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Introduction

Scholars are increasingly aware that the identity of the implied audience or readership may have a bearing on how an ancient text was appropriated. Increasingly phenomena within ancient environments which may assist the task of understanding how they might have understood a text are considered valuable. To avoid the charge of anachronism, it is advisable to look for data which are synchronous with the material which is being examined. John’s Gospel and its implied readership both lend themselves for consideration of this type. In the wake of the *Religionsgeschichte* school and its attempts to find non-Judaic antecedents dogmatic and symbolic imagery in the gospel, the pendulum has swung back.¹ The discoveries of Qumran, and the wealth of documentation subsequently published, have made it clear that much of the imagery in the gospel may be located well within the boundaries of Second Temple Judaism. This brings with it a further problem: how might non-Judaic audiences in the locations posited for the gospel, and the community which is associated with it, have begun to apprehend what is in many respects a complex piece of Judaic literature. Whilst much of this is open to the charge of speculation, it is possible to analyse the environment of the gospel and read the gospel in light of that without recourse to over-blown claims.²

Such an approach might start with a broad overview of the use of symbolism and imagery at the broadest level. A number of images work across a number of cultures at a very wide and simple level. Thus Craig R. Koester has noted that symbols in the NT period may function across a broad cultural spectrum: core symbols like life, water, bread and light ‘stand on the boundary between various

¹ It must be admitted that, for some, it never swung that far: William Temple, *Readings in John’s Gospel*, First and Second Series (London: Macmillan, 1963), xxiii.

² Andrew C. Brunson, *Psalm 118 in the Gospel of John : An Intertextual Study of the New Exodus Pattern in the Theology of John*, WUNT 2/158 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 140; Ruth B. Edwards, *Discovering John: Content, Interpretation, Reception*, 2nd edition (London: SPCK, 2014), 49-53.

Jewish and Hellenistic modes of speech'.³ Water, as will be seen in the more detailed discussion which follows, is of particular interest in this regard when the Johannine literature is put under examination. Readers from a number of cultural backgrounds would therefore have approached John's discussion of 'water' with a prior understanding of its symbolism culled from their immediate environment. Robert Royalty's remarks about symbolism in regard to Revelation would hold good for many contexts of the 1st CE Mediterranean :

Few of the Christians who heard the Apocalypse would have had the knowledge of the Hebrew Scriptures that John had, whereas all would be conversant in the public aspects of Greco-Roman culture that organized social life in the cities of Asia Minor.⁴

These sentiments hold good even if we hold that neither the provenance nor the author of the gospel and Revelation are most likely the same.⁵ However, a case may be made for a shared environment, even if not a common authorship.⁶

Additionally, Andreas Köstenberger notes that similarities with Greco-Roman literature may figure:

the Gospel also displays a considerable amount of surface affinities with Greco-Roman literature, both on the macro- and on the micro-level. However, there are several important differences that suggest that rather than reflect the wholesale adoption of a particular Greco- Roman literary genre, these affinities, which relate to both internal and

³ Craig R. Koester, *Symbolism in the Fourth Gospel: Meaning, Mystery, Community* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995), 234.

⁴ Robert M. Royalty, *The Streets of Heaven: The Ideology of Wealth in the Apocalypse of John* (Macon: Mercer University Press, 1998), 81.

⁵ Fergus J. King, *Opening the Scroll: An Introductory Commentary on the Revelation of John*, (Köln: Lambert Academic Publishing, 2009), 10-12.

⁶ Dennis R. MacDonald, *The Dionysian Gospel: The Fourth Gospel and Euripides* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2017), 11. MacDonald's work implicitly raises the possibility that, if a precise Euripidean intertextuality is possible, so might a reference to a generic trope.

external features, represent John’s attempts to contextualize the Gospel message for a Greco-Roman audience.⁷

Absent from his study of textual data, which has a strong focus on historiographical elements, is the literary trope known as the *locus amoenus* (‘pleasant place’ - hereafter *LA*), common in both Greek and Roman literature, but also in visual forms. As other studies have suggested that literary types other than historiography might play a part in the composition of the gospel,⁸ it may be worth asking if the *LA* provide a lens through which a Graeco-Roman reader or listener recognize the claims made in the gospel, and function as an introit to more detailed understanding of them?

The *Locus Amoenus*

The *LA* is first found in Homer: its descriptive features include music, dancing, meadows, shady groves, water and an absence of death and destruction.⁹ It is found in a broad spectrum of Greek poetry: Homer, Simonides (72 Page), Pindar (*Isthm.* 6:74 ff.), Sophocles (*Oedipus at Colonus* 668-93), Plato (*Phaedrus* 229a-242a, 279 b), Theocritus (1:106, 5:31-33; 7:131-57, 11:44-48, 13:39-45, 22:37-43, epigram 4:1-12), and *Daphnis and Chloe*.¹⁰ It was recognized as a literary form by Varro and Verrius Flaccus (1st century BCE).¹¹

⁷ Andreas J. Köstenberger, “The Genre of the Fourth Gospel and Greco-Roman Literary Conventions” in Stanley E. Porter & Andrew M Pitts (ed.s), *Christian Origins and Greco-Roman Culture*. Texts and Editions for New Testament Studies, Volume 9 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 435- 462 at 461.

⁸ For example, Jo-Ann A. Brant, *Dialogue and Drama: Elements of Greek Tragedy in the Fourth Gospel* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2004).

⁹ Jeffrey Burton Russell, *A History of Heaven: The Singing Silence* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1997) .21; Thomas E. V. Pearce, “The Function of the *Locus Amoenus* in Theocritus’ Seventh Poem”, *Rheinisches Museum für Philologie* Neue Folge, 131. Bd., H. 3/4 (1988), 276-304 at 292-94.

¹⁰ Paul J. Alpers, *What is Pastoral?* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2011), 324; Pearce, “The Function of the *Locus Amoenus*”, 293-99. See Apollonius Rhodius, *Argonautica* 2. 727-751 for a *locus horrificus*, thus Annette Lucia Giesecke, *The Epic City: Urbanism, Utopia, and the Garden in Ancient Greece and Rome*, Hellenic Studies 21(Cambridge: Centre for Hellenic Studies/ Harvard University Press), 95-97.

Pastoral landscapes included real and mythic creatures, for example, nymphs and muses.¹² These images had a number of symbolic references: emotional interaction between humanity and nature, poetic inspiration, erotic encounters, or a *locus sanctus* (an environment which is appropriate for encounters between the gods and humanity).¹³

A resurgence in pastoral poetry in the late Roman Republic and the early Empire saw its appear in the writings of Lucretius (99BCE-55BCE), Vergil (70BCE-19 BCE), Horace (65 BCE-8BCE), who linked it to Epicurean philosophy, and Statius (50 CE – 95 CE), whose pastoral idylls included technological details.¹⁴ It is a literary trope in which the human condition is explored:

a middle country of the imagination, halfway between a past perfection and a present imperfection, a place of becoming rather than being, where the individual's potencies for the arts of love and poetry are explored and tested. It points two ways therefore, backward into the past and forward into a possible future.¹⁵

In these writings, the pastoral form often has an eschatological or teleological function, sometimes serving as a literary frame for describing outcomes desirable to a philosophical school. Epicureans were key exponents of this practice. First seen in Lucretius, it also appears in Vergil and Horace. Thus Giesecke is able to say of *De Rerum Natura* 2:29-33 and 15: 1390-96:

by including the *locus amoenus* in both of these passages, namely the description of the origin of civilization and the description of the ultimate Epicurean lifestyle, Lucretius is

¹¹ Karin Schlapbach, "The Pleasance, Solitude and Literary Production: The Transformation of the *locus amoenus* in Late Antiquity", *Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* 50 (2007), 34-50 at 35.

¹² Pearce, "The Function of the *Locus Amoenus*", 276.

¹³ Respectively, Evangelos Karakasis, *Song Exchange in Roman Pastoral* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2011), 164;

Pearce, "The Function of the *Locus amoenus*", 301-02, Schlapbach, "The Pleasance", 38-40; Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 324; Livy 1.21.3, see Pearce, "The Function of the *Locus amoenus*", 302-04

¹⁴ Fergus J. King, "Revelation 21:1-22:5: An Early Christian *Locus Amoenus*?", *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 45/3 (2015), 174-83 at 175-78.

¹⁵ Peter V. Marinelli, *Pastoral* (London: Methuen, 1971), 37.

providing his audience/readers with a means, on a metaphysical or spiritual level, of returning to the blessed springtime of human existence and its primal harmony with nature. It is with the guidance of Epicurus and the attending withdrawal from the misconceived modern day, urbane value system that this beatific condition, freedom from distress and anxiety, can be attained.¹⁶

Thus the *LA* becomes a cipher for the goals and aspirations of the philosophical way of life, at least in Epicureanism.

It was a motif also accessible to those who were not literate or had no access to books. Pastoral motifs were significant architecturally. Houses in the late Republic and Early Empire with second-style wall paintings (circa 40-20 BCE) included pastoral scenes.¹⁷ These can also be seen at the Villa Farnesina (Rome).¹⁸ Porticus 102 of the Villa San Marco (Naples) incorporates pastoral depictions of mythological figures.¹⁹ Contrapuntal designs at the Villa of the Papyri include Epicurean themes seen in the poetry of the period.²⁰ The phenomenon was not confined to private houses: public architecture and design might include pastoral themes. They also were found in theatre design: Vitruvius includes it along with the tragic and comicas a setting.²¹

¹⁶ Annette Lucia Giesecke, “Lucretius and Virgil’s Pastoral Dream”, *Utopian Studies* 10/2 (1999), 1-15 at.6.

¹⁷ John R. Clarke, *The Houses of Roman Italy, 100 BC- AD 250: Ritual, Space and Decoration* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 49. Pastoral may also be described as “satirical”, thus Vitruvius Pollio, *An Abridgement of the Architecture of Vitruvius* E-book (B & R Samizdat Express, 1692), 1.3.

¹⁸ Diana Spencer, *Roman Landscape: Culture and Identity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 149-54.

¹⁹ Mantha Zarmakoupi, *Designing for Luxury on the Bay of Naples: Villas and Landscapes (c. 100 BCE-79 CE)* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 262-63.

²⁰ Zarmakoupi, *Designing*, 43-44.

²¹ Oscar G. Brockett & Robert J. Ball, *The Essential Theatre*, 10th Enhanced Edition. (Boston: Wadsworth, 2014), 114.

In summary, the *LA* has four recurring features: a mixture of what is real and unreal, indications of what is truly desirable and worthwhile, an encounter with the mythical and/or divine, and a teleological function. With these in mind, it is worth considering how these points might have been recognized within John's Gospel by a reader familiar with the *LA*.

The *Locus Amoenus* in John's Gospel

At first glance, the pickings appear slim: John appears to offer little that resembles the *LA*, nor are there direct descriptions of some perfect environment. Descriptions of anything approaching the Kingdom are few in comparison to those found in the Synoptics, which often include a distinct geographical component, although little geographical detail.²² In many ways, Revelation, which is increasingly seen as written by a hand distinct from the gospel, would seem to offer more in this regard. Tellingly, the picture of the heavenly Jerusalem found in Revelation 21 and 22 echoes its nearest pastoral contemporary, Statius, in combining elements of both technology and rural landscapes within the visions.²³

However, issues of place do figure in John, not least in John 14:2 where the mention of *monai pollai* indicates a desirable place with generous and unlimited space.²⁴ This qualification is significant, especially if it bears the sense of 'all', rather than just 'many', allowing a translation like 'there are enough for all'.²⁵ Even if this is not sustained, it suggests there is no agonistic competition for places,²⁶ nor any 'economics of scarcity', understood as 'the allocation of scarce resources among alternative wants'.²⁷ This functions beyond the confines of economics, as Rescher observes,

²² John C. O'Neill, "The Kingdom of God", *NT XXXV* (1993), 130-141 at 131-35.

²³ King, "Revelation 21:1-22:5", 177-78.

²⁴ Jean Zumstein, *L'Évangile Selon Saint Jean (13-21)*. Commentaire du Nouveau Testament Deuxième Série IVb. (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2007), 61.

²⁵ Raymond E. Brown, *The Gospel according to John XIII-XXI*, AB 29A (New York: Doubleday, 1970), 625.

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An economy of scarcity is, by definition, one in which justice (in a restricted sense of the term) cannot be done because there is not enough to go around: if everyone is given a share proportional to his claims and desert then someone- or everyone- is pressed beneath the floor of the minimally acceptable level.²⁸

Such views had already been challenged in the OT.²⁹ In this regard, the sentence is important, as it admits that there will be no need to compete against the rest of humanity for a desirable place close to God. Other than that, the verse reveals barely any equivalent of the *LA* as the descriptive details are minimal. However, it potentially indicates a relationship rather than a specific location, more about the presence of God than the location of the afterlife: this shift in focus, from place to relationship, will permeate the use of geography in the gospel.³⁰

Other passages contain more descriptive detail and so may also reveal the trope. One reference occurs early in the gospel: the calling of Nathanael (John 1:43-51). The encounter includes the puzzling reference to seeing Nicodemus *hupo tēn sukēn* (John 1:49). It is an obscure phrase which has brought forth a wealth of interpretations.³¹ Many of these depend on intertextual references to the

²⁷ For the agonistic nature of ancient Mediterranean societies, see Jerome H. Neyrey, *Honor and Shame in the Gospel of Matthew* (Louisville: WJKP, 1998), 15-32; William M. Dugger and James T. Peach, *Economic Abundance: An Introduction* (London: Routledge, 2009), ix.

²⁸ Nicholas Rescher, *Public Concerns: Philosophical Studies of Social Issues* (London: Rowman and Littlefield, 1995), 123.

²⁹ Walter Brueggemann, “The Liturgy of Abundance, the Myth of Scarcity”, *Christian Century*, March 24-31, 1999, 342-47; *Inscribing the Text: Sermons and Prayers of Walter Brueggemann* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 71-75.

³⁰ Jaime Clark-Soles, “ “I Will Raise [Whom?] Up on the Last Day”: Anthropology as a Feature of Johannine Eschatology” in Francisco Lozada & Tom Thatcher (ed.s), *New Currents in John: A Global Perspective*, (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2006), 29-53 at 48-49.

³¹ Donald A. Carson, *The Gospel according to John*, The Pillar New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1991) 161 for home, prosperity, meditation and /or prayer; John Phillips, *Exploring the Gospel of*

OT : these include potentially Eden , or the Messiah, the study of the Law, or Israel.³² Expressed in broader terms, these concerns overlap with the significance of the *LA*: “peace, prosperity and divine blessing”.³³ Thus at a general, rather than a specific, interpretive level the substance of the scene is accessible. Nathanael, under the fig tree, symbolizes the apparent *telos* of his tradition in terms reminiscent of the *LA*. He is, to put it crudely, in a good place.

However, this location, and, by implication, the state it represents, are revealed as illusory in the dialogue which follows. All four elements of the *LA* intrude: real and unreal, as well as desirable, elements, an encounter with the mythic of divine and an eschatological function. These serve to introduce an even better and more desirable experience. Instead of the bliss of the fig tree, Nathanael will experience the higher experience of a heavenly vision of the Son of Man, a better condition shaped by symbolism and ideas culled from the OT: Genesis 28:12, an open heaven, and the Son of Man.³⁴ Person and relationship replaces place alone. Again, access to the place adds an aspect of unreality or fantasy. A ladder used by angels is not exactly normal. It might be objected that such mythological language might be an obstacle to a Graeco-Roman reader, but it must be borne in mind that even a strongly materialist school like the Epicureans could use the language of heavenly ascent to make a teleological point.³⁵

John: An Expository Commentary. The John Phillips Commentary Series (Grand Rapids: Kregel, 2001), 48 for Israel; Herman Ridderbos, *The Gospel of John: A Theological Commentary* (Eerdmans: Grand Rapids, 1997), 90 as a shared history, symbolic meaning, or rabbinic study.

³² Respectively, Michael Theobald, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes Kapitel 1-12*, Regensberger Neues Testament (Regensburg: Verlag Friedrich Pustet, 2009), 194; Zumstein, Jean. *L'Évangile Selon Saint Jean (1-12)*. Commentaire du Nouveau Testament Deuxième Série IVa. (Genève: Labor et Fides, 2014) , 90; Jo-Ann A. Brant, *John*, Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 54.

³³ John K. Stafford, “The Call of Nathanael. John 1:49. A Rhetorical-Theological Study”, *Perichoresis* 11/2 (2013), 199- 210 at 205.

³⁴ Zumstein, *L'Évangile Selon Saint Jean (1-12)*, 91-92.

³⁵ Michael J. Edwards, “Treading the Aether: Lucretius, *De Rerum Natura*, 1:62-79”, *CQ* 40 (1990), 465-69.

A similar dynamic, in which Jesus effectively replaces places and/or rituals which exercise a teleological function, will be seen elsewhere. This new *telos* further finds in expression in fresh places and geographical descriptions: the sites of encounter with both the earthly and risen Jesus. The most intriguing of these is the Description of Jacob’s Well and the subsequent dialogue with a Samaritan woman about living water.

John 4 & 7- The Well at Samaria and Living Water

The encounter with the Samaritan Woman is set in a clearly defined place, near the well of Jacob (John 4:4), and the dialogue which follows includes talk of water. Again, the locus of such a desirable element is shifted to the person of Jesus rather than a holy site or shrine. The encounter takes place in a significant location, redolent with Scriptural symbolism, although Jacob may well not be known to a reader unacquainted with Jewish patriarchal history, and is not explained in the text. However, the mention of water shows the shortcomings of the *LA* motif in revealing the full symbolic potential of both place and water. Certainly the element is a desirable feature of the pastoral landscape, and therefore might indicate the desirability of Jesus and his message. However, the Johannine usage, particularly when viewed in a Judaic environment has much greater symbolic potential.

The same reality pertains to other details and characters: Jacob and the Samaritan Woman. Without knowledge of the patriarchal narratives, the well is more important than Jacob, and would be at best a desirable geographical reference. If the reader does not know the background history of the Jews and Samaritans, it is hard for the woman to function as either allegorical or representative figure.³⁶ The literary ‘type-scene’ might hold better prospects.³⁷ Might our putative Graeco-Roman reader catch a glimpse of Odysseus’ encounter with Nausicaa (*Odyssey* 6) rather than the plethora of such accounts in the Old Testament? The two stories share a broad similarity: a stranger encounters a

³⁶ For a summary of modern critical approaches, see Janeth Norfleete Day, *The Woman at the Well: Interpretation of John 4:1-42 in Retrospect and Prospect* (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 24-41.

³⁷ Day, *The Woman*, 35-36.

woman and seeks hospitality. However, a cautionary note is needed. Odysseus may be a significant and positive prototype for some Epicurean reflection, notably on politics and statesmanship, but references to the Phaeacians and Nausicaa were also used pejoratively by critics of Epicureanism who used these passages to describe it as hedonistic.³⁸

The *hudōr zōn* (living water- John 4:10-11) promised by Jesus will replace the harsh reality of fetching water.³⁹ It may be read initially as literal or symbolic.⁴⁰ The symbolism of water, present in a variety of OT texts and Second Temple Judaism, indicates the inauguration of eschatological hopes, which Jesus will give.⁴¹ The point is further made in John 7:37-38 where Jesus proclaims himself the source of this living water, potentially replacing the Temple.⁴² Whilst this has been disputed, with the implication that water flows from the believer, 7:38 may be translated as follows:

³⁸ Silvia Montiglio, *From Villain to Hero: Odysseus in Ancient Thought* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press 2011), 95-123; for criticism of hedonism, see Paul A. Olson, *The Journey to Wisdom: Self-education in Patristic and Medieval Literature* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1995), 97.

³⁹ For the meaning of 'living water', see Dale C. Allison, "The Living Water (John 4:1-14; 6:35c; 7: 37-39)", *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 30/2 (1986), 143-57; Beth M. Stovell, "Rivers, Springs and Wells of Living Water: Metaphorical Transformation in the Johannine Corpus" in Stanley E. Porter & Andrew R. Witts (ed.s), *Christian Origins & Hellenistic Judaism: Social and Literary Contexts for the New Testament*, (Leiden: Brill, 2013), 461-91.

⁴⁰ Zumstein, *L'Évangile Selon Saint Jean (1-12)*, 147.

⁴¹ Allison, "The Living Water", 144-47; Margaret Barker, *King of the Jews: Temple Theology in John's Gospel* (London: SPCK, 2014), 218.

⁴² Barker, *King of the Jews*, 265-6; Stuart S. Miller, *At the Intersection of Texts and Material Finds: Stepped Pools, Stone Vessels, and Ritual Purity Among the Jews of Roman Galilee*, *Journal of Ancient Judaism* Supplement 16 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 139-40..

The one believing in me, as Scripture says, ‘streams of living water will flow from his
[that is, my] heart’⁴³

When *autou* is linked to *eme* (me) rather than *ho pisteuōn* (the one believing) Jesus is identified as the source for the believer.⁴⁴ This joint reading of John 4:14 and 7:37-38 is supported by another verse which identifies him as source of water: John 19:34.⁴⁵ However, a demand to choose either Jesus as the source, or the believer may be redundant. One thing remains sure: that the ‘living water’ is associated with the status of a believer, not a general anthropological category.⁴⁶ Thus, Larry Paul Jones, whilst arguing for the Eastern reading which sees the believer as the source, notes that those who receive from Jesus, the source of living water, are to pass this gift on, just as Jesus did:

Believers are not the sources of the gifts Jesus brings, but when they receive those gifts they do so not merely for personal satisfaction but also to meet the needs of others who can come to faith after and through them.⁴⁷

The verses also exhibit an ambiguity which permeates the ‘I am’ sayings: they not only identify Jesus symbolically, but suggest his divine status.⁴⁸ When the Johannine literature is considered as a whole nine points emerge: an invitation for the thirsty to drink (John 7:37; Revelation 22:17), no cost (John 4: 10, 14; Revelation 21:6, 22:17) , a fountain (*pēgē*) (John 4:14; Revelation 7:17, 21:6), end of thirst

⁴³ Ashton, *Understanding the Fourth Gospel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991), 183 notes the grammatical uncertainty of the verse. Brant, *John*, 140 notes the ambiguity of the construction, but favours the reading adopted here.

⁴⁴ King, *A Guide*, 101.

⁴⁵ Brant, *John*, 254, with the reminder that water is not the only symbol operating in that verse; Miller, *At the Intersection*, 140-43, with the addition that John 21:1-11 develops this theme because of the rabbinic connection of the Feast of Booths with Ezek 47.

⁴⁶ Clark-Soles, “In Will Raise”, 39.

⁴⁷ Larry Paul Jones, *The Symbol of Water in the Gospel of John*, JSNTSupS 145 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1997), 154-56, quote from 155-56.

⁴⁸ Edwards, *Discovering John*, 150-51.

(John 4:14; Revelation 21:6), an association with eternity (John 4:14; Revelation 22:5), river(s), signifying an abundance (John 7:38; Revelation 22:1), the water as a present reality (Revelation 22:16), an invitation to take (*lambanein*)(John 7:39; Revelation 22:17), and a divine source (John 4:10,14; 7:38; Revelation 7:38).⁴⁹ Water also symbolizes the Spirit.⁵⁰ More controversial is the question of whether the phrase has any sacramental connotation, given that the debate over sacramentalism in John is wide-ranging and runs the full gamut of options.⁵¹

Would our Graeco-Roman reader grasp any of this in its fullness, or as intended? A study of the phrase reveals that it is common within writings which originate within Judaic contexts,⁵² often linked to purification.⁵³ Purification was a widespread phenomenon in Second Temple Judaism: terms such as *miqveh* and *bet tevilah* reveal a variety of ritual bath traditions and practices.⁵⁴ Discussion of purification included a debate over which kinds of water were most efficacious: there seems to have been a distinction between ‘running water’ and ‘living water’.⁵⁵ The Judaic environment also provides

⁴⁹ Thus Allison, “The Living Water”, 148-49.

⁵⁰ Allison, “The Living Water”, 149-54; Jones, *The Symbol*, 229; Xavier Léon-Dufour, “Spécificité symbolique du langage de Jean” in Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Jean-Michel Poffet & Jean Zumstein (ed.s), *Communauté Johannique et son Histoire: la Trajectoire de L’Évangile de Jean aux deux premiers Siècles* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1990), 121-34 at 134; Alistair C. Stewart-Sykes, “Bathed in Living Waters: Papyrus Oxyrhynchus 840 and Christian Baptism Reconsidered”, *Zeitschrift für die Neutestamentliche Wissenschaft* 100:2 (2009), 278-86 at 284.

⁵¹ Jones, *The Symbol*, 26-35, 231-35. For an overview of sacramentalism, see Paul N. Anderson, *The Christology of the Fourth Gospel: Its Unity and Disunity in Light of John 6* (Valley Forge: Trinity Press International, 1996), 137-66.

⁵² Allison, “The Living Water”, 144-46; Stovell, “Rivers”, 466-71; 475-82.

⁵³ Koester, *Symbolism*, 168.

⁵⁴ Miller, *At the Intersection*, 32-44.

⁵⁵ Miller, *At the Intersection*, 110-22 notes that this debate appears in intra-Jewish debate and latterly in controversies between Judaism and Christianity. In some contexts, like *Did.* 7: 1-2, the phrase may simply mean ‘running water’, thus Charles E. Hill, “‘The Orthodox Gospel’: Reception in the Real Church” in Tuomas

spiritual understandings of the phrase which develop from the general symbolism of water. Water, and this includes flowing water, is associated with the gift of life.⁵⁶ This imagery is also found in the Old Testament (Ezek 47) as a gift from God, who is further described as *pēgēn hudatos zōēs* (the ‘fount of living waters’ -Jer 2: 13; also *pēgēn zōēs* – ‘the fountain of life’ - Jer 17:13).⁵⁷ In the period between Jeremiah and the rabbis, the symbolic understanding of water and rain as originating with God, and of rain water as a vehicle of purity were developed.⁵⁸ Within the later stages of the Second Temple period water’s identification as life-giving leads to its further being linked to the Torah and its correct interpretation: Ps 1:1-3, 1 Bar 3:12, and the CD 3:13-17; 6:3-8 all take up this theme.⁵⁹ In this period, a possible sacramental frame of reference of the gospel usage also emerges:

Rasimus (ed.), *The Legacy of John: Second-Century Reception of the Fourth Gospel* (Leiden: Brill, 2010), 233-300 at 276 ; Joseph Martos, *Deconstructing Sacramental Theology and Reconstructing Catholic Ritual* (Eugene: Resource, 2014), 101; Michael Peppard, *The World's Oldest Church: Bible, Art, and Ritual at Dura-Europos, Syria* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 156; Willy Rordorf, “Baptism according to the Didache” in Jonathan Draper (ed.), *The Didache in Modern Research* (Leiden: Brill, 1996), 212- 222 at 218; Huub van de Sandt, “Baptism and Holiness: Two Requirements Authorizing Participation in the Didache’s Eucharist” in Jonathan A. Draper and Clayton N. Jefferd (ed.s), *The Didache: A Missing Piece of the Puzzle in Early Christianity* (Atlanta: SBL Press, 2015), 139-64 at 149. But for *Did.* 7:1-2 as ‘living water’, see Boris Repschinski , S.J., “Purity in Matthew, James and the Didache” in *Matthew, James, and Didache: Three Related Documents in Their Jewish and Christian Settings*, Issue 45, Society of Biblical Literature Symposium Series. (Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 379-96 at 393; William R. Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch : a Commentary on the Letters of Ignatius of Antioch*. Hermeneia. Edited by Helmut Koester (Philadelphia :Fortress, 1985), 185; Stephen Richard Turley, *The Ritualized Revelation of the Messianic Age: Washings and Meals in Galatians and I Corinthians*, The Library of New Testament Studies, Vol. 544 .(London: Bloomsbury T& T Clark, 2015),77.

⁵⁶ Miller, *At the Intersection*, 124.

⁵⁷ Miller, *At the Intersection*, 125-30.

⁵⁸ Miller, *At The Intersection*, 130-37.

⁵⁹ Miller, *At the Intersection*, 137.

John himself may be drawing on a tradition of association between water and the Spirit such as that found in the *Community Rule* of Qumran.⁶⁰

Thus, 'living water' in the Judaic tradition may symbolize any or all of purity, the Holy Spirit, and lustral rites, which might include baptism in emerging Christianity. Awareness of these references will depend on the particular exposure readers had to such views and practices in their local contexts.

That said, a general reading of the metaphor is possible even if this symbolic environment is unfamiliar: "l'eau symbolise ce qui est le plus necessaire a la vie humaine et lui permet de s'epanouir".⁶¹ Even if water as a symbol is much rarer in Graeco-Roman usage, it still was used thus. It appears in myths related to Oceanus, where it marks the boundary between this life and the afterlife, and the lake of Mnemosyne in the Orphic traditions: water is thus associated with life.⁶² Water, often from streams or springs, was certainly used in a number of purification rituals in the Graeco-Roman world, as shown by a number of archeological sites, including Delphi.⁶³ Elsewhere, it is associated with divine powers (Muses, prophecy) and inspired utterance.⁶⁴ The pastoral traditions

⁶⁰ Stewart-Sykes, "Bathed in Living Waters", 284 as part of the thesis that the writer of POxy 840 interprets living water sacramentally within a wider Syrian tradition which may well include a baptismal typology derived via the gospel.

⁶¹ "What symbolizes what is most need for human life and allows it to flourish" (translation mine), Zumstein, *L'Évangile Selon Saint Jean (1-12)*, 149.

⁶² Stovell, "Rivers", 472-75.

⁶³ Koester, *Symbolism*, 179; Anders Klostergaard Petersen, "Rituals of Purification, Rituals of Initiation: Phenomenological, taxonomical and Culturally Evolutionary Reflections" in David Hellholm, Tor Vegge, Øyvind Norderval and Christer Hellholm (ed.s), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity, Vol. 1*. (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 3-40 at 7-11 Rites at Eleusis appear to have involved sea water, see Petersen, "Rituals of Purification", 7. Fritz Graf, "Baptism and the Graeco-Roman Mystery Cults" in David Hellholm, Tor Vegge, Øyvind Norderval and Christer Hellholm (ed.s), *Ablution, Initiation, and Baptism: Late Antiquity, Early Judaism, and Early Christianity, Vol. 1* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), 101-18 records no mention of "living water" in his analysis of these rites. .

⁶⁴ Koester, *Symbolism*, 179. Plutach, *Moralia*, 411F, 414C; Acts 16:13, 16.

such as Horace knew the desirability of water, often in ‘living’ forms, springs and rivers.⁶⁵ For him, its ready availability in the *LA* makes it a place where *negotium* (the daily grind) is replaced by *otium* (leisurely bliss).⁶⁶ Water may be described as sacred (*hieron hudōr*- Theocritus 1. 69, 7.136) and is ‘numinous substance whose presence marks man’s entrance into a world beyond his normal ken and normal powers’.⁶⁷ The idea of ‘living water’ seems to indicate water of the best kind.⁶⁸

However, *hydōr zōn* appears rare as a phrase in the Graeco-Roman literature.⁶⁹ The nearest phrase which can be found, *hydōr zēnion*, appears in the Greek Magical Papyri, where it means ‘rain water’.⁷⁰ It has no spiritual significance in itself. A similar phrase is found in the *Aeneid*, where Aeneas stresses his need to be purified in a *flumine vivo* (living stream).⁷¹ However, there is no

⁶⁵ Thomas Hubbard, “Locus Amoenus” in Anthony Grafton, Glenn W. Most and Salvatore Settis (ed.s), *The Classical Tradition* (Cambridge: Belknap/Harvard University Press, 2010), 538; Carole E. Newlands, *Statius’ Silvae and the Poetics of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 130.

⁶⁶ King, “Revelation 21:1-22:5”, 177.

⁶⁷ Charles Segal, *Poetry and Myth in Ancient Pastoral: Essays on Theocritus and Virgil* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981) 48-49. Segal notes that such environments have potential for blessing or destruction.

⁶⁸ Koester, *Symbolism*, 175.

⁶⁹ Some scholars muddy the issue. Thus, Hill, “The Orthodox Gospel”, 276 implies the phrase occurs in Hellenistic literature, and cites Schoedel, *Ignatius of Antioch*, 185 as evidence. However, Schoedel refers not to ὕδωρ ζῶν, but to λάλον πίνοντες ὕδωρ –drink[ing] speaking water (*Anacreontea* 12.7, cf. Ps-Justin *Cohort.* 3 and Apuleius, *Met.* 6.14).

⁷⁰ PMag.Par.1.225, see also Theodor Klauser, “Taufet im Lebendigem Wasser: Zum religions- und kulturgeschichtlichen Verständnis von Didache 7,1/3” in . Ernst Dassmann (ed.), *Gesammelte Arbeiten zur Liturgiegeschichte Kirchengeschichte und Christlichen Archäologie, Jahrbuch für Antike und Christentum* Ergänzungsband 3. (Münster: Aschendorff Verlag, 1974), 177-83 at 182.

⁷¹ Vergil, *The Aeneid*, 2.717-20, cited in Petersen, “Rituals of Purification”, 7.

indication of which, if any, cult or practice might apply directly, and care needs to be taken when appropriating poetic literature as evidence of cultic practice or theory.⁷²

It becomes clear that the levels at which the symbolism resonate with the Graeco-Roman reader will be influenced by a number of factors. Without some prior knowledge of the Judaic usage, or an interpreter who explicates the significance of the term, it is highly likely to remain little more than a general allusion, or one coloured by prior exposure to what appears to be a rare phrase outside Judaism. Furthermore, both the metaphor (water) and what it symbolizes (the Spirit) are alien, so it cannot be assumed that a Graeco-Roman reader will readily see their significance. If all these details are shorn away, the qualification 'living' might do little more than hint at something to superior to ordinary water which is desirable and immediately available. Without some prior knowledge, much of the importance of the phrase would pass unnoticed. However, the general symbolism of water as seen in the *LA* would provide a recognisable point of entry for the reader who wished to delve further into the worldview of the evangelist.

John 4- The Temple

This same episode includes a statement which spells out the ultimate deconstruction of contemporary places of worship: Jesus promises that both the worship of Jerusalem and Mount Gerizim will be replaced in his new dispensation. Again, without some prior knowledge of the history, these remarks will be baffling. At best, they might be taken as construing that the sites mentioned (*en tō orei toutō* - this [unnamed] mountain- John 4:20) near Sychar (John (4:5) and Jerusalem (John 4:20) will be replaced by worship of some higher order: *en pneumati kai alētheia* (in spirit and truth- John 4:23).

⁷² A point which is most apparent in the discussion of Dionysiac ritual and the value of Euripides' *Bacchae* as a source: Albert Heinrichs, "Greek Maenadism from Olympias to Messalina". *HSCP*, 82 (1978), 121-60 at 121-23, 150-52; "Changing Dionysiac Identities" in Ed P. Sanders, Albert I. Baumgarten and Alan Mendelson (ed.s), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition: Volume 3 Self-Definition in the Graeco-Roman World* (London: SCM Press, 1982), 137-60 at 143-45.

The argument makes this clear even if the terms are not fully recognisable: this argument clearly proposes that a worship of higher order is presumed. However, its nature may be puzzling unless the reader or hearer holds that these are desirable characteristics. Even then, *en pneumatē* may be opaque, not least because it does not indicate a dualist separation between flesh and spirit.⁷³ A possible reference to Jesus himself rather than a designated place, specifically the Temple, for worship,⁷⁴ suggests that the phrase is tied to a very specific theological context- the competing claims about true worship and the nature of God within Judaism. John David Audlin's claim that the phrase represents a rejection of Hellenized conceptions of Jesus, specifically those promulgated by Paul, would make the phrase a direct challenge to the worldviews from which many Graeco-Roman readers might have come. However, he seems to be overly bold in describing a supposed conflict between Pauline and Johannine expressions of emerging Christianity: is there for example, any firm evidence that the 'author of this gospel....threw Paul out of his synagogue in Ephesus'?⁷⁵ I think not. That begs a number of questions. Ultimately his point may hold some value, given that the claim of superiority is in respect of *all* other forms of worship. If the text is anchored in context of the narrative, the subtleties of thought might here not be fully apparent to a non-Judaic reader, but the gist of the argument, that worship centred on Jesus is superior to other forms, would be accessible.

The process of deconstruction finds its chief focus in John's re-evaluation of the Temple. It is possible, by considering the symbolic and ritual design of the temple, to argue that functions as a

⁷³ Johannes Nissen, *The Gospel of John and the Religious Quest: Historical and Contemporary Perspectives* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2013), 69.

⁷⁴ Jerome Neyrey, *The Gospel of John in Cultural and Rhetorical Perspective* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 70-71; Marianne Meye Thompson, *The God of the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2001), 212-14.

⁷⁵ James David Audlin, *The Gospel of John: Volume II- Commentaries on the Text* (Paso Ancho: Volcan Baru 2013-17), 659. Audlin's reading depends on conjectured Aramaic Ur-texts to develop his argument, an interesting approach given that Maurice Casey, *Jesus of Nazareth: An Independent Historian's Account of His Life and Teaching* (London: T&T Clark, 2010), 108-20 has highlighted, amongst other things, problems with any such Aramaic reconstructions of John.

ritual *LA*. Margaret Barker's work lays bare the spatial symbolism of the Temple design, furniture and ornaments which reveal the temple as a stylized and manufactured variant of God's creation. Significantly, for any discussion of the *LA*, a garden motif is included in the form of water, lustral rites and the *menorah*.⁷⁶ We might re-appropriate Warren's terminology and describe the temple as a 'ritual in stone'.⁷⁷ This allows for the displacement of a religious element, the Temple, and its replacement with one which is primarily christological, Jesus himself.⁷⁸

However, a note of caution must be introduced, and the simple question asked, "how much would our putative Epicurean reader known of the Temple design?", especially if a non-Jew, living outside Palestine in the period after the destruction of the Jerusalem temple?⁷⁹ Detailed comparisons of the Temple design as resonating with knowledge of the *LA* motif would only be possible for one acquainted with both, and that is by no means certain. So, to avoid the charge of parallelomania, it would appear best to put aside such lines of argument.

John 6- Changing Places

Sometimes landscape, which can include features of the *LA*, intrudes, although it will always be the presence of Jesus which will become ultimately significant. Key events, such as baptism and the meal of John 6, take place in rural, rather than urban, locations or religious centres. Jesus is also portrayed as one who has power to make the environment agreeable. The Feeding of the Five Thousand (John 6:1-15) reveals him as one who has the power to transform an environment, where the feeding of a

⁷⁶ Margaret Barker, *The Gate of Heaven: The History and Symbolism of the Temple in Jerusalem* (London: SPCK, 1991), 57-103; *King of the Jews*, 36-39.

⁷⁷ The original phrase is 'ritual in ink', for a definition, see Meredith J.C. Warren, *My Flesh is Meat Indeed: Nonsacramental Reading of John 6:51-58* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2015), 8-10.

⁷⁸ Neyrey, *The Gospel*, 70-71.

⁷⁹ Significant elements in this hold good even if the earlier date of the gospel, around 68 CE is maintained. The gospel, after all, continues to be read well after its composition.

crowd in a rural setting (not agricultural – John 6:10) seems an impossibility (John 6:7-9). For some, *chortos polus* (much grass) of John 6:10 is sometimes thought to gain additional layers of significance through references to messianic imagery or Psalm 23.⁸⁰ To the reader familiar with the LA motif, but not the Judaic material, an analogous element of desirability would be recognisable. Similarly, Jesus’ walking on the water transforms a hostile environment (John 6:21). The ensuing dialogue will pursue this further. The food which he provides, whether identified sacramentally or christologically, will not simply be one which fills stomachs, but one which is qualitatively superior.⁸¹

John 20 and 21- Changing Places 2

This pattern continues after the resurrection: features of the LA continue to provide a backdrop to the action which might well inform the sensibilities of readers familiar with the trope. The first encounters with the Risen Jesus take place near the tomb (*mnēmeion* – John 19:41, 42; 20: 1-4,6,8,11), located in a garden (*kēpos* -John 19:41). The Risen Christ appears as the gardener (*ho kēpouros* – John 20:15). For some this indicates a motif about paradise, drawing particularly on imagery from Genesis.⁸² Whatever view is taken of the nature of Jesus’ resurrection, the encounter between Mary and the (at first) unrecognised gardener fits well with the uncanny or supernatural encounters of the LA motif: one does not expect to encounter someone who has died publicly and been well and truly buried. The LA motif thus provides a literary hint to the non-cognoscenti of Judaism that something uncanny is afoot.

Later, the disciples will share another simple meal in a rural location, beside the sea of Galilee (John 21: 12-14), after Jesus has changed the Sea of Galilee from a barren fishing ground to a sea of

⁸⁰ Theobald, *Das Evangelium*, 433; Zumstein, *L’Évangile Selon Saint Jean (1-12)*, 212..
⁸¹ Anderson, *The Christology*, 137-66 for the interpretive debate.
⁸² Addison Hodges Hart, *The Woman, The Hour, and the Garden: A Study of Imagery in the Gospel of John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2014), 87-88; Udo Schnelle, *Das Evangelium nach Johannes*, Theologischer Handkommentar zum Neuen Testament 4. (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 1998), 303.

plenty: the catch of fish threatens to break the net (John 21:6). A barren, unfriendly environment, indicated by the long failure to catch any fish, has again been transformed through the actions of the Risen Jesus. Just as the landscape of John 6 became a friendly environment because of his presence, so does the Sea of Galilee now become a desirable and pleasant place, transformed by an encounter with a supernatural presence. This marks a major departure from the classical tropes. In those, the *LA* is symbolic of a philosophical telos, or a utopian hope: it is simply there for the spectator to enjoy. In the gospel, Jesus is consistently depicted as one who reconfigures the landscape in which he finds himself, be it Samaria, Galilee or the Temple. The desirability of place is directly linked to his activity.⁸³ This point is emphasised, and potentially the *LA* motif re-iterated, if this passage is considered to be the realisation of John 1:51.⁸⁴ This is even true of the heavenly locale; there may be ‘many mansions’ (John 14:1), but even there Jesus goes to prepare the place, obviously desirable and closely identified with his own presence (John 14:2-3).

Conclusions

In one significant respect, the *LA* motif, if used in the gospel, would function in a manner which relates more to its pastoral roots: a place of uncanny encounters between humanity and either a deity or supernatural creatures indicating a desirable existence. It would alert readers unfamiliar with Judaic and Scriptural traditions to the significance of the events they describe. Such a motif fits well with those rural locations, already identified above, where Jesus, both earthly and risen, encounters with

⁸³ Note that the gospel is much more explicitly Christocentric in its use of the *LA* than Revelation, which includes far more of description of desirable features. Luther’s observation that ‘Christ was ‘neither sought nor known in it’ (Arthur W. Wainwright, *Mysterious Apocalypse* (Nashville: Abingdon, 1993), 109) certainly seems applicable to the use of the *LA*, as Revelation does not place Jesus’ activity at its centre. This variance in the use of the trope might be a small piece of evidence against common authorship.

⁸⁴ Jean Zumstein, “La Rédaction Finale De L’Évangile Selon Jean (À L’Exemple du Chapitre 21)” in Jean-Daniel Kaestli, Jean-Michel Poffet & Jean Zumstein (ed.s), *Communauté Johannique et son Histoire: La Trajectoire de l’Évangile de Jean aux deux premiers Siècles* (Genève: Labor et Fides, 1990), 209-30 at 220.

his followers. Given the prominence of the LA motif in Roman culture, it is likely to have been known to wide audience, but these claims remain probable, and I am loathe to conclude that they must have been part of the gospel's design or reception. Johannine studies have seen much ink expended on grand reconstructions of the putative Johannine community and audience which are increasingly questioned.⁸⁵ Purely and simply, it cannot be proven that the motif was definitely a part of the Fourth Gospel's composition or reception. That said, such claims are not impossible, either. If this was a possible lens for reading the gospel, the trope broke free from its Graeco-Roman origins and was re-accentuated to become Christocentric: desirability of place was intimately linked with the activity and teaching of Jesus. In addition, the claims of the gospel were never fully exhausted by the LA. These pastoral episodes contained further elements which were less accessible to some readers: claims made that Jesus, rather than the Temple and its festivals, was the means to knowing and relating positively to God, would be greatly enriched by a more specific understanding of a Judaic context. Furthermore, the focus was not, as in pastoral, on landscape, so much as on relationship and encounter. Friendship and values of encounter featured significantly the pastoral accounts, inasmuch as the LA was a place which was expected to be free from strife, war and tension, but here they took centre stage, and the relationship with Jesus became the dominant feature of the new place.⁸⁶

⁸⁵ David A. Lamb, *Text, Context, and the Johannine Community*, Library of New Testament Studies Vol.447 (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1-55 provides a critique of the ebb and flow of views about the Johannine community.

⁸⁶ Note that political and social reality intrudes occasionally: foxes indicate discord (Theocritus 7: 45-54; see Alpers, *What is Pastoral?*, 149). Political discord is a hangover from the civil wars of the late Roman Republic (*Eclogues* 9:3-6. William Clausen, *A Commentary on Vergil Eclogues* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1995), 266-68. Also, *Eclogue* 1:3-5). For a less than perfect social environment, consider that the Muses may even fear rape (Ovid, *Metamorphoses* 5:288; Genevieve Lively, *Ovid's 'Metamorphoses': A Reader's Guide* (London: Continuum, 2011), 64).