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4 Same, Same, But Different? 4

5 A Cognitive Analysis of an Early Christian 5

6 Apotropaic Amulet 6

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10 **Abstract:** P.Oslo.5 is an apotropaic amulet from 4th or 5th century Egypt, combin- 10
11 ing traditional, Greco-Egyptian ritual elements with seemingly Christian elements. 11
12 Here, I present and use Jesper Sørensen’s adaptation of blending theory to study ritual 12
13 and ritual development, to explore how traditional apotropaic practice negotiates 13
14 Christian influence. My analysis shows how, on the one hand, the ritual structure of 14
15 P.Oslo.5 works to align its Christian and Greco-Egyptian elements, while on the other 15
16 hand the Christian elements retain some distinguishing traits. P.Oslo.5, then, demon- 16
17 strates a dynamic between ritual compression offered by its structure and a resistance 17
18 to this offered by the respective cultural backgrounds. 18

19 **Keywords:** Amulet; ritual; blending theory; cognitive theory; early Christianity; Late 19
20 Antiquity. 20

21 Introduction 21

22 Last year Theodore de Bruyn published a magisterial study of late antique 22
23 amulets from Egypt that contain some sort of Christian element (2017), 23
24 building on his 2011 survey together with Jitse Dijkstra of over 90 such pub- 24
25 lished cases (2011). While continuing the traditional, Greco-Egyptian² 25
26 amulet practice evidenced elsewhere in the Greek Magical Papyri (*PGM*), 26
27 these amulets also include litanies or prayers, doxologies, acclamations or 27
28 references to Christ’s miracles in the Gospels (de Bruyn and Dijkstra 2011: 28
29 180–81). One of these amulets is P.Oslo.5 (inv. 303) (*PGM* P3); a small papy- 29
30 rus acquired by Samson Eitrem in Egypt sometime in the 1910s, which he 30
31 later published with A. Fridrichsen (1921). It contains a ten-line long incan- 31
32 tation to bind the *artemisian scorpion* and protect the amulet’s owner by 32
33 calling on a range of deities and powers, including Christ. Eitrem and Frid- 33
34 richsen were enthused by this example of “Mischung von Heidnischen und 34
35 Christlichem” [mixture of Pagan and Christian] (1921: 27), and concluded 35

1 that “offenbar liegt hier der Fall vor, dass eine altbewährte heidnische 1
 2 Beschwörungsformel durch einen christlichen Zusatz erweitert worden ist” 2
 3 [Apparently the case here is that a well-trying pagan incantation has been 3
 4 extended by a Christian addition] (1921: 23).³ 4

5 Now, this “Mischung” in the *PGM* is nothing new. Numerous studies 5
 6 have addressed the apparent paradox of Christian amulets and magic in 6
 7 the face of repeated condemnation and ridicule from Christian authori- 7
 8 ties.⁴ Many agree with Walter Shandruk that in the *PGM* “efficacy was 8
 9 drawn from any source that the practitioner deemed as having legitimate 9
 10 power” (2012: 33),⁵ yet others point out cases where amulets seem to draw 10
 11 on Christian tradition and practice.⁶ This apparent conflict, between cases 11
 12 with seemingly liturgical elements and others that invoke Jesus as just 12
 13 one powerful being among many others, mirrors a rough division among 13
 14 scholars between those who speak of Christian amulets and those who do 14
 15 not. Yet, in recent years, studies have begun to question this dichotomy in 15
 16 the field, seeking to nuance the discussion and understanding of the differ- 16
 17 ent elements and figures in the ancient amulets. They seek to “move beyond 17
 18 simply labeling elements based on their presumed historical or linguistic 18
 19 origins to consider the fluctuating nature of religious idioms and commu- 19
 20 nal boundaries” (Boustán and Sanzo 2017: 219). In de Bruyn’s recent mono- 20
 21 graph, for instance, he engages with different levels of text structure and 21
 22 idiom to trace different degrees of Christian influence (2017), and Ra’anan 22
 23 Boustán and Joseph E. Sanzo, for their part, look at an incantation’s rheto- 23
 24 ric of *indigenization* and *exoticization* when dealing with elements hail- 24
 25 ing from different religious traditions and cultures (2017).⁷ Here, I want 25
 26 to enlist a ritual theory developed from the growing arsenal of cognitive 26
 27 culture studies in this endeavour to nuance and expand the understanding 27
 28 of how Christian, and other, elements were employed and combined in late 28
 29 antique amulets. And with its “Mischung von Heidnischen und Christli- 29
 30 chem”, P.Oslo.5 is an excellent test case. 30

31 Since Thomas E. Lawson and Robert N. McCauley’s *Rethinking Religion* 31
 32 from 1990, cognitive theories have been a growing part of the study of reli- 32
 33 gious ritual. Important contributions include Illka Pyysiäinen’s *Magic, Mir- 33
 34 acles and Religion* (2004), Harvey Whitehouse’s *Modes of Religiosity* (2004), 34
 35 as well as Lawson and McCauley’s own work (1990/2002). In this article I 35
 36 take up Jesper Sørensen’s *A Cognitive Theory of Magic* (2007),⁸ where he 36
 37 develops an analytical model for understanding rituals and ritual develop- 37
 38 ment based on *blending theory*; an approach developed by Gilles Faucon- 38
 39 nier and Mark Turner to map and understand the cognitive formation of 39
 40 ideas and concepts (1998: 2002).⁹ Sørensen’s model explores how the human 40
 41 mind appreciates ritual efficacy, and through the analysis he discusses what 41

1 features and elements a ritual must have, and how they should interact, to 1
 2 be considered efficacious. This makes it an attractive analytical model for 2
 3 my purposes, since it will help me to highlight the features and elements in 3
 4 P.Oslo.5 that contribute to its efficacy, which in turn will help me to assess 4
 5 the role and importance of the apparently Christian features versus the tra- 5
 6 ditional, Greco-Egyptian elements in the amulet. Several studies already 6
 7 use cognitive theory to explore religion and ritual in Late Antiquity,¹⁰ and 7
 8 others have used blending theory to examine rituals as described in literary 8
 9 texts,¹¹ but this is a first attempt to use Sørensen's ritual theory to examine 9
 10 an actual amulet from the *PGM*. As such, my results may inform not only 10
 11 the debate on Christian and/or Greco-Egyptian elements in late antique 11
 12 amulets, but also the use and applicability of cognitive ritual theory on 12
 13 historical artefacts. 13

14 **P.Oslo.5** 14

15 P.Oslo.5 is a small, rectangular papyrus that measures 10 by 16 cm, and its 15
 16 lines show that it has been folded several times, which is typical for papyrus 16
 17 amulets (Wessely 1974: 422). In the first publication Eitrem dates it to the 17
 18 4th century, from its uncial writing and the symbols at the end – arguing 18
 19 that the $A\uparrow\Omega$ and the $IX\Theta Y\Sigma$ is common from the 4th century onwards 19
 20 (Eitrem and Fridrichsen 1921: 3). In the debates following the publication 20
 21 by these scholars, other scholars found parallels with later papyri, and 21
 22 pointed out the difficulties of dating early Christian symbols (Peterson 22
 23 1923: 135), so the dating was changed to the 5th or 6th century (Eitrem 23
 24 and Amundsen 1925: 21). I use Marvin Meyer's translation of P.Oslo.5, and 24
 25 refer interested readers to his publication for the Greek text and for further 25
 26 discussion of the philological features of the papyrus (Meyer, Smith and 26
 27 Kelsey 1994: 49–50). There is little controversy regarding the reading and 27
 28 translation of this text since it is almost uncommonly legible, indeed de 28
 29 Bruyn writes that the papyrus is distinguished both by its regular script 29
 30 and correct orthography (2017: 96), and there are almost no *lacunae*. There 30
 31 are a few differences in the transcriptions and translations offered in the 31
 32 other publications, listed in note 2, but these are negligible. 32
 33

- 34 1. CH M G. 34
- 35 2. Hor Hor Phor Phor, Yao Sabaoth Adonai, Eloë, Salaman, Tarchei 35
- 36 3. I bind you, artemisian scorpion, 315 times. Preserve this house 36
- 37 4. With its occupants from all evil, from all bewitchment of spirits of 37
 38 the air and human (evil) eye 38
- 39 5. And terrible pain [and] sting of scorpion and snake, through the 39

- 1 6. Name of the highest god, Naias Meli, 7 (times) (?), XUROURO 1
 2 AAAAAA 2
 3 7. BAINCHOOOCH MARIII III L ENAG KORE. Be on guard, O 3
 4 Lord, son of 4
 5 8. David according to the flesh, the one born of the holy virgin 5
 6 9. Mary, O holy one, highest god, from the holy spirit. Glory to you, 6
 7 10. O heavenly king. Amen. (signs) 7
 8 8

9 The text opens with the acronym *XMI*, which is thought to stand for 9
 10 the invocatory phrase “Mary gives birth to Christ” (*Χριστὸν Μαρία γεννᾷ*), 10
 11 known both from other amulets and from letters and documentary papyri 11
 12 (Choat 2006: 115). Lines 2–6 are intriguing, as they are a variation of an 12
 13 apparently well-established incantation for protection found in a number 13
 14 of amulets from Oxyrhynchus.¹² De Bruyn discusses how this must have 14
 15 been a common protective text that takes up a number of apotropaic ele- 15
 16 ments (2017: 90–93): The opening, phonetic words may be a reference 16
 17 to Horus (Eitrem and Fridrichsen 1921: 9), and the subsequent string of 17
 18 Jewish divine names in line 2 were an apotropaic commonplace in the 18
 19 *PGM* (Bohak 2008: 306). The *artemisian scorpion* is the main antagonist in 19
 20 all these amulets, but is not known from other sources. Eitrem suggests that 20
 21 it comes from Artemis’ protection of wild animals, or possibly her identifi- 21
 22 cation with Hecate (Eitrem and Fridrichsen 1921: 12–13), but most scholars 22
 23 are content to see it as a variation on the period’s practice of seeing demons 23
 24 in the guise of harmful creatures (Frankfurter 2015: 11–13), as done also in 24
 25 line 5 here. 25

26 Following the sequence of so-called *voces magicae*¹³ in lines 6–7, most 26
 27 of the suggested Christian material occurs in lines 7–10. Eitrem and Frid- 27
 28 richsen suggest that this is an addition to the traditional formula, possibly 28
 29 borrowed from liturgy (1921: 28) – but I have not been able to find any 29
 30 parallels in contemporary liturgical sources. Still, the elaborate epithet in 30
 31 lines 7–9, which describes the Lord as “Son of David according to the flesh”, 31
 32 echoes Romans 1:3 and Christ’s birth by the Virgin and Spirit seems to 32
 33 evoke the Niceno-Constantinopolitan creed of 381. The doxology in lines 33
 34 9–10 also uses Christian imagery, and there are of course the sequence of 34
 35 crosses and alpha-omega monograms at the end. In his discussion of the 35
 36 amulet, de Bruyn points to how these symbols compare with contemporary 36
 37 Christian iconography from tombstones and various gems, and also argues 37
 38 that the epithet and doxology “would have resonated with the Alexandrian 38
 39 Christology of the Egyptian church” (2017: 95). “The combination of these 39
 40 elements with a customary incantation exposes the manifold ways in which 40
 41 an incantation or a scribe might have been shaped by the surrounding 41

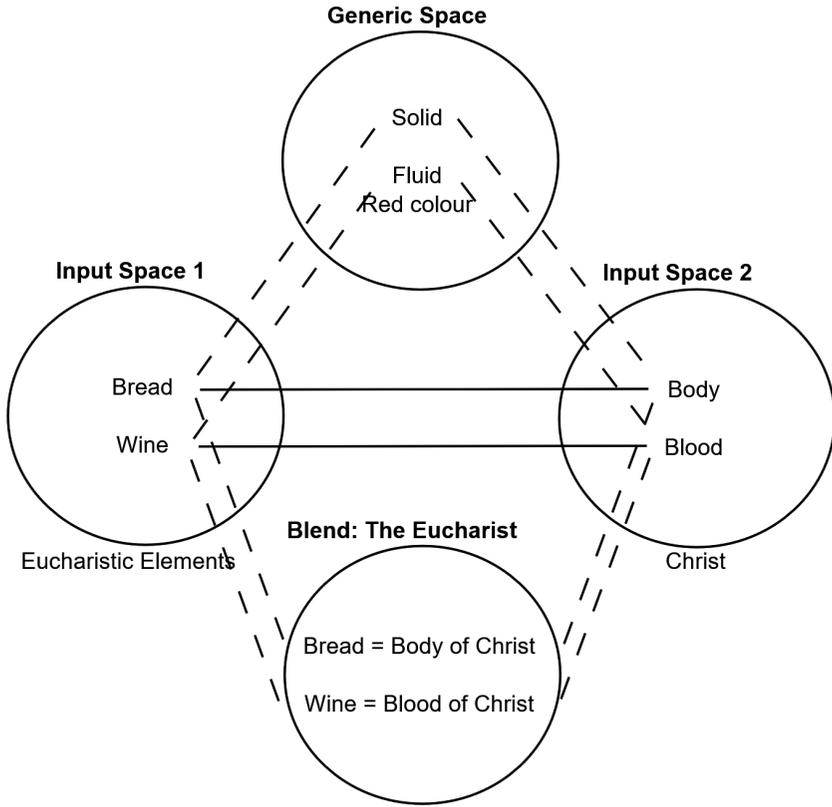
1 Christian culture”, de Bruyn proceeds (2017: 97), confirming Eitrem and 1
 2 Fridrichsen’s initial proposal of a Christian addition to a traditional core. 2
 3 Now, there are no means to verify conclusively that the symbols and the 3
 4 epithet are not simply the opportunistic use of powerful, available ritual 4
 5 elements, as the Jewish divine names in line 2. The criteria that de Bruyn 5
 6 uses to suggest otherwise, as I relay above, is that the incantation in lines 6
 7 7–10 display both a *structure* (doxological) and an *idiom* (Christological) 7
 8 that point to a Christian setting.¹⁴ Indeed, I also reach a similar conclu- 8
 9 sion if I use criteria proposed by other new contributors to the debate on 9
 10 late antique amulets. Gideon Bohak, for instance, argues that the potential 10
 11 reference of elements must be assessed by their *context* in the respective 11
 12 incantations; are they presented as “independent and powerful entities 12
 13 with their own myths, rituals and iconography” or are they “mere words 13
 14 of power” (2008: 257)? In P.Oslo.5 there are clear traces of both Christol- 14
 15 ogy and Christian soteriology, alongside the iconographical features of the 15
 16 symbols, which then also by Bohak’s criteria suggests a Christian reference 16
 17 or background for this amulet. Therefore, although one cannot conclude 17
 18 with any certainty what references or intentions lay behind the elements 18
 19 in a late antique amulet, I find that there are strong enough indications of 19
 20 Christian influence in lines 7–10 to proceed with my exploration of how 20
 21 Christian elements came to be used and integrated with traditional, Greco- 21
 22 Egyptian apotropaic practice in P.Oslo.5. 22
 23 Finally, there are important theoretical debates, for instance surround- 23
 24 ing the concept of *syncretization*, that problematize comparative investiga- 24
 25 tions into the combination of and interaction between different religious 25
 26 elements and traditions in cultural expressions; because such studies imply 26
 27 that there are original, undiluted religious elements and traditions (Martin 27
 28 2000). The debates have pointed to the many pitfalls of this underlying 28
 29 implication, and its modernist, Eurocentric heritage, and, although some 29
 30 still use the term *syncretization*, most scholars agree that all human/cul- 30
 31 tural expression of tradition or religion are always contextual negotiations 31
 32 between a number of factors and influences (Leopold and Jensen 2004). 32
 33 Indeed, this criticism for dealing with ideal-types has ridden comparative 33
 34 studies of religion for some time, and there is really no definitive solution 34
 35 to this – some degree of abstraction and categorization will necessarily 35
 36 take place in a comparative study (Smith 1982). The answer, then, has been 36
 37 to compare with ever-greater stringency, and with an awareness of pre- 37
 38 cisely the abstraction and categorization that comparative analysis entails 38
 39 (Stausberg 2011). I see this answer also in the aforementioned, recent con- 39
 40 tributions to the study of late antique amulets, where de Bruyn, Bohak, 40
 41 Boustan, Sanzo, and others, explore the material with explicitly discussed 41

1 and assessed criteria for categorizing the different elements found. As my 1
 2 discussion above shows, I build on their work here and aim to carry their 2
 3 analytical rigour and transparency over into my analysis. 3
 4 4

Blending Theory

5 “Conceptual integration, which we also call *conceptual blending*, is another 5
 6 basic mental operation, highly imaginative but crucial to even the simplest 6
 7 kinds of thought” (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 18). Gilles Fauconnier 7
 8 and Mark Turner started developing blending theory in 1993, basing their 8
 9 work on George Lakoff and Mark Johnson’s influential *conceptual metaphor* 9
 10 *theory* from 1980. Lakoff and Johnson argue that metaphor is a mode of 10
 11 thinking, not just rhetorical embellishment, and they point to the classical 11
 12 metaphor *life is a journey* as an example: this is not simply a literary analogy, 12
 13 but a conceptualization that carries a comparison and contrasting of the 13
 14 notions of *life* and *journey* (i.e. having a beginning, an end and, possibly, a 14
 15 goal) that is used to comprehend the situation or phenomenon at hand (Fau- 15
 16 connier and Turner 2002: 35). Fauconnier and Turner recognize such oppor- 16
 17 tunistic combination of different concepts or notions in all human meaning 17
 18 formation and argue that it is a key cognitive process. Then they proceed to 18
 19 describe how this process of *conceptual integration* may be mapped out in 19
 20 what they call a *conceptual integration network*. A basic network consists 20
 21 of, first, two *input spaces*, for instance *life* and *journey*. These input spaces 21
 22 are then related through a *generic space*, which holds the relevant common 22
 23 traits of the two input spaces (a beginning, an end, movement, etc.). Finally, 23
 24 this combination of the two input spaces, through the generic space, forms 24
 25 a new, *blended space*, where the metaphor *life is a journey* occurs as a new 25
 26 *emergent structure* that may in turn function as an input space in a new 26
 27 conceptual blend (Fauconnier and Turner 1998: 182). 27

28 As a model the description of a basic conceptual blend is of course 28
 29 schematic, and there are numerous variations and adjustments for each 29
 30 blend. Fauconnier and Turner, however, formulate and describe two key 30
 31 principles that determine how a blend “runs”; that is, what contacts and 31
 32 exchanges are made between the different spaces in a blend. First, there 32
 33 are certain *optimality principles* that describe conditions under which the 33
 34 blend works most efficiently. A successful blend should compress what is 34
 35 diffuse; help obtain global insight; strengthen vital relations; and finally 35
 36 go from many to one (Fauconnier and Turner 2002: 312). Fauconnier and 36
 37 Turner observe that a typical way of meeting these optimality principles 37
 38 is for the blend to be compressed to *human scale* (2002: 312), for instance 38
 39 as when God in Western, Christian traditions is conceptualized as Father 39



1 Consuming the bread and wine effects union with Christ 1

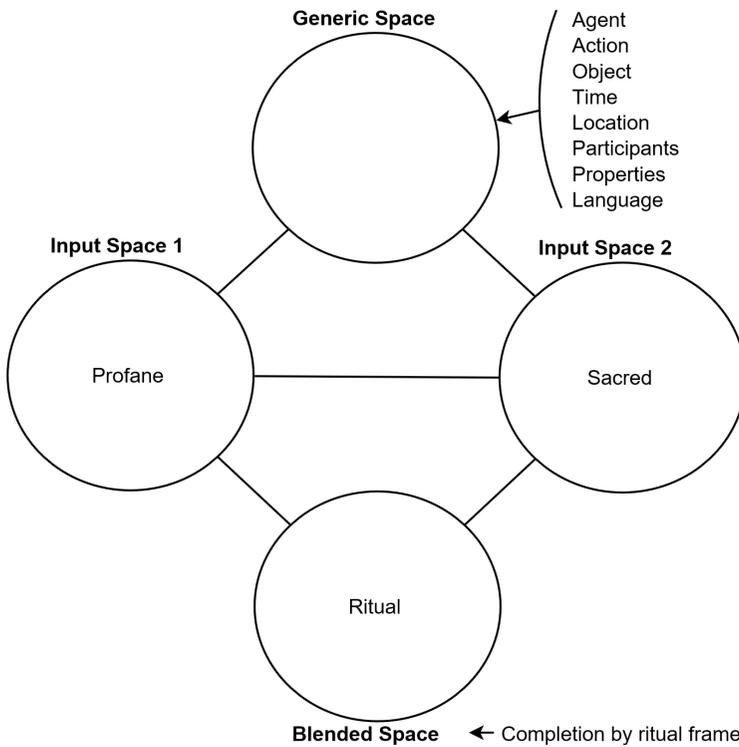
2 **Figure 1.** A further example of a conceptual integration network, explaining the Eucharist 2
 3 as a cognitive blend. From *Images of Rebirth. Cognitive Poetics and Transformational* 3
 4 *Soteriology in the Gospel of Philip and the Exegesis on the Soul* by Hugo Lundhaug (Brill 2010, 4
 5 418). Reproduced with permission. 5

6 or King. Then, there is the *topology principle*, which describes conditions 6
 7 that oppose conceptual blending. *Topology* refers to existing conceptual 7
 8 frame(s) in input spaces, and the *topology principle* describes an inherent 8
 9 resistance against blending “that eliminates important topology” (Fau- 9
 10 connier and Turner 2002: 328). To return to God, he may be brought into 10
 11 human scale as Father or King, but rarely as an insect or a drainpipe as this 11
 12 would violate important topology. Hence, a blend will always function as 12
 13 a balancing act between the topology principle and the optimality princi- 13
 14 ples, which together create the dynamic that guides a blend’s conceptual 14
 15 integration. 15

1 **Ritual Blending**

1

2 Sørensen builds, as many students of ritual do, on the basic premise offered 2
 3 by John L. Austin’s *speech-act theory*,¹⁵ and considers rituals “special kinds 3
 4 of speech-acts, believed to establish or create a desired state of affairs” 4
 5 (2007: 68). He takes up Fauconnier and Turner’s work to argue that the 5
 6 human appreciation of ritual efficacy can be mapped out or explained as, 6
 7 precisely, conceptual blending. A ritual, according to him, is a conceptual 7
 8 blend that blends a profane and a sacred domain (the two input spaces), 8
 9 and it is efficacious when the actions in the profane space are allowed to 9
 10 influence the sacred space (Sørensen 2007: 63–64).¹⁶ “[T]he aim is to change 10
 11 schematic aspects of entities belonging to one domain by manipulating 11
 12 entities belonging to another domain” (Sørensen 2013: 234). To keep with 12
 13 the example from Figure 1, the rites of the Eucharist blends wine and bread 13
 14 from the profane space with the body and blood of Christ from the sacred 14
 15 space to form the ritually efficacious Host. 15



16

16

17 **Figure 2.** The Generic Blend. From *A Cognitive Theory of Magic* by Jesper Sørensen 17
 18 (AltaMira Press 2007, 75). Reproduced with permission. 18

1 Sørensen continues, detailing that the traits connecting the sacred and the profane 1
2 domains, shown in the generic space, centre on the question of magical agency (2007: 2
3 65), and based on various anthropological studies of ritual practices he finds that the most 3
4 common types of magical agency are agent-based agency, action-based agency, and 4
5 object-based agency (2007: 73).¹⁷ Turning again to the Eucharist as an example, magical 5
6 agency here comes through two avenues; agent-based agency constituted by the priest 6
7 blessing the gifts in persona Christi and action-based agency in its recreation of the Last 7
8 Supper (Sørensen 2007: 86). 8

9 To supplement and make Fauconnier and Turner's observations on the relations between 9
10 input spaces relevant for ritual, Sørensen turns to Charles S. Peirce's theory of semiotics. 10
11 In brief, Peirce argues that objects are appreciated as signs, and that a sign is interpreted 11
12 through an interplay between three properties of the sign: 12

13 13

14 a. icon, likeness or appearance; 14
15 b. index, factual connection; 15
16 c. symbol, its formal/cultural meaning (see Sørensen 2007: 54–59). 16
17 17

18 Applied to a ritual blend; the Eucharistic wine appears similar to blood 18
19 (icon), it is factually connected to Christ by the liturgy (index) and the rep- 19
20 etition of this in turn makes blood and wine connected in culture (symbol). 20
21 Sørensen then proceeds to argue that it is the indexical and/or iconic, and 21
22 not the symbolic, properties that determine what is projected into the 22
23 blended space. “Spells and magical formulas are a certain type of speech- 23
24 act almost devoid of direct reference and communicative effect [symbolic 24
25 understanding]” (Sørensen 2007: 87). He claims that, from various studies 25
26 of ritual use and behaviour, there is in fact a direct negative correlation 26
27 between “the degree of interpretation of a ritual [symbolic understanding] 27
28 and representation of ritual efficacy” (Sørensen 2013: 237). In other words, 28
29 it is the colour and texture of wine and blood that facilitate their blend in 29
30 the Eucharist, not their symbolic or referential understanding (wine as a 30
31 beverage and blood as part of the human body). 31

32 Still, Sørensen adds, the human need to organize and interpret phenom- 32
33 ena symbolically works against this tendency (2007: 180). The symbolic 33
34 meaning of wine and blood may be downplayed in the Eucharist, but it also 34
35 contributes to its religious and cultural interpretation. It is, after all, the 35
36 symbolic understanding of both wine and blood that renders them relevant 36
37 and poignant for use in a ritual. Therefore, the twin pull of icon/index and 37
38 symbol result in a dynamic process that Sørensen argues is a driving force 38
39 in religious innovation (2007: 180): first, the emphasis on iconic and index- 39
40 ical features in ritual opens for new contexts and/or alignments. Then, these 40
41 new ritual alignments, which by then have become incongruous to their 41
42 former symbolic interpretation, provoke new symbolic interpretation.¹⁸ As 42

1 such, the symbolic meaning functions in a manner similar to Fauconnier 1
 2 and Turner's topology principle, in that the original topology of an input 2
 3 space (its symbolic understanding) restrains blending (caused by iconic 3
 4 and indexical understanding). 4

5 **Ritual Blending and Development in P.Oslo.5** 5

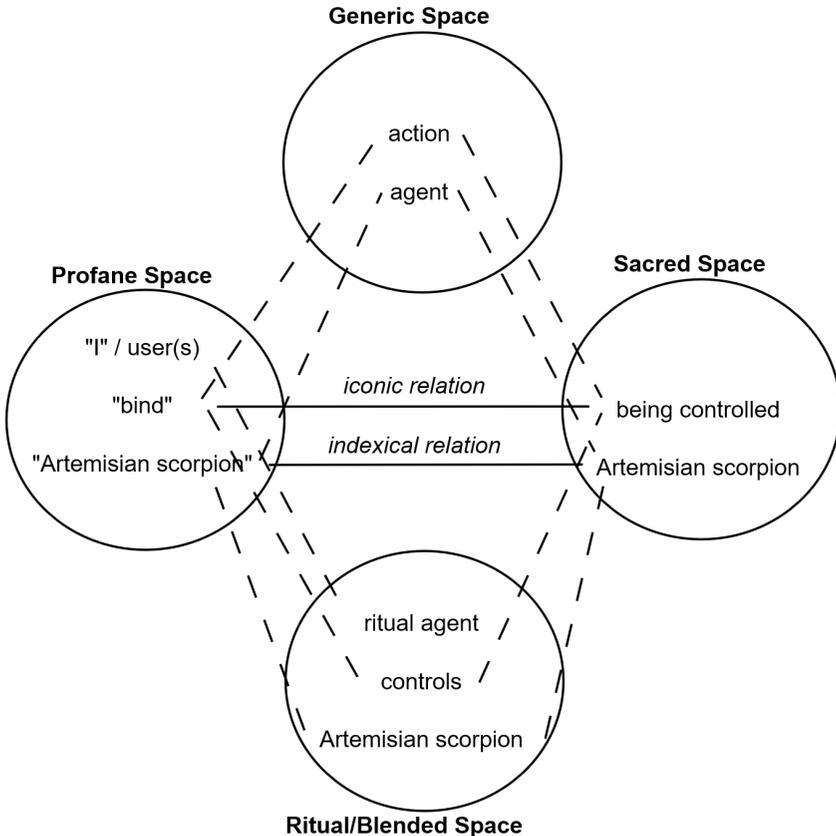
6 I start by identifying the performative utterances in P.Oslo.5, which are the 6
 7 basic units in Sørensen's analysis of ritual. The incantation has three main 7
 8 verbs, suggesting that there are three utterances to explore here. 1) I bind 8
 9 you, artemisian scorpion, 2) protect this house..., and 3) be on guard, Lord. 9
 10 Yet, according to Austin's classification of performative speech-acts, the 10
 11 second and third utterances here are not performative: typical performa- 11
 12 tive speech-acts should be in the first person active indicative (as I bind you, 12
 13 artemisian scorpion), or at least "reducible, or expandable, or analysable 13
 14 into a form with a verb in the first person singular present indicative active" 14
 15 (Austin 1971: 61–62). The other two are imperatives and must therefore 15
 16 be expanded somewhat to be in the first person active indicative: Austin 16
 17 writes that imperatives imply an operative word; for instance, in saying 17
 18 "be quiet!" there is an implicit I ask/order you to be quiet (Austin 1971: 59). 18
 19 Thus, the imperative becomes performative through the implied operative 19
 20 word ask/order, and it is the operative ask/order that is performative then, 20
 21 not the imperative itself. Be quiet is a propositional act; the action that the 21
 22 utterance proposes to achieve (Searle 1969: 29). 22

23 Hence, I suggest that the first two verbs in P.Oslo.5 are the performa- 23
 24 tive and propositional acts of one utterance: I bind [performative] you, 24
 25 Artemisian scorpion (...) (to) protect [propositional act] this house... "Be 25
 26 on guard, Lord", is also a propositional act, and therefore not a complete 26
 27 performative utterance. However, following Austin's assertion that there is 27
 28 an implicit operative verb to every imperative, I analyse the performative 28
 29 speech-act that is implied by the imperative. Thus, the second performative 29
 30 utterance in P.Oslo.5 would be something like I ask/order/appeal to [per- 30
 31 formative] you to be on guard, Lord [propositional act]... 31

32 **a. The First Utterance** 32

33 First, the I of the sentence is projected into the ritual/blend space as ritual 33
 34 agent (see figure 3). It is projected from the profane space only, with no 34
 35 related event or being in the sacred space. This, of course, also means that it 35
 36 does not convey magical agency into the blend. However, the act mentioned 36
 37 in the text, the binding, can be connected to a counterpart in the sacred 37
 38 space and thereby convey magical agency, since binding is a common term 38

1 and notion for taking control over supernatural beings in late antique amu- 1
 2 lets (Wessely 1974: 423; Ciraolo 1995: 280). Being controlled can therefore 2
 3 be formulated as a counterpart in the sacred domain, and it connects to the 3
 4 profane domain through its iconic properties to bind. As it is an action, it 4
 5 provides action-based agency mirrored in the generic space. 5



6 **Figure 3.** The first performative utterance of P.Oslo.5 as a cognitive blend. 6
 7 7

8 Finally, there is the *artemisian scorpion*, which is the audience of the per- 8
 9 formative utterance, or the ritual's object. It is a demonic figure, thereby 9
 10 originating from the sacred domain and it is implicated in the blend 10
 11 through the utterance of its name in the profane space. Writing a deity's 11
 12 name is a potent appeal to the deity (Levy 2013: 104). Remembering Peirce's 12
 13 definition that indexes are *factual connections*, a name is a typical indexical 13
 14 relation since it is something applied to the sign and asserted by external 14
 15 rules. Here, this means that the *artemisian scorpion* is included in the ritual 15

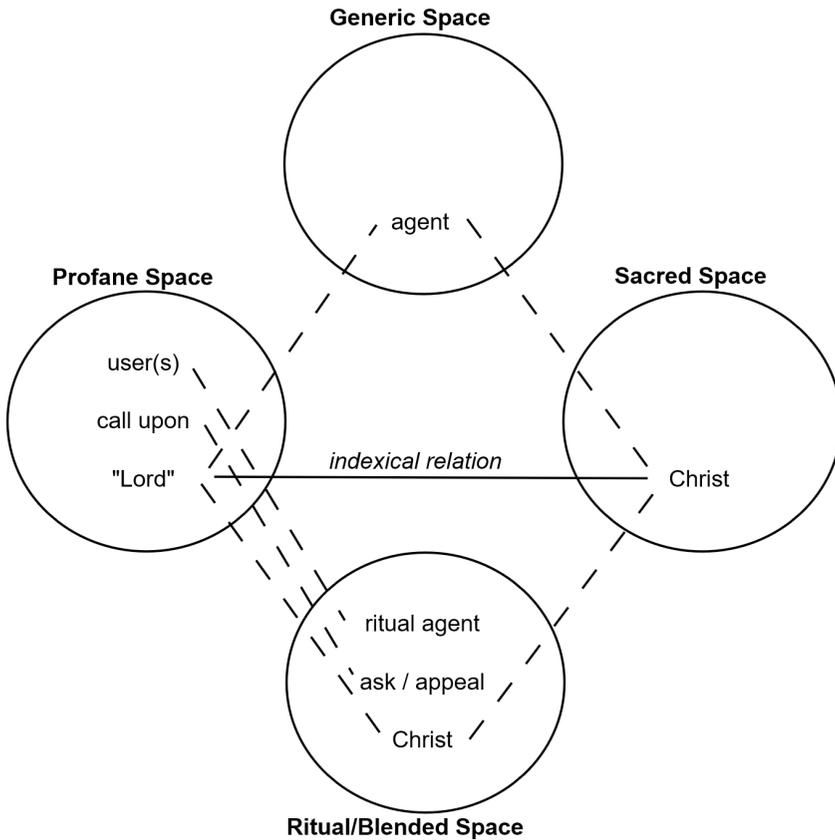
1 blend, connecting the sacred and the profane input spaces and thus pro- 1
 2 viding agent-based agency mirrored in the generic space. All this is then 2
 3 projected into the ritual or blended space, which produces the emergent 3
 4 structure wherein the user(s), as ritual agent, can exert power over the *arte-* 4
 5 *misian scorpion*. 5

6 **b. The Second Utterance** 6

7 The second performative act, implied by the imperative *be on guard*, shares 7
 8 some traits with the first, but there are also differences between the two 8
 9 (see Fig. 4). To begin with, the only actual utterance here is *Lord*, the ritual 9
 10 object. However, I expand it based on Austin's assertion about imperatives, 10
 11 and thereby have the performative utterance *I ask/order/appeal to you to be* 11
 12 *on guard Lord...* in the profane space. As in the first performative act, the 12
 13 ritual agent here is the user(s), and he/she/they are implicitly projected into 13
 14 the ritual space from the profane space without a counterpart in the sacred 14
 15 space. However, differently from the first act, also the action here stands with- 15
 16 out a direct connection to the sacred space. While the first utterance implied 16
 17 a direct change in the sacred space, by binding the *artemisian scorpion*, the 17
 18 second utterance does not bring about a direct change in the audience. 18
 19 This, according to John R. Searle's development of speech-act theory, is the 19
 20 difference between a *perlocutionary* and an *illocutionary* speech-act: both 20
 21 are performative utterances, but only the former causes a direct change in 21
 22 the utterance's audience while the former does not (Holdcroft 1994: 350). 22
 23 Hence, the second utterance here differs from the first, suggesting that this 23
 24 supposed Christian addition works somewhat differently than the first. 24

25 The only connection, then, between the sacred and the profane spaces in 25
 26 this second blend is through object-based agency. The audience, or ritual 26
 27 object, in the profane space here is *Lord*, whom we know by the indexical 27
 28 relation asserted in the epithet and doxology in lines 7–10 to be Christ, 28
 29 thereby making Christ the sacred space counterpart. Through this identi- 29
 30 fication there is a connection between the sacred and the profane domains, 30
 31 creating a basis for the blend. However, this second utterance is different 31
 32 from the first in that the ritual object is the only provider of agency, making 32
 33 Christ the only conveyor of ritual efficacy. This simple fact of having one 33
 34 instead of two connections can signify a weaker blend in the second act, 34
 35 indicating a greater distance between the two input spaces and possibly 35
 36 also a weaker efficacy for the ritual. 36

37 This could bring us back to the aforementioned point that the utter- 37
 38 ance is not perlocutionary, which may invite the traditional differentiation 38
 39 between magic as coercion and prayer as supplication (Harari 2005: 111) 39



1

2 **Figure 4.** The second performative utterance of P.Oslo.5 as a cognitive blend.

1

2

3 into the discussion: the second utterance, by not being perlocutionary, is 3
 4 more like a prayer, while the first utterance is magical coercion. However, 4
 5 as the analytical value of the category *prayer* has been found to be limited, 5
 6 and its use disputed, in studies of ancient amulets (Graf 1991), I will not 6
 7 venture into this here. Yet, the difference between the two utterances in 7
 8 P.Oslo.5 is nevertheless interesting. Realizing that Christology was a com- 8
 9 plex matter in those centuries, the second utterance can be understood to 9
 10 show that the topology behind the Christian sacred space does not allow for 10
 11 any active agent other than Christ, and no other agent or force should 11
 12 control him. This is, then, a notable difference between the first and the 12
 13 performative utterances, as the topology of the first performative utterance 13
 14 appears to include a hierarchy, or even hierarchies, of divine beings in the 14
 15 sacred space (implied by the fact that beings here may be controlled). Of 15

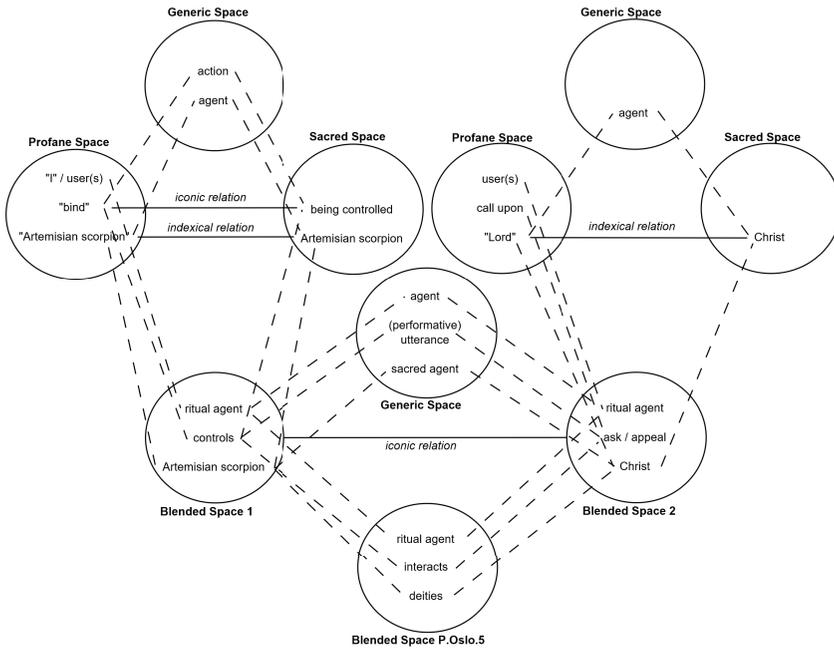
1 course, any reconstruction of a full theology or pantheon from a single, 1
 2 small amulet is doomed to fail. Still, my analysis suggests that there are 2
 3 some differences in the ritual blending of the first and second utterances, 3
 4 and furthermore that these differences stem from topological constraints 4
 5 within the sacred domains. This, in turn, confirms the observations made 5
 6 by de Bruyn and others that P.Oslo.5 seems to have a more than fleeting 6
 7 appreciation of Christian worship. However, the analysis does not yet show 7
 8 how these two different utterances still can come together and form an 8
 9 efficacious, ritual whole. 9

10 **c. Both Utterances Together** 10

11 On the one hand, these are two distinct utterances, and one could simply 11
 12 say that they are the products of two different ritual traditions brought 12
 13 together on one piece of papyrus, without any more thought or considera- 13
 14 tion of the matter. However, on the other hand, having these utterances 14
 15 together on the same piece of papyrus does place them in some form of 15
 16 relation to each other. The two utterances are not separated by any lines 16
 17 or marks on the papyrus; the text is continuous and appears as one whole. 17
 18 Hence, the two utterances should be considered in some relation to each 18
 19 other, and I therefore bring them together and analyse them as one concep- 19
 20 tual integration network: 20

21 Here we can see that, on the one hand, the utterances are structurally 21
 22 similar. They share the basic structure *agent* – *action(s)* – *object* in the 22
 23 profane space, and this is projected into the ritual/blended space. Second, 23
 24 ritual agency is in both cases ascribed to the blend by the implication of a 24
 25 being from the sacred space, as the object of the utterance. On the other 25
 26 hand, the sacred spaces appear to have different topology principles, with 26
 27 the agency in Blended Space 2 coming only through Christ, while the 27
 28 agency in Blended Space 1 comes both from the *artemisian scorpion* and 28
 29 the ritual action. Hence, the structure of the utterances works towards the 29
 30 ritual blend, while the different topology principles counter this blending. 30
 31 P.Oslo.5 then works in a dynamic between the blending tendencies of the 31
 32 ritual's emergent structure and the restraining topology from the Christian 32
 33 sacred domain. 33

34 At first, I was hesitant to use the two performative acts as input spaces 34
 35 for a new blended space, since the above dynamic creates a quite weak 35
 36 blend. As the model shows, the two blended spaces can only be brought 36
 37 together in an overarching blend by taking up the two very large and open 37
 38 concepts *interaction(s)* and *deities*. Such wide concepts are symptomatic of 38
 39 a weak blend, begging the question of whether there is any blending taking 39



1

1

2 **Figure 5.** A blend of both utterances in P.Oslo.5.

2

3 place at all. Now, with the blending provided by the structural similarity, 3
 4 which facilitates an iconic relation between the two blended spaces and 4
 5 may thereby start a new integration network and emergent structure, I 5
 6 argue that there is such a thing, even if it is a weak blend. In fact, I think 6
 7 that the weakness of this overarching blend may be an important factor. 7
 8 On the one hand, the iconic connection between the ritual structures in the 8
 9 two utterances puts the *artemisian scorpion* and Christ on a par with each 9
 10 other, echoing earlier studies that find Christ to be just another powerful 10
 11 figure in the diverse repertoire of the *PGM*. On the other hand, my analysis 11
 12 shows that the blend is weak, suggesting there is a topological restraint here 12
 13 that links with the symbolic interpretation of the different elements. 13

14 **Conclusion**

14

15 In the end P.Oslo.5 is a weak ritual blend that includes both topological dif- 15
 16 ference and ritual blending in spite of this. In fact, this situation illustrates 16
 17 precisely Sørensen's argument that rituals develop in a dynamic between 17
 18 iconic and indexical properties on the one hand, and symbolic properties 18

1 on the other. Here, it is the iconic similarities in the ritual structure that 1
 2 compares Christ with the *artemisian scorpion*, while their symbolic inter- 2
 3 pretation, present and manifest in their respective domains, resist this 3
 4 comparison and the blend it facilitates. Thus, Sørensen's approach con- 4
 5 tributes to the discussion, driven by de Bruyn, Sanzo, and others, of how 5
 6 traditional, Greco-Egyptian apotropaic practice negotiates Christian influ- 6
 7 ence and context. In fact, my observations compare with de Bruyn's recent 7
 8 study, where he finds that the most common use of Christian elements in 8
 9 the *PGM* follow traditional, Greco-Egyptian ritual structure, but use a 9
 10 Christian idiom, known also from other sources (2017). Through Sørensen- 10
 11 en's cognitive ritual theory I am able to map and appreciate the dynamics of 11
 12 these processes of negotiation and ritual development. The results add fur- 12
 13 ther nuance to the debate on influence and interaction in late antique apo- 13
 14 tropaic practices, underscoring that the old dichotomy that saw Christian 14
 15 elements in amulets as either defining or as emptied of religious signifi- 15
 16 cance is obsolete, and the analysis is done with a methodological transpar- 16
 17 ency that clearly shows the abstractions and categorizations imposed on 17
 18 the source material. Certainly, more work is required, for instance testing 18
 19 the theory on other historical material; on other amulets from the *PGM*; 19
 20 and perhaps also on what constitutes a domain and which criteria go into 20
 21 establishing that. And this should be done, since there is potential in the 21
 22 model for mapping and analysing the composition and developmental 22
 23 dynamics of complex ritual corpora like the *PGM*. 23

24 Endnotes 24

- 25 1. Nils Hallvard Korsvoll's is **give title**. His research interests include ritual and magic in 25
 26 Late Antiquity, popular religion, ritual theory, cognitive theory, and cross-cultural interaction. 26
 27 In his doctoral dissertation, Korsvoll explores the distribution and use of apparently Christian 27
 28 elements in Syriac amulets from Late Antiquity (2017). 28
- 29 2. As *pagan* is no longer an adequate description, *Greek*, *Greco-Roman*, *Greco-Egyptian* 29
 30 and *Hellenistic* are among the adjectives used to describe the content of the *PGM*. I follow 30
 31 David Frankfurter's use of *Greco-Egyptian*, but then as something "which I understand 31
 32 broadly as a pan-Mediterranean phenomenon" (Frankfurter 1994: 190). 32
- 33 3. For further publications on P.Oslo.5, see de Bruyn (2017: 94–96); Preisendanz 33
 34 (1977/2001: 210–11); Meyer, Smith and Kelsey (1994: 49–51); Wessely (1974: 422); Aland 34
 35 (1976: 428). 35
- 36 4. E.g. de Bruyn (2017); Aune (1980); Janowitz (2002); Graf (2002); Frankfurter (1998); 36
 37 Brakke (2006). 37
- 38 5. E.g. Czachesz (2007); Bohak (2008: 229–30; 2003: 71–73); Boustan and Sanzo (2017: 38
 39 226–29). 39
- 40 6. E.g. Bovon (2001); de Bruyn (2010); Twelftree (2007). 40
- 41 7. For further contributions to this discussion, see Bohak 2008: 284; Otto 2013: 339–41; 41
 42 Ronis 2015; Boustan and Beshay 2015. 42

8. Sørensen argues for the continued use of *magic* as an analytical category: “The primary problem is not the overestimation of representations of direct ritual efficacy among ‘the Other’ (whether in present-day Congo or ancient Rome), but the radical underestimation of representations of such efficacy in the Protestant West” (2013: 230–31). He thus turns the criticism of the term *magic*, which argues that so-called magical acts can be equally well described as ritual (Smith 1995: 16), on its head by saying all forms of ritual include *magical agency*. In a recent summary of the debate on *magic* in Antiquity, Bernd-Christian Otto still points out some prevailing issues with the term *magic* (2013), so in my discussion I use the term *ritual*. However, I retain *magic* or *magical* when reporting from Sørensen’s work.

9. Eve Sweetser (2000) also applies blending theory to ritual, in an article that outlines the main premises of what Sørensen is doing, but Sørensen’s monograph develops the approach further than her article.

10. E.g. Martin (2003/2004); Uro (2007); Gragg (2004); Beck (2004); Ketola (2007); Biró (2013); Jokiranta (2013) and Czachesz (2013).

11. E.g. Czachesz 2010; Lundhaug 2010; Robbins 2007.

12. P.Oxy. VIII 1152, P.Oxy. VII 1060, P.Oxy. XVI 2061–63. Only P.Oxy. VIII 1152 includes a brief invocation of Christ, while the others are without Christian elements. Although acquired in the Fayyum, the findspot of P.Oslo.5 is unknown, so it remains uncertain whether this formula was local to Oxyrhynchus or had a wider dispersion (de Bruyn 2017: 98).

13. Nonsensical words or phrases. The phenomenon permeates the *PGM*, see for instance Gordon 2012.

14. In his analysis of early Christian amulets, which I refer to in my introduction, de Bruyn launches precisely these two aspects as criteria for discussing how and to what extent an amulet is connected with on Christian tradition (2017: 1–16).

15. Austin challenges the view that language is only representational, but rather points to several common instances where utterances do not only describe but actually bring about some sort of change of affairs, and are thus *performative* (Austin 1971). It has since been established that speech-act theory also applies to written utterances (Verschueren 1980: 3), such as the incantations in late antique amulets; in fact, some studies even suggest that a written form heightens the effect of a ritual, increasing its potency (Levy 2013: 106; Frankfurter 1994: 195).

16. What constitutes the sacred and what constitutes the profane domains of a conceptual blend, asserts Sørensen, depends on historical and cultural circumstances (2007: 63–64).

17. Sørensen derives this tripartite structure from the same basic principles of Linguistics as Lawson and McCauley do in their cognitive approach to ritual (Lawson and McCauley 1990; McCauley and Lawson 2002), but he understands and uses it differently, informed by observations from a range of anthropological studies.

18. For instance, during the Protestant Reformation the absurdity of drinking Christ’s actual blood was a favoured theme for attacks on the Catholic Church and it also motivated their new interpretations of the Eucharist.

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