

ARTICLE

John Chrysostom and Christian Love Magic: A Spellbinding Moment in the History of Interpretation of I Cor 7.2–4*

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Abstract

This article, originally presented as the presidential address at the 2021 SNTS meeting, held virtually via Leuven due to Covid-19 conditions, investigates the nature of Pauline interpretation, past and present. It brings into the scholarly conversation a neglected ancient source, John Chrysostom's occasional homily on 1 Cor 7.2–4 (*Hom. 1 Cor. 7–4 (CPG 4377)*), and provides an analysis of key passages showing how the late antique orator-bishop seeks to turn Paul's words from the fifties to Corinth into a magical incantation, and, as inscribed on various materials, a talisman against the evils associated with *porneia*. The article concludes with defence of the category 'Christian love magic' and an argument that New Testament studies constitutes a unified field which should unite (rather than separate out) the work of philology, historical contextualisation, literary criticism, humanistic commitments and hermeneutical sophistication as we trace and analyse the ways human agents construct meanings with New Testament texts, then and now.

Keywords: Paul; John Chrysostom; history of interpretation; ancient magic; hermeneutics; Christian love magic

1. Περὶ δὲ ὧν ἐγράψατε

Some Christ-believers at Roman Corinth in the early fifties wrote a letter to Paul when he was in Ephesus, containing some questions, and most likely contestations, about Paul's teaching on sexuality, marriage, divorce, children, remarriage and ascetic practice. Their letter is long gone.

His response is emphatically not.

'Now concerning the things about which you wrote' begins a long and convoluted segment of the epistolary correspondence between Παῦλος ἀπόστολος Χριστοῦ Ἰησοῦ¹ and that group of people he rather grandiosely² refers to as ἡ ἐκκλησία τοῦ θεοῦ ἢ οὐση ἐν

* Presidential address, Studiorum Novi Testamenti Societas, 75th General Meeting, 26 July 2021. This article is dedicated to two eminent scholarly friends of blessed memory, Judith L. Kovacs and Elizabeth A. Clark, both profoundly missed.

¹ Despite the epistolary co-sender Σωσθένης ὁ ἀδελφός (1.1), the letter has a singular speaker, Paul, from the epistolary thanksgiving onward (εὐχαριστῶ in 1.4; cf. παρακαλῶ in 1.10 to open the letter body, and thereafter). Most importantly for 1 Corinthians 7, there is a loud and emphatic λέγω/παραγγέλλω/διατάσσομαι (7.6, 8, 10, 12, 17 etc.), the subject of which is clearly Paul.

² The word ἐκκλησία (τοῦ θεοῦ) and its locative specification here (ἢ οὐση ἐν Κορίνθῳ) are aspirational and ambitious (see Y.-H. Park, *Paul's Ekklēsia as a Civic Assembly: Understanding the People of God in their Politico-Social*

Κορίνθῳ. The words the Hellenistic Jewish wordsmith (Paul) offered on this occasion to address multiple scenarios and life status of gentile Christ-believers were not at all destined to solve the problems posed to him. Instead, these words have generated countless disputes, about their meaning(s) and applications to other cultural and historical contexts into which the historical-epistolary Paul would be thrust as an authoritative voice in the following decades, centuries and millennia.³ These moments of reinterpretation and reuse range from further letters Paul wrote to these same Corinthians,⁴ to the pseudepigraphical authors of Ephesians and 1 Timothy (among others), to the author of the *Acta Pauli et Theclae*, to Tertullian, Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Jerome, Jovinian, Augustine,⁵ Thomas Aquinas, Martin Luther, Katharine C. Bushnell⁶ and other Christian interpreters (ancient, medieval and modern) who debated and disputed the proper Christian teaching and practices regarding sexual activity, marriage and the celibate life. This history of interpretation and reuse extends to this semiotically complicated artefact of our Coronavirus times, a face mask emblazoned with the words of 1 Cor 7.2 (King James Version), that is available online for \$15 USD (Fig. 1).⁷

What does this composite textual-material object mean? Is the form of a face mask appropriate for bearing these words? How is its meaning different if worn by a man, a woman or a child (yes, it is available also in child sizes, fitting ages 3–7) (Fig. 2)?⁸

Whose interpretive agency might we recover here? How much does the designer's intent, or that of the manufacturer, matter to its meaning? The intent of those who buy and wear it? The reactions of those with whom they come in contact while wearing it? Where they wear it (to school, to a dance party, to church, on an airplane, to a wedding reception)? Is it serious, or ironic? And how does the fact that the physical object on

World (WUNT 11/393; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015)). We do not know how many Corinthian Christ-believers there were in the early fifties when Paul wrote this letter (for a fair assessment of the sheer difficulty of attempting to discern sociological data on the earliest Christian house churches at Corinth from archaeological evidence, with full bibliography, see D. N. Schowalter, 'Seeking Shelter in Roman Corinth: Archaeology and the Placement of Paul's Communities', *Corinth in Context: Comparative Studies on Religion and Society* (ed. S. J. Friesen, D. N. Schowalter and J. C. Walters; NovTSup 134; Leiden: Brill, 2010) 327–41. But it cannot have been a huge number, and they did not have dedicated architecture, so Paul's words (such as *ἡσυχία* in 1 Cor 3.16) are very metaphorically outsized.

³ I use the term the 'historical-epistolary Paul' (HEP) to refer to Paul as known through his voice as found in the seven authentic letters; the HEP, as based on a finite and contingent set of epistolary documents from a little more than a decade's time, is not identical with Paul, the human person (P, who is lost to history) or the Historical Paul (HP, a scholarly reconstruction of that historical person based on the letters and other ambient sources). None of them should be called (or considered) 'the real Paul' (even in scare quotes). For a defence of this position and its methodological utility for understanding the growth of Paulinism – and its necessity for establishing the hermeneutical object – see M. M. Mitchell, *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality: Early Christian Literary Culture in Context* (WUNT 393; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017) xiii and 'How Was the Reception of Paul Shaped in the Early Church', *The New Cambridge Companion to St. Paul* (ed. B. W. Longenecker; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2020) 278–98. My emphasis on Paul as author is not intended to reinscribe his authority unquestioningly, but to point to his responsibility for setting these words in motion, even if the legacy that traces itself often tenuously back to him is complexly related to his own chosen words in their context(s), at the hands of interpreters who make their own choices.

⁴ E.g. 2 Cor 12.21 and, for ancient interpreters, 2 Cor 2.5–11 (taken to refer to the same person as 1 Cor 5).

⁵ An introduction and overview of some of these ancient interpretations may be found in J. L. Kovacs, ed. and trans., *1 Corinthians Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators* (The Church's Bible; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005) 104–16.

⁶ American physician, Bible translator, missionary and activist who lived 1855–1945, and wrote *God's Word to Women: 10 Bible Studies on Woman's Place in the Divine Economy* (Grapevine, TX: God's Word to Women, Inc., original 1921). In §111 Bushnell invokes the passage that is our subject today: 'Further, the Apostle Paul, 1. Corinthians 7:4, makes the authority of the wife precisely equal to the husband's in the marital relation.'

⁷ www.teepublic.com, accessed 26 May 2021.

⁸ www.teepublic.com, accessed 26 May 2021.



Figure 1

which the text is printed is a face mask relate to other commitments and convictions (medical, social, legal) about what kind of ‘protection’ such a mask affords – and from what or whom? (The same website sells other such merchandise that brings 1 Cor 7.2 KJV actively into the world as wall art, stickers, iPhone cases etc.)

The relevance of these contemporary objects to ancient biblical interpretation will I hope become clearer later in this article, but the chief point of this introduction is to emphasise the empirical point that the words Paul wrote (1 Cor 7.2–4) *have been doing work in the world, in the mouths and hands of interpreters with a purpose*.⁹ As Elizabeth Clark has brilliantly demonstrated in her book *Reading Renunciation*, ‘the exhortations of patristic writers to their contemporaries intersected in unexpected ways with the varied advice Paul had addressed to specific Christian constituencies at Corinth’.¹⁰ The utterly contingent and yet pervasive – and remarkably variable – influence of Paul’s letters down through time should continually surprise us.

2. The Passage 1 Cor 7.2–4: Form and Pre- and Post-history

Before we focus upon another astonishing instance of Pauline reinterpretation, from antiquity, first let’s examine those words themselves. These three rather carefully

⁹ As I have argued for some time, ‘the meaning of Paul’s letters is not and never was a fixed and immutable given awaiting discovery, nor was it transparent in the moment of their initial reading, but it was (and is) negotiated’ (M. M. Mitchell, ‘The Corinthian Correspondence and the Birth of Pauline Hermeneutics’, *Paul and the Corinthians: Studies on a Community in Conflict. Essays in Honor of Margaret E. Thrall* (ed. T. J. Burke and J. K. Elliott; NovTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2003) 17–53, at 19; republished in Mitchell, *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality*, 161–91, at 163; see also Mitchell, *Paul and the Emergence of Christian Textuality*, xv: ‘Paul’s letters never did have and still do not have one single unambiguous meaning; epistolary meaning is not set in stone nor is it unchanging, but it is negotiated between authors, readers, communities and circumstances, including those well after the death of the author’).

¹⁰ E. A. Clark, *Reading Renunciation: Asceticism and Scripture in Early Christianity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999) 261 (emphasis original).

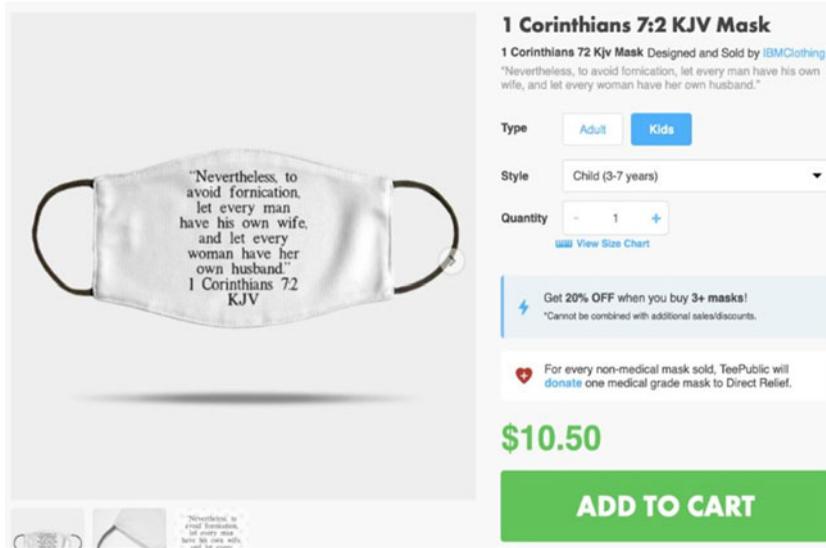


Figure 2

composed sentences set up a grammatical and semantic parallelism between ἡ γυνή and ὁ ἀνὴρ, with form and content joining forces to reinforce with some solemnity the (surprising) gender parity – at least on the grammatical level – in the prescriptions:

διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας

ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἔχέτω, καὶ
ἕκαστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἔχέτω. (1 Cor 7.2)

τῇ γυναικί ὁ ἀνὴρ τὴν ῥόφειλὴν ἀποδίδτω, ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ
ῥόφειλομένην εὐνοίαν Κ Α 104. 365. 1241. 1505 ¶
 ἡ γυνή τῷ ἀνδρί. (1 Cor 7.3)

ἡ γυνή τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλ' ὁ ἀνὴρ. ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ
 ὁ ἀνὴρ τοῦ ἰδίου σώματος οὐκ ἐξουσιάζει ἀλλ' ἡ γυνή. (1 Cor 7.4)

But because of acts of sexual misconduct

Let each man 'have' his own wife, and
 Let each woman 'have' her own husband

Let the husband give 'what is owed' to the wife; and likewise also
 the goodwill that is owed
 Let the wife give 'what is owed' to the husband

The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; and like-
 wise also
 The husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

These deliberately crafted statements represent a phenomenon we find elsewhere in Paul's letters across time, as he revised, updated or reworded his own earlier statements in light of readerly puzzlement and contestation,¹¹ as well as new ideas and purposes of his own. In this case, the terse, elliptical and even crude εἰδέναι ἕκαστον ἡμῶν τὸ ἑαυτοῦ σκεῦος κτᾶσθαι ἐν ἀγιασμῷ καὶ τιμῇ, μὴ ἐν πάθει ἐπιθυμίας ('each of you to know how to have his own "vessel" in sanctification and honour, and not in lustful passion', 1 Thess 4.4–5) has been reworked to make explicit that σκεῦος refers to the body (but whose?),¹² and that the marital/sexual possession of the partner (κτᾶσθαι, ἔχειν) is not solely commanded of men, but also of women. And yet Paul's language, with its combination of dysphemism (what does πορνεία in the plural cover?) and euphemism (what do ἔχειν¹³ or ὀφειλή¹⁴ quite mean or include?) leaves much that remains underdetermined. Inscripting a sharp gender binary between men and women – even as the full letter repeatedly signals his recognition that this binary was not in fact securely in place within the Corinthian house churches¹⁵ – Paul formulates each of the three sentences with the ἀνήρ/γυνή pairing. Whether this is to be taken as 'egalitarian' or compatible with a 'complementarian' view (that retains the hierarchy of husband over wife)¹⁶ remains disputed

¹¹ See W. A. Meeks, 'The Polyphonic Ethics of the Apostle Paul', *idem*, *In Search of the Early Christians: Selected Essays* (ed. A. R. Hilton and H. G. Snyder; New Haven: Yale University Press, 2002) 196–209; fuller argument for how this works out in the Corinthian letters in M. M. Mitchell, *Paul, the Corinthians and the Birth of Christian Hermeneutics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), alluding briefly to this example from 1 Thess 4.3–6 on p. 6.

¹² See e.g. A. J. Malherbe, *The Letters to the Thessalonians* (AB 32B; New York: Doubleday, 2000) 226–8, who gives three different possible meanings for σκεῦος in this passage: the body (cf. 2 Cor 4.7), or 'the male sexual member', or 'as a euphemism for a woman engaged in sexual relations'; see also BDAG s.v. 3 on options, from 'one's own body' (Theodoret, Calvin, modern commentators) to 'one's own wife' (Theodore of Mopsuestia, modern commentators), to 'penis' as 'also probable' (by reference to the euphemism in Antistius, Aelian and the corresponding Latin, *vasa*).

¹³ The editors of BDAG, s.v. 2.a, under the very broad category of 'to stand in a close relationship to someone', accurately note that it can refer to 'having' someone, as in to 'be married'. But they shy away from the clear reference in 1 Cor 5.1 to 'having' someone sexually, by the hesitant 'perh. an illicit relationship is meant' (of course it is, from Paul's point of view!). LSJ A.I.4 is a bit more attuned to the easy earthiness in Paul's language when it translates (if a bit archaically in English): 'have to wife or as husband ... also of a lover'. In context, for Paul and more broadly, these locutions presume an ideology of what it means to 'possess' another, i.e. to have another both in marriage and in sex. Origen's paraphrase captures both senses of what Paul means by ἐχέτω: τὰ ἔργα τοῦ γάμου (*Comm. 1 Cor.* on 7.2 (C. Jenkins, 'Origen on I Corinthians. iii', *JTS* 9 (1907–8) 500–14, at 501)) – 'marital business' (translation mine; compare Kovacs, *1 Corinthians Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 108: 'marital relations').

¹⁴ Already J. Weiß, *Der erste Korintherbrief* (MeyerK 7; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1910⁹) 172–3: 'ὀφειλή ... hat aber hier deutlich euphemistischen und ganz speziellen Sinn'.

¹⁵ One can see Paul was troubled by what he considered to be non-gender-conforming activity at Corinth in the anxious and tortured passage 11.2–16, the heavy-handed 14.33–6 (which I regard as authentic), and the fact that he removed οὐκ ἔνι ἄρσεν καὶ θήλυ from the baptismal formula of Gal 3.28 when he quoted it in 1 Cor 12.13 (as well as other evidence, including the notorious 6.9–10). Among many insightful treatments, see the groundbreaking work of A. C. Wire, *The Corinthian Women Prophets: A Reconstruction through Paul's Rhetoric* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1991); J. Økland, *Women in their Place: Paul and the Corinthian Discourse of Gender and Sanctuary Space* (*JNTSup* 269; London: T&T Clark, 2004); and, most recently, J. A. Marchal, 'A Close Corinthian Shave: Trans/Androgyné', *Appalling Bodies: Queer Figures before and after Paul's Letters* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020) 30–67.

¹⁶ Chrysostom adopts this position in the homily we shall analyse below: 'Why then did Paul introduce such great equality of privilege [ἰσοτιμία] here [1 Cor 7.2–4]? Because in the other cases [i.e. the statements enjoining subordination of women to men in Eph 5.33; 1 Cor 11.3; Eph 5.22; Gen 3.16 that Chrysostom has just serially quoted] there was a need for superiority [ὑπεροχή, of men over women]; but here, when it concerns the profit that comes from chasteness and dignity (σωφοσύνης καιρὸς καὶ σεμνότητος), the husband has no advantage over the woman (οὐδὲν ἔχει πλέον τῆς γυναίκος ὁ ἀνὴρ), but he is punished in the same way as she is (ὅλλ' ὁμοίως ἐκείνη κολάζεται) if he has defiled the laws of marriage. And rightly so' (*Hom. 1 Cor 7.2–4* §4 (51.214)).

even into our day (at least in some pockets), as indeed it was already in antiquity. Paul also here extends the claim with an entirely new proposition about ἐξουσία/ἐξουσιάζειν, which coheres, if somewhat tensively, with the paradoxical theme of ‘freedom’ as ‘slavery’ ἐν Χριστῷ that he invokes frequently in this entire wider section of the long letter that is 1 Corinthians.¹⁷ And, crucially, Paul introduces the whole under the ambiguous term πορνεία, which for him targets the specific act of sex with πόρνοι, ‘female prostitutes’/‘whores’ or ‘harlots’,¹⁸ and also can serve as a metonymy for the field of all ‘sexual misconduct’.¹⁹

Even as we see Paul engaging in continuing self-interpretation, modification and expansion in his epistolary statements on marriage and sexual acts from 1 Thessalonians to 1 Corinthians, his own words once written down and sent to Corinth were not set in stone. Various Corinthians read them, and not all agreed (cf. 2 Cor 12.21). Pseudepigraphers sought to steer their meaning by new words of their own put in ‘Paul’s’ mouth,²⁰ whereas the transmission history of these lines shows a remarkably successful attempt to sanitise the meaning of the ὀφειλή, ‘debt’ or ‘duty’, that Paul insisted the spouses owe each other, transforming Paul’s euphemism for sexual

Chrysostom has focalised Paul’s ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ (‘and likewise/in the same way also’) solely on the requirement for chasteness and the punishment for failure in it, not equal honour or status, which he bolsters with the other canonical texts to rebut the apparent parity here (he makes the same argument in *Hom. 1 Cor.* 19.1 (61.152)). The debate among United States evangelicals between the complementarian and egalitarian positions – carried out on virtually the same terms as the fourth century – has been going on for decades upon decades; it was renewed once more this summer in relation to the Southern Baptist Convention, 15–16 June 2021 (<https://religionnews.com/2021/06/03/women-in-the-southern-baptist-convention-have-fought-for-decades-to-be-ordained/>, accessed 26 May 2021), which was much in the news. The 1988 Danvers Statement from the ‘Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood’ (CBMW) (<https://cbmw.org/about/danvers-statement/>, accessed 26 May 2021), in its argument that ‘[d]istinctions in masculine and feminine roles are ordained by God as part of the created order, and should find an echo in every human heart’, does not mention 1 Cor 7.2–4 (though it refers three times to 1 Cor 11.2–16). In direct contrast, ‘Christians for Biblical Equality’ (CBE) (www.cbeinternational.org/resource/article/priscilla-papers-academic-journal/first-corinthians-7-pauls-neglected-treatise, accessed 26 May 2021) emphasises (among other biblical verses) 1 Corinthians 7, regarded as ‘Paul’s neglected treatise on Gender’. Ironically, in this they find an unwitting ally in Michel Foucault (see n. 29 below).

¹⁷ As named in 6.12b: πάντα μοι ἔξεστιν ἀλλ’ οὐκ ἐγὼ ἐξουσιασθήσομαι; cf. 9.1–6, 19; 10.23.

¹⁸ See 1 Cor 6.15–16; cf. πόρνοι in 5.9–10; 6.9. Paul’s usage is strongly influenced by the Septuagint, which, in translating biblical Hebrew זונה/זנות/זנותים, does the same (see e.g. Gen 38.24; Num 14.33 (with 1 Cor 10.8); Hos 1.2; 2.4, 6; 4.11–12; 5.4; 6.10; Nah 3.4; Jer 3.2 and many other passages in the prophets).

¹⁹ For example, in 1 Cor 5.1 it is used of apparent incest; in 6.18 of the carnal sin Paul depicts as one that infiltrates the body. The translation of πορνεία as ‘fornication’ (KJV through to NRSV and other English translations) restricts the misconduct to ‘sexual intercourse between two persons not married to each other’ (so *Merriam-Webster*, with first known use in the fourteenth century). Compare also *Oxford English Dictionary*, gloss a: ‘Voluntary sexual intercourse between a man (in restricted use, an unmarried man) and an unmarried woman. In Scripture extended to adultery.’ It is important to appreciate that for Paul (as for his devoted interpreter, Chrysostom), the term is one of high disapproval, and even disgust. D. Wheeler-Reed, J. W. Knust and D. B. Martin (‘Can a Man Commit πορνεία with his Wife?’, *JBL* 137 (2018) 383–98) rightly point to the problems with the translation ‘fornication’ (though their conclusion that ‘[b]y the reckoning of early Christian authors, including those of the New Testament, anyone who has engaged in a sexual act and enjoyed it is guilty of πορνεία’ meets counter-evidence both in 1 Cor 7.2 and Chrysostom’s interpretation of it, as analysed below).

²⁰ E.g. Eph 5.21–33; 1 Tim 2.11–15, on which see A. Yarbro Collins’ 2010 SNTS presidential address (‘The Female Body as Social Space in 1 Timothy’, *NTS* 57 (2011) 155–75). This process is what Annette Merz aptly calls ‘die fiktive Selbstausslegung des Paulus’ (in the important monograph of that title, with subtitle *Intertextuelle Studien zur Intention und Rezeption der Pastoralbriefe* (NTOA 52; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht/Fribourg: Academic Press, 2004)). Rules about marriage, sex and submission are, as we well know, rampant in these pseud-epigrapha, which seek to steer the Pauline ambiguities firmly in the direction of patriarchal marriage, reproduction and child-rearing; see K. Zamfir, *Men and Women in the Household of God: A Contextual Approach to Roles and Ministries in the Pastoral Epistles* (NTOA 103; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013); A. B. Huizenga, *1–2 Timothy, Titus* (Wisdom Commentary; Collegeville, MN: Michael Glazier, 2016), with much further literature.

obligations ('conjugal rights')²¹ into a more generalised call for 'the goodwill that is owed' to one another (τὴν ὀφειλομένην εὖνοιαν).²²

The formality of these parallel statements in 1 Cor 7.2–4 – the first two imperatival, and the third indicative – has facilitated their being treated not as casual or contingent advice to the group that met in Gaius' dining room in the fifties, but as Pauline directives or, even more, as rules or legal stipulations,²³ thus encouraging their trans-temporal status and reach. At the ninth meeting of SNTS in 1954, held at Marburg²⁴ – the site of our most recent, and still-memorably wonderful, meeting as a Society in 2019 – Ernst Käsemann wrote of 'sentences of holy law' ('Sätze heiligen Rechtes') in the New Testament, including Paul's letters.²⁵ Käsemann pointed to examples from before and after this chapter (1 Corinthians 7), but not these lines that are our subject today, though he could have done so. That Paul was engaging in *lawgiving* here about marriage (Περὶ γάμων ὁ Παῦλος νομοθετεῖ)²⁶ is one key assumption in the inventive act of Pauline interpretation by John Chrysostom in a homily from the last decades of the fourth century, to which we now turn.

3. John Chrysostom, *Hom. 1 Cor. 7.2–4 (In illud: Propter fornicationes uxorem, etc.)*, CPG 4377

3.1 A Neglected Source

While New Testament scholars know well and often refer to the series of forty-four homilies by John Chrysostom on 1 Corinthians (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 1–44), the individual sermon on 1 Cor 7.2–4 that stands outside that famous series, bearing the traditional title *In illud: Propter fornicationes autem unusquisque suam uxorem habeat*, has received very little attention, even by those interested in ancient reception history.²⁷ This inattention

²¹ Modern lexica have their own euphemisms, as e.g. in BDAG, s.v. 2: 'obligation of pleasing one's spouse conjugally'.

²² K L 104. 365. 1241. 1505 ἤ, the latter being Chrysostom's usual New Testament text type, as it is rendered in this homily (whereas earlier Greek interpreters like Clement and Origen read τὴν ὀφειλήν). That this is a secondary reading is universally acknowledged; see B. M. Metzger, *A Textual Commentary on the Greek New Testament* (London/New York: United Bible Societies, 1971) 553: '[this reading] softens the expression (which refers to sexual relations) by substituting the words ὀφειλομένην εὖνοιαν ("the kindness that is her due")'. However, in two other places in Chrysostom's oeuvre one finds the rephrasing process extended, as he introduces a singular reading of his own, ὀφειλομένην τιμὴν (*Hom. Matt. 7.7* (57.82); *Hom. 1 Cor.* 19.1 (61.152)), even as twice he goes on to rephrase that as Paul having called it an ὀφειλή.

²³ This is a fact of subsequent reception, even as I would agree with Wolfgang Schrage 'daß Paulus auch in Kap. 7 nicht kompendien- oder traktathaft eine theoretische Abhandlung über Ehe und Ehelosigkeit vorlegt oder eine zeitlose Auffassung sexualethischer Probleme entwickelt, sondern zu konkreten Fragen und aktuellen Problemen Stellung nimmt' (*W. Schrage, Der erste Brief an die Korinther* (3 vols.; EKK VII/1–4; Zürich/Braunschweig: Benziger/Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener, 1991–2001) II.51).

²⁴ See (SNTS president, 2012) H. J. de Jonge's archival discovery, in 'C. K. Barrett on Rudolf Bultmann as Symposiarch at the 1954 SNTS General Meeting in Marburg', *NTS* 67 (2021) 447–53, which recounts memories not only of that meeting, but also the early history of our Society and its survival after World War II, and establishment of traditions (including convivial and lively conversations over libations in the evenings at our meetings, still one of our cherished experiences of the annual meeting).

²⁵ 8 September 1954. This was published as 'Sätze heiligen Rechtes im Neuen Testament', *NTS* 1 (1954–5) 248–60, and in an English translation as 'Sentences of Holy Law in the New Testament', *New Testament Questions of Today* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1969) 66–81.

²⁶ See also §4 (51.214), where Chrysostom refers to Paul's words as ὁ τοῦ θεοῦ νόμος.

²⁷ For example, it is not included in Kovacs, *1 Corinthians Interpreted by Early Christian Commentators*, 304, 319; Schrage, *Der erste Brief an die Korinther*, I.4; II.74–81; or A. C. Thiselton, *The First Epistle to the Corinthians* (New International Greek Testament Commentary; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000) 1433–4. An exception is Clark, *Reading Renunciation*, 271–4, who refers to it three times (all from §§3–5).

in New Testament scholarship is thrown into relief in the present moment, since our homily holds some measure of prominence in one chapter of Michel Foucault's fourth volume of *Histoire de la sexualité, Les aveux de la chair*, posthumously published in 2018.²⁸ For all the interest of Foucault's reconstruction of the late antique development of a Christian τέχνη of marriage, his treatment of the homily does not give sufficient attention to the role of Pauline interpretation in it, or to the stylised rhetorical performance this homily involves, since he treats the homily as in effect a 'traité de l'état matrimonial' ('treatise on the matrimonial state', which it is not),²⁹ and he excerpts just a few sentences from the middle sections in forming his own argument. We can add to this that scholars of ancient Greek magic have occasionally referred to a single passage in our homily featuring the techniques of love magic used by the 'prostitute',³⁰ but no one has appreciated that the theme of the arts of love and magic unites the whole of the sermon within which this key passage must be interpreted – and hence there is much more to be said about the contribution of this homily to the study of late antique magic than has been realised. Our purpose in the present article is to introduce this source and analyse some of the main arguments of the homily in order to resource all three of these circles of scholarly discussion. It is also an opportunity to share with you, SNTS colleagues, some of the surprising things I discovered Chrysostom doing with Paul's words, as I worked to get my mind into understanding this curious late antique sermon and to translate it into correspondingly vivid English.

²⁸ M. Foucault, *Histoire de la sexualité*, vol. iv: *Les aveux de la chair* (ed. F. Gros; Paris: Éditions Gallimard, 2018), chapter iii, 2, 'Le devoir des époux' (which refers to this homily for that theme, of the 'debt' that spouses owe to one another). Foucault accessed the homily, to which he refers seven times (all from the middle portions, §§3–5), in the nineteenth-century French translation of M. Jeannin, ed., *Saint Jean Chrysostome. Oeuvres complètes traduites par la première fois en français*, vol. iv: *Homélie sur divers textes du Nouveau Testament . . .* (Bar-le-Duc: L. Guérin et Cie, 1864), with occasional recourse also to J. Bareille, ed., *Oeuvres complètes de S. Jean Chrysostome. Traduction nouvelle* (Paris: Louis Vivès, 1867). See N. K. Clements, 'Foucault's Christianities', *JAAR* 89 (2021) 1–40, who carefully contextualises this volume within Foucault's oeuvre, and calls for critical methodological reflection on his use of the late ancient Christian sources; on Foucault's treatment of Chrysostom in *Les aveux*, see C. de Wet, "'Le devoir des époux". Michel Foucault's Reading of John Chrysostom's Marital Ethic in *Histoire de la sexualité 4: Les aveux de la chair* ([1982–4] 2018)', *Religion and Theology* 27 (2020) 114–51.

²⁹ Jeannin and Bareille in their French editions of Chrysostom's works follow Bernard de Montfaucon (*Sancti patris nostri Joannis Chrysostomi archiepiscopi Constantinopolitani opera omnia quae exstant* (Paris: Sumtibus [sic] Charles Robustel et al., 1718–38], vol. iii.vi, 231) in presenting this homily as the first in a series of 'Trois homélie sur le mariage', followed by *Hom. 1 Cor. 7.39–40* (CPG 4378) and *Laus Maximi et quales ducendae sint uxores* (CPG 4379); Foucault accepts this framing, regarding them together as 'constituent de véritables petits traités de l'état matrimonial' (*Les aveux*, 254).

³⁰ M. W. Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World* (London: Routledge, 2001) 302–3, who regards Chrysostom's sermons as containing valuable historical reports about ancient magic, and its use by prostitutes in particular, may have been the first to bring one passage of our homily (§5 (51.216)) into the conversation. C. Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1999) 155–6 picked up this reference from Dickie (see his n. 81, a reference to the former book while it was in press), and he, rightly in my view, challenges whether this can be taken as simple description, rather than an 'undoubtedly exaggerated' proffered excuse for why 'good men from good families stray'. D. S. Kalleres, 'Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells: The Re-Feminization of Magic in Late Antique Christian Homilies', *Daughters of Hecate: Women and Magic in the Ancient World* (ed. K. B. Stratton, with D. S. Kalleres; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014) 219–51, in an insightful treatment of the literary and cultural stereotypes involved, mentions our homily in passing (also from Dickie), but explicitly excludes it from her analysis (250 n. 72). J. E. Sanzo's extensive chapter 'Early Christianity', *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic* (ed. D. Frankfurter; Religions in the Graeco-Roman World 189; Leiden: Brill, 2019) 198–239, refers to several different Chrysostomic sources (e.g. on the lines between Jewish and Christian magic, and on amulets), but not this homily.

3.2 The 'Occasional Homily' and its Textual History

Chrysostom's homily *Propter fornicationes uxorem, etc.*, which was perhaps delivered in Constantinople some time between 398 and 403,³¹ was copied by Byzantine scribes in manuscripts of miscellaneous homilies and other works by Chrysostom that stand outside the full homily sets on biblical books.³² The Greek text of this sermon was first published by Henry Savile in 1611 in his monumental 'Eton Edition' of Chrysostom's oeuvre in vol. v, *Χρυσοστόμου εἰς διαφοροῦς τῶν ἁγίων γραφῶν περικοπὰς γνήσιοι λόγοι* ('Genuine Homilies of Chrysostom on Various Passages of the Holy Scriptures').³³ Savile's *editio princeps* was based on a transcription of *Codex Monac. gr. 352* (xι), fols. 54–63 (then held in Augsburg), which he had received from one of his assistants.³⁴ Although some additional manuscript readings of the Greek text of the homily were added by Bernard de Montfaucon in the footnotes to his edition of Chrysostom's *opera omnia* 1721,³⁵ the text in Migne, *Patrologia Graeca*, vol. 51 (1862) remains substantially that which Savile published in 1611. Notably, however, in 1998 Daniela Mazzoni Dami published a critical edition on the basis of her collation of eighteen medieval manuscripts.³⁶ Mazzoni Dami reconstructed a *stemma codicum* and demonstrated that *Monac. gr. 352* (the basis of all earlier printed editions) is inferior at numerous points and contains frequent singular readings (often expansions), as well as significant minuses. My translation, now in press (the first complete translation of this work into English),³⁷ is based on the Migne text, since

³¹ Montfaucon argued for a Constantinopolitan provenance of this homily, on the basis of the third of his reconstructed trio of marriage homilies, *Quales ducendae sint uxores* (= *Laus Maximi*), which refers to an earlier preacher, Maximus, that he thought was Maximus of Seleucia. In her justly influential study *The Homilies of St John Chrysostom: Provenance. Reshaping the Foundations* (*Orientalia christiana analecta* 273; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Orientale, 2005), W. Meyer agrees that the third homily is from Constantinople, but is uncertain about the provenance of our, first, homily (or the second). D. Mazzoni Dami, *Giovanni Crisostomo. Prima omelia sul matrimonio: In illud: Propter fornicationes uxorem* (*Studi e Testi* 14; Florence: Università degli Studi di Firenze Dipartimento di Scienze dell'Antichità 'Giorgio Pasquali', 1998) 16–18 is convinced by Montfaucon's placing of this homily in Constantinople, also because of what she sees as developments in Chrysostom's thinking over his earlier work *De virginitate* (with B. Grillet, *Jean Chrysostome. La virginité* (SC 125; Paris: Les Éditions du Cerf, 1966) 23 n. 3). It must be conceded that there is no internal evidence in this homily that links it specifically to either Constantinople or Antioch. The question of whether Chrysostom's views developed, or whether he was variable in different genres and contexts, remains open.

³² But far less often than the homily set on 1 Corinthians, for which there are approximately a hundred extant manuscripts, in whole or part (per the Pinakes website: <https://pinakes.irht.cnrs.fr>, accessed 26 May 2021).

³³ H. Savile, *Τοῦ ἐν ἁγίοις πατρὸς ἡμῶν Ἰωάννου ἀρχιεπισκόπου Κωνσταντινουπόλεως τοῦ Χρυσοστόμου τῶν εὐρίσκομένων τόμου* (1–8) (Eton: Ioannes Norton, 1611–12). Our homily appears in v.330–7.

³⁴ Either James Dalrymple or Samuel Slade, both of whom made trips to Augsburg in 1604–5 and 1607, respectively, to copy Chrysostomic works selected by Savile from the catalogue of Augsburg manuscripts published by D. Hoeschel (*Catalogus Graecorum codicum qui sunt in bibliotheca reip. Augustanae Vindelicarum* (Augsburg: Augustae Vindelicorum, 1595)), among which is *Monac. gr. 478* (xιι), fols. 287–8^v, a Byzantine catalogue of works by Chrysostom thought to be authentic (see the invaluable study of J.-L. Quantin, 'Du Chrysostome latin au Chrysostome grec. Une histoire européenne (1588–1613)', *Chrysostomosbilder in 1600 Jahren: Facetten der Wirkungsgeschichte eines Kirchenvaters* (ed. M. Wallraff and R. Brändle; Arbeiten zur Kirchengeschichte 105; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2008) 267–346, 319–21).

³⁵ From his collation of two further manuscripts: *Colbertinus* 970 (= *Paris. gr. 748* (xι)) and *Colbertinus* 1030 (= *Paris. gr. 768* (xιι)).

³⁶ D. Mazzoni Dami, *Giovanni Crisostomo. Prima omelia sul matrimonio: In illud: Propter fornicationes uxorem* (see n. 31).

³⁷ All translations of Chrysostom's homily in this article are reprinted from M. M. Mitchell, *John Chrysostom on Paul: Praises and Problem Texts* (Writings from the Greco-Roman World; Atlanta: SBL, in production for 2022 publication), used by permission, together with some of the explanatory and textual notes. A translation of selections from the middle portions (§§2–4) of *Hom. 1 Cor. 7.2–4* was made in 1986 by C. P. Roth and D. Anderson in their collection *St. John Chrysostom on Marriage and Family Life* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1986) 81–8. But that partial translation can be misleading, in that it has excerpted or smoothed over some of

it remains the most widely available to scholars today, but with readings adopted from Mazzoni Dami (cited as DMD), as indicated in the notes. We shall see what a key difference her critical text makes to an understanding of this homily and its central theme and rhetorical purpose.

4. Scripture, Culture and Context

Before we (at last!) turn to the homily, we should appreciate the historical context of the act of Pauline interpretation we are about to encounter. The famous preacher, active in his home city of Antioch and later translated to the imperial capital, was one of an emerging class of orator-bishops of the post-Julianic period who used their pulpits to help craft a distinct – and, they fervently hoped, attractive – new form of urban Christianised culture, on the household and city-wide level. We cannot overemphasise the social role of oratory in the formation of Christian culture, nor of the now-existing literary culture (Scripture, commentary, homilies, a host of other genres) in their ambitions to enact on a social level what the Theodosian legislation sought to do on the legal – to enshrine Christian cultural content and values in the very heart of urban life and homes, including a kind of democratised lay semi-ascetic lifestyle. It is now widely recognised that figures such as Chrysostom did not ‘borrow’ from the rhetorical, philosophical or cultural materials of the late classical world, but they were born to them and sought in their persons, words and actions to realise some kind of synthesis of what they already inhabited. This involved much negotiation. We focus here on the role of the Pauline letters in relation to these goals, and the ways in which they provide both opportunities and challenges the preacher seeks to meet. How, in their occasional nature and gritty particularity, do these letters count as a sacred text of perduring meaning and deserved attention? How, in their simple diction and sometimes pedestrian concerns, do they match the great works of the ancient philosophical authors, as known in their entirety or through doxographic selections (the Platonic dialogues, letters of Epicurus etc.)? And how does the Christian preacher (let alone a male celibate) in the semi-public space of the basilica in the imperial city, while claiming that he is the purveyor of a new and more excellent philosophy characterised by purity, holiness and godliness, preach on a text about the unsavoury topic of πορνεία?

4.1 Words like Honey

After the anagnost has just read aloud in the *synaxis* the words of 1 Cor 7.1–4, Chrysostom the preacher begins:

Again today I wish to lead you to fountains of honey (πρὸς τὰς τοῦ μέλιτος πηγὰς), a honey of which one can never get enough (μέλιτος οὐδέποτε κόρον ἔχοντος). For such is the nature of Paul’s words (τοιαύτη γὰρ τῶν Παύλου ῥημάτων ἢ φύσις), and all those who fill their hearts from these fountains speak forth in the Holy Spirit. And indeed, the pleasure of the divine utterances makes one lose sight of even the good taste of honey (μᾶλλον δὲ καὶ μέλιτος ἀρετὴν ἀποκρύπτει πᾶσαν ἢ τῶν θεῶν ἡδονὴ λογίων). (§1 (51.207))³⁸

the most interesting passages having to do with magic, danger and conflict, in order to create a more wholesome Chrysostomic exhortation to a good Christian marriage. I do not know of a translation of the homily into German (it is not included in the Bibliothek der Kirchenväter, J. C. Mitterrutzner, ed., *Des heiligen Kirchenlehrers Johannes Chrysostomus ausgewählte Schriften, aus dem Griechischen übersetzt* (10 vols.; Kempten: Kösel, 1869–84)); the French translations edited by Jeannin and Bareille have been cited above, n. 28.

³⁸ References to the homily include the paragraph numbers as found in Migne, followed by the volume number (51) and column.

With exuberant words of his own Chrysostom extols Paul's words as sweet 'fountains of honey' of which one cannot possibly get too much. This accent on the desirability and delight of these words is meant to forestall the objection that the morning will be spent focusing on that distasteful term and reality, πορνεία. That John is likely playing on a well-known aphorism from Pindar that links too much amatory pleasure with too much honey³⁹ suggests, perhaps, a bit of playfulness about how the pulpit orator will navigate the serious topic of sexual misconduct with a lighter touch about the pleasures of right romance.

After showering further words of praise on the words of Scripture (including the words of Paul), employing the self-testimony of Ps 11.7; 118.103;⁴⁰ and Proverbs 25.27, Chrysostom makes the crisp rhetorical σύγκρισις, 'For indeed, honey is destroyed in the digestive process; but the divine utterances (τὰ λόγια τὰ θεῖα) when digested become both sweeter and more useful, both to those who possess them and to many others' (§1 (51.208)). This metaphor for scriptural interpretation as ingestion will be developed even more graphically in John's ensuing contrast that those who eat wholesome meals (now moving from material victuals to the spiritual food of Scripture) will 'belch forth'⁴¹ a 'rich fragrance' to their neighbours. The contrast includes not only the food – material or spiritual, sweet or sour – but also *the place* at which one 'consumes' the food/words.

The same is true also with the power of words: many people belch forth [209] things akin to what they eat. For example, if you go up to the theatre (εἰς θέατρον) and you listen to 'whorish hymns' (πορνικὰ⁴² ᾄσματα), then those are the kinds of things you'll surely belch forth in the presence of your neighbour. But if by coming to church you share in the hearing of spiritual things (ἀκούσματα πνευματικά) then those are the kinds of belches you'll have as well. (§1 (51.208–9)).

³⁹ Pindar, *Nem.* 7.52–3 (ed. H. Maehler): κόρον δ' ἔχει | καὶ μέλι καὶ τὰ τέρπν' ἄνθε' Ἀφροδίσεια ('one can get enough even of honey and the pleasant blossoms of Aphrodite'; translation mine) (note the same idiom, κόρον ἔχειν). The saying was in broad circulation later as e.g. in Dionysius of Halicarnassus, *Pomp.* 3.12 (ed. L. Radermacher and H. Usener), and hence need not necessarily be a direct literary reference. But John does use it again in *Hom. Isa.* 45.7 §1 (56.141), he cites Pindar by name elsewhere (in *Oppug.* §10 (47.347)), and he alludes to Pindar's poetry at least one other time (P. R. Colman-Norton, 'St. Chrysostom's Use of the Greek Poets', *Classical Philology* 27 (1932) 213–21, who does not include this example). But even if not a direct appeal to the Pindar quotation, the idiom [οὐ] κόρον ἔχειν is often applied to the arts of love (as e.g. in Achilles Tatius, *Leucippe et Clitophon* 2.38.5; 4.8.2).

⁴⁰ Ως γλυκέα τῷ λάρυγγί μου τὰ λόγια σου, ὑπὲρ μέλι καὶ κηρίον τῷ στόματι μου ('How sweet in my throat are your utterances, more than honey and honeycomb in my mouth'; I accept DMD's plus reading of καὶ κηρίον after μέλι).

⁴¹ Ps 44.2 LXX, ἐρεῦγεσθαί (LPGL: 'vomit forth', 'belch forth' and 'utter'), is more graphic than MT Ps 45.2 (שׁוּר).

⁴² Because for John πόρνη (and the associated adjective, πορνικός, -ή, -όν) is always a derivative term of abuse (see n. 19 above), I choose the corresponding ugly English invective term, 'whore' (or for the adjective, 'whorish', as here), which can mean either 'a person who engages in sexual intercourse for pay: prostitute' or 'a promiscuous or immoral woman' (*Merriam-Webster*). Note that πόρνη in 1 Cor 6.15 was translated as 'whore' in Wycliffe, and 'harlot' in KJV, although modern English translations, such as RSV, NRSV, NIV, conventionally render it as 'prostitute'. See also C. L. de Wet, 'John Chrysostom on Homoeroticism', *Neot* 48 (2014) 187–218, at 188, on the need to translate the term in a way that captures the revilement. In Chrysostom's ideology of gender and sexual relations, this word means any woman engaging in sexual activity he regards as unlawful and dangerous, inclusive of, but not restricted to, those who do so for payment (i.e. 'sex workers' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, first recorded use 1971)). However, Chrysostom may allude to the latter in §5 (51.216) when he lists 'loss of money' (ἡ τῶν χρημάτων ζημία) as one of the deleterious effects of consorting with πόρνη. In this homily the πόρνη serves almost as a personification of the eponymous sin of πορνεία.

4.2 Sweet Words about a Distasteful Topic

By means of a light wordplay (πορνικὰ ἄσματα/ἀκούσματα πνευματικά), John seeks to place the discourse about πορνεία in the theatre,⁴³ and the words of Scripture – even when they are *about* πορνεία – in the ἐκκλησία. The quality of words, the contexts in which they are spoken, and by whom they are said, are essential, the preacher insists from his pulpit in the basilica:

In assemblies out there in the world,⁴⁴ even if occasionally something useful might be said, on many sordid occasions the majority of people hardly utter a single thing that's salutary (μόλις ἔν ὑγιές οἱ πολλοὶ φθέγγονται).⁴⁵ But in the case of the divine Scriptures, it's the exact opposite. You'll never hear a single wicked word in them, but all the words are full of salvation and profound philosophy (πονηρὸν μὲν οὐδένα οὐδέποτε ἀκούση λόγον, πάντας δὲ σωτηρίας καὶ πολλῆς γέμοντας φιλοσοφίας). Such indeed are the things that were read to us today. And what are these? 'Now concerning the things about which you wrote to me', he says, 'it is good for a man not to touch a woman. But on account of sexual misconduct, let each man have his own wife and let each woman have her own husband' [1 Cor 7.1–2].⁴⁶ Paul lays down laws about marriage (περὶ γάμων ὁ Παῦλος νομοθετεῖ),⁴⁷ and he's not ashamed (καὶ οὐκ αἰσχύνεται) nor does he blush (οὐδὲ ἐρυθριᾷ). And rightly so! For his Lord esteemed marriage and wasn't ashamed of it, but even honoured the practice with both his presence and a gift – for indeed, he brought the greatest gifts of all to the wedding by changing the nature of water into wine [cf. John 2.1–12]. If that's so, then rightly his servant⁴⁸ doesn't blush when laying down laws about these things (εἰκότως οὐδὲ ὁ δοῦλος ἐρυθριᾷ περὶ τούτων νομοθετῶν).⁴⁹ (§2 (51.210))

In denying the apostolic blush, the celibate preacher may well be deflecting his own (and likely forestalling a congregational complaint). But with Pauline παρρησία he, too, will engage the unsavoury topic of πορνεία as full of πολλῆ φιλοσοφία.

4.3 Marriage as a pharmakon

Chrysostom offers his thesis for the homily in a concise rhythmic formulation of his own:

Οὐ γὰρ πονηρὸν ὁ γάμος πρᾶγμα,
ἀλλὰ πονηρὸν ἡ μοιχεία,

⁴³ On Chrysostom's continual inveighing against the theatre as a competitive cultural and religious space, see B. Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives: John Chrysostom's Attack on Spiritual Marriage* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001).

⁴⁴ ἔξωθεν here, as always with Chrysostom, refers both to the physical spaces outside the ἐκκλησία (e.g. the marketplace, the theatre, the law courts) and to the notional space or social construct of non-Christians ('pagans', 'outsiders').

⁴⁵ Chrysostom's play on words as food is facilitated by the language and notion of ὑγίεια as applied to words (λόγοι) or teaching (διδασκαλία) (especially prominent in the Pastoral Epistles within the New Testament, as e.g. in 1 Tim 1.10; 2 Tim 1.13; 4.3; Titus 1.9; 2.8).

⁴⁶ With DMD reading ἄνδρα ἐχέτω instead of ἄνδρα.

⁴⁷ Note that John has introduced Paul's words in 1 Cor 7.2–4 as being about marriage (a philosophical topic more fit for public oratory) rather than about sexual misconduct (πορνεία). On the conventional question and debate among Cynics and Stoics about whether the philosopher should marry, see the extensive treatment of W. H. Deming, *Paul on Marriage and Celibacy: The Hellenistic Background of 1 Corinthians 7* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2004²).

⁴⁸ Echoing the Pauline self-designation δοῦλος Χριστοῦ in Rom 1.1; Phil 1.1; Gal 1.10; etc.

⁴⁹ I adopt DMD's reading εἰκότως οὐδὲ ὁ δοῦλος ἐρυθριᾷ περὶ τούτων (as found in *Paris. gr.* 748 and 768), over that of PG, πῶς ὁ δοῦλος ἠρυθρίασεν περὶ γάμου ('how did his slave blush concerning marriage').

πονηρὸν ἢ πορνεία·
γάμος δὲ πορνείας ἀνααιρετικὸν φάρμακον. (§2 (51.210))

For marriage isn't a wicked practice,
but what's wicked is adultery,
what's wicked is sexual misconduct.
And marriage is a potion that destroys sexual misconduct.⁵⁰

While the contrast between marriage and πορνεία comes right out of 1 Corinthians 7, Chrysostom brings the Pauline idea into a magical register when he infers (presumably taking into account also 1 Cor 7.9b: κρεῖττον γάρ ἐστιν γαμῆσαι ἢ πυροῦσθαι, 'it is better to marry than to be set on fire') that in the eyes of the apostle the malady of πορνεία is so severe that it requires a *potion* (φάρμακον)⁵¹ designed to target and destroy it (ἀνααιρετικόν). While the Pauline text of 1 Cor 7.2–4 includes both women and men in each line, Chrysostom chooses to focus his sermon on the men in his congregation – even as he talks about women and in the presence of women – depicting the men as the especially weak link in the marriage.⁵² Why are these men at such risk? As with his author, Paul, for John the threat of πορνεία can encompass a wide field of forms of sexual misconduct,⁵³ even as it is etymologically related to that ready-made stereotypical villain, the πόρνη.⁵⁴

4.4 Γάμος and ἔθος

The allusion to the wedding feast at Cana in John 2 directs the preacher first to marriage ceremonies (the term γάμος of course refers to both the ceremony and the institution). This is a pet peeve of the preacher, since here is both a social space and a cultural

⁵⁰ An interesting parallel (to quite different effect) is found in Ps.-Lucian, *Amores* §33: γάμοι μὲν γὰρ διαδοχῆς ἀναγκάιας εὕρηται φάρμακα ('for marriages have been invented as potions/remedies to ensure the necessary continuation [of the human race]'; but, the author goes on to insist, it is only love (ἔρως) of men for other men that is suited to a soul that engages in philosophy).

⁵¹ φάρμακον can mean 'drug, healing remedy, medicine, enchanted potion, philter, charm, and spell' (LSJ s.v. ι.1–2; ii.1; Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 7–8, 110–19, for the term used as a 'love potion'). Translating it here as 'potion' also works best with the adjective ἀνααιρετικόν, as 'destructive' or, when used of plants, 'poisonous' (LSJ s.v. A).

⁵² Chrysostom's view of men in this argument broadly fits Faraone's 'misandrist' model, 'according to which men are the "naturally" lascivious and wild gender', and yet not completely, since John does not quite agree (as we shall see) that the remedy is that these husbands 'needed to be sedated and controlled by "naturally" moderate and chaste women' (*Ancient Greek Love Magic*, ix–x). There is also one key passage (§5 (51.215)) in which Chrysostom depicts the fear the loyal husband may have that his wife, whom he suspects of adultery, is trying to poison him with δηλητήρια φάρμακα, 'poisonous potions' (presumably to get him out of the way so she can carry on with her lover). But the disloyal wife is largely not a character in Chrysostom's domestic tales in this homily.

⁵³ A major argument John makes in this homily is that, despite what both custom and law dictate, sex with πόρνοι (and also with θεραπεινίδες, female slaves, as well as unmarried free women) counts as μοιχεία, 'adultery' (see §§4–5 (51.213–18)).

⁵⁴ There is no male counterpart in this homily to Chrysostom's dramatic description of the marital risk posed by the πόρνη (such as a lecherous man seeking to debauch the new bride). As R. G. Edmonds III aptly puts it for Greco-Roman magic in general, 'The predominance of women in the imaginative depictions of erotic magic [as compared with the greater role of men in the books of spells as found in PGM or the documentary and material record] seems, however, to stem primarily from their place in the Greco-Roman imaginary as Other; it is a way of depicting difference from the male norm' (*Drawing Down the Moon: Magic in the Ancient Greco-Roman World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2019) 111). On the prostitute as a rhetorical foil in Christian texts, beginning with Paul, see C. Daniel-Hughes, 'Prostitution', *The Oxford Handbook of New Testament, Gender, and Sexuality* (ed. B. J. Dunning; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019) 645–60.

form where convention – and not his version of Christianity – holds sway. After first complaining that the priest (unlike the Johannine Jesus) is *not* invited to the wedding, John gives his own negative description of the various ritual actions within a conventional late antique wedding that are intended to curry favour with the gods and fates for the couple's prosperous future:⁵⁵ 'whorish hymns (τὰ πορνικὰ ᾄσματα), effeminate songs,⁵⁶ disorderly choruses, shameful words, the satanic procession, the commotion, the pealing laughter, and the rest of the unseemly behaviour' (§2 (51.210)).⁵⁷ Chrysostom urges his congregants to drive all these things out of the wedding celebration. His anticipated lack of success in this endeavour is shown in his quotation of the expected rejoinder: 'But it's our custom (ἔθος)!' ⁵⁸ Chrysostom tries lamely to find ancient biblical precedent for decorous weddings by alluding to Isaac marrying Rebecca and Jacob marrying Rachel, but, perhaps recognising that he is skating on thin ice here (what about Leah in the bed trick in Genesis 29?!), ⁵⁹ he doesn't tarry here, instead giving an even more vivid description of the riotous goings-on at weddings:

... flutes, pan pipes, cymbals and leaping about like asses,⁶⁰ and all the rest of the present unseemly behaviour were nowhere in sight [in the biblical examples]. But the choral singers in our day sing hymns to Aphrodite, and on that very day they sing about serial adultery, defilement of marriages, unlawful lovers and illicit couplings, and many other songs filled with impiety and shame. And after a drunken bout and so much unseemly behaviour, they parade the bride around publicly with shameful words.⁶¹ (§2 (51.211))⁶²

⁵⁵ Among others, these include the ἐπιθαλάμιος λόγος ('wedding speech') and κατευναστικός λόγος ('the bed-chamber speech'), as described by Menander Rhetor (Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν 2.399–412; text Russell-Wilson), all of which are performative speech acts meant to bestow favour on the couple. As we shall see, Chrysostom wishes to replace these with speech acts of his own choosing – from Paul (i.e. the HEP).

⁵⁶ Chrysostom participates in, and intensifies, the anxiety about 'effeminacy' and non-binary gender roles that one can find within stereotypical critiques of the theatre (see R. Webb, *Demons and Dancers: Performance in Late Antiquity* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2008) 139–40; de Wet, 'John Chrysostom on Homoeroticism', with further literature).

⁵⁷ τὰ πορνικὰ ᾄσματα, καὶ τὰ κεκλασμένα μέλη, καὶ τὰς ἀτάκτους χορείας, καὶ τὰ αἰσχρὰ ῥήματα, καὶ τὴν διαβολικὴν πομπήν, καὶ τὸν θόρυβον, καὶ τὸν κεχυμένον γέλωτα καὶ τὴν λοιπὴν ἐξελάσης ἀσχημοσύνην (§2 (51.210)).

⁵⁸ Μὴ μοι λεγέτω τις, ὅτι ἔθος ἐστίν (§2 (51.210)). Chrysostom fights an uphill battle in his attempt to argue (by dubious biblical precedent) that these marital rites of centuries-long continuity are actually not a παλαιὸν ἔθος ('ancient custom') but καινοτομία ('a recent invention') (§2 (51.210)).

⁵⁹ W. Doniger, *The Bedtrick: Tales of Sex and Masquerade* (Worlds of Desire: The Chicago Series on Sexuality, Gender, and Culture; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005) 1–5, 160–6.

⁶⁰ Ὀνώδη (as found in Savile's edition) is the reading 'presente in tutta la tradizione manoscritta' (DMD 125). The conjectural reading οἰνώδη ('wine-filled'), originally from Fronto Ducaeus in the seventeenth century and adopted by Migne, is unnecessary. The same is true of Montfaucon's footnoted conjecture of the non-existent word οἰμώδη (see discussion in DMD 125–7 and *app. crit.* at p. 149). I would add that the universally attested manuscript reading fits Chrysostom's bitter invective, as 'in ancient literature the horse (and donkey) was widely used to express voracious sexuality and animal desire' (D. Frankfurter, 'Spell and Speech Act: The Magic of the Spoken Word', *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, 608–25, at 613). In terms of cultural translation, the dance described as ὀνώδη σκιρτήματα is perhaps akin to what is now in some circles called 'twerking' (*Oxford English Dictionary*, 'originally US', with first listed use in 1993).

⁶¹ John is referring disparagingly to the so-called ὑμέναιος, or hymn to Hymen, god of marriage, including the acclamation Ὑμέν; see Catullus 61 and 62, with the study by O. Thomsen, *Ritual and Desire: Catullus 61 and 62 and Other Ancient Documents on Weddings and Marriage* (Aarhus: Aarhus University Press, 1992).

⁶² αὐλοὶ δὲ, σύργγες, καὶ κύμβαλα, καὶ τὰ ὀνώδη [οἰνώδη Montfaucon, Migne] σκιρτήματα, καὶ ἡ λοιπὴ ἡ νῦν ἀσχημοσύνη πᾶσα ἐκποδῶν ἦν. Οἱ δὲ ἐφ' ἡμῶν καὶ ὕμνους εἰς τὴν Ἀφροδίτην ἄδουσι χορεύοντες, καὶ μοιχείας πολλὰς, καὶ γάμων διαφθορὰς, καὶ ἔρωτας παρανόμους, καὶ μίξεις ἀθέσιμους, καὶ πολλὰ ἕτερα ἀσεβείας καὶ

We can see here the stubborn hold of an unquestioned mainstay of late antique classical culture when it comes to celebrating love and nuptials,⁶³ hardly touched by the decades since the imperial sponsorship of Χριστιανισμός under Constantine and his successors. This includes practices and speech acts that are thought to set the pair on an auspicious path – such as the use of insults and curses as apotropaic of evils and misfortunes (for instance, the famous *Fescennini versus*),⁶⁴ and of sexually graphic speech to encourage procreation.⁶⁵ Chrysostom terms these acts, and the hymns calling on Aphrodite and Hymen and other traditional gods to favour the couple, ‘summoning demons’ (τοὺς δαίμονας κολεῖν, §2 (51.211)), thus identifying the traditional marital rites as, in his view, magical incantations of the worst sort.

As a rejoinder to being on the losing end of this argument about age-old rituals, the preacher tries to urge the inauguration of a new custom (συνήθεια) along the lines of Matt 22.1–14 // Luke 14.16–24, of inviting the poor to the wedding⁶⁶ instead of the musicians, actors and other hired performers whom Chrysostom despises when they are in the theatre and whose appearance in congregants’ homes at the time of the wedding celebrations he finds abominable.⁶⁷ Again, Chrysostom voices an anticipated objection from the congregants: but having the poor at a wedding would be a bad omen for the couple,⁶⁸ presaging their own future life in poverty. Weddings should feature auspicious rites that summon the gods of love and prosperity to the side of the couple. Here Chrysostom – who is as convinced as those he seeks to correct that ritual can bring good or bad fortune – tries to flip the cultural script and argue that the presence of

αἰσχρῆς γέμοντα ἄσματα κατ’ ἐκείνην ἄδουσι τὴν ἡμέραν, καὶ μετὰ μέην καὶ τοσαύτην ἀσχημοσύνην δι’ αἰσχροῶν ῥημάτων δημοσίᾳ τὴν νύμφην πομπεύουσι.

⁶³ See A. Natali, ‘Mariages chrétiens à Antioche au IV^e siècle’, *Sociabilité, pouvoirs et société. Actes du colloque de Rouen 24/26 Novembre 1983* (ed. F. Thelamon; Rouens: Publications de l’Université de Rouen, 1987) 111–16; J. Evans-Grubbs, ‘“Pagan” and “Christian” Marriage: The State of the Question’, *JESCS* 2 (1994) 361–412, at 389: ‘In general, Christians followed the traditional nuptial rites of the province in which they lived, except that they rejected any customs involving sacrifice to pagan gods or idolatry’ (a judgement that fits our homily, in that John does not excoriate his congregants for the sacrifice, specifically). The Christian weddings that emerge in the early Byzantine era will continue to combine classical motifs with Christian imagery, terms and notions (see G. Vikan, ‘Art and Marriage in Early Byzantium’, *DOP* 44 (1990) 145–63).

⁶⁴ ‘Improvised songs, sung at weddings, which fall into the category of quite commonly found apotropaic obscenity’ (E. Courtney, ‘Fescennini versus’, *Brill’s New Pauly*, who notes that ‘the custom even continued in Christian times’); see further K. K. Hersch, *The Roman Wedding: Ritual and Meaning in Antiquity* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010) 151–6, 252–5. Chrysostom gives a vivid description of the practice a bit later in this homily: ‘consider how great the chastisement is that is endured by those [i.e. the bride and groom] who are dressed down by people who are drunk and ‘mentally defiled’ [cf. 1 Tim 6.5] with such insults offered in public with everyone listening ... those revilers, after they overimbibe and overeat, pour all kinds of filthy jokes down on the heads of those who are marrying, as though they had a kind of satanic rivalry (ἀμιλλά τις διαβολική) with one another. And just as though enemies were locked in battle, so do their relatives engage in competition with one another in pronouncing speakable and unspeakable reproaches about the married couple in imitation of their opponents. And their contest with one another causes the groom, along with the bride, to be ashamed to the highest degree’ (§3 (51.212)). John insists that all these ritual acts happen because ‘the demons are moving their souls’ (τῶν δαιμόνων κινούντων τὰς ἐκείνων ψυχάς).

⁶⁵ Much of this was of course formulaic. Menander Rhetor describes the κατευναστικὸς λόγος (‘speech at the bedroom’) with the neat rhyme: προτροπή πρὸς τὴν συμπλοκὴν (‘an exhortation to copulation’; *Epid. (Epithal. Log.)* 2.405; text Russell-Wilson, translation mine).

⁶⁶ A form of what we might call ‘apotropaic almsgiving’, a down-payment on the couple’s happy life to come through this initial benefaction that secures divine assistance and wards off evil. This also entails a performative speech act: Chrysostom argues that the poor when they are fed offer words of blessing (εὐλογεῖν) (§3 (51.212)), whereas the customary wedding rituals involve insults and obscene language.

⁶⁷ So also Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 26, citing our homily.

⁶⁸ His language within this *prosōporoia* overtly invokes auspices: οἰωνίζοιτο/συμφορὰς σύμβολα (§3 (51.212)).

these performers at the wedding (rather than the poor, who embody Christ's own presence)⁶⁹ is precisely what will lead to *the demise* of the marriage:

... what is a portent of utter unpleasantness and countless calamities (ἀπάσης ἀηδίας καὶ μυρίων ἐστὶ σύμβολον κακῶν) is not the poor and widows being fed but the 'pansies' (μαλακοί)⁷⁰ and the 'whores' (πόρνοι). For often the 'whore', having from that day forward taken the groom captive (αἰχμάλωτον λαβοῦσα) from his friends, has gone off and extinguished the loving passion (ἔρωσ) he had for his bride, dragged away his goodwill (εὐνοία), destroyed his love (ἀγάπη) before it has been inflamed, and sown in him the seeds of adultery (μοιχείας σπέρματα).⁷¹ Fathers should be afraid of these things, and, even if for no other reason, they should prevent mimes and dancers from coming to wedding celebrations. (§3 (51.212))

By 'whores' John may be referring to higher-class ἐταῖραι ('courtesans'), but more likely this reflects his assumption (shared with others in the long-standing majority culture) that mimes and pantomimes who perform at wedding receptions are all sexually promiscuous and of dubious morals.⁷² Chrysostom's generally misogynist (and resolutely androcentric) views resonate easily with the cultural stereotype of the πόρνη as trafficking in magical techniques⁷³ – ironically, the more aggressive or 'masculine' ones⁷⁴ – setting her sights on the newly married man and with her aggressive arts of seduction taking him captive, extinguishing his ἔρωσ for his wife, uprooting his ἀγάπη before it even gets kindled and causing him to forsake the εὐνοία the wife deserves.⁷⁵ Later in the homily, in which he rather theatrically seeks to warn off the men in his congregation, John will get even more technical about the specific magical practices the imagined πόρνη performs:

⁶⁹ The great parable in Matt 25.31–46 is very important for Chrysostom in this regard (see the key study of R. Brändle, *Matthäus 25:31–46 im Werk des Johannes Chrysostomus: Ein Beitrag zur Auslegungsgeschichte und zur Erforschung der Ethik der griechischen Kirche um die Wende vom 4. zum 5. Jahrhundert* (Beiträge zur Geschichte der biblischen Exegese 22; Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1979)).

⁷⁰ As in 1 Cor 6.9, μαλακός means a man who is a 'softie', 'effeminate', and is intended to be an insult, so I choose an English word, 'pansy', that is 'disparaging and offensive: a weak or effeminate man or boy; a male homosexual' (*Merriam-Webster*) (compare de Wet, 'John Chrysostom on Homoeroticism', 188 with n. 4, who for the same reasons opts for the translation 'fag'). Chrysostom assumes that actors are especially prone to this stereotype (see Leyerle, *Theatrical Shows and Ascetic Lives*, 100–42 (chapter 5, 'Ridiculous Men')).

⁷¹ Πολλάκις γὰρ ἀπ' αὐτῆς τῆς ἡμέρας ἐκ τῶν φίλων τὸν νυμφίον αἰχμάλωτον λαβοῦσα ἀπῆλθεν ἡ πόρνη, καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν πρὸς τὴν νύμφην ἔσβεσε, καὶ τὴν εὐνοίαν ὑπέσυρε, καὶ τὴν ἀγάπην, πρὶν ἐξαφθῆναι, κατέλυσε, καὶ μοιχείας ἐγκατέβαλε σπέρματα.

⁷² See Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 139–67, who argues that pantomimes and dancers were especially reviled: 'The use of the term *pornē* for the mime actress is one example of the way in which an accusation of sexual transgression carries with it claims of cultural and religious transgressions, assimilating the actress with the religiously forbidden harlots of the Bible' (142); 'The image of the actress as wanton harlot reflects not just the transgressive nature of her appearances on the public stage but also the roles she often played: desired and desiring women' (152).

⁷³ As often, Chrysostom can also find a homology for his cultural assumptions within his biblical text, as Nahum 3.4 LXX also connects the πόρνη with φάρμακα ('poisons'): πόρνη καλὴ καὶ ἐπιχαρῆς ἡγουμένη φαρμάκων ἡ πωλοῦσα ἔθνη ἐν τῇ πορνείᾳ αὐτῆς καὶ φυλάς ἐν τοῖς φαρμάκοις αὐτῆς.

⁷⁴ Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, ix argues that, while there was a general tendency for gendering *erōs*-magic as the practice of men and *philia*-magic as that of women, 'courtesans and prostitutes employ aggressive erotic magic – usually the purview of males – because, as autonomous operators free to indulge in their passions, these women are constructed as male in Greek culture'. Further on this theme, see Kalleres, 'Drunken Hags with Amulets and Prostitutes with Erotic Spells', especially 238–44. In the quote above from Chrysostom we can see both his confirmation and bending of this type of gendering taxonomy.

⁷⁵ Precisely what Paul commands, according to Chrysostom's (B) text.

Many of the bad men who have consorted with ‘whores’ have come to bad ends because of it, once they’ve submitted to the manipulative craft (περιεργία)⁷⁶ of these women who make ‘whores’ of themselves (ὑπὸ τῶν πορνευομένων γυναικῶν). Out of their ambition to separate him from the wife who shares his home and has received his pledge of fidelity, and to bind him completely by lust for them (τῷ ... αὐτῶν ἔρωτι προσδῆσαι τέλεον), those women have set in motion forms of magical trickery (μαγγανεῖαι), concocted love charms (φίλτρα)⁷⁷ and devised many acts of sorcery (γοητεῖαι). Then, after throwing him into such painful sickness and handing him over to rot and waste away, and lassoing him with countless ills, they’ve carried him away from the present life. So, man, if you don’t fear hell, fear their magical spells! (Εἰ μὴ φοβῆ τὴν γέενναν, ἄνθρωπε, τὰς γοητείας αὐτῶν φοβήθητι). For by this debauchery (ἀσέλγεια) you cause yourself to lose God as an ally (σαντὸν ... ταύτης ἔρημον ποιήσης τῆς τοῦ Θεοῦ συμμαχίας), and you strip yourself of assistance from on high (ἢ ἄνωθεν βοήθεια).⁷⁸ At that very moment, the ‘whore’ – having taken you captive (λαβοῦσά σε) by licentiousness, summoned her demons (τοὺς αὐτῆς καλέσασα δαίμονας),⁷⁹ stitched her magical spells (τὰ πέταλα ῥάψασα)⁸⁰ and set in motion her schemes – so easily stands victorious over your salvation (μετὰ πολλῆς τῆς εὐκολίας περιγίνεται σου τῆς σωτηρίας).⁸¹ (§5 (51.216))⁸²

With this litany of magical terms (περιεργία, μαγγανεῖαι, φίλτρα, γοητεῖαι), John depicts the πόρνη using the full panoply of *erōs*-magic, summoning a kind of curse that inflicts the victim with the painful and even deadly disease of love.⁸³ Given this threat, the preacher insists, inviting such figures into a wedding celebration isn’t just a harbinger of problems down the road, but the πόρνη’s presence at the wedding actually sets in motion her power to identify her victim and then seduce the new husband through her powerful love magic. By offering this operative tale,⁸⁴ the celibate preacher solemnly forewarns that a marriage begun this way can only end badly.

⁷⁶ Cf. Acts 19.19.

⁷⁷ ‘Love-charm, whether a potion, or any other means’ (LSJ, s.v. φίλτρον A.1). For examples, see PGM VII.405–6, 459–61, 462–6 (Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 25 n. 110), with English translations by E. N. O’Neil in H. D. Betz, ed., *The Greek Magical Papyri in Translation, Including the Demotic Spells* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1986) 128, 130.

⁷⁸ John claims that this sin leaves the Christian husband bereft of the protective powers afforded by his faith and its operative rituals.

⁷⁹ Note that this is the same characterisation Chrysostom made earlier of the traditional marital rites (§2 (51.211)). Though he does not say it outright, one may detect here, too, an allusion to ‘idolatry’ (as made explicitly in a similar argument warning against the *erōs*-magic of the πόρνη in *Hom. Rom.* 24.4 (60.626–7)).

⁸⁰ πέταλα (‘leaves’), in reference to very thin metal or foil on which magic charms or spells were written. Here John might be referring to curse tablets or *defixiones* (binding spells), linking with τῷ δὲ αὐτῶν ἔρωτι προσδῆσαι τέλεον above, binding the husband to her and preventing him from having sexual relations with his wife. However, more likely, given the participle ῥάψασα (‘stitching’), he is envisioning these πέταλα as love charms (ἀγαγαί) the πόρνη has stitched into her own clothing to draw the husband to her.

⁸¹ Σωτηρία here is clearly a double entendre, also referring to the groom’s health.

⁸² This is the passage cited by Dickie, *Magic and Magicians in the Greco-Roman World*, 303 n. 112.

⁸³ See Faraone, *Ancient Greek Love Magic*, 43–55, ‘If *Erōs* Is a Disease, Then Erotic Magic Is a Curse’, with many examples both literary and from the PGM and other sources. The goal of *erōs*-magic is submission to love, not death (*ibid.*, 55), but Chrysostom regards a gruesome end as a realistic consequence of the πόρνη’s severe spells.

⁸⁴ Just as Chrysostom imitates in this homily other stock conventions of the marriage (such as giving an aetiology for why the practice of marriage was itself introduced, in §3 (51.213), which was a commonplace topic of wedding oratory), here he is offering in miniature a kind of adultery play such as mimes would often present (Webb, *Demons and Dancers*, 105–12), though, of course, with his own slant and specific didactic intent. Still, the colourful language and scenario he paints are also meant to compel his audience’s attention.

4.5 The Prophylaxis

In the face of such a supernaturally charged threat, what is the weakly and vulnerable new husband to do? He needs to summon powers of his own against the assaults of the πόρνη's power, a counter-charm. The preacher recites 1 Cor 7.2 once more, and then prescribes:

I would wish each man to inscribe (ἐγγράψαι) this passage [1 Cor 7.2] on his mind (διάνοια) and usher his own bride⁸⁵ into the house of the bridegroom using these words (μετὰ τούτων τῶν ῥημάτων), and to have this very statement carved (ἐγκεκολλάσθαι) on the walls of the house (εἰς τοὺς τοίχους τῆς οἰκίας), on the bridal chamber (εἰς τὸν θάλαμον) and on the marital bed itself (εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν εὐνήν): 'But on account of sexual misconduct, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband' (1 Cor 7.2).⁸⁶

This fascinating sentence, so important for understanding the discourse on magic that Chrysostom engages in throughout this homily – and so insistent as it is upon rendering text in more permanent and public media – had ironically been lost to scholarship by a *homoeoteleuton*⁸⁷ in the sub-archetype of medieval Chrysostomic manuscripts on which all modern printed editions were based. But it has been restored thanks to the critical edition of Mazzoni Dami in 1998.⁸⁸

Echoing the diction and directive of Deut 6.6, καὶ ἔσται τὰ ῥήματα ταῦτα, ὅσα ἐγὼ ἐντέλλομαί σοι σήμερον, ἐν τῇ καρδίᾳ σου καὶ ἐν τῇ ψυχῇ σου ('and these words which I am commanding to you today shall be in your heart and in your soul'), and the injunction in Deut 6.9 for the words of the Shema to be γραφῆναι ἐπὶ τὰς φιλιάς τῶν οἰκῶν ὑμῶν καὶ τῶν πυλῶν ὑμῶν ('written on the doorposts of your houses and your gates'), Chrysostom calls for the words of 1 Cor 7.2 to be inscribed on multiple surfaces and spaces. First, these words are to be for the groom a kind of mental amulet, etched into his mind and purpose.⁸⁹ Second, they are to be used as substitute lyrics for the bawdy songs and hymns to Aphrodite and Hymen that accompany the bridal procession and involve the wedding party marching around the outside of the bridal chamber with song and speech, cheering the couple on during their first marital night together.⁹⁰

⁸⁵ In Roman weddings this is called the rite of *ducere uxorem* (see Hersch, *Roman Wedding*, 16, 141–32).

⁸⁶ Ταύτην τὴν ῥῆσιν ἐβουλόμην ἕκαστον εἰς τὴν διάνοιαν ἐγγράψαι, τὴν ἑαυτοῦ μετὰ τούτων τῶν ῥημάτων τὴν νύμφην εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν ἀγεσθαι τοῦ νυμφίου, καὶ εἰς τοὺς τοίχους τῆς οἰκίας καὶ εἰς τὸν θάλαμον καὶ εἰς αὐτὴν τὴν εὐνήν ἐγκεκολλάσθαι τοῦτ' τὸ ῥῆμα· Διὰ δὲ τὰς πορνείας ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐχέτω καὶ ἐκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω (DMD 153).

⁸⁷ Occasioned by the repetition of the *lemma* of 1 Cor 7.2, τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω.

⁸⁸ All three of the manuscripts represented in the text now in Migne, PG 51 are from Mazzoni Dami's sub-archetype α, which reads the minus, whereas the plus reading is found in sub-archetype δ (DMD, 81). The insertion point is at PG 51.213, line 4, between ἐχέτω and δύο γὰρ ταῦτά ἐστι.

⁸⁹ Chrysostom is fond of the internalisation topos, i.e. writing things on the mind or heart (as inspired by Jer 38.33 LXX; 2 Cor 3.3; and the Synoptic version of the Shema, in the controversy over the greatest commandment, which adds ἡ διάνοια σοῦ). See also e.g. *In Genesim* 15.5 (53.124); *Hom. Jo.* 3.1 (59.38); 32.3 (59.186–7); *Hom. Rom.* 17.4 (60.569), also combined with inscribing the text on walls and doors (here of Luke 6.26); and *Stat.* 19.4 (49.196), in relation to gospel amulets. On the latter passage, and the phenomenon, see R. M. Calhoun, 'The Gospel(-Amulet) as God's Power for Salvation', *Early Christianity* 10 (2019) 21–55, with further examples and extensive literature). The inscription of the Pauline text on the mind also works for Chrysostom as he views it as the faculty of cognition and intention that would impact good or bad sexual choices. Note that Chrysostom is addressing only the men here.

⁹⁰ See n. 65 above on the instructions of Menander Rhetor for the κατευναστικός λόγος ('the bedchamber speech') (*Epid.* (Περὶ ἐπιδεικτικῶν) 2.399–412; text Russell-Wilson). On how Christians continued to practise these rituals, even as they variously transformed them, see the detailed treatment of G. Radle, 'The Christianization of Marriage Ritual in Late Antiquity: Ecclesiastical Rites at the Bridal Chamber', *Marriage*,

And, even more, like the words of Deut 6.4–5 that proclaim the total love of the Israelite for the one true God, Paul’s carefully cadenced words of 1 Cor 7.2 are to be inscribed as a talismanic house phylactery,⁹¹ not on the doorposts and gates, but on increasingly focalised spaces of the private home in which the newly married couple will dwell: the outer walls of the house,⁹² inside the bridal chamber itself, and lastly on the very bed on which the marriage will be consummated. Chrysostom has hereby transformed Paul’s 1 Cor 7.2 into a veritable Shema of sex.

But this is not all. Later in the homily Chrysostom sketches in even more specific detail how the now married man, when faced with a moment of acute temptation, is to ritually summon the power of 1 Cor 7.2 for this apotropaic purpose:⁹³

Sing these words as an incantation to yourself every day (ταῦτα καθ’ ἐκάστην ἔπαδε⁹⁴ σεαυτῶ τὴν ἡμέραν τὰ ῥήματα).⁹⁵ And if you perceive that lust (ἐπιθυμία) for another woman is being aroused in you (ἐγειρομένη ἐν σοί), and concomitantly your own wife seems repugnant (ἀηδής) to you, go into your bedroom (θάλαμος), unroll this book (τὸ βιβλίον ἀναπτύξας τοῦτο)⁹⁶ and, making Paul your go-between (λαβὼν Παῦλον μεσίτην), continually sing these words as an incantation (συνεχῶς ἐπάδων ταῦτα τὰ ῥήματα) and thereby extinguish the flame (κατάσβεσον τὴν φλόγα). (§4 (51.215))

Families and Spirituality 26 (2020) 49–64, who cites our homily once (on the presence of the priest for prayer, 55 n. 27), via the Roth-Anderson translation, but does not appreciate the many ways the entire work helps to prove his thesis!

⁹¹ There is of course much discussion about how *tefillin* and *mezuzot* – as enactments of the commandment of Deut 6.9 – were viewed as apotropaic by the rabbis or others, and how they relate to other unsanctioned ‘magical’ rituals (see G. Bohak, *Ancient Jewish Magic: A History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), especially 367–8).

⁹² See A. T. Wilburn, ‘Building Ritual Agency: Foundations, Floors, Doors, and Walls’, *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, 555–602, who dates the practice in Syria a bit later than Chrysostom: ‘Beginning in the fifth century CE, the lintels over the main doors of houses in Syria were inscribed with Christian symbols, biblical verses and prayers’ (587). Chrysostom does not name the doorway specifically in the passage above, though that is not strictly incompatible with his reference to the walls of the house.

⁹³ In between these passages is yet another instruction for 1 Cor 7:4 to be used as an apotropaic charm against the wiles of the πόρνη: ‘Hence, when you see a “whore” luring you in, setting a trap, lusting after your body, say to her, “My body is not mine, but it belongs to my wife. I don’t dare to abuse it or give it into the hands of another woman.” Let a wife do this, too’ (§4 (51.214)). Paul’s epistolary words become a script for a defensive encounter, to thwart the enticements of the πόρνη (and, though more briefly, anyone who might prey on the wife).

⁹⁴ For this meaning of ἐπάδειν, see LSJ s.v. 2, ‘sing as an incantation ... use charms or incantations’. Once again, Paul’s epistolary words are taken as musical lyrics, but, even more, as the context demonstrates, sung words that are to be apotropaically performative and hence ‘incantations’ or counter-magic to that of the πόρνη. But John is deliberately cagy in his choice of terms, since the verb can also mean less specifically ‘repeat, recite’ (LPGL 2) or even just ‘sing’ (LSJ s.v. 1).

⁹⁵ With DMD reading καθ’ ἐκάστην ἔπαδε σεαυτῶ τὴν ἡμέραν τὰ ῥήματα for ταῦτα σεαυτῶ καθ’ ἐκάστην ἔπαδε τὰ ῥήματα (PG).

⁹⁶ John is perhaps imitating the formality of the biblical language of unrolling a scroll before reading, as found in Luke 4.17 Ἰ, though the verb can more often mean ‘unfold’ a text (see R. S. Bagnall, ‘Jesus Reads a Book’, *JTS* 51 (2000) 577–88, with thanks to John Kloppenborg for the reference). Beyond the physical act of unrolling or unfolding a text, it is unclear whether Chrysostom has in mind, say, the whole of 1 Corinthians or a larger biblical corpus, or if he is imagining a smaller, amuletic folded text (he does not use the term περιπτων, ‘amulet’, for instance). On the importance of the ‘book’ (notional and material) for Christian miniature gospels worn for protection, see Calhoun, ‘Gospel(-Amulet)’, especially 38–53). (On Christian amulets with Pauline quotations, see below, n. 112.)

On this vivid scenario, the Pauline words of 1 Cor 7.2, present always in the mind and daily on the lips of the husband, as well as (putatively) carved into the house, can be even more directly activated when there is a special need, that is, when the *erōs*-magic⁹⁷ of the ‘other woman’ (i.e. the πόρνη) is producing the effect that it should, and is alluring the husband to her with lust (ἐπιθυμία), while at the same time turning his proper romantic desire for his wife into outright disgust. Now the Pauline words of 1 Cor 7.2 are present in yet another physical form – the ‘book’ (τὸ βιβλίον τοῦτο)⁹⁸ itself – a physical object that can be activated even more intensively for defensive purposes by turning to the exact page, encountering ‘Paul’ in it and revoicing Paul’s words as a protective charm, with the written text physically standing between oneself and the threat.

Most interesting here is Chrysostom’s designation of ‘Paul’ as a μεσίτης, ‘go-between’, or ‘intermediary’. Chrysostom is perhaps deliberately ambiguous about the identity of the other party participating in this act of mediation involving the vulnerable husband. If it is the ‘other woman’ or πόρνη, Paul is an intermediary who does not facilitate contact but instead blocks it, in the physical form of the book of his words (hence one might translate: ‘positioning “Paul” between her and you’). But that is not how the term μεσίτης is usually used. The phrase λαμβάνειν μεσίτην can refer to establishing a ‘go-between’ between lovers.⁹⁹ On this rendering, John means that Paul acts as the ‘intermediary’ facilitating the proper sexual and romantic love between the husband and his wife, in the θάλαμος to which he retreats, and where this talismanic text is supposed to have already been inscribed on the room and the bed itself (per the restored passage quoted above, p. 136).¹⁰⁰

In favour of the second option is Chrysostom’s very next sentence, about the effects of this apotropaic ritual with the Pauline βιβλίον:

And in this way, also, your wife will again be more desirable (ποθεινότερα) to you,¹⁰¹ since no lust (ἐπιθυμία) is dragging away the goodwill (εὐνοία) you have for her. And not only will your wife be more desirable (ποθεινότερα), but you in turn will seem more dignified (σεμνότερος) and less servile (ἐλευθεριώτερος). (§4 (51.215))

⁹⁷ I.e. the καταδεσμοί (‘binding spells’) or ἀγωγαί (‘spells of attraction’).

⁹⁸ Chrysostom does not give any specific details about how one came to be in possession of this ‘book’, nor (as noted above, n. 96) what its full contents are imagined to be. But elsewhere in his oeuvre he also assumes that lay Christians have access to some biblical materials – either miniature codices, gospel amulets or other physical formats – that they could read at home (see G. Frank, ‘From Antioch to Arles: Lay Devotion in Context’, *The Cambridge History of Christianity*, vol. 11: *Constantine to c. 600* (ed. A. Casiday and F. W. Norris; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007) 531–47, at 533–4, with references).

⁹⁹ As in Ps.-Lucian, *Amatores* §47: ‘Phocis united Orestes to Plylades right from their infancy. Taking the love-god [Eros] as the mediator of their emotions for each other (θεὸν δὲ τῶν πρὸς ἀλλήλους παθῶν μεσίτην λαβόντες), they sailed together as it were on the same vessel of life’ (translation M. D. MacLeod, LCL).

¹⁰⁰ Yet another possibility is that Paul is the μεσίτης, ‘intermediary’, between the husband and God, to whom the husband prays in his private room (with an echo of Matt 6.6; cf. 1 Tim 2.5 on Christ as mediator between God and humanity). If that is the case, Chrysostom as a monk may well have in mind not only the injunction to pray in private of Matt 6.6, but also the common prescription among monks to retreat to their cell for contemplation and compunction, now transferred to the married man’s ‘cell’, the bedroom he shares with his wife. See e.g. *Aprophthegmata patrum* 139.6 (PG 65.284) of Abba Moses: Ὑπαγε, κάθισον εἰς τὸ κελλίον σου· καὶ τὸ κελλίον σου διδάσκει σε πάντα (‘Go, sit in your cell and your cell will teach you everything’). And yet, perhaps surprisingly, Chrysostom nowhere commands the man under temptation to pray, or to address God and ask for help.

¹⁰¹ Chrysostom assumes that a marital couple should have amatory affection for one another. This is also the case in *Hom. Eph.* 20 (62.135–49), a source often cited in discussions of Chrysostom and marriage (see D. G. Hunter, ed., *Marriage and Sexuality in Early Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2018) 109–33).

On this reckoning, Paul's words in 1 Cor 7.2, activated in the talismanic ritual, serve not only as a protective spell extinguishing the 'flame' of illicit ἔρωσ,¹⁰² but also as a kind of love charm that turns the husband's romantic desire back onto its proper target, his wife, now rendered more desirable (ποθεινοτέρα). According to Chrysostom's vivid description, this ensures the husband's obedience to the Pauline law of obligatory spousal goodwill (τὴν ὀφειλομένην εὐνοιαν, 1 Cor 7.3 ὘), and in turn makes him a proper object of her love. He had hinted at this already just moments earlier when he cast σωφροσύνη as the best allurements to romance for the married couple: 'it's impossible for a licentious (ἀσελγής) and promiscuous (ἀκόλαστος) man to love (φιλεῖν) his own wife, even if she's more beautiful (εὐμορφότερα) than all other women. For love (ἀγάπη) is born from chasteness (σωφροσύνη), and from love come countless good things (ἀπὸ δὲ ἀγάπης τὰ μυρία ἀγαθὰ)' (§4 (51.215)).

4.6 Final Movements and Rituals

In the last part of the homily, the preacher returns to the theme of 'honey' with which he opened, quoting the warning in Prov 5.3–4 that the πόρνη's lips taste like honey, but her kiss is bitter, containing an unseen and deadly poison (ἰός). After a closing argument drawing once again on Proverbs (5.18–19) and framed from the husband's point of view, extolling via vivid metaphor the virtues of sexual love with one's wife – 'a filly of one's own fancy', 'drinking from one's own well' – Chrysostom returns to the Shema of sex of 1 Cor 7.2 and leads his congregation in a ritual enactment of the charm that will protect the Christian marriage:

Thus, let's continually sing these words as an incantation (ἐπάδοντες οὕτω διατελῶμεν) both to ourselves and our wives (καὶ ἑαυτοῖς καὶ ταῖς γυναῖξιν). And hence I, too, shall conclude with these words: 'But on account of sexual misconduct, let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband. Let the husband give the goodwill that is owed to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does; likewise also the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does' [1 Cor 7.2–4]. By keeping these words constantly in our minds in the marketplace and at home, day and night, at table and in bed, and everywhere, let's practise them ourselves, and let's instruct our wives (καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας παιδεύωμεν)¹⁰³ both to say them to us and to hear them from us (καὶ πρὸς ἡμᾶς λέγειν, καὶ παρ' ἡμῶν ἀκούειν), so that, after living the present life with due chasteness (σωφρόνως), we might attain the kingdom of heaven, by the grace and loving kindness of our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom and with whom be glory to the Father, together with the Holy Spirit, forever and ever. Amen. (§5 (51.218))

The Pauline text as chanted in the *synaxis* becomes the peroration of the homily, and the explicit call for the performative communal liturgy to be carried out into the world. Giving only minimal lip service to the parallelism of women and men in the Pauline passage, in his own words throughout this homily Chrysostom has focused almost exclusively

¹⁰² Note that this is precisely what the *erōs*-magic of the πόρνη is said to do to the romantic love the husband has for his wife in §3 (51.212), cited above: καὶ τὸν ἔρωτα τὸν πρὸς τὴν νύμφην ἔσβεσε.

¹⁰³ Μετὰ ἀκριβείας ταῦτα φυλάξαντες τὰ ῥήματα, καὶ ἐν ἀγορᾷ, καὶ ἐν οἰκίᾳ, καὶ ἐν ἡμέρᾳ, καὶ ἐν ἑσπέρᾳ, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς τραπέζης, καὶ ἐπὶ τῆς εὐνῆς, καὶ πανταχοῦ καὶ αὐτοὶ μελετῶμεν, καὶ τὰς γυναῖκας παιδεύωμεν. Cf. Deut 6.7: καὶ προβιβάσεις αὐτὰ τοὺς υἱοὺς σου καὶ λαλήσεις ἐν αὐτοῖς καθήμενος ἐν οἴκῳ καὶ πορευόμενος ἐν ὁδῷ καὶ κοιταζόμενος καὶ διανιστάμενος. Notice that in his rewording Chrysostom has focalised this on the marital pair, including naming the domestic spaces they share, with the husband instructing the wife, rather than the sons of the household (as in the Shema).

on the men and their potential for straying. In the self-appointed guise of one championing the cause of the wife against betrayal at the hands of her husband, Chrysostom relies routinely on a misogynist stereotype of the πόρνη, her rival. In the role of marriage counsellor-cum-liturgist, the unmarried ascetic leads the final love chant and instructs it for ‘our wives’, even as in his own person he defies the very ‘commands’ he leads them in singing.¹⁰⁴

5. Conclusion

5.1 John Chrysostom, Paul and ‘Christian Love Magic’

Paul’s words, first dictated and written down in the early fifties, then copied by scribes down to Chrysostom’s time, revoiced by the anagnost in the liturgy in the 380s or 390s, and by the preacher himself in his own words, have been (re)cast as an apotropaic spell, performative words that, activated orally and in material form, are said to have the potential to act and protect – if used as instructed. We know that Chrysostom himself was well aware of the practice of amulets among Jews, ‘pagans’ and Christians, from a number of well-studied passages in his oeuvre,¹⁰⁵ as well as the remarkable narrative he tells in *Hom. Ac.* 38.4–5 (60.273–76) of having found a magical handbook floating in the Orontes in his youth.¹⁰⁶ All of this means that what Chrysostom has done in the homily we have been investigating here is not an accidental straying into the land, logic and vocabulary of the magical arts, but an intentionally devised face-off between rival ritual technologies for securing a safe and prosperous marriage, both in the nuptials and thereafter. This historical-contextual evidence fully confirms our literary analysis of the repeated pairings of good and bad love magic, and the way the argument of the whole homily unfolds.

But is it legitimate to call what Chrysostom engages in here discourse about ‘Christian love magic’? There is of course historic debate about whether to use the term ‘magic’ at all in scholarly work on ancient religions, or to use the term only in an emic mode (when the ancient sources use the term) or etic mode (with a modern analytical definition for heuristic purposes).¹⁰⁷ I use the term ‘love magic’ as one key aspect of what Chrysostom does here because there is clear correspondence in technical vocabulary and contextual meanings of specific magical spells (φίλτρα, πέταλα, μαγγανείαι), and the introduction of rituals meant to counter them in forms both verbal and material. I also use it to describe the wider cultural arena within which he seeks to develop a τέχνη of Christian marriage (with a nod to Foucault), and also to draw due attention to the surprising lengths to which he goes to push these Pauline verses into the lives of his congregants. Indeed, what Chrysostom is doing in this highly rhetorically stylised

¹⁰⁴ One can only wonder how much irony is felt by the speaker or the audience as a publicly celibate man in the sanctuary proceeds to follow the advice he gave to the married man for the bedroom by turning to recite the incantation himself with *καὶ αὐτὸς εἰς τὰ αὐτὰ καταλύσω τὰ ῥήματα* (‘I, too, shall conclude with these words’). Much of course would have relied upon the performance and delivery, including tone of voice and gestures. Perhaps this was done in solemnity and without acknowledgement of the incongruity, but one wonders.

¹⁰⁵ For an entrée into the considerable literature and major issues of debate, see the two important studies by Calhoun, ‘Gospel(-Amulet)’ and J. E. Sanzo, ‘Magic and Communal Boundaries: The Problems with Amulets in Chrysostom, *Adv. Iud.* 8, and Augustine, *In Io. tra.* 7’, *Henoch* 38 (2017) 227–46.

¹⁰⁶ I have analysed this text in ‘John Chrysostom Creates Magical Handbooks: Two Case Studies’ (Oxford Patristics Conference, 21 August 2019).

¹⁰⁷ See most recently D. Frankfurter, ‘Ancient Magic in a New Key: Refining an Exotic Discipline in the History of Religions’, *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, 3–20, who, in conversation with the vibrant scholarship on ancient magic over the last four decades, insists that there are problems with adhering to both emic and etic perspectives, and with either using or abandoning the term ‘magic’ (though he favours minimising that use). (I thank David Frankfurter for valuable conversation on some of these issues in September 2019.)

homily is positioning himself precisely between the emic and the etic – in the mimetic, if you will. He deprecates by lurid stereotypical description the magic arts of the extreme outsider, the πόρνη, on the one hand, while also offering sanctioned protective rituals that mimic hers and those of the traditional wedding ceremonies,¹⁰⁸ both in terms of apotropaic spells and a more positive love magic for the Christian couple defined by σωφροσύνη as their romantic charm, even as it is marriage itself, he claims, that is the φάρμακον that will destroy the demonic force of πορνεία.

There is some risk to Chrysostom's mimicry, which renders his proposals at the least ambiguously poised.¹⁰⁹ Although Chrysostom himself (the emic perspective) would certainly not accept the label, what he is calling for here is a form of 'scripture magic', defined by David Frankfurter (the etic perspective) as 'a charismatic medium of a Great Tradition [as defined by the anthropologist Robert Redfield], both in the "performance" of the scribal ritual expert who delivers efficacious passages of scripture and in the client's encounter and use'.¹¹⁰ This definition maps very well onto the ways in which the institutional authority, Chrysostom, is in this homily designing and legitimating ritual practices with the authorised scriptural text for his congregants to use in their daily lives and homes. We could add to this that Chrysostom deliberately invokes a *doubly scriptural idiom* for these written and spoken incantations – not only the rhythmic words of the Pauline verse, but also of the Shema – in his attempt to authorise and normalise the practice. And this performance by Chrysostom also fits well the paradigm of 'miniaturisation' of ritual to which theorists of ancient magic have pointed,¹¹¹ here from the formal reading, homiletic interpretation and final communal 'chant' of 1 Cor 7.2 in the liturgical *synaxis* in the *ecclesia*, to its reinvocation and reactivation in progressively tighter spaces, down to the bedroom of the private home.

But this leaves us with a key question, circling back to the 2021 face mask imprinted with 1 Cor 7.2 KJV with which we began: just how seriously did Chrysostom expect his congregants to take this injunction to chant 1 Cor 7.2 as a spell for protection, to use it as lyrics for songs at wedding ceremonies, to keep it in book or amulet format in the bedroom, or inscribe it as a phylactery on their homes or furniture? To date, no amulet has been found that contains 1 Cor 7.2 – although there are very few extant ancient Christian amulets that include Pauline texts at all (rather than gospels or psalms, for instance).¹¹² Perhaps, in the process of negotiated Pauline meaning(s) that began way back with the Corinthians, Chrysostom's audience just didn't buy it?

¹⁰⁸ For another such example in Chrysostom, see Sanzo, 'Early Christianity', 231–2: 'Illicit rites also functioned as a point of orientation for defining proper Christian ritual practice.'

¹⁰⁹ For instance, why does he insist on repeatedly using the verb ἐπέδειν to describe what they are to do in calling down Paul's words, rather than προσεύχεσθαι or other similar vocabulary such as the ample set of terms for prayers in 1 Tim 2.1, which become the categories for (legitimate) Christian prayer as in e.g. Origen's *De oratione* 14.2–6, etc.?

¹¹⁰ D. Frankfurter, 'Magic as the Local Application of Authoritative Tradition', *Guide to the Study of Ancient Magic*, 720–45, at 732.

¹¹¹ See the justly influential essay by J. Z. Smith, 'Trading Places', *Ancient Magic and Ritual Power* (ed. M. Meyer and P. Mirecki; Leiden: Brill, 1995) 13–27.

¹¹² There are, for example, none in the collection of T. S. de Bruyn and J. H. F. Dijkstra, 'Greek Amulets and Formularies from Egypt Containing Christian Elements: A Checklist of Papyri, Parchments, Ostraka, and Tablets', *The Bulletin of the American Society of Papyrologists* 48 (2011) 163–216, or B. C. Jones, *New Testament Texts on Greek Amulets in Late Antiquity* (LNTS 554; London: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2016), who aptly asks, 'Why do we not find more texts from the Pauline and pseudo-Pauline corpus on amulets?' (164). Jones himself catalogues just three, all post-dating Chrysostom: *P.Vindob.* G 2312 (Rom 12.1–2 (5th–6th cent.)); *P. Vindob.* G 26034 + 30453 (2 Cor 10.4; 1 Thess 5.8; Eph 6.16 (6th cent.)); *P.Berl.* inv. 13997 (1 Tim 1.15–16 (7th cent.)).

5.2 *New Testament Studies as a Unified Field*

Aside from being the first SNTS Presidential address to date on *πορνεία*, what does this study out of my current research say about New Testament scholarship, now and into the future? I close by offering a few reflections on my own view of the field for consideration, discussion and debate among us.

New Testament studies is not just a collection of various approaches and methodologies, but is a unified field that at its best defies separation into sub-specialities. Although unified, New Testament studies cannot stand on its own apart from early Christian literature¹¹³ more broadly, the study of Second Temple and post-Second Temple Judaisms, imperial period history and classical literature, religion and culture. So many of the most interesting questions of the field, and its promise for original contributions to humanistic learning, require the integration of:

Philological precision on the word, phrase, sentence, paragraph and document level, and attention to the art and science of translation, which is always an act of interpretation. Words matter, and words do not stand still.¹¹⁴

Textual criticism and manuscript studies as both central for the construction(s) of the objects of our study and as an invaluable record of reception and repackaging.

Historical contextualisation that includes history of religions and history of culture information and analysis, as well as intellectual (i.e. theological, philosophical) and social histories.

Reception-history of the multimedia and variably purposed reinterpretations and reuses of the New Testament texts, and the ways in which in each moment of interpretation a human agent is making deliberate choices that complexly interact with other interpreters and proposals, and their own purposes, audiences and thick contexts.

Literary finesse both in reading the New Testament documents themselves and textual forms of interpretation down through history (including our contemporaries); this includes the need to offer fresh readings of whole texts, and not just mine the documents for nuggets taken out of context and applied to more general questions. Whole and part must always be carefully and consciously navigated, all the more so now that digital reading and search habits heavily favour the part over the whole.

Methodological sophistication as one of the humanistic disciplines (committed to the quest for truth, justice, beauty, learning, understanding and new knowledge), consistently questioning the philosophical and epistemological bases of our work, and attuned to and actively engaged with its political, ethical, social and ideological ramifications, past and present, in a non-simplistic way, as we, along with our contemporaries in and outside

¹¹³ This has been the tradition at the University of Chicago since its earliest days, starting from the first PhD from the Divinity School, Edgar Johnson Goodspeed, in 1898, whose first published monograph was *The Book of Thecla* (Historical and Linguistic Studies in Literature Related to the New Testament; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1901) and his second (his doctoral dissertation), *The Newberry Gospels* (Historical and Linguistic Studies in Literature Related to the New Testament; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1902).

¹¹⁴ It is this broader sense of philology, both grounded in the minute particulars of linguistic artefacts and attuned to larger questions of meaning and value – including the contested histories of what constitutes ‘philology’ itself – that I have in view here. See J. Orlemanski, ‘Philology and the Turn Away from the Linguistic Turn’, *Florilegium* 32 (2015) 157–81.

the academy seek critically to test and discern how the past has and continues to provide resources for human flourishing or for oppression, dignity or debasement.¹¹⁵

Hermeneutical suppleness about how meaning is constructed in each act of interpretation (including our own), and ways in which there is a continual play between the old and the new, the clear and the unclear, the expected and the utterly unexpected. Our task is not to lock-box meanings of those words, but to locate and analyse each act of New Testament composition and interpretation as one that involves conscious decisions by human actors with a purpose, whether an audacious Hellenistic Jew named Paul proclaiming the crucified Jesus as Messiah, a late fourth-century homilist faced with a problem text and an unpopular pastoral crusade against well-entrenched cultural convention or a twenty-first century face mask designer looking for buyers seeking protection in uncertain times. We should continue to be surprised.

Competing interests. The author declares none.

¹¹⁵ For a powerful expression of this commitment, see our SNTS colleague A. Reinhartz's presidential address for the Society of Biblical Literature in November 2020 ("The Hermeneutics of Chutzpah: A Disquisition on the Value/s of "Critical Investigation of the Bible", *JBL* 140 (2021) 8–30).

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