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Recent and Previous Research on the Pericope Adulterae (John 7.53–8.11)

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ABSTRACT

This article surveys recent and previous research on the enigmatic *Pericope Adulterae* (PA), traditionally placed at Jn 7.53–8.11. The discussion is organized by the methodologies that scholars have applied to PA, and thus the article also demonstrates the various critical approaches in New Testament studies that have found popularity at a given time. While the following study will observe that some scholarly conclusions, such as the theory that PA did not appear in the original version of the Gospel of John, are near consensus, it will also highlight some remaining unsettled issues in PA scholarship.

Keywords: adulteress; Jn 7.53–8.11; methodology; *Pericope Adulterae*.

As the longest of New Testament interpolations, this section has constituted a serious problem for modern editors (Goodspeed 1945: 108).

Corresponding to other aspects of the *Pericope Adulterae* (Jn 7.53–8.11; hereafter PA), its history of research is unique in New Testament studies. The academic discussion of this pericope primarily dwells in articles and appendices rather than textbooks and monographs, as only three book-length treatments of PA are extant, all of which are doctoral dissertations. While one of these dissertations is published (Becker 1963) and unsurpassed as an introduction to PA's many textual issues, the other two (A. Johnson 1964; Toensing 1998) remain unpublished. Scholarly treatments of PA tend to be restricted to short glances because, though most scholars find the story of Jesus and the adulteress interesting and enigmatic, its textual history causes it to fall between the cracks of the

New Testament guild, with no one group (especially Johannine scholars) claiming PA as 'its own'. Schnackenburg is exemplary of both the intrigue for PA and the short treatment of the text: 'This "lost pearl of ancient tradition" ...most certainly deserves to have attention lavished upon it; but because it presents a number of problems, which have resulted in abundant literature, its treatment in a commentary on John's gospel must inevitably be limited' (1980: II, 162). Nonetheless, a surprising array of methodological approaches appears in PA's research history, and the following article will be organized along these lines. The oldest, and most common, approach to PA is a text-critical one.

1. *Text Criticism*

PA naturally invites a text-critical approach, as Gregory observes, 'If I am not mistaken, there are in the whole New Testament no other dozen verses that exhibit such a manifold variation of readings. It is a section that in reference to its textual history and textual character stands totally alone' (1907: 514). Given the volume of text-critical work on PA, this particular methodology will require the bulk of attention in the current study. However, I will limit the discussion to two text-critical questions concerning PA: (1) Is PA Johannine?; and (if not) (2) From where does PA come? In order to provide background to scholarly discussion of these questions, a brief overview of the textual evidence for PA follows.

a. *Textual Evidence*

Sinaiticus (Ⲛ) omits PA, and it is unlikely that Alexandrinus (A) or Ephraemi Rescriptus (C) contained it, though their manuscripts are missing leaves at this point in John's Gospel (Metzger 1994: 187). Concerning Vaticanus (B), PA itself does not appear but Robinson suggests that the presence of a marginal umlaut at Jn 7.52 'appear[s] to indicate that the original scribe of that MS had some knowledge of the pericope variant' (2000: 40). Here Robinson follows Payne's assessment of umlauts in Vaticanus generally and PA specifically (1995: 250-62), and Knust (2005: 61; 2006: 489), similarly following a study of Payne and Canart (2000: 105-13), also suggests the umlaut reflects knowledge of PA at Jn 7.52-8.11. However, in a 2006 paper given at the annual meeting of the Evangelical Theological Society, which he kindly provided to me, Robinson disregards Payne's suggestion and claims the umlaut more likely attests a textual variant at 7.52 (2006: 18 n. 53). In this same paper he proposes (very tentatively) that the lined but blank leaf between the end of the Gospel of John and the beginning of

the Gospel of Luke in Washingtonianus (W) may attest to knowledge of PA following Jn 21.25 as it does in some *f*¹ manuscripts.

Amidst the host of other manuscripts that omit PA (see Metzger 1994: 187-88), the diglot Bezae (D), dated to ca. 400 CE (Parker 1992: 281), is the earliest Greek gospel text to include PA, and it does so at Jn 7.53–8.11. The remaining majuscules that include the pericope can be dated from the seventh century to the fifteenth century, with the vast majority of these dating closer to the twelfth century (these include 18, 180, 205, 579, 597, 700, 892, 1006, 1010, 1071, 1243, 1929, 1342 and 1505). *Inter alia*, Streeter lists several of the manuscripts that either omit PA and note that it is not found in other manuscripts (565) or attach notes that it is not read in some of the Fathers' commentaries (1, 1582) (1924: 124). Robinson (2000: 41-42) provides valuable information, claiming to have found no less than seven alternative locations (from the traditional location of Jn 7.53–8.11) in the approximately 1350 continuous gospel manuscripts attesting PA (26 MSS at end of the Gospel of John; 1 MS at beginning of the Gospel of John [and 1 MS after Jn 7.52 and beginning of the Gospel of John]; 9 MSS after Lk. 21.38; 2 MSS after Jn 7.36; 1 MS after Jn 8.20; 1 MS after Jn 8.14a; 17 MSS after Jn 8.13). Robinson omits eighth and ninth alternative locations—the corrector of MS 1333 places PA at the end of Luke's Gospel (Parker 1997: 96); and one can find PA after Jn 7.44 in the Georgian manuscript tradition (see Birdsall 2006: 188-89). A total of ten different locations amongst around 1350 manuscripts demonstrate a complex textual history for PA.

b. *Is PA Johannine?*

In the face of this evidence, a clear and overwhelming majority of scholars conclude that PA is not original to the Gospel of John, such that it is not necessary or possible to list them all here. Contrary to the practice of some (Strachan 1941: 204; Burge 1984: 144; Rius-Camps 1993: 149; Beasley-Murray 1999: 143; Lincoln 2005: 524), however, one should resist describing this as a 'consensus', 'unanimous', or 'universal agreement' due to frequent attempts to prove or support the Johannine authenticity of the material (A. Johnson 1964; 1966: 91-96; Trites 1974: 137-46; Hodges 1979: 318-32; 1980: 41-53; Baylis 1989: 172; Heil 1991: 182-91; see also Bengel 1873: II, 348, 352; Heil 1994: 361-66). Strauss represents a mediating position by stating that 'a decision on the subject cannot be hazarded' (1972: 410; also Hendricksen 1954: 35).

Despite Strauss's claim, one can indeed hazard a decision in favour of the majority position, as a non-Johannine origin for the pericope is suggested by more than PA's textual history alone. First, PA's language is closer to

Synoptic material than Johannine, particularly Lukan material (*inter alia*, McLachlan 1912: 94-126; Cadbury 1917: 237-44; Newman and Nida 1980: 257). A. Johnson records 13 words found in PA that do not occur anywhere else in the Gospel of John, while Morgenthaller, Kubo, and Köstenberger record 14 (A. Johnson 1964: 183; 1966: 94; Morgenthaller 1958: 187; Kubo 1975: 98; Köstenberger 2004: 245). In reality, there are 15 such words in PA: ἐλαία (7.53); ὄρθρος (8.2); γραμματεὺς (8.3); μοιχεία (8.3); αὐτόφωρος (8.4, also NT *hapax legomenon*); μοιχεύω (8.4); κύπτω (8.6); καταγράφω (8.6, also NT *hapax legomenon*); ἐπιμένω (8.7); ἀνακύπτω (8.7, 10); ἀναμάρτητος (8.7, also NT *hapax legomenon*); κατακύπτω (8.8, also NT *hapax legomenon*); πρεσβύτερος (8.9) καταλείπω (8.9); and κατακρίνω (8.10). The scene itself more closely parallels the Synoptic portrayal of Jesus teaching in the Temple on a daily basis prior to his passion, and for that reason many commentators note especially the connection with Lk. 21.37-38 ('Every day he was teaching in the temple, and at night he would go out and spend the night on the Mount of Olives, as it was called. And all the people would get up early in the morning to listen to him in the temple', NRSV; see Jn 7.53-8.2). The Ferrar group of manuscripts, known as *f*¹³, makes the connection between PA and Lk. 21.37-38 explicit by moving the text to a position following Lk. 21.38. The connection with Luke's Gospel is further strengthened by the occurrence of ὄρθρου ('early morning') in Jn 8.2, as it is also *hapax* in the Gospel of John and occurs elsewhere in the New Testament only in Lukan material: Lk. 24.1 and Acts 5.21 (here ὄρθρον). (Barrett 1978: 591 lists other Lukan vocabulary in Jn 8.2.) Additionally connecting PA with Luke is Jn 8.6a, which parallels Lk. 6.7 regarding the Jews' intention to 'accuse' Jesus (Brown 1966: 333).

Jn 8.6a: ἵνα ἔχωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ

Lk. 6.7: ἵνα εὐρωσιν κατηγορεῖν αὐτοῦ

Strengthening this parallel between Jn 8.6a and Lk. 6.7 is that both verses share a common subject of οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ Φαρισαῖοι ('the scribes and the Pharisees'), and the fact that γραμματεὺς occurs nowhere else in the Gospel of John (but most often in Matthew among the Synoptics). (Since this is the only occurrence of γραμματεὺς in the Fourth Gospel, one can only be bewildered by the following statement of Kreitzer 2000: 162: 'There is every indication that "scribes and Pharisees" are representative opponents within the Gospel accounts, *most particularly within the Gospel of John*' [emphasis added].) PA's similarities to Lukan tradition lead several scholars to suggest a Lukan origin for the story (Blass 1898: 155-64; Westcott 1908: II, 381; McLachlan 1912: 94-126; Bishop 1934: 40-45; Temple 1945: 131-32;

Salvoni 1960: 12-15; Moule 1967: 66; Newman and Nida 1980: 257; Gourgues 1990: 308-309; Ross 1992: 155; see Cadbury 1917: 237-44; 1927: 258). This is unlikely for reasons discussed below, but these studies demonstrate PA's affinities with Synoptic material. A second argument against the Johannine authenticity of PA is the complete absence of the dichotomies (light/dark, heavenly/earthly, above/below, spirit/flesh) that play such a prominent role not only in PA's immediately preceding and succeeding contexts but also the Gospel of John as a whole. Third, there is a stark difference between the presentation of the adulteress in PA and the presentation of other women in the Gospel of John who appear as paradigmatic followers (M. Scott 1992: 239; 2000: 73; Kitzberger 1998: 26 n. 17). Thus, the majority opinion that PA is not original to the Gospel of John is affirmed.

This conclusion, however, should not lead scholars to neglect the various connections PA displays with its Johannine context. Despite frequent comments that PA disrupts the flow of the narrative and fits awkwardly in its forced surroundings (Farrar 1879: 35; Westcott and Hort 1881: 87; McLachlan 1912: 95; Bernard 1928: II, 715; Temple 1945: 132; Brown 1966: 336; Kümmel 1966: 147-48; Riesenfeld 1970: 95; Schnackenburg 1980: II, 171; Burge 1984: 144; Ehrman 1988: 27; Comfort 1989: 145-46; Ross 1992: 155; Brodie 1993a: 338; Stanton 1995: 47; L. Johnson 1999: 544; Charlesworth 2001: 497; Keener 2003: I, 736; Gensch 2004: 137; Lincoln 2005: 525, 527; Staley 2005: 106), PA not only fits its context (as the third person aorist ἐπορεύθησαν of Jn 7.53 parallels the third person aorist ἀπεκρίθησαν of 7.52), but continues and heightens the issues addressed in the preceding and succeeding context, regarding Jesus' authority as a teacher in John 7 and the theme of judgment in John 7 and 8. Beyond these thematic connections, the narrative consistently presents the setting as the Temple in Jerusalem before (7.14), during (8.2), and after (8.20) PA. The disciples are utterly absent before PA in John 7, after PA in John 8, and likewise make no appearance in PA. This is not to deny the cohesion of Jn 7.37–8.12, where Jesus claims to be the 'Water of Life' and the 'Light of the World' and thus the fulfilment/replacement of the Feast of Tabernacles (see Westcott and Hort 1881: 87; and Comfort 1989: 146-47, who builds on Westcott and Hort), but rather to point out that PA appears as more of an interlude than a full break in the narrative. Thus, a number of scholars, while not claiming Johannine authenticity for the pericope, observe an essential congruity between PA and its narrative location at Jn 7.53–8.11 (Guilding 1960: 110; Bruce 1983: 413; Heil 1994: 361-66; Witherington 1995: 363; Edwards 2004: 88; Waetjen 2005: 233-34). (Strangely, Neyrey 2006: 151 cites the studies of Heil 1991: 182-91 and Trites 1974: 137-46 seemingly in support of his statement that PA 'is an unwelcome

insert'. However, this is the *exact opposite* point of these two scholars, who both argue for PA's essential congruity with its narrative context and thus see PA as plausibly originally Johannine.)

Additionally, PA demonstrates as strong linguistic connections with Johannine material as it does with Synoptic material. In fact, Jn 8.6, the verse previously discussed that contains the verbal parallel with Lk. 6.7, also contains a verbal parallel to Jn 6.6. In Jn 6.6, the narrator explains that Jesus' prior question to Philip in 6.5 was intended to 'test' Philip. Though in 6.6 Jesus is the tester, while in 8.6a the 'scribes and the Pharisees' are the testers, the phrase is nearly identical (Brown 1966: 333; Heil 1991: 184; 1994: 363; Köstenberger 2004: 246).

Jn 6.6: τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγεν πειράζων αὐτόν

Jn 8.6: τοῦτο δὲ ἔλεγον πειράζοντες αὐτόν

Furthermore, Jesus' instructions to the adulteress to 'sin no longer' in 8.11 is the exact same as his instructions to the healed lame man of 5.14 (Heil 1991: 185; 1994: 363).

Jn 5.14: μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε

Jn 8.11: μηκέτι ἁμάρτανε

Strengthening the connection with Johannine material, A. Johnson argues for the presence of a 'stylistic trait' of the Fourth Gospel in PA—'the practice by the author of interjecting short explanatory phrases which interpret the significance of the words that have just been spoken in the narrative' (A. Johnson 1966: 95; see also his 1964: 218-19). This Johannine phrase consists of 'the conjunction "now" (δὲ), the demonstrative "this" (τοῦτο) and a form of the verb "to speak" (λεγειν)', and occurs ten times in the Johannine text, including Jn 6.6 of PA (A. Johnson 1966: 95; see Jn 6.6, 71; 7.39; 11.13, 51; 12.6, 33; 13.11, 28; 21.19). A. Johnson proceeds to affirm this as evidence of the Johannine authenticity of PA. The burden of his argument, however, (and others who would see these linguistic factors as evidence of Johannine authenticity) is to demonstrate persuasively that this could not have been the work of an attentive interpolator or simply someone familiar with John's Gospel, which he fails to do. Fifty years earlier, McLachlan (1912: 94-126) had already provided an assessment of PA similar to that of A. Johnson, except with reference to Lukan style and authenticity, and with significantly more evidence. Five years after McLachlan, Cadbury (1917: 237-44) made a similar assessment of PA's Lukan style. (On p. 244 n. 17, Cadbury notes that he had written his article previous to the publication of McLachlan's study.) In contrast to both A. Johnson and McLachlan,

however, Cadbury appropriately notes the limitations of the argument from style. He observes that someone could have written PA with 'a style that is indistinguishable from the most distinctive of New Testament styles [i.e., Lukan]', and thus, 'In this case style proves to be a most unreliable criterion' (244; see also Murphy O'Connor 1995: 34 for a negative statement on literary style as a criterion), a conclusion that holds for arguments based on Johannine style as well.

The cumulative effect of the preceding evidence is to suggest that, while PA is not original to the Fourth Gospel, neither did an interpolator insert it sloppily without sensitivity to its Johannine context. Indeed, there are compelling reasons to view PA as especially appropriate in its traditional and majority location of Jn 7.53–8.11. First, Bezae (D, ca. 400) is the earliest gospel manuscript to include PA and it places PA at Jn 7.53–8.11. The earliest alternative manuscript locations are represented by a Georgian revision from the ca. tenth century (after Jn 7.44) and MS 1582 of *f*¹ (end of John's Gospel) from the same period (*pace* Toensing 1998: 2 n. 1, who incorrectly dates these Georgian manuscripts to the seventh century; see Birdsall 2006 for Georgian PA). Second, slightly earlier than Bezae, Jerome had placed PA at Jn 7.53–8.11 in his Vulgate by 384 CE, when he presented the gospels to Pope Damasus (for date see Kelly 1975: 88) and Ambrose too reads PA in John's Gospel (*Epistle* 68; English translation Beyenka 1954 [listed in Beyenka as *Epistle* 84]). Another contemporary of Bezae, Augustine, is likewise one of the earliest extrabiblical commentators to know PA in the Gospel of John. He twice discusses the story in running gospel commentary, clearly demonstrating that his manuscript contained it at 7.53–8.11 (*Cons.* 4.10.17; *Tract. Ev. Jo.* 33.5). Thus, from the fourth to the tenth centuries CE, Jn 7.53–8.11 is the only attested manuscript location for PA in canonical tradition. Third, after having viewed the manuscripts known to include PA at the *Institut für neutestamentliche Textforschung* in Münster, Robinson claims, 'The standard practice of the Lectionary system omitted the PA as its normal location because it would have interfered with the flow of the lesson for Pentecost and its content was not pertinent to the theme of that day's lesson', and thus 'All the PA relocations among the continuous-text MSS reflect a desire and intent to preserve the continuity of the Pentecost lesson as a unit' (Robinson 2000: 43, 45, respectively; emphasis added). In fact, Robinson states, 'Some MSS which relocate the PA outside of John's Gospel nevertheless label it as coming ἐκ τοῦ κατὰ Ἰωάννου, demonstrating (in standard lectionary manner) not only a *knowledge* of its origin, but also of its *source*, despite its excision from the main text of John for lectionary-related purposes', though he does not state exactly which manuscripts

contain this statement (2000: 45). One may not be persuaded by Robinson's claim that *all* the alternative positions are due to the lectionary system, but it is significant that he joins a number of other scholars who affirm that at least some of the alternative locations for PA in the manuscript tradition are due to lectionary readings (see Colwell 1933: 19; Riddle 1933: 22; Wikgren 1963: 119 n. 46; A. Johnson 1964: 62; Lindars 1972: 307; van Lopik 1995: 286-89; Toensing 1998: 169-76). Due to the dominance of the traditional position in the manuscript and patristic evidence, as well as the impact of lectionary readings on some of the alternative positions, it is reasonable to assume that the scribe who initially inserted PA into (what would become) canonical tradition did so at Jn 7.53–8.11, and that he intended it to fit this context in a manner in which it was never intended to fit the alternative locations. (Amongst other reasons, then, I find suggestions of Lukan authenticity implausible.)

c. From Where Does PA Come?

But if PA was not originally in John's Gospel, from where did it come? As a result of PA's apparent textual 'homelessness' (Joplin 1992: 227; Klauck 2003: 19, 40; Gench 2004: 137, 156), scholars have linked the account of the adulterous woman with numerous textual traditions outside its common location in the Gospel of John, ranging from Q to the Gospel of Peter.

Claiming she received the suggestion from a 'Dr J.M. Gibbs', Coleman posits that PA was originally part of Q (1970: 409).

Von Soden curiously stated that PA follows Mark 6 in MS 560, though Aland claims this is 'höchst fragwürdig' ('highly unlikely/questionable') (Aland 1967: 44 n. 1). Moir later examined MS 560 and says the text 'shows nothing odd at the end of Mark 6' and that 'v. Soden's note must remain a mystery' (1988: 172 n. 11). Jenkinson (1925: 33) notes that 'Hitzig would find room for it between Mark xii. 17 and xii. 18', a suggestion that other scholars note as well (Farrar 1879: 35 n. 3; Godet 1978: 645). Grundmann goes so far as to discuss PA in his commentary on Mark's Gospel as if it follows Mk 12.17 (1959: 245-47). Grundmann never claims to know manuscripts containing PA at this location, though, *contra* Waetjen (2005: 233 n. 36). In a recent and unpersuasive study, Rius-Camps argues for Markan authenticity when he claims PA originally appeared after Mk 12.12a, after which Luke took it for his own gospel (2007: 383).

Concerning PA and Matthew's Gospel, Godet interestingly claims that 'some Mnn. (in Matthaëi)' attest a variant reading of Jn 8.6 (Godet 1978: 646 n. 15). He does not list them, however, and thus they remain unknown. More generally, Riesenfeld says, 'So far as concerns origin, both the content

and form align the pericope with the material which we otherwise have in Mark or Matthew' (1970: 96).

Based on its literary style and/or the fact that some MSS of f^{13} include PA after Lk. 21.38, a number of scholars suggest that PA was originally part of the Gospel of Luke (see above p. 380). In an overlooked argument for Lukan authenticity, written prior to the previously-mentioned article where he argues Markan authenticity for PA, Rius-Camps argues that PA originally belonged in Lk. 19.47–21.38 following Lk. 20.19 (1993). He claims here that, while Luke omitted Mk 10.1–12, the Markan pericope nevertheless inspired him to write PA (1993: 170). Over a century earlier, Blass also suggested that Luke himself wrote PA when he amended its position from following Lk. 21.38 in the f^{13} manuscripts to following Lk. 21.36 and said, 'I venture to say that this connection is so perfect that it cannot be the result of chance, but must really go back to the author' (1898: 158). Bishop argues that PA was originally part of proto-Luke at Lk. 19.48 before being taken out (1934: 40–45). Williams even claims PA was in the version of Luke that Marcion read (1951: 17). Another overlooked argument for Lukan authenticity of PA is that of McLachlan (1912: 94–126), who argues that Luke read a form of PA in *Gos. Heb.* and used it himself after making minor alterations. He further suggests the author of *Prot. Jas.* read PA in Luke, and that from Luke's Gospel PA was placed into *Inf. Gos. Thom.*, which brings the current study to suggestions for PA's origin in non-canonical tradition.

McLachlan speculates on PA's presence in *Inf. Gos. Thom.* because a scholion in an eleventh-century manuscript of the Gospels (MS 1006) contains the following statement: 'τὸ κεφάλαιον τοῦτο τοῦ κατὰ θωμᾶν εὐαγγελίου ἐστίν' (Becker 1963: 11; see also Ehrman 1988: 40 n. 25; Klijn 1992: 118 n. 154). Barrett suggests the version of PA that appears in *Didascalia* 7.2.23 may have originally been part of the *Gos. Pet.* (1978: 590). In *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.17, Eusebius notes that a story of a sinful woman and Jesus known to Papias (presumably PA though this is disputed) is from 'the Gospel according to the Hebrews' (τὸ καθ' Ἑβραίους εὐαγγέλιον). Syntactically, it is not entirely clear whether Eusebius intends to claim that Papias knew PA in *Gos. Heb.* or only that Papias knew PA, which Eusebius then identifies as part of *Gos. Heb.* None of the available fragments of this text contain a story like PA, however, nor do other texts that occasionally went by this name (such as *Gos. Eb.* or *Gos. Naz.*; see further Vielhauer and Strecker 1991: I, 138–39). Nonetheless, Lührmann affirms that Didymus the Blind (fourth century) got PA from *Gos. Heb.* and posits that Papias could have as well (1990: 311; for more on this issue, see discussion of Ehrman below).

From whence PA came before an interpolator placed it into John's Gospel is clearly an unsettled issue in PA research. PA, or a version of it, circulated in the early Church from at least the second century CE. Important to note here, however, is that the earliest interpreters of PA (Ambrose, Augustine, Jerome) all read the story in John's Gospel, and there is no manuscript evidence of PA in Luke until the eleventh century CE (*f*¹³ and MS 1333's corrector).

2. Form Criticism

Moving away from text-critical works, scholars have also applied form criticism to PA. The strength of Jesus' final statement in Jn 8.11, and its position at the close of the pericope, cause several scholars to classify PA form-critically as a pronouncement story. Others, focusing on the content of the narrative, classify it as a controversy story. Bultmann classifies PA as belonging to the former, specifically as a 'typical' 'apocryphal apophthegm' (Bultmann 1972: 63). Following Bultmann in his assessment are Taylor (1935: 83-84), Schnackenburg (1980: II, 168-69; technically a 'biographical apophthegm'), Beasley-Murray (1999: 145), and Young (1995: 69). This conclusion, however, has not won favour with other scholars who, noting the similarities between PA and Synoptic controversy narratives (such as Mk 3.1-6, 10.2-9; Lk. 6.6-11), place the emphasis of the narrative on the conflict between Jesus and the Jewish leadership. Commenting on Taylor, Petersen states, 'V. Taylor...perversely (in your author's opinion) classifies the *pericope adulterae* as a "pronouncement story"' (Petersen 1997: 206 n. 57). Petersen instead aligns himself with Becker, who classifies PA as a confrontation story (*Streitgesprächen*), and more recently Lincoln argues this position (Becker 1963: 83; Lincoln 2005: 528). Dibelius offers a third option, which sees PA as a 'hybrid' form and classifies it generally as a 'Tale' analogous to Greek literature (1934: 98, 165).

While recognizing the contributions of these scholars, I submit that Schnackenburg is correct in the final sentence of the section in his commentary dedicated to form-critical classification of PA: 'Possibly our schematic form-critical categories are too rigid for this type of material in the gospel tradition' (1980: II, 169). Not only do questions such as 'What is the original version of this story?' appear misplaced when applied to PA (due to its multiple variations and complex transmission process), so do attempts to classify it as one particular type of oral tradition over against another. Final resolution on this issue evades the collective grasp of scholars.

3. Tradition Criticism

Approaching PA through tradition-critical lenses, some scholars have nonetheless sought to reconstruct an original version of the pericope. Ehrman posits that the version of PA that texts such as Bezae (D) preserve is a conflation of two earlier independent traditions: one of Jesus interrupting a stoning, attested in a commentary on Ecclesiastes by Didymus the Blind and originally in *Gos. Heb.*; another of Jesus pardoning a sinful woman when local leaders attempt to entrap him, preserved by Papias and the *Didascalia* (1988: 34-37). The basis of his theory is the peculiarities between the two accounts, which lead him to conclude that they are actually two separate stories since ‘the setting and action of the stories differ entirely, and each version narrates exclusively an episode omitted by the other’ (1988: 34; Holmes 1999: 557-60 seems to accept Ehrman’s thesis). The differences between versions of PA admittedly deserve the type of scrutiny that Ehrman gives them. However, one significant problem for his solution is that Eusebius, who apparently would have known both traditions, considers them one and the same, since at *Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.17 Eusebius references Papias’s knowledge of the story and subsequently claims it is found in the Gospel according to the Hebrews. Ehrman also overemphasizes the differences in the accounts, which demonstrate strong similarity as well as differences (also noted by Knust 2006: 498). An additional problem is an assumption contained implicitly in Ehrman’s argument. That a version of PA, or any other tradition, does not reference an element attested elsewhere does not prove that the source lacked that element (and thus that there is actually a different source for each version); only that, even if the source did contain that element, the author did not find it worth commenting upon. (Though I offer this critique independently, it is also made by McDonald 1995: 419; Lincoln 2005: 527.) Appropriately, Meier (1991: 301 n. 79) observes, ‘Ehrman’s theory of the existence of three different versions of the pericope by the 4th century remains highly speculative’, while Lührmann (1990: 301) claims Ehrman attempts to reconstruct PA’s pre-history in ‘einen überaus unklaren Weg’ (‘an exceedingly unclear way’).

Though often overlooked, many years prior to Ehrman’s proposal Strauss restricted himself to canonical traditions and investigated the relationship between PA and other stories involving women and Jesus. Starting from Eusebius’s comment (*Hist. Eccl.* 3.39.17), Strauss draws attention to the similarities between PA and the story of the sinful woman who anoints Jesus’ feet at the home of Simon the Pharisee in Lk. 7.36-50: ‘In both we

have a woman, a sinner, before Jesus; in both, this woman is regarded with an evil eye by Pharasaic sanctimoniousness, but is taken into protection by Jesus, and dismissed with a friendly πορεύου, *go*' (1972: 410). Strauss then posits that the latter tradition, and the woman's status as a 'sinner', is the result of a conflation of PA and the story of the woman who anoints Jesus in Mt. 26.6-13/Mk 14.3-9. According to Strauss, however, Lk. 7.36-50 is not the only tradition that can claim Mt. 26.6-13/Mk 14.3-9 as a parent. He further posits that the account of the woman who anoints Jesus was conflated with the account of Jesus visiting Mary and Martha from Lk. 10.38-41, with the result being the story of Jesus' visit to the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus in Bethany from Jn 12.2-3 (Strauss 1972: 411). Thus, according to Strauss, the Matthean/Markan anointing woman combined, on the one hand, with PA's adulteress in order to produce the Lukan feet-anointing sinner, and on the other hand, with the Lukan Mary in order to produce the Johannine anointing Mary. The appeal of this proposal is that it makes a complex situation seemingly simple. However, Strauss grants the Fourth Evangelist could have penned PA (1972: 411), and this makes an already complicated scene even more complicated. For, in Strauss's proposal, he views both Johannine and Lukan traditions simultaneously as raw material and finished product (PA combines with Mt. 26/Mk 14 to produce Lk. 7; Lk. 10 combines with Mt. 26/Mk 14 to produce Jn 12). Furthermore, he extends this view of the 'independent' and 'intermixed' nature of the respective traditions to the historical level:

It is true that all the five narratives might with some plausibility be regarded as varied editions of one historical incident; but from the essential dissimilarity between the three to which I have assigned the middle and extreme places, I am rather of the opinion that these are each founded on a special incident, but that the two intermediate narratives are secondary formations which owe their existence to the intermixture of the primary ones by tradition (1972: 412).

Though early Christian Jesus traditions undoubtedly did intermingle, that process must be more critically discerned than by simply viewing a third tradition as the average between two prior, presumed independent, traditions. Under Strauss's rubric, the nature of the dependence could run as easily in one direction as the other and there is ultimately no way to prove which is more likely. The relationship between historicity, textual tradition, oral tradition, and the gospels as 'final' products is much more complex than Strauss allows.

Other tradition-critical approaches study the various attestations of PA and/or the relationship between PA and other ancient Christian texts. Petersen

employs a tradition-critical approach in order to argue that the author of *Prot. Jas.* (second century CE) knew a version of PA similar to what is found in the Gospel of John (1997: 218). In support, Petersen notes the parallel with Jn 8.11 found in *Prot. Jas.* 16.3 ('neither do I condemn you') (1997: 204). He also notes the parallel with the Fourth Gospel of digital examination as proof of a miracle in Jn 20.25//*Prot. Jas.* 19.3 (1997: 212). Petersen is successful in demonstrating the verbal parallels, though only one manuscript of *Prot. Jas.* contains the compound form of κρίνω found in Jn 8.11 (κατακρίνω) (1997: 205 n. 50). He thus sets the date for the earliest possible evidence of PA's inclusion into Johannine tradition at 'the second half of the second century' (1997: 218). Interestingly, as noted earlier, McLachlan argues that *Prot. Jas.*'s author read PA in the Gospel of Luke (1912: 98-99, 112), but his argument is unpersuasive.

Unconcerned with an original form, Atherton provides an interesting study on the Old English versions of PA found in the seventh-century homilies of Venerable Bede and ninth-century *Heliand* (2000: 105-38). According to Atherton, Bede connected the actions of Jesus in PA with Jn 8.12 (and therefore knew PA at Jn 7.53-8.11), and thus 'the circumstances of the story of the woman taken in adultery signify light and mercy' (2000: 128).

In some of the most recent research on PA, Knust uses a tradition-critical approach in order to demonstrate convincingly the increasingly anti-Jewish presentations and descriptions of Jesus' opponents in PA as found in the extrabiblical attestations (2006). In a slightly earlier study she focuses on the tradition history of PA and demonstrates that PA was treated authoritatively whether an author knew it as a 'gospel' story about Jesus, or as part of a 'Gospel' manuscript (2005). Knust appropriately draws attention not only to what PA tells us about how gospels/Gospels functioned in the early Church, but also to the importance of the literary environment for oral/written sacred texts and their interaction. She is currently working on an eagerly anticipated book-length treatment of PA.

Rather than noting the various forms of PA that appear in the life of the Church, some scholars have utilized a tradition-critical approach in order to argue for PA's dependence upon or connection with the apocryphal story of *Susanna* (LXX Daniel 13) (Goodspeed 1945: 107; Becker 1963: 51; Derrett 1963-64: 11; Brown 1966: 333; Osborne 1966: 282; Sloyan 1988: 95; Sanders 1990: 341; Brodie 1993b: 158; McDonald 1995: 419-22; M. Scott 2000: 65-80; B. Johnson 2003: 8-10; Edwards 2004: 90; Knust 2006: 497). Given the common rejoinder to this text in PA discussions and the current lack of a thorough treatment, a brief excursus is appropriate.

a. *Excursus on Susanna*

In *Susanna* (LXX Daniel 13), two voyeuristic elders accuse an innocent young wife of adultery as retribution for refusing to have sex with them when they privately propositioned her (*Sus.* 19–23). The elders had repeatedly watched her bathe and eventually plotted to confront her together. When the elders falsely accuse Susanna publicly and she is being led away to her death, God stirs the spirit of a ‘young lad named Daniel’ (*Sus.* 45, NRSV) and he exposes their scheme. The elders are then punished with the very punishment that was planned for Susanna (*Sus.* 60–62).

This story clearly contains allusions to other stories in biblical tradition. The elders suffering the particular type of death they had planned for Susanna echoes Haman being hanged on the gallows he prepared for Mordecai (Est. 7.10) and Daniel’s accusers being thrown in the lion’s den prepared for Daniel (Dan. 6.24). The action of watching a young married woman bathe echoes David’s watching Bathsheba (2 Sam. 2.2). Amidst the many intertextual connections, then, it is no surprise that some scholars see in PA an echo of *Susanna*, arguing that Jesus functions similarly to Daniel by saving a(n) (innocent) woman from the plotting schemes of sinful Jewish elders. Connections between the two narratives do exist that justify such enquiries. First, there are verbal parallels between *Susanna* and PA (in what follows ‘OldGr’ = the Old Greek Version, while ‘Θ’ = the Theodotian Version; one may find both versions in parallel in Rahlfs-Hanhart LXX): *πρεσβύτεροι* (Θ *Sus.* 5 [*et al.*], Jn 8.9); *κατακρίνω* (OldGr *Sus.* 12, Jn 8.2); *ἐν μέσω* (Θ *Sus.* 34, Jn 8.3, 9); *ἀνακύπτω* (OldGr *Sus.* 35, Jn 8.7, 10); *κατακρίνω* (OldGr *Sus.* 53/Θ *Sus.* 41, 48, Jn 8.10, 11); and *καταλαμβάνω* (OldGr/Θ *Sus.* 58, Jn 8.4) (see further B. Johnson 2003: 8–10; also Becker 1963: 51). Second, there are thematic parallels: in both narratives the charge against the woman is adultery; in both she is said to have been ‘caught in the act’; in both the male counterpart is curiously absent; in both a prophetic figure (Daniel in *Sus.*, Jesus in PA) stands between the Jewish leaders and the woman; in both the prescribed punishment entails death; and in both the Jewish leaders ‘fail’ in their accusations (see also Brodie 1993b: 258). Based on these similarities, M. Scott argues not only that *Sus.* is an appropriate backdrop for PA, but also that the adulteress is a ‘parallel sister’ of Susanna, both in fact being innocent of their accused crimes (2000: 72, 80). He claims further that this is a ‘genuine alternative reading of the text’ that male interpreters have suppressed (2000: 79–80; feminist interpreters will be discussed below). This, however, stretches the bounds of the narrative too far and ultimately is not persuasive. Amidst the similarities between PA and *Sus.*, several significant differences exist that problematize efforts to read the former in light of the latter.

One key difference between PA and *Sus.* is that in PA the adulteress is presumed guilty while Susanna is unambiguously innocent. Though this is the exact point M. Scott argues against, namely that perhaps the adulteress is not 'presumed guilty', he does not take full account of the narrative and narrator's standpoint in PA. The admittedly suspect witness of the 'scribes and the Pharisees' in 8.4 is previously affirmed by the omniscient narrator in 8.3—the woman had indeed been caught in adultery. (The narrator's confirmation of the adulteress's guilt is ignored by Gench 2004: 147 and Thurston 1998: 86.) Additionally, Jesus' instructions to 'sin no more' in 8.11 presume that the adulteress had in fact sinned initially. 'The pericope...is quite clear that the woman was caught in the act. The story, as the text stands wherever it appears, does not permit of the possibility that the accusation is false' (Sanders 1990: 341; see also Schottroff 1995: 181; Maccini 1996: 235; Lincoln 2005: 529). Thus, though patriarchal readings certainly have influenced the interpretation of the Bible generally and PA specifically, the reason that a reading assuming the innocence of the woman 'nowhere has...been allowed to surface in the tradition' (M. Scott 2000: 80) is that the narrative itself contradicts such a reading.

Second, Lincoln notes a difference in the presentation of the accusers in each narrative. In *Sus.*, the elders are portrayed 'as entirely perverted through lust' (Lincoln 2005: 535). In contrast, the accusers in PA demonstrate an ability to acknowledge truth: 'When they are put to the test they show enough integrity to acknowledge their own shortcomings and to realize that these undermine their pursuit of the woman's condemnation' (Lincoln 2005: 535; see also Gench 2004: 143).

A third difference is that in *Sus.* the Jewish leaders are seeking to trap the woman as punishment for rejecting them. Meanwhile, in PA the Jewish leaders seek to trap Jesus, with the woman and her sin serving only as an opportunity to accomplish that purpose.

Implicit in the third difference is a significant fourth difference that must be made explicit—in PA the main character is Jesus, not the adulteress. Contrary to this, the main character in *Sus.* is Susanna, with Daniel functioning in a supporting role. Scholars wishing to assert a dependence on *Sus.* eventually must also assert that PA is first and foremost about the adulteress. This, however, is incorrect, as PA is primarily a story about Jesus and his conflict(s) with the Jewish leadership of his day. For example, for ἀνακύπτω to be a proper allusion to *Sus.*, one must recognize that it is Susanna who 'raises up' in *Sus.*, while it is Jesus who 'raises up' in PA. Surely Jesus is not here being portrayed as an innocent young wife who has been accused of adultery.

Finally, a more probable explanation exists for the verbal parallels between the two narratives. According to B. Johnson, 'Any of these common words alone may not demonstrate that the *Pericope Adulterae* was intended to be read against the backdrop of *Susanna*, but together they are quite convincing' (2003: 10). *Pace* Johnson, I propose that the common words point not to parallels between PA and *Sus.*, but to their common usage of the legal terminology employed in the trial motif (legal terminology in PA is mentioned by Brown 1966: 333; Lindars 1972: 308). For example, the phrase ἐν μέσῳ ('in the middle/midst') appears at Θ *Sus.* 34 as well as Jn 8.3, 9. Note, however, outside PA, that in Peter's Lukan 'trial' that parallels that of Jesus, Peter is 'accused' of being one of Jesus' followers while sitting ἐν μέσῳ (Lk. 22.55) of the onlookers, and that Peter and John are also placed ἐν τῷ μέσῳ of the Jewish council (Acts 4.7). In Jesus' Markan trial, the high priest interrogates Jesus εἰς μέσον (Mk 14.60). Concerning the presence of ἐν μέσῳ at Jn 8.3 and 8.9, McLachlan appropriately notes, 'In both instances, the words suggest that the woman was "on trial"' (1912: 116). Thus, some of the common language between PA and *Sus.* is appropriate to such a motif, and in light of the other differences between PA and *Sus.*, a common dependence on this motif is more plausible. (Note also that Schottroff 1995: 177-80 argues that PA and *Sus.* both participate in a Jewish narrative tradition of the exaltation of debased women, but also does not assert a direct literary relationship between the two.)

Therefore, while verbal and thematic parallels do exist between PA and the apocryphal *Sus.*, there is insufficient evidence to establish a direct relationship between the two in terms of (literary) composition. This is not, however, to deny any literary or cultural relationship between *Sus.* and PA, nor the overall importance of the adulteress in the transmission history of PA and collective memory of the early Church. As Knust notes, Roman liturgy eventually connected *Sus.* and PA, and the latter was read 'at Santa Susanna each Lenten season' (2006: 497 n. 38, 534 [quote from p. 534]; see also Sloyan 1988: 97). Likewise, in Byzantine liturgy, PA was read on the feast of St. Pelagia, and thus in the tradition history there are certainly connections between the adulteress and stories of similar women in Jewish and Christian history. Furthermore, Edwards (2004: 90) notes that '*Christ and the Adulteress* and *Daniel and Susannah* are alternative titles of the same painting from the school of Titian'.

The particular point at present, however, is that PA was not originally crafted in dialogue with *Sus.* despite connections that the later Church made. Most importantly, readers must recognize that PA is primarily a story

about Jesus and not the adulteress. With the relationship between *Sus.* and PA clarified, the general survey of PA research may proceed.

4. Sitz im Leben der Kirche

Some studies appropriate a tradition-critical approach in order to assess PA's *Sitz im Leben der Kirche*. The majority of scholars assert that PA's textual history is most readily explained by the fact that Jesus is lenient on the adulteress, a fact that contrasted with early Christian disciplinary praxis concerning adultery. The assumption in this theory is that the Church suppressed PA until a proper penance system had arisen, at which time it could allow a lenient Jesus in the canon. The classic expression of this 'suppression theory' (to my knowledge, Jennifer W. Knust coined this term) is an article by Riesenfeld (1970), and the theory's appearance in numerous works demonstrates its popularity (Farrar 1879: 31-32; Cadbury 1917: 243 n. 14; Bernard 1928: II, 716-17; Bishop 1934: 40, 42; Lightfoot 1956: 346-47; Grundmann 1959: 224; Brown 1966: 335; Meyer 1970: 125; Trites 1974: 145; Hodges 1979: 331; Burge 1984; Witherington 1990: 38-39; O'Day 1992: 631-40; Ross 1992: 155; Rius-Camps 1993: 173-74; Stanton 1995: 47; Culpepper 1998: 170; Boice 1999: 603; M. Scott 2000: 53-82; Gench 2004: 137, 151-55; Rius-Camps 2007: 383).

Notwithstanding this popularity, several scholars express scepticism concerning the ability of the 'suppression theory' to account fully for PA's textual history, including the present author (Blass 1898: 160; Zahn 1909: III, 346 n. 3; Metzger 1994: 189; Parker 1997: 101; Keener 2003: I, 735; Knust 2005: 71-72). In my doctoral thesis at the University of Edinburgh (presently entitled 'Jesus Began to Write: Literacy, the *Pericope Adulterae*, and the Gospel of John'), I re-focus attention to the fact that PA is the only place in canonical or non-canonical Jesus tradition that shows Jesus writing (Jn 8.6, 8). I also engage, for example, the recent study of Foster (2006: 19-21), who claims the portrayal of Jesus writing in the ground in Jn 8.6, 8 cannot definitely be taken as a claim for literacy. To the contrary, I argue that it is a claim for literacy and posit that the importance of this aspect of PA presents a more plausible *Sitz im Leben der Kirche* for its insertion into the Fourth Gospel and thus a more plausible explanation of its textual history.

5. Sitz im Leben Jesu

Proceeding from the life of the pericope to the life of Jesus reflected in it, historical enquiries into the *Sitz im Leben Jesu* have proceeded against two

backgrounds: the marital status of the adulteress; and the (in)ability of imperial Jewish leaders to enforce capital punishment (for examples of the first, see Eisler 1923: 307 n. 2; Hendricksen 1954: 36; Blinzler 1957–58: 32–47; Watson 1999: 100–108; Rooke 2000: 45–46; for examples of the second, see Jeremias 1950–51: 148–50; Manson 1952–53: 255–56; Godet 1978: 647–48; Bruce 1983: 415; Young 1995: 63–65). I suggest that neither of these are concerns of the pericope or Johannine text (though the implied reader is to assume the adulteress's death is an impending one; otherwise Jesus' pronouncement loses its force). Worthy of note in relation to the issue of capital punishment, James (1979: 45–53) applies PA to the modern debate.

It is also pertinent here to note, concerning the *Sitz im Leben Jesu*, that though most scholars reject PA as authentic to the Gospel of John, a significant number nonetheless accept it as authentic to the Historical Jesus (Zahn 1909: III, 346 n. 3; Cadbury 1917: 243 n. 12; Bernard 1928: II, 716; Strachan 1941: 204; Hoskyns 1947: 566; Hendricksen 1954: 35; Derrett 1963–64: 1; Meyer 1970: 122; Bruce 1972: 180; Godet 1978: 645, 649; Schnackenburg 1980: II, 170; Bruce 1983: 413, 417; Carson 1991: 333; McDonald 1995: 425–26; Witherington 1995: 362–63; Beasley-Murray 1999: 143; Boice 1999: 602; Kruse 2003: 198; Lincoln 2005: 534; see also Keener 1993: 284). Farrar goes so far as to claim that it must be authentic to Jesus due to the stunted emotional and mental capacity of early Christians: 'It is not at all too much to say that there was no writer of the first four centuries who had the heart to conceive, or the head to express, such an incident, if it had not really occurred in the life of Christ' (Farrar 1879: 29–30; similarly, McLachlan 1912: 94; Meyer 1970: 122). Needless to say, criteria for determining historical authenticity have developed a bit since Farrar wrote in 1879.

6. *Critical Theory*

From historical interests to literary interests, scholars have applied varying methods to PA that all fall under the general heading of 'Critical Theory'. Østenstad provides a structural analysis of PA, claiming that PA belongs in John's Gospel based upon his larger structural analysis of the latter (1998: 149–50). Toensing's dissertation is an application of reader-response criticism to PA in some of its various manuscript locations (1998). Aichele presents what he terms a 'post-canonical' reading of PA (2004: 366). PA is especially popular with the practitioners of feminist criticism, who often parallel the marginal status of the adulteress in the narrative and/or the marginal status of PA within the canon with the experience of women in patri-

archal societies (see Joplin 1992: 226-37; O'Day 1992: 631-40; Schottroff 1995: 177-203; Kinukawa 2000: 82-96; J. Scott 2000: 214-39; M. Scott 2000: 53-82; Holmes and Winfield 2003: 143-62; Toensing 2003: 159-72). Green provides an excellent survey of feminist research on PA and a proposal for re-situating the discussion (2000: 240-65). Two studies focus on the intertextual connections between PA and modern narratives. The first is that of Kreitzer, who reads PA alongside Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter* (2000: 139-213). In the second, Staley highlights his own context as he reads PA alongside the Jim Carrey movie *Liar Liar* (2005). (This essay is a slightly modified republication of Staley 2003.) In addition to these, several recent essays apply postcolonial theory to PA (Guardiola-Sáenz 2002; Kim 2002). Most of the 'critical theory' studies on PA derive from a methodological framework that focuses upon the personal and political realities that influence the use of the text by its readers.

7. *Literary Structure of PA*

Finally, though not a theory or criticism per se, scholars have proposed various literary structures for PA. Rousseau offers an elaborate study on the structure of PA and concludes by positing that the pericope consists of an introduction (7.53-8.2) and three sections in the main body of the story (8.3-8.6a, 8.6b-8.7, and 8.8-8.11) (1978: 478-79). O'Day accepts this structure and employs it in order to claim, 'It is precisely the equality of the woman and the scribes and Pharisees before Jesus that is the heart of this story' (1992: 631). *Contra* Rousseau, the narrator's emphasis of Jesus' dual writing suggests that 8.6-8 is a unit, with the writing serving as an intercalation (or 'sandwich'), and thus should not be broken into two separate sections. *Contra* O'Day, 'the heart of this story' is not the adulteress, her sin, or her opponents, but rather Jesus' standing vis-à-vis Moses and the law. Though I concede that I arrive at the sandwich structure of Jn 8.6-8 by the same method Rousseau and O'Day arrive at their structure—namely by noting what 'appears to be in the text'—I reject both Rousseau's structure and O'Day's acceptance and use of the structure. Additionally, the verbal similarities and parallels that create the chiasms of their proposed structure do not appear to me to be 'undeniable' (O'Day 1992: 636) but rather convenient for their proposals. Unfortunately, O'Day's a priori imposition of Rousseau's structure onto PA leads her to 'misread' the text in the same manner as those she argues against in a study that otherwise provides many illuminating criticisms (such as her emphasis that scholars should focus on the action of writing rather than the content, and what the text does rather than what it means). Ultimately, her critique of

Sanders (1990) is equally applicable to her own proposal; she 'has to rewrite the text' (O'Day 1992: 636 n. 14), and uses Rousseau to do so. Since Jn 8.6-8 should be read as a unit, I also reject the structures proposed by Gourgues (1990: 310), Keddle (2001: I, 312), Lincoln (2005: 528), McDonald (1995: 422-23), and Toensing (1998: 63-64).

8. Summary

Though this general survey of PA research makes no claim at being complete, it nevertheless demonstrates a wide variety of approaches to PA. Scholars have applied almost every type of major biblical criticism to the passage, ranging from seemingly endless text-critical discussions to more modern approaches that emphasize the power structures at work both in and out of the biblical text. Some issues, such as the thesis that PA was not originally in the Gospel of John, appear settled. Others, such as PA's tradition history, need further attention. Others still, such as PA's reception history throughout the Middle Ages and/or its artistic representation on codex covers or paintings, have yet to be fully breached.

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