FEMINISM, QUEERNESS, AFFECT, AND ROMANS

EARLY CHRISTIANITY AND ITS LITERATURE

Number 30

SBL PRESS

FEMINISM, QUEERNESS, AFFECT, AND ROMANS

Under God?

Jimmy Hoke

SBL PRESS

SBL PRESS

Atlanta

Library of Congress Control Number: 2021946563

This book is for the queer folks who were, are,
and evermore shall be there

Contents

Acknowledgments

For the best damn doctoral mentors who have been coaching me and this book from its beginning to this end: Althea Spencer Miller, Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre, and Stephen Moore.

For feminist and queer advice, mentorship, and book publication guidance: Shelly Matthews and Joseph Marchal.

For their labor and attention to perfect the manuscript, promote and advertise it, and transform it into a tangible book: my two anonymous reviewers and the staff of SBL Press: Bob Buller, Lindsay Lingo, Heather McMurray, and Nicole Tilford.

For conversation, collaboration, and good times at Drew University: Amy Chase, Arminta Fox, Christy Cobb, Elizabeth Freese, Eric Thomas, Jesse Mann (especially for Latin guidance), Karri Whipple, Linzi Guy, Lydia York, Matthew Ketchum, Midori Hartman, Minenhle Khumalo, Paige Rawson, Peter McLellan, and Sarah Emanuel.

For writing accountability and editing (and coffee breaks) at Luther College: David Faldet, Destiny Crider, and Melanie Batoff.

For creativity, diligence, and eagerness: all my students, especially my phenomenal research assistants Abby Trewin, Anna Luber, and Lucas Byl.

For everyone willing to take time (especially during a global pandemic) to read and comment on drafts: Arminta Fox, Christy Cobb, Christopher Zeichmann, Harry Hoke, Madison McClendon, Nan St. Clair, Paige Rawson, and Peter McLellan.

And, most especially, for their friendship and unwavering support and for continually shaping my feminism and queerness: Alyssa Henning, Ellis Arnold, Karen Esterl, Laura Wright, Madison McClendon, Mike Le Chevallier, Paige Rawson, Catherine ("Gran") Hoke, Lynn Williamson, and Chip, Harry, Kathy, and Michael Hoke.

Reading Guidance

I quote (and then translate—my own translations, unless noted otherwise) Greek and Latin passages frequently. Some readers—especially students and lay readers longing for accessible writing about Paul, sexuality, and gender—may find this off-putting, making the reading more dense and challenging than it is.[1] I ask (and thank you) for your patience: I want you to read my book, and I understand that including words, phrases, and large chunks in unfamiliar ancient languages creates a barrier.

Embrace that barrier; relish the unfamiliar. That is the reason I give all my readers the untranslated text: it is a visible reminder of the distance between us and these words.

There are a few Greek words that I refuse to translate. They are terms that have become too familiar, in my opinion. To provide readers with an orientation and guide they can turn back to, these terms are:

- ἐκκλησία (plural: ἐκκλησίαι): pronounced "eck-lay-see-uh" (plural, "eck-lay-see-ay"); means "assembly," broadly used, especially when people engaged in a democratic decision-making process; traditionally translated "church" within texts that describe assemblies of wo/men who gathered to follow Christ.
- ἔθνη (singular, ἔθνος): pronounced "eth-nay" (singular, "eth-nohs"); means "nations," used by Romans to refer to nations/peoples they conquered; often translated as "gentiles" in the New Testament, since it is the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew *goyim*, which frequently refers to the nations other than ancient Israel/Jews in the Hebrew Bible and other Jewish literature.

1. As I have come to understand from listening to disability activists, the issues addressed below are not barriers that keep academic writing from being accessible beyond the academy. Academic writing would be much more accessible if it were cheaper, open access, and available in formats such as large print or audiobook.

- πίστις: pronounced "pis-tis"; "trust" or "faith," typically translated in the New Testament and early Christian texts as "faith" or "belief" (πίστις has a verb form, πιστεύω, which I render "have/display/show πίστις").
- κύριος (plural, κύριοι): pronounced "koo-ree-os" (plural, "koo-ree-oy"); means "master" (especially in the context of slavery) and often translated as "lord" when Christian texts refer to Jesus (in Paul's letters) or when Jewish or Christian texts refer to God.
- δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ: pronounced "dee-kay-oh-soo-nay theh-oo"; means "God's justice" ("justice" = δικαιοσύνη), which, in Paul's letters and other Jewish and Christian texts, has been translated as God's "righteousness" or "justification"—words that efface its political roots and coat it with theological sentiment.

By using only the untranslated word, I transform these Greek words into terms themselves, which both you and I will imbue with meaning. But, even as we give them new limits, this allows them to exceed the limited containers in which English—often churchy—translation tends to place them.

Finally, beyond the Greek, some may find the theoretical orientation of this book dense and difficult. Though I won't provide full definitions here, I note them along with where in the book you can find where I define and detail them:

- Wo/men: pronounced "women"; term coined and theorized by Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza to call attention to and remind readers of the many differences among women (see further definition/discussion in chapter 1, starting on page 25).
- LGBTIA2Q+: acronym referring to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, intersex, asexual/ace/aromantic, two-spirit, and queer folks, with the plus (+) indicating the proliferation of other queer and trans identities not explicitly named in the acronym. There can be numerous variations on the acronym depending on the user (LGBT, LGBTQ, LGBTI/Q, etc.) as well as different meanings given to the letters (especially the A and Q). Any use of any acronym (and definition of each letter's meaning) is likely to become dated as discourse changes, and my usage reflects the acronym as LGBTIA2Q+ activists were using it in early 2021.
- Kyriarchy: pronounced "keer-ree-ARK-ee"; another term coined by Schüssler Fiorenza to point out how power is structured hier-

archically along many axes of privilege and oppression, including gender identity, race, sexual orientation, class, and ability (see further definition and discussion in chapter 1, starting on page 17).

- Cruel optimism: concept theorized by Lauren Berlant to describe conditions when people attach to objects or promises that actively prevent their flourishing (see full definition and discussion in chapter 3, starting on page 139).
- Homonationalism: term coined by Jasbir K. Puar to theorize the alliances between LGBTIA2Q+ folks and the project of nationalism, especially in (but not limited to) the post-9/11 United States' war on terror (see full definition and discussion in chapter 5, starting on page 237).
- Fuck: okay, this is not a theoretical term, but it is an obscenity that may create barriers for some readers, even as it refreshes and empowers other readers who are weary of the sanitization (and romanticization) of academic/religious discourses on sex. In addition to being used in translations of Roman-era graffiti, I use the term several select times throughout the book as I think about the different (and sometimes obscene) sexual interactions that occurred in ancient Rome, including (but not limited to) those among ancient queer wo/men.

Again, I ask you to struggle with these terms and concepts and to enjoy that struggle. It took me years of reading theoretical texts before I finally felt like I had a foothold, and I still struggle when engaging new theories. I keep struggling because the payoff has always been worth it. I hope you will struggle with me, and I hope you will find it valuable—pleasurable, even.

Abbreviations

AB	Anchor Bible
ABRL	Anchor (Yale) Bible Reference Library
AcBib	Academia Biblia
Agr.	Philo, *De Agricultura*
AJP	*American Journal of Philology*
Ann.	Tacitus, *Annales*
ANTC	Abingdon New Testament Commentaries
Ant. rom.	Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Antiquitates romanae*
AUSS	*Andrews University Seminary Studies*
BDSM	Bondage and discipline; domination and submission; sadism and masochism
BECNT	Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament
Ben.	Seneca, *De Beneficiis*
Bibl. hist.	Diodorus Siculus, *Bibliotheca historica*
BibInt	*Biblical Interpretation*
BibInt	Biblical Interpretation Series
B.J.	Josephus, *Bellum judaicum*
BRPBI	Brill Research Perspectives in Biblical Interpretation
Carm.	Horace, *Carmina*
CBQ	*Catholic Biblical Quarterly*
CIL	*Corpus inscriptionum latinarum*
CJ	*Classical Journal*
CMP	Cultural Memory in the Present
Contempl.	Philo, *De vita contemplativa*
Contraversions	Contraversions: Jews and Other Differences
CP	Cultural Politics
CultRel	*Culture and Religion: An Interdisciplinary Journal*
CurBR	*Currents in Biblical Research*
Det.	Philo, *Quod deterius potiori insidari soleat*
dif.	*differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*

Div	Divinations: Rereading Late Ancient Religion
ECL	Early Christianity and Its Literature
Fact.	Valerius Maximus, *Facta et dicta memorabilia*
Flacc.	Philo, *In Flaccum*
GLQ	*GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies*
GTR	Gender, Theory, and Religion
Hermeneia	Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible
HTR	*Harvard Theological Review*
HTS	Harvard Theological Studies
Ios.	Philo, *De Iosepho*
JCMAMW	Jews, Christians, and Muslims from the Ancient to the Modern World
JBL	*Journal of Biblical Literature*
JECH	*Journal of Early Christian History*
JECS	*Journal of Early Christian Studies*
JFSR	*Journal of Feminist Studies in Religion*
JHFCB	A John Hope Franklin Center Book
JHistSex	*Journal of the History of Sexuality*
JR	*Journal of Religion*
JSNT	*Journal for the Study of the New Testament*
JSP	*Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha*
LCL	Loeb Classical Library
LD	*Lectio Difficilior*
Leg. 1, 2, 3	Philo, *Legum allegoriae* 1, 2, 3
Legat.	Philo, *Legatio ad Gaium*
Lib. aegr.	Plutarch, *De libidune et aegritudine*
LSJ	Liddell, H. G., R. Scott, H. S. Jones, *A Greek-English Lexicon*. 9th ed. with revised supplement. Oxford, 1996.
LXX	Septuagint
Metam.	Apuleius, *Metamorphoses*
MTSR	*Method and Theory in the Study of Religion*
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NIGTC	New International Greek Testament Commentary
NovT	*Novum Testamentum*
NRSV	New Revised Standard Version
NTS	*New Testament Studies*

NW	Next Wave: New Directions in Women's Studies
OED	*Oxford English Dictionary*
P.Oxy.	*Papyrus* Oxyrhynchus
PCC	Paul in Critical Contexts
PM	Perverse Modernities
Post.	Philo, *De posteritate Caini*
Praec. ger. rei publ.	Plutarch, *Praecepta gerendae rei publicae*
Prov. 1, 2	Philo, *De providentia* 1, 2
PTMS	Princeton Theological Monograph Series
QT	Queering Theology Series
Res gest. divi Aug.	Res gestae divi Augusti
RTR	*Reformed Theological Review*
Saec.	Horace, *Carmen saeculare*
Sat.	Juvenal, *Satirae*
SBL	Society of Biblical Literature
SBLSP	Society of Biblical Literature Seminar Papers
SemeiaSt	Semeia Studies
SerQ	Series Q
SocT	*Social Text*
SP	Sacra Pagina
Spec.	*De specialibus legibus*
Syn	Synkrisis: Comparative Approaches to Early Christianity in Greco-Roman Culture
TSAJ	Texte und Studien zum antiken Judentum
TTC	Transdisciplinary Theological Colloquia
UCLF	*University of Chicago Legal Forum*
USQR	*Union Seminary Quarterly Review*
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
WW	*Word and World*

Introduction: Under God?

One nation,
Under God.

—United States Pledge of Allegiance

We want villains. We look for them everywhere. People to pin our misfortune on, whose sins and flaws are responsible for all the suffering we see. We want a world where the real monstrosity lies in wicked individuals, instead of being a fundamental facet of human society, of the human heart.

Stories prime us to search for villains. Because villains can be punished. Villains can be stopped.

But villains are oversimplifications.

—Sam J. Miller, *Blackfish City*

This is a book about submission and subversion, injustice and justice, heroes and villains. It is also about Paul and the wo/men around Rome's ἐκκλησία; the Roman Empire and the nations it conquered and ruled; and the norms of straight cis men and resistant subcultures of queer wo/men.[1] Yet this oversimplifies my book's contents. In *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans*, I animate the impulses that move *in between* these simple divisions. This book is about *in-betweenness*.

In-betweenness is political because divisions are political. Heroes require villains: a villain's characteristics determine who and what is heroic. Villains, as the epigraph suggests, get imbued with all the injustices we wish to cast from the messy in-betweenness of the worlds we inhabit. Who is made a villain? How do heroic norms allow some villainous wo/men to

1. Feminist biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza coins *wo/men* to visibly represent the differences that exist among women. I explain this term and my usage of it more fully in chapter 1. It is pronounced aloud as "women" as though the slash were not present.

transform themselves into heroes? If we look in between the hero-villain divide, can we get beyond this norm and the injustices it paves over? *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans: Under God?* probes these questions and their intersections.

This book is political. The theo-political notion of "under God" is a problem that traps possibilities.[2] Paul's letter to the Romans traps and erases queer wo/men under God, just as Roman imperialism trapped and erased queer wo/men under a god-like Caesar. Indeed, Paul repudiates queerness *because* Rome did. Throughout this book, I argue that Paul's letter to the Romans submits to the norms that determined Rome's heroes and villains. Paul does this in hopes that he—and his audience of Christ-followers—can transform into Roman heroes. I call this *Romanormativity*.

These politics equally concern the present, as I emphasize with my book's subtitle. *Under God?* signals contemporary relevance by directing a query toward the US Pledge of Allegiance. Queer folks, especially queer folks of color, remain trapped and erased under present norms that heroicize the white straight cis men who rule over us. These men make queerness the villain, even as some of these villains regulate their queerness and submit to norms that promise to make them heroes. Just like Paul. I am concerned about Romans and the pasts it summons because they affect the present. The gridlock created by contemporary injustices is knotted to histories of intersecting oppressions in which Paul's letters participate. The twenty-first-century United States and first-century Rome declare: Under God, genuine change is an impossible fantasy. Justice and freedom are speculative fiction.

This book is oriented toward the past, the present, and the future. I refuse to uphold these temporal divisions. I gaze at the pasts in between the present and future, the futures in between the present and past. I am attempting to loosen theo-politics, particularly as expressed and influenced by Pauline interpretation, from this knotty gridlock. In *Under God?* I struggle to make the impossible plausible.

The scents of a plausibly utopian future drive this book. I do more than sniff out unjust divisions for critique. Critiquing these divisions resists their normalcy, but critique alone does not get out from under

2. Erin Runions has drawn wider attention to the biblical roots (beyond Paul's letters) of theo-politics and its affective and apocalyptic fantasies surrounding sex. See Erin Runions, *The Babylon Complex: Fantasies of War, Sex, and Sovereignty* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014).

them. "Struggle includes the power to resist but it also seeks the power to change," writes feminist theorist, the*logian, and biblical scholar Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza.[3] *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans* struggles to move beyond villains and heroes, especially ones that take Pauline form. I bring to life the queer wo/men whose impulses oozed in between one another and Paul's words as they engaged his letter in Rome's ἐκκλησία.

A title orients a book. *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans* signals many orientations. Through *Feminism* and *Queerness*, I accentuate my political orientations. I am concerned about the inseparable oppressions of wo/men and LGBTIA2Q+ folks. This necessarily means this book concerns sexual orientation and gender identity, including how gender and sexuality are constructed. But feminist and queer orientations are always political: I care about *who* constructs sexuality and gender and *how* queer wo/men navigate norms. Feminism and queerness are central to this book because they demand justice. I insist that *queer wo/men were there*, a political refrain that demands a recognition that *does* something: I reconstruct queer wo/men in the past because they help us to imagine new futures in which queer wo/men are central.

Through *Affect*, I convey an orientation to *in-betweenness*. Some readers might be tempted to call this a theoretical orientation, since *affect* does signal that I am engaging with scholarship that is now characterized within affect theory. I cannot deny this theoretical orientation exists within these pages. But affect is more than just a theoretical orientation (just as feminism and queerness also gesture to theoretical fields). Affect orients us towards *feelings* and *sensations* that go beyond cognitive thinking. Affect is not disembodied from politics. Affect draws out these feelings and sensations and their in-betweenness and asks: Who produces or controls these feelings? What do these sensations *do*? By orienting *in between*, affect

3. Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza, *Transforming Vision: Explorations in Feminist The*logy* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2011), 16. As she notes in this introduction to the volume, struggle is a long-present theme within her vast contributions to feminism, and it framed an older collection of her essays: Schüssler Fiorenza, *Discipleship of Equals: A Critical Feminist* Ekklēsia-*logy of Liberation* (New York: Crossroad, 1993). On pp. 2–3 of that volume, she observes how many liberal Protestants have questioned her ongoing work that struggles against the Catholic Church's restrictive positions toward women as well as how many feminists (often with understandable reasons) relinquish the struggle with religion or the Bible. Based in part on personal experience, a similar questioning (framed by a similar relinquishing) is often the reaction of queer folks to biblical scholars who continue to queerly probe biblical texts.

refuses to divide thinking from feeling: thinking is one among many sensations that move in between bodies. We already have seen this affective orientation at work in the book's first paragraphs: what (and who) moves in between justice and injustice, the villains and the heroes, Paul and first-century queer wo/men?

Finally, this book is about *Romans*. The title's final word signals its historical and textual dimensions. It orients my book toward an academic field, biblical studies, and this series, Early Christianity and Its Literature. Within biblical studies, *Romans* is shorthand for Paul's letter to the queer wo/men who assembled in the city of Rome in the late 50s CE.[4] This letter provides one starting point that allows us to see sensations that move in between this letter and the queer wo/men who came into contact with it.

Romans is an ambiguous term. Romans were *people*. Since they lived in the city of Rome, could we not also call the first-century queer wo/men

4. There is a rather wide range of dating for the epistle, which places its composition anywhere from 55 to 59 CE (or even as late as 64), and some older commentaries prefer a date in the earlier 50s, with the assumption that Paul writes this letter from Corinth. While I do not dispute this general dating, it should be noted that almost all of the commentaries appeal to Acts to establish some of the historical details of Paul's travels. See Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *Romans*, AB 33 (New York: Doubleday, 1993), 85–88; Thomas R. Schreiner, *Romans*, BECNT (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1998), 3–5; Robert Jewett, *Romans: A Commentary*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2007), 18 (Jewett prefers a date in late 56 or early 57); James D. G. Dunn, *Romans* WBC 38, 2 vols. (Dallas: Word, 1988), 1:xliii–xliv; Philip F. Esler, *Conflict and Identity in Romans* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2003), 101; Douglas J. Moo, *The Epistle to the Romans*, NICNT (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1996), 2–3 (Moo prefers to date to 57); Brendan Byrne, *Romans*, SP 6 (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical, 2007), 8–9 (Byrne gives early 58 the highest probability within this range); John B. Cobb Jr. and David J. Lull, *Romans* (Saint Louis: Chalice, 2005), 3; Arland J. Hultgren, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 2–4. Scholars who give precise dates include: early in 56 CE, Frank J. Matera, *Romans*, Paideia (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2010), 4–6; winter 56–57 CE, Ben Witherington III with Darlene Hyatt, *Paul's Letter to the Romans: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004), 7; 57 CE, Leander E. Keck, *Romans*, ANTC (Nashville: Abingdon, 2005), 29–30; 56 or 57 CE, Elsa Tamez, "Romans: A Feminist Reading," in *Feminist Biblical Interpretation: A Compendium of Critical Commentary on the Books of the Bible and Related Literature*, ed. Luise Schottroff and Marie-Theres Wacker (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 698; winter 57–58 CE, Luke Timothy Johnson, *Reading Romans: A Literary and Theological Commentary* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 4; Richard N. Longenecker, *The Epistle to the Romans: A Commentary on the Greek Text*, NIGTC (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2016), 5–6.

who engaged Paul's letter Romans? Certainly, we can; yet, this designation is complicated. *Roman* can designate any inhabitant of the city, but it could also have a narrower meaning. One is Roman if one possessed Roman citizenship. It can also have a wider meaning, since Rome was both a city and an empire: A Roman could be anyone who dwelt within Rome's expansive territory. The meaning of *Roman* is as malleable as *American* is used today: inhabitant of the United States; US citizen; a person living anywhere in the Americas. Therefore, *Romans* also denotes this book's historical orientation. I am digging up the history of queer wo/men in first-century Rome, and I am situating Paul's letter as a primary source that offers a glimpse into this history.

The letter to the Romans did not affect queer wo/men only in first-century Rome: queer wo/men continue to be affected by it, sometimes unaware of subtle ways our lives bump against it. Romans 1:26–27 arguably contains the Bible's most infamous, overt, and encompassing condemnation of same-sex intercourse and its only explicit condemnation of queer *wo/men*. While I cannot ignore the impacts of these verses, the letter has more than one chapter; its effects on queer wo/men extends beyond two verses. Deeper dangers lurk beyond 1:26–27. How did Paul's theo-Christology (Rom 3–5) and ethics (Rom 12–15) affect first-century queer wo/men? And how do they continue to impact queer wo/men? A political orientation motivates my scrutiny of Romans. I desire change for how Romans affects queer wo/men and our politics.

Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans. These are not four discrete orientations: they come together, even though they sometimes tug in different directions. These orientations are starting points: they shape the arguments that follow. My book shows some of the impulses that emerge *in between* these orientations. It is about what happens when feminism, queerness, affect, and Romans interact. What happens when we decenter Paul, as hero or villain? What ensues when queer wo/men become fully visible? Most importantly, it is about what *can* happen if these critiques and reconstructions move beyond the past. What justices are plausible when we try to get out from under God?

Reading Romans alongside Affect, Queerness, and Feminism

Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans: Under God? reads Romans. As a work in biblical studies, it offers plausible meanings to passages in the letter. These meanings probe how queer wo/men who first encountered

this letter could have engaged with it. It does historical work because it reconstructs the plausible responses and impulses of these wo/men. This work summons an assemblage where Paul is one among many queer wo/men. Paul's letter represents some of the many impulses—words, ideas, sensations, gestures, movements, scents, feelings, and so on—that moved in between queer wo/men in Rome's ἐκκλησία.

Submission provides a thematic lens for how I read Romans. Submission is often hidden due to the letter's hopeful anticipations of δικαιοσύνη θεοῦ ("God's justice"). Submission pulsates the pages of Romans, and submission's *affect* draws focus to particular texts where it is most explicit (such as Rom 13) or most cruel (such as Rom 3). When these pulses are intentionally wielded by systems of power, ignored, or left dormant, they enact or enable oppression. I direct my attention to two instances: submission's implicit appearance as faithful submission in Rom 3 and its explicit mention as ethical submission in Rom 13.[5] I draw out this submission by engaging *feminist and queer affective critique*. This is one way that the politics of feminism, queerness, affect, and Romans are drawn together throughout my book.

The second way engages in *subversion* alongside Rome's queer wo/men. I reconstruct queer wo/men in Rome through a praxis of ἐκκλησία-l assemblage, which draws attention to how bodies, forces, and sensations converge and collide alongside one another in complex and contradictory ways. Assemblages emphasize affect's in-betweenness: firm divisions break down; identities overlap. Assemblages help us see submission being subverted.

Subversion is different from inversion. Inversion implies a flipping or switching of positions: the powerless become powerful, the heroes transformed into villains. Imbalance inverts. This dismantles a specific oppression only to rebuild its same structures. Subversion seeks *interruption*. It destabilizes, sometimes subtly, sneakily. It can slowly bubble into a boiling point. In my use of the term, subversion struggles to dismantle oppression entirely, without rebuilding it. Subversion is hard work; it is an unending struggle.

The subversive ἐκκλησία-l assemblages I (re)build are part of my overall feminist and queer affective politics, inseparable from the work of

5. Though left untouched here, submission's pulse can also be found explicitly in Rom 8 and 10 and implicitly in many other unexamined spaces in the letter. See especially Rom 8:7, 20; 10:3.

critique. The queer wo/men of Rome—like queer wo/men today—have not fully embodied justice: there is always more critical work to do. Justices and injustices remain for us to unearth. The following six chapters engage in this critical work with the queer wo/men in between Romans.

The first chapter, "Romans and Romanormativity: Feminist and Queer Affective Critique," spells out the book's feminist and queer commitments. It begins with a discussion of foundational political-theoretical concepts, including intersectionality and difference; wo/men and kyriarchy; and heteronormativity and homonormativity. The chapter then places these feminist and queer concepts into dialogue with first-century Roman materials to demonstrate what I am calling Romosexuality and Romanormativity. Finally, I develop feminist and queer work around affect theory's emphasis on feelings, sensations, and in-betweenness, which shows how normativity, as an affective force, draws and compels bodies even when they may seem to resist dominant culture. This provokes new ways to read Romans. Feminist and queer affective critique, in dialogue with first-century socio-sexual-political norms, compels attention to how Roman constructions of sexuality and gender affect Paul's letter to the Romans beyond obvious passages. Affectively feminist and queer attention, I argue, reveals how an imperial-aligned ideal of submission "under God" undergirds Romans and drives an affectively aspirational Romanormativity.

In chapter 2, "Waking Up (from) Tired Texts: Feminism, Queerness, and *ἐκκλησία*-l Assemblages," I argue that feminist and queer deployments of assemblage move readings of Romans beyond "the heroic Paul" identified by Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre and Laura S. Nasrallah. The chapter engages feminist and queer affective critique to analyze Rom 1:26–27 and queer biblical scholarship's (literally) exhaustive focus on it. Looking to Rom 16 and material culture, I show how turning to the queer wo/men in and around Paul's audience aids in moving beyond the first chapter of Paul's letter. I argue that the site of the ancient *ἐκκλησία* offers a first-century space to expand feminist and queer affective renderings of assemblage. By thinking with assemblages alongside Schüssler Fiorenza's "*ἐκκλησία* of wo/men," I harness my own praxis of *ἐκκλησία*-l assemblage that the rest of the book uses to move beyond Pauline heroism. I feature this praxis by returning to Rom 1:26–27 as a test case at the chapter's conclusion. I bring to life the queer wo/men of Rome's *ἐκκλησία* by proliferating their plausible, diverging responses to these verses. Challenging presumptions of historical certainty, my speculatively plausible reconstruction imagines how queer wo/men interrupted and interacted

with Paul and each other as their ideas and feelings clashed and mingled. My praxis of ἐκκλησία-l assemblage, in dialogue with feminist and queer affective critique, scrambles the sides in between queer wo/men and Paul and awakens this tired text.

The next two chapters turn to how first-century Christ-followers developed different theo-Christologies. Chapter 3, "Faithful Submission," considers the submissiveness of Paul's presentation of Jesus Christ and his πίστις in 3:21–31. I situate πίστις (traditionally translated as "faith") within the propaganda of Roman imperialism, which benefitted from promises of loyal πίστις to ensure the submissive behavior of its conquered ἔθνη. Rome's promises of πίστις enabled ancient fantasies of upward mobility into a Romanormative good life. These fantasies forge attachments akin to what Lauren Berlant calls "cruel optimism." I argue that faithful submission spreads from the letter's introduction in 1:5 into Rom 3–5 in ways that render Paul a purveyor of a cruel πίστις that is optimistically and impossibly attached to a fantasy of achieving the Romanormative good life under a Roman-without-Rome God.

Chapter 4, "Faithful Subversion," considers alternatives to Rome's cruel optimism based on different interpretations of Jesus, God, and πίστις (or lack thereof). Considering many affective impulses that were generated in between queer wo/men in Rome's ἐκκλησία, this chapter proliferates several different interpretations of theo-Christology that could exist alongside those in Rom 1–5. Reconstructed alongside evidence from other first-century theologies (among Christ-followers, Jews, and other religious associations), these impulses aligned with and subverted Rome's kyriarchy as all of these bodies continue to tread in imperial waters. The chapter concludes by putting all of these impulses together and brings to life the theo-Christologies of Rome's queer wo/men as they interacted with Rom 3–5. These impulsive interactions simultaneously subvert and more stringently support cruel πίστις and faithful submission under God.

The final two chapters focus on how theo-Christology impacted Christ-followers' ethics: what they should *do*. Submission's pulse continues through the epistle's closing chapters, as chapter 5, "Ethical Submission," shows. Jasbir Puar's "homonationalism"—a tactic that allows certain "queer" bodies to perform patriotic morality in order to become praiseworthy under a national/imperial gaze—resonates in a first-century Roman context. Many non-elite bodies, including but not limited to Paul, attempted to conform their ethics to those of Rome in order to benefit and rise in status. In this chapter, I exegete the ethical ideas in Rom 13

alongside imperial ethics and the kyriarchal structuring of morality. The regulations of sexual and ethical moderation in Rom 13:8–14 prove inseparable from 13:1–7's ethical mandate to submit to the ruling authorities of Rome. Romans 13 highlights how Pauline ethics participate in Roman-style homonationalism.

These homonational ethics were neither unique to Paul nor the only ethical ideas held by Christ-followers. If Paul's submissive notion of πίστις underlies his homonational ethics, then what different ethical responses might emerge from other theo-christological starting points? Chapter 6, "An Ethical ἐκκλησία," moves beyond the ethical questions of Rom 13 and considers other ethical impulses that plausibly emerged around Rome's ἐκκλησία. These plausible impulses engaged some of the pressing moral concerns that surrounded imperial politics, sexual praxis, and ethnic diversity. Emphasizing how Christ-followers were grappling with these concerns before receiving Paul's letter, this chapter situates Paul's ethical impulses as some among many ethical impulses that were sensed and embodied among queer wo/men in Rome's ἐκκλησία. Ultimately, it brings to life the complex and contradictory queerness that moved in between regulation and freedom and characterized this ἐκκλησία-l assemblage.

My book generates conversations in between theory and (biblical) text. This is a critical contribution. Feminist and queer affective critique and subversively feminist and queer assemblages are not methods applied to historical texts and contexts. Although this book *reads* Romans, the goal is not *a reading of* Romans. Its goal is to query what feminism, queerness, affect, and Romans can do when drawn together. Throughout this book, feminism, queerness, affect, and Romans twirl together in ways that affect each element. Feminism helps us read affect. Affect helps us feel Romans. Romans helps us engage queerness. These orientations draw many lines, move back and forth and in between many directions. The intersecting feminisms, queernesses, affects, and Romans that spill out of this constellation matter. Their politics impact queer wo/men in the present; their plausibilities intuit more just futures. From start to finish, *Feminism, Queerness, Affect, and Romans: Under God?* must, I insist, be political.