earliest manuscript evidence connecting the name of John with this Gospel, see the discussion of Udo Schnelle. Note, however, that he rightly emphasizes that 'es handelt sich um das *eine* Evangelium, so wie es Johannes erzählt' (it is the *one* gospel, as John tells it; *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, THKNT 4 [Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998], 346, emphasis original). It is his function as a re-teller of the story that will be emphasized in this study, and the name John will be retained for convenience.

[2] References to auditors and to hearing the Gospel (rather than seeing and reading) will be used throughout this book in recognition that most of the people encountering its words would have heard it read rather than reading it themselves (Lucian *Ind.* 2, 4; Andrew T. Lincoln, *The Gospel According to Saint John*, BNTC [Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2005], 30–31).

[3] While this study will interact with a variety of commentaries on topics of relevance, I have found the following authors to be the most useful on issues of language in general, and of Roman language and culture specifically: Raymond E. Brown, C. Kingsley Barrett, Craig S. Keener, Andrew T. Lincoln, and Jo-Ann Brant. For specific works, see bibliography.

ancient world, as today, people do not live in one culture isolated from all others but rather negotiate the intersections of the cultures that surround them.

The availability of information from these cultures, however, does not imply that all are referenced equally throughout a text. The Fourth Gospel is also intersectional with, for example, Jewish and Samaritan cultural reference (e.g., John 4:21–26). Umberto Eco's semiotic theories, introduced below and elaborated in Chapter 2, highlight the abductive nature of interpretation and thus provide the concepts and terminology to examine Roman cultural units related to Caesar. Accordingly, I will discuss the concentration in John 18:28–19:22 of what Stefan Alkier calls *Haftpunkte*, key words and phrases which indicate not only Roman people acting in a Roman setting but also the salience of Roman references for the interpretation of the Johannine trial narrative. As a preliminary step to that analysis, this chapter will establish the method of interpretation and the approach to language taken in this book. Then, the last part of the chapter will discuss intersecting loyalties and their effect on language use, the cohesion of John's Gospel auditors, and their allegiance to Jesus' versus Caesar's empire.

A. Moving Empire Studies Forward: Issues of Interpretation

The negotiation of loyalty to Rome in the world outside the Gospel of John has been emphasized before.[4] In NT scholarship, however, Roman culture is often eclipsed by Greek.[5] When Wayne Meeks wrote *The Prophet-King* in 1967, he proposed that surveys of Johannine sources should include 'geographically, the whole Mediterranean world' and 'chronologically … the *Roman-Hellenistic* period'.[6] He then listed possibilities for 'dominant influences' as '"Jewish" or "Hellenistic", "Palestinian" or "Diaspora" traditions'.[7] Thus, although 'Roman' is not only referenced but prioritized in his terminology, it is almost absent from his discussion.[8] I highlight Meeks' work only as a representative

[4] E.g., Warren Carter, *John and Empire: Initial Explorations* (New York: T&T Clark, 2008), x.

[5] Christoph Heilig mentions this problem as well (*Hidden Criticism: The Methodology and Plausibility of the Search for a Counter-Imperial Subtext in Paul* [Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017], 92).

[6] Wayne A. Meeks, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology*, NovTSup 14 (Leiden: Brill, 1967), 30, emphasis mine.

[7] Meeks, *Prophet-King*, 30.

[8] He only mentions Roman traditions with reference to the question of who is sitting at the βῆμα in the trial scene (John 19:3), and he does so only *à propos* historical 'verisimilitude' (74).

example of this phenomenon.[9] Indeed, despite the ostensible presence of the Roman Empire in the term 'Greco-Roman', when it is used, the 'Greco' often eclipses the 'Roman'.

Some scholars, rather than omitting attention to the Roman Empire, have specifically focused on it. The present study agrees with empire studies insofar as they recognize the Roman Empire as an inescapable presence in the first- and second-century CE Mediterranean world. It will argue that Roman culture and the Latin language must be added among the traceable influences on the text of the Gospel of John. While the interpretative methods of some empire studies, however, may sometimes be overly influenced by contemporary anti-imperialism, they also bring to Johannine studies important insights that will contribute to this study.

I. Interpretative agendas in empire studies

Some contributions to empire studies explicitly use the anti-imperialism they find in ancient texts to combat imperialism today. For example, the Union Theological Seminary conference held in 2004 was 'convened at a time where empire had re-emerged as one of the most dangerous and frightening phenomena of our time' and 'addressed directly the ways the New Testament today can help shape ways of resisting and negotiating the realities of arrogant American power'.[10] Interpreters who offer anti-imperial readings are often similarly explicit about the applications of their results to the modern world. Warren Carter, for example, suggests that his work, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament*, 'provid[es] something of … an agenda for ecclesial communities to pursue in forming alternative worldviews and communities that embody alternative, anti-imperial practices'.[11] This passion for changing oppressive systems

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[9] See also, for example, Christopher Stanley's chapter on 'citation technique in Greco-Roman literature' that only looks at Strabo, 'Longinus', Heraclitus, and Plutarch (*Paul and the Language of Scripture: Citation Technique in the Pauline Epistles and Contemporary Literature* [Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992], 267–91 [271–72]). They are called 'Greco-Roman writers', despite being exclusively Greeks writing in Greek (273). For a counterexample, see David E. Aune, 'Religion, Greco-Roman', *DNTB* 917–26.

[10] Hal Taussig, 'Prologue: A Door Thrown Open', *USQR* 59.3–4 (2005): 1–5 (1). Others that take this perspective (with at least one representative example of their work) include Richard A. Horsley, *Hearing the Whole Story: The Politics of Plot in Mark's Gospel* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 2001), see also his specific explanations in Richard A. Horsley, 'Jesus and Empire', *USQR* 59.3–4 (2005): 44–74; Warren Carter, *The Roman Empire and the New Testament: An Essential Guide* (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2006); Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *The Power of the Word: Scripture and the Rhetoric of Empire* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007); John Dominic Crossan, *God and Empire: Jesus against Rome, Then and Now* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 2007).

[11] Carter, *The Roman Empire*, 143. For further descriptions and analyses of postcolonial approaches which are often but not necessarily anti-imperial, see Stephen D. Moore, *Empire*

in today's world is valuable and necessary. However, in reading these authors, one often feels that one is reading exegesis written with one eye in each world.[12]

Scholars such as those mentioned above, that is, those explicitly critical of modern imperialism, have sometimes been accused of having overt contemporary biases.[13] Yet all analyses can lead to this-century applications.[14] Donald Senior, for example, seems to resist critiquing ancient power structures when he claims that John 'is not trying … to dispassionately assess the historical roles of Jews and Romans'.[15] Yet his conclusions surely include critiques that have present-day implications:

> Jesus clearly teaches that his royal power is of a totally different nature than the brutalizing power familiar to Pilate and the Jewish leaders…. His royal power was not expressed, as Rome's and therefore Pilate's was, in dominating the Jews and in trading on a human life. And Pilate's own power was limited to what God would permit him (19:11).[16]

In the end, Senior concludes:

> Even as brutal force threatens human life, people of faith can exercise complete freedom: willingly sacrificing their lives for the sake of the Gospel; refusing to render violence for violence, refusing to base their lives on the false value of their captors. No power on earth … can rob the Christian of this freedom and this triumph.[17]

Thus, even works that lie outside of empire studies may propose a particular stance towards oppressive regimes today based on, or undergirded by, an interpretation of the Gospel of John as for or against the Roman Empire.

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and Apocalypse: Postcolonialism and the New Testament, The Bible in the Modern World 12 (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2006), 3–23.

[12] This is not necessarily a criticism. Such an analysis is sometimes purposeful, such as with new historicist approaches (Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* [Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002], 179). More critical is Jörg Frey, 'Jesus und Pilatus: Der wahre König und der Repräsentant des Kaisers im Johannesevangelium', in *Christ and the Emperor: The Gospel Evidence*, ed. Gilbert Van Belle and Joseph Verheyden (Leuven: Peeters, 2014), 337–93 (338–39).

[13] McKnight and Modica, for example, note that 'at times empire criticism *sounds too much like one's personal progressive, left-wing, neo-Marxist, or whatever, politics*' ('Introduction', in *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica [Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013], 15–21 [19, emphasis mine]).

[14] In discussion, Brian Walsh pointed out, for example, that all analyses have political implications ('Research Group: Ancient Historiography and the New Testament' [review panel of McKnight and Modica, *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not*, presented at the annual meeting of the Institute for Biblical Research, Baltimore, MD, 22 November, 2013]).

[15] Donald Senior, *The Passion of Jesus in the Gospel of John*, The Passion Series 4 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 1991), 76.

[16] Senior, *Passion*, 152–53.

[17] Senior, *Passion*, 165–66.

Therefore, one must ask: What influence did the existence of the Roman Empire have on the text under consideration? Was it in 'the foreground, not the background, of late first-century daily life', or was it 'lurking in the background of the narrative'?[18] This study will answer with a firm *neither*.

My purpose is to offer a reading of the Johannine trial narrative that takes into account the ubiquity of the Roman Empire but allows it to inform that reading only in so far as it is warranted by the text. After all, Roman references are not always anti-imperial, and even texts that may be anti-imperial in one passage are not necessarily so throughout.[19] However, as much as I may attempt to keep my eyes on the binoculars reaching back across the centuries, there is no way to see without using my own contemporary eyes. The challenge, then, is to limit the degree to which desired present-day applications *map* interpretations, while at the same time recognizing that they inevitably *undergird* them. Furthermore, I have a responsibility to think soberly about the ways that the discussions and conclusions from within the guild might affect the practices of future Christian communities and those who interact with them.

The chronological tension between current empire studies and the ancient texts that they address can perhaps be illustrated by the encounter in *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* between King Arthur and two peasants from an 'Anarcho-Syndicalist Commune'.[20] When the king announces that he is 'King of the Britons', the woman responds, 'Who are the Britons?', a question familiar to anyone who has asked about ethnicity in antiquity.[21] On the topic of the right to rule, King Arthur (quite reasonably within the movie world) explains, with an angelic choral accompaniment, that he is king because 'the Lady of the Lake, her arm clad in the purest shimmering samite held aloft Excalibur from the bosom of the water'. The peasant Dennis, in the role of postcolonial analyst, passionately argues that 'strange women lyin' in ponds distributin' swords is no basis for a system of government'. And finally, when Arthur grabs Dennis and yells at him to shut up, Dennis victoriously exclaims, 'Ah ha! Now we see the violence inherent in the system!'

The humour in the skit stems, of course, from mapping the standards of evaluation from one era onto those of another. Although contemporary categories may help to better *describe* the first-century CE world, conclusions about

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[18] Carter, *John and Empire*, x; Christopher W. Skinner, 'John's Gospel and the Roman Imperial Context: An Evaluation of Recent Proposals', in *Jesus Is Lord, Caesar Is Not: Evaluating Empire in New Testament Studies*, ed. Scot McKnight and Joseph B. Modica (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2013), 116–29 (122).

[19] Heilig, *Hidden Criticism*, 10, 134–38.

[20] Terry Gilliam and Terry Jones, *Monty Python and the Holy Grail* (Burbank, CA: Columbia TriStar Home Entertainment, 2001); this analysis is described in Darl Larsen, *A Book About the Film* Monty Python and the Holy Grail*: All the References from African Swallows to Zoot* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2015), 112–49.

[21] See, briefly, Chapter 1, Section C.II.

meaning have to be set in categories closer to those that the first century CE would recognize. In this book, I shall attempt as much as possible to understand the language of the text in the ways it could have been understood in the first and second century CE. However, since I am neither a Roman soldier nor a Jewish proselyte living in the Mediterranean region in those years but a twenty-first century interpreter, my analysis is inevitably apprehended through different eyes.[22]

II. Interpretative method to de-emphasize agendas: Semiotics

In addition to highlighting the importance of the Roman Empire to the interpretation of the text, empire studies have also questioned how one can know where meaning is situated. Where should interpretation happen? Richard Horsley draws his analysis of 'the historical Jesus in a fuller and more adequate historical context' than he believes is usually done.[23] By contrast, Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza highlights the importance of interpreting 'by carefully analyzing and reframing the workings of power, in the imperial discourses of the past and those of the present, as well as by constructing an imaginative space for articulating an alternative radical egalitarian discourse'.[24] I shall be focusing my binoculars on the space between these two, not attempting to push

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[22] This is by no means a novel remark. See, for example, James Aageson, *Written Also for Our Sake: Paul and the Art of Biblical Interpretation* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox, 1993), 7. For more on the role of the author in the creation of interpretation as well as the power that interpretations exert in the world, see Mary Ann Tolbert, 'Writing History, Writing Culture, Writing Ourselves', in *Soundings in Cultural Criticism: Perspectives and Methods in Culture, Power, and Identity in the New Testament*, ed. Francisco Lozada, Jr. and Greg Carey (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2013), 17–30.

[23] Richard A. Horsley, *Jesus and Empire: The Kingdom of God and the New World Disorder* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 13.

[24] Schüssler Fiorenza, *Power*, 28. For other studies that highlight the Roman Empire but that focus primarily on the historical Jesus, see Richard A. Horsley and Tom Thatcher, *John, Jesus, and the Renewal of Israel* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2013); Christopher Bryan, *Render to Caesar: Jesus, the Early Church, and the Roman Superpower* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005). The definition of /discourse/ used in this work is provided by Chandler: 'A discourse is a system of representation consisting of a set of representational codes (including a distinctive interpretive repertoire of concepts, tropes and myths) for constructing and maintaining particular forms of reality within the ontological domain (or topic) defined as relevant to its concerns. Representational codes thus reflect relational principles underlying the symbolic order of the "discursive field"' (*Semiotics: The Basics* [London: Routledge, 2007], 249). For a definition of /code/, see Chapter 2, Section B.II. /Discourse/ is often used in literary studies to distinguish words spoken by characters from narration, e.g., David A. Lamb, *Text, Context and the Johannine Community: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of the Johannine Writings* (London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2014), 146. This book will use /speech/ for those instead. For an explanation of the use of slashes in this book, see abbreviation page (p. XIII).

through the text to a historical Jesus but neither looking at current practices stemming from contemporary interpretations of the texts. I am interested, therefore, in the way the matrix of languages in the first century (see below and in Chapter 3) affected communication, and the way an awareness of these intersections – especially with Latin – might illuminate the Gospel of John. For this reason, the locations usually associated with its composition and redaction (specifically Ephesus, Antioch, and Alexandria) will figure more prominently in this book than Galilee and Judaea.[25]

In order to pursue such an interpretation, I shall use methodology developed by Umberto Eco and Stefan Alkier. Based on Charles Sanders Peirce's categorical semiotics, it describes the process of meaning production and analyzes both the context of production and the contexts of interpretation (past *and* present), recognizing the inherent limitations of each aspect of this analysis.[26] Peirce is used in preference to Saussure because the inclusion of an interpretant, the primacy of the Sign, and the extensive elaboration of their connections with culture allow me to interpret a text that emerged from cultural intersections.[27] Eco's and Alkier's elaborations of Peirce are used in preference to Bourdieu, because Bourdieu's focus on *habitus*, the regulative system of habitual actions and responses of individuals in their social worlds, takes analysis beyond the text into discussions of behaviour.[28] My main focus, instead, will be on language and culture, topics which Eco and Alkier helpfully include.

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[25] For an argument for these locations in particular, see Chapter 3, Section A. This is unlike Hughson T. Ong, for example, who discusses multilingualism in Judaea rather than in Asia Minor, Syria, or Egypt (*The Multilingual Jesus and the Sociolinguistic World of the New Testament*, Linguistic Biblical Studies 12 [Leiden: Brill, 2016]).

[26] The following discussion is based on Stefan Alkier, 'New Testament Studies on the Basis of Categorical Semiotics', in *Reading the Bible Intertextually*, ed. Richard B. Hays, Stefan Alkier, and Leroy Andrew Huizenga (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 223–48; see also Leroy A. Huizenga in 'The Old Testament in the New, Intertextuality and Allegory', *JSNT* 38.1 (2015): 17–35 (25–30) and Chandler, *Semiotics*, 29–33. For a similar approach without an explicitly semiotic foundation, see Manfred Lang, 'The Christian and the Roman Self: The Lukan Paul and a Roman Reading', in *Christian Body, Christian Self: Concepts of Early Christian Personhood*, ed. Clare K. Rothschild and Trevor W. Thompson, WUNT 1.284 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 151–73. Although this book will occasionally reference Peirce, it primarily depends on Eco's work as it interprets and applies the theories of Peirce. For a clear and concise description of the semiotic triad in Peirce, see James Jakób Liszka, *A General Introduction to the Semeiotic of Charles Sanders Peirce* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1996), 18–34.

[27] Halina Sendera Mohd Yakin and Andreas Totu, 'The Semiotic Perspectives of Peirce and Saussure: A Brief Comparative Study', *Social and Behavioral Sciences* 155.1 (2014): 4–8 (7–8); Gary P. Radford, *On Eco*, Wadsworth Philosophers Series (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, 2003), 50–51.

[28] Dermot Nestor, *Cognitive Perspectives on Israelite Identity* (New York: T&T Clark, 2010), 114; cf. 112–25.

The three elements in Peirce's semiotic triad are Sign, interpretant, and object.[29] Although Signs and texts can be conceived of broadly, this work will only focus on Signs in the form of written texts.[30] A Sign is '*everything* that, on the grounds of a previously established social convention, can be taken as *something standing for something else*'.[31] The thing it stands for (the '*something else*') is the object. The object, in Peirce, relates to the condition of secondness. It is not existence nor even simple perception. It is the effect of perception on one's conceptions. Peirce discusses the change in the pitch of a train whistle as it goes by an observer (*C.P.* 1.335). One perceives first one note, then another. Experience consists in the recognition that the note changes; it pushes back against the firstness of the Sign, which is /train whistle/, a note that does not, as we conceive of it, change. The interpretant is the image or concept the Sign raises for the interpreter, based on the shared 'social convention'. When someone else mentions having heard a train whistle, I do not normally think of the change in pitch he experienced, as that is not part of the cultural unit «train whistle» as it is used in casual conversation.[32] It is a public understanding separated from mere 'mental experience'.[33] To demonstrate the

[29] The triad is presented in this section and elaborated further in Chapter 2, Section A, as well as applied in the rest of the study.

[30] Texts can 'refer to anything which can be "read" for meaning; to some theorists, the world is "social text". Although the term appears to privilege written texts (it seems *grapho-centric* and *logocentric*), to most semioticians a text is a systems of signs (in the form of words, images, sounds and/or gestures). The term is often used to refer to *recorded* (e.g., written) texts which are independent of their users' (Chandler, *Semiotics*, 263). It is in this last sense that the word /text/ will be used in this book, to refer to written systems of Signs that are therefore also written.

[31] Umberto Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1976), 16, emphasis original. See similarly Charles Sanders Peirce, 'Logic as Semiotic: The Theory of Signs', in *Philosophical Writings of Peirce*, ed. Justus Buchler (New York: Dover, 1955), 98–119 (99). The words /Sign/, /interpretant/, and /object/ are variously capitalized or not in the literature. In this work I have chosen only to capitalize the word /Sign/ in order to distinguish its use in semiotics (Sign) from its use in Johannine studies (sign). I am aware that some analyses have taken the Gospel of John as a sign in the Johannine sense. That is not the claim being made in this book. See Tom Thatcher, 'The Semeiotics of History: C. H. Dodd on the Origins and Character of the Fourth Gospel', in *Engaging with C.H. Dodd on the Gospel of John: Sixty Years of Tradition and Interpretation*, ed. Tom Thatcher and Catrin H. Williams (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1–28 (10–12); Charles H. Dodd, *The Interpretation of the Fourth Gospel* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1953), 438. Note that an error in Thatcher ('Semeiotics', 12) mistakenly places this passage in Charles H. Dodd, *Historical Tradition in the Fourth Gospel* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1965).

[32] For the use of guillemets for cultural units, see abbreviation page (ix).

[33] Umberto Eco, *Kant and the Platypus: Essays on Language and Cognition* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1999), 137; see also Peirce *C.P.* 1.339 cited in Umberto Eco, *The Limits of Interpretation*, Advances in Semiotics (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1990),

relationships between these three elements, this book can be described in the language of Peirce as follows:

The Gospel of John is a Sign that arose on the basis of the needs and experiences of its creator(s). It is not a clear and transparent window into reality (the dynamic object) but a Sign determined by the immediate object, John's particular view of the life of Jesus.[34] The Sign-object relation produces an interpretant, which may be immediate (initial and unformed, like my first reading of the Gospel), dynamic (a scholar's *magnum opus*), or final (a comprehensive interpretant produced by a community over time that hopefully mirrors the immediate object,).[35] However, in writing this book, I have taken an interpretant of the Sign produced by John (my understanding of the text of the Gospel derived not only from my reading of the Gospel but also from my research into others' interpretants) and turned it into an object.[36] This object, pared down according to certain grounds (primarily Roman culture

28; Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 68–72. The interpretant is 'either a sign or an expression or a sequence of expressions which translate a previous expression' (Umberto Eco, *Semiotics and the Philosophy of Language* [Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1984], 43). David Savan suggests that Peirce might have more properly called it a 'translatant' (*An Introduction to C.S. Peirce's Full System of Semeiotic*, Monograph Series of the TSC 1 [Toronto: Toronto Semiotic Circle, 1988], 41). Neither Peirce nor his interpreters are always clear on this. Albert Atkin, for example, lucidly identifies the way the interpretant is determined by the Sign-object relation but may somewhat muddy the waters by referring to one's 'understanding' ('Peirce's Theory of Signs', *SEP* 3, 5, 6, 14–15, 18, 21–25). However, the repeated use of plural pronouns throughout Atkin's article connects this 'understanding' clearly to a consensus that exists outside of individual appropriation. Furthermore, Eco detaches the concept of interpretant from individual mental experiences by reminding that '*[t]he interpretant is not the interpreter* (even if a confusion of this type occasionally arises in Peirce)' (Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 68; *pace* Leroy A. Huizenga, *New Isaac: Tradition and Intertextuality in the Gospel of Matthew*, NovTSup 131 [Leiden: Brill, 2009], 32, emphasis original).

[34] An example of a dynamic object would be a *//dog//* as it exists, in all of its aspects including the chemical composition of its saliva. An example of an immediate object is the idea of a dog that only includes certain aspects (such as its loyalty, bark, furriness) that British culture emphasizes as the salient elements of dog-ness and that English speakers represent with the Sign /dog/. Note that from the point of view of the object, 'the sign is passive', determined by the object. From the point of view of 'sign *production*', on the other hand, '[t]he production of a sign is the causal result of the interaction between a dynamic object and the sign medium of some sign-interpreting agency' (Liszka, *A General Introduction*, 23, emphasis original). In this way, John's views of Jesus could prompt him to choose Signs from the Roman encyclopaedia as well as from the Jewish one.

[35] Another word frequently used to describe the final interpretant is 'habit' (e.g., Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 70; Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* [London: Hutchinson, 1981], 192).

[36] I thus recognize my activity and contributions in the process. 'I have tried to underscore the crucial active, creative nature of interpretation by referring to *writers* of interpretations instead of the more passive-sounding *readers* of texts. The process of interpreting the Bible (or actually any other script) is an [*sic*] dynamic process of writing a new "text" into existence, whether oral (for example, a sermon) or physically written' (Tolbert, 'Writing History', 21, emphasis original). On this see also Chapter 2, Section A.II.

in the East), has prompted the creation of this new text, a new Sign that requires an interpretant – from each and all of my readers.

The previous paragraph describes this study using the Peircian triad to demonstrate the theoretical basis for an analysis that allows for multiple approaches to the Gospel without excluding authorial intent. Alkier explains:

> Peirce is revealed here as a representative of a version of the correspondence theory of truth. The semiotic point of Peirce's theory is to learn to think about the plurality of interpretations as stations on the way to truth, without favoring an absolute arbitrariness. In the short run, however, no interpretation can claim to be the absolute interpretation. It cannot show itself to be suitable for the dynamic object. Only in the long run can an interpretive community achieve an approach to the final interpretant.[37]

Alkier offers Umberto Eco's semiotic theory to address this hermeneutical issue by proposing a process of interpretation that, on the one hand, always points to an outside world that prompted the creation of the text but that, on the other hand, continues to correct itself through an interpreting community.[38] Furthermore, as Alkier notes, 'Die Rezeption der Äußerung eines anderen ist nicht nur ein hermeneutisches, sondern grundlegend immer auch ein ethisches Problem. Wie verhalte ich mich zu einem Anderen?'[39]

Approaching interpretation through Eco's semiotics and recognizing the need for an approach that is not only theoretical but ethical helps with concerns raised by Stanley Porter.[40] When Richard Hays discusses the creation of meaning, he notes that what he calls 'the hermeneutical event' could happen either 'in Paul's mind', 'in the original readers of the letter', 'in the text itself', 'in my act of reading', or 'in a community of interpretation'.[41] He determines that

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[37] Alkier, 'New Testament Studies', 229, emphasis original. One might think that 2000 years is enough of a long run, and yet interpretation goes on! For more on Alkier's concerns for ethical interpretation, see 'Ethik der Interpretation', in *Der eine Gott und die Welt der Religionen: Beiträge zu einer Theologie der Religionen und zum interreligiösen Dialog*, ed. Markus Witte (Würzburg: Religion & Kultur, 2003), 21–41.

[38] Alkier, 'Ethik der Interpretation', 26–32. In this way, the interpretant becomes separated from any empirical interpreter. 'The interpretant is that which guarantees the validity of the sign, even in the absence of the interpreter' (Eco, *A Theory of Semiotics*, 68). The word /community/ will be used in this book to designate such an interpretative community who share at least one encyclopaedia (see Chapter 2, Section A), without taking a position on its cohesiveness, either geographical or ideological (see Section C.III).

[39] (The reception of an Other's expression is not only a hermeneutic, but also always fundamentally an ethical problem. How do I comport myself towards an Other?; Alkier, 'Ethik der Interpretation', 23, italics removed.)

[40] These concerns are raised in the context of intertextuality which will be discussed in Chapter 2, Section C.

[41] Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 26.

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