

THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY OF SLAVERY

VOLUME 1

The Ancient Mediterranean World

Edited by

Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge



THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY OF SLAVERY

Most societies in the past have had slaves, and almost all peoples have at some time in their pasts been both slaves and owners of slaves. Recent decades have seen a significant increase in our understanding of the historical role played by slavery and wide interest across a range of academic disciplines in the evolution of the institution. Exciting and innovative research methodologies have been developed, and numerous fruitful debates generated. Further, the study of slavery has come to provide strong connections between academic research and the wider public interest at a time when such links have in general been weak. *The Cambridge World History of Slavery* responds to these trends by providing for the first time, in four volumes, a comprehensive global history of this widespread phenomenon from the ancient world to the present day.

Volume I surveys the history of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world. Although chapters are devoted to the ancient Near East and the Jews, its principal concern is with the societies of ancient Greece and Rome. These are often considered as the first examples in world history of genuine slave societies because of the widespread prevalence of chattel slavery, which is argued to have been a cultural manifestation of the ubiquitous violence in societies typified by incessant warfare. There was never any sustained opposition to slavery, and the new religion of Christianity probably reinforced rather than challenged its existence. In twenty-two chapters, leading scholars from Europe and North America explore the centrality of slavery in ancient Mediterranean life from diverse perspectives and using a wide range of textual and material evidence. Non-specialist readers in particular will find the volume an accessible account of the early history of this crucial phenomenon.

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THE CAMBRIDGE WORLD HISTORY OF SLAVERY

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VOLUME I
The Ancient Mediterranean World

Edited by

KEITH BRADLEY and PAUL CARTLEDGE



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SERIES EDITORS' INTRODUCTION

This is the first volume of *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, dealing with the major slave societies of classical Greece and Rome. Slavery has been among the most ubiquitous of all human institutions, across time and place, from earliest history until, some would argue, the present day. Yet its durability and ubiquity are not widely recognised and, where they are, they seem poorly understood by the general public and scholars alike. A central aim of these volumes, which cover many different times and places, is to help to place the existence and nature of slavery against the backdrop of the broader human social condition.

Slavery has appeared in many different forms and is not always easy to separate from other forms of coerced labour. Nevertheless, there are basic similarities that emerge from the contributions that follow. Most critical of these is the ownership of one human by another, and the ability to buy and sell the human chattel such ownership creates. A second common characteristic is the fact that chattel status is a heritable condition passed down through the mother. Such characteristics are not to be found in the more general category of 'coerced labour', as normally practised. The latter typically involves a general loss of citizenship rights, but not necessarily ownership of one person by another and inherited status. Some scholars regard slavery as part of a spectrum of coerced labour and dependency, but the institution has maintained a distinctive legal existence in almost all societies.

Slavery evolved independently in the Americas, Africa and Asia, but Greece and Rome were the first major slave societies. The legal patterns, social practices and attitudes established there had a large impact on the cultures that came after. Even more important, it was Greece and Rome that first had to confront the basic dilemmas that slavery raised. These included the nature of freedom and the mix of coercion and freedom that is a central element of the lives of everyone whatever their formal status, the impossibility of having complete control over another human being, and, of course, the moral implications of ownership. This first volume of the series not only provides much new evidence on Greek and Roman slavery but also introduces the reader to key issues that will be further explored in subsequent volumes.

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this volume, the first in a series of multi-authored works examining the institution of slavery throughout human history, is to survey the history of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world. It begins with an overview of slavery in the ancient Near East, then quickly moves to its principal concern, the history of slavery in the societies of ancient Greece and Rome. In these societies slaves were regularly used as primary producers in the key economic activities of agriculture, mining and manufacturing. As domestic servants and administrators, they also provided their owners with a multitude of services. In competitive social and political contexts, they were sometimes simultaneously items of conspicuous display.

The scale of ancient slave-owning varied from period to period and from place to place. In certain instances, especially in classical Athens and in Roman Italy of the Late Republic and Principate, it became particularly prominent. But despite fluctuations of scale, slavery as a concept was never altogether absent from ancient Mediterranean life. Ideologically, members of society were divided into two broad categories: those who were free and those who were not. As the Roman jurist Gaius stated, attributing the coercive authority that slave-owners exercised in the second century AD to universal standards: ‘The principal distinction in the law of persons is this, that all human beings are either free men or slaves’ (*Institutes* 1.9). For Greeks and Romans throughout their history, slavery was a defining and distinctive element of culture.

Across time and place slavery, or ‘unfreedom’, took different forms. Debt-bondage, helotage, temple slavery and something akin to serfdom are all attested. But the form with which this volume is chiefly concerned is chattel slavery, the most extreme form of unfreedom in antiquity, in which the slave was conceptualised as a commodity, akin to livestock, and was owned by a master who had full capacity to alienate his human property, by sale, gift, bequest or other means. For the slave the result was a state of social death in which all rights and sense of personhood were denied. The appearance of this form of slavery in the ancient Mediterranean has led to the dominant modern view that Greece and Rome offer the first examples in world history of what can be called genuine slave societies. Precisely

how and when those societies arose, and how they should be understood to be genuine, are matters of ongoing debate, to which the contents of the volume contribute in various ways. But if a single origin for the practice and maintenance of chattel slavery in antiquity can be identified, it lies in the right of victors in warfare, endemic to the ancient world, to dispose of the defeated as they saw fit: to free, hold to ransom, or kill them; or to retain them in a state of servitude as long as they wished. Slavery in antiquity can be regarded accordingly as a cultural manifestation of the ubiquitous violence in society that incessant warfare typified, bringing into being social relationships in which absolute power was exercised by some over others whose lives had been spared after military conquest.

If the volume illustrates how deeply embedded slavery was in the life of the differing societies that made up the ancient Mediterranean world, over long intervals of time and across a vast geographical space, it equally makes clear that there was never any sustained opposition to slavery. The question may well have sometimes been asked whether slavery was justifiable; and some communities, that of the Essenes for instance, were said not to have practised slave-owning. But the question was academic only, and the communities concerned were few and exceptional. It remains a fact that as far as can be seen, no movement advocating an end to slavery ever appeared in the ancient world. To those today who live in societies that regard the abolition of slavery in the nineteenth century as an integral element of a progressive democratic legacy, this may seem difficult to understand, especially in view of the rise in late antiquity of Christianity, a religion that was open to all members of society, slaves as well as free, and whose religiously levelling character could be assumed, in principle, to have had socially ameliorative consequences. In its Protestant forms in later history, Christianity was of course a mainstay of the modern abolitionist cause. But ideas of improving social change were not characteristic of the ancient world, and if the new religion had any effect at all, it was to reinforce, not to challenge, traditional social structures. Christianity did not make a difference to slavery in antiquity, and in the absence of any notion of universal freedom or of comparable rights and privileges as understood in the modern Western liberal tradition, slavery in the ancient Mediterranean world never became a problem.

The chapters that make up the volume are of two types. Some give chronological surveys of the development of slavery in particular periods or places. Others treat topics or themes. The overall organisational aim has been to allow the centrality of slavery in ancient Mediterranean life to emerge from diverse but interrelated perspectives: historical, cultural, legal, archaeological, demographic and, occasionally, comparative. Inevitably the conclusions reached are based on sources that represent almost exclusively the views and interests of the slave-owning sectors of ancient society, not

of those who lived in slavery. Many slaves and former slaves in the ancient Mediterranean world were literate and may well have written about their experiences of life in slavery. But if so, nothing of substance has survived, and the emergence of a slave literature of the kind familiar from the history of New World slavery seems not to have been a prominent feature of the history of ancient slavery. Nor apparently were slave-owners much concerned to write works about slavery or individual slaves that would now allow direct views of the institution's material conditions to be seen and a servile perspective perhaps to be glimpsed. There were occasional exceptions. Caecilius of Caleacte wrote a work on the history of slave rebellions in Sicily, and Hermippos of Berytus a work on slaves who achieved eminence in learning. Both authors had once perhaps been slaves themselves (*RE* III, 1.1174–88; VIII, 1.853–4). Again, however, their books have not survived, and altogether the slave's view of slavery remains elusive. Each chapter in the volume includes a synthesis of modern research on its topic, but authors have been encouraged to present their own opinions and to write free from theoretical or ideological constraint. As in many multi-authored works, approaches and methods vary considerably, but the volume as a whole provides a comprehensive introduction to its principal subject. *The Cambridge History of World Slavery* is a response to the enormous interest scholars have shown in the history of slavery in the last generation. This volume reflects the attention to slavery paid by historians of the ancient Mediterranean world.

CHAPTER 1

SLAVERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

DANIEL C. SNELL

DEFINING SLAVERY IN THE ANCIENT NEAR EAST

The study of the ancient Near East, the modern Middle East from Iran to Turkey to Egypt, has been pursued in the last two centuries in societies of Europe and the Americas that have themselves been mired in industrial slavery. Scholars of the ancient region have consequently been quick to point out that nowhere do we see the kind of mass exploitation that we find since the sixteenth century of our era. Some have tried to deny that there even were slaves in the ancient Near East and have suggested that we should not call some of the dependent people slaves.¹

It is true that there were other kinds of dependency in the ancient Near East besides slavery, and ancient law-givers and others who reflected their societies were not concerned clearly to define lowly statuses that they took for granted. But there is no question that persons could be and were bought and sold from a very early period, such transactions fitting with a traditional definition of what slavery is. Patterson (1982), however, questions whether this is sufficient. He argues that in societies with a wide range of documentation, a more general component of the lives of enslaved peoples was systematic dishonour from the enslaving group. He speaks also of natal alienation, meaning that the enslaving group went to lengths to deny the actual family relationships of the enslaved and to create a new subservient identity for them, engineering their social death to their former lives in freedom.

The evidence from the ancient Near East is usually not detailed enough to say anything about dishonour, how it was felt or sometimes even whether it existed. But we do know that those who found themselves enslaved frequently had their names changed; foreign names especially seem to have been replaced by more local ones, and female slave names especially seem to belong to a distinctive category borne only by slaves.² This has the function for us of obscuring the origins of the enslaved, but for them it had the function of deracinating them and re-creating them as little Mesopotamians of

¹ Adams 1966: 103. ² Harris 1977: 48–9; Baker 2001: 23.

low status. If we read carefully the records about slavery across the three millennia covered by cuneiform-using societies, it is repeatedly clear that there were instances of the self-conscious imposition of social death and of dishonour. And if we cannot agree absolutely on terminology, it is nonetheless clear that the institutions that gave elites power in Mesopotamian cities seem to have been where dependent people were concentrated.³

It is legitimate therefore to compare instances of oppression in the ancient Near East with later phenomena. For slavery we have many archival texts, texts that were meant to be kept only for a brief time to fend off disputes about ownership. These are usually laconic and structured simply, with little unnecessary detail. Their point usually is to name living witnesses who would be able to confirm the agreement of the parties concerned. So these lists of names were much more important to the participants than any elaboration of exactly what was and was not permitted, and usually we hear nothing of the thoughts of the sold person.

We also have legal collections made mostly by kings. These were probably not codes in a modern sense of collections of rules intended to be enforced in a jurisdiction. But they may have been resolutions of the community that sketched out examples of correct human behaviour and the justice that could be dispensed by human rulers. They appear to have been teaching texts rather than documents from the practice of law.⁴ And yet they are invaluable as a sketch of the possibilities envisioned within their societies. They notoriously did not define their terms, but they do show how people were supposed to interact. And that allows us to examine the norms of these societies in ideal times, which admittedly may never have existed.

There are chance references to slavery too in letters, especially between officials. And in royal propaganda there is sometimes mention not usually of real slavery, actual people who were demeaned and could be bought and sold, but of political subordination decried as slavery.⁵ Although this does not help us understand how slavery worked, it does help us see what people's attitudes were towards it; everywhere it was a sorry state to be avoided at all costs.

The appearance of slaves in literary texts is more limited and not as suggestive as in the categories just named. But again the slave was a social type that sometimes had to be dealt with in texts copied for scribal education in the cuneiform tradition.

Beyond that tradition, the evidence of slavery is more patchy and best understood in light of evidence from better-documented societies. And yet in Egypt and in the North-West Semitic-speaking areas of the Syrian and Palestinian coast, there is evidence for something like the ancient Near Eastern practice of slavery. The Hebrew Bible passed down texts copied

³ Adams 1966: 103–4.

⁴ Finkelstein 1961: 103.

⁵ Snell 2001: 75–6.

over generations that purport to refer to the first millennium BC, and though there is little doubt that scribes updated them in copying, they may frequently represent early conditions. As evidence is more scarce, there is of course more leeway to impose one's own preconceived notions on it.

THE INVENTION OF SLAVERY

Although it is from the ancient Near East that we have the earliest writings, we can be sure that they do not attest to the origins of slavery. We believe those go back much further into the past, before the rise of societies organised as states, to simpler polities that have been called chieftaincies. These were conglomerations of village farming communities united by a belief in their common descent and organised in a loose way by leaders known for their wealth, their generosity, and their abilities to compel people to do what they wanted. The areas controlled might vary, and the relation of chieftaincies to the state is probably not possible to define with absolute clarity. We may say that a state is an organisation that theoretically at least is not directly tied to the personality of the leader, but a chieftaincy was.⁶ When the chief died, all possibilities were open; his son or successor might be able to take over his role, but that was negotiable and might not in fact be negotiated. Chieftaincies were better and more efficient at waging war than simpler societies, but also at arranging peace.⁷

Apparently all such societies, and even nomadic groups,⁸ had slaves. It is not known why these polities generated slavery, and though there is a growing literature on chieftaincies, there is almost nothing recent that considers the connection to slaves. The guess is that, though there were certainly conflicts in simpler societies between neighbouring villages that might lead to war and bloodshed, the need to continue peaceful relations after war minimised the temptation to exploit prisoners of war and led to prisoner exchanges as conditions of peace. But societies organised on a larger scale could afford to ignore the sensibilities of a village of people who had been enemies. The greed to acquire more hands to do work overcame the need to establish a stable peace, and the prisoners were retained. It stands to reason, though the evidence is weak, that the first such prisoners were women, since enemy men were likely to be killed or, as we shall see below, otherwise mutilated. Men were a continuing threat, especially those who had been skilled at war. But women, it may have been felt, could be subdued, raped and exploited more easily, and they might be folded into the polity as secondary wives. Chieftaincies could never be concerned to exploit too many people in this way, and all would have been used in domestic capacities, serving as amenities for the leadership related to the

⁶ Service 1975: 293.

⁷ Service 1975: 271.

⁸ Nieboer 1900; Sáenz 1991.

chiefs. The women might run away, but not if they were from a distant village, nor if they were pregnant or already had children in the community.

In Mesopotamia itself there is no physical evidence of slavery in early periods. But the suggestion has been made that the Ubaid period (5500–4000 BC) may have seen changes that corresponded to chieftaincy organisations.⁹ The main evidence is the creation of public buildings, usually understood as temples, within the rather small settlements we find exploiting irrigation along the rivers of southern Iraq.

In the earliest texts we find signs that probably mean ‘slave’ and ‘slave girl’; one later became a sign for ‘mountain’ and ‘foreign country’. Another came to mean ‘woman’. There were also other signs that cannot be interpreted because they later dropped out of the system. The earliest texts had groups of somewhat more than fifty almost equally divided between men and women.¹⁰ A later form of the sign for ‘slave’ in Sumerian had a sign for ‘man’ with a sign for ‘mountain’ worked into it, and in fact many slaves appear to have been caught in the Iranian foothills and brought to the Mesopotamian plain.

The later Sumerian word for ‘slave’, *arad*, is either the same or directly derived from the Akkadian word, *wardum*.¹¹ The mountains may not be far away from that word either, since there is a possibly related Akkadian verb meaning ‘to descend, to go down’, though that might be taken socially, not physically. Others have sought an etymology from Sumerian words for ‘man’, *ur*, and ‘woman’, *eme*, showing up in later Sumerian as *geme*, ‘(working) girl’.¹²

Speculation on etymology does not bring us back to the origins of the terms, but there were several other ways of referring to slaves. One was to list them as ‘head, male’, or ‘head, female’.¹³ This tells us nothing about origins, but it is the way animals also could be counted, and it probably was meant to reduce slaves to animals. Another early term is ‘blind ones’, literally ‘eyes do not see’. Perhaps the word originated in the often posited practice of killing male prisoners of war but preserving female prisoners for work and reproduction, while mutilating some few others. Blinding is known from the slaves of the Scythians as a way of keeping slaves from trying to escape.¹⁴

In early times slaves were sometimes referred to as *subur*, connecting them to the country called Subar, the northern reaches of Mesopotamia. The idea that this alone shows that chattel slavery itself was imported from the north seems unlikely in light of comparative material.¹⁵

⁹ Porada, Hansen, Dunham and Babcock 1992: 87; Stein 1994. ¹⁰ Vajman 1989.

¹¹ Gelb 1982. ¹² Krecher 1987. ¹³ Gelb 1982: 89.

¹⁴ Taylor 2001: 38. ¹⁵ Gelb 1982: 89–90.

Another term that appears from the Old Babylonian period on (2004–1595 BC) is *subaru* ‘lad, young one’. That word may imply nothing about slave status, but sometimes it is obvious that slaves were meant. One letter writer begs, ‘Please take my lads along and sell them.’ And another notes silver ‘for the price of an ox and a lad’. Another letter advises, ‘There is no lad worthy of any trust.’¹⁶ In the same vein later periods refer to the slave as *qallu*, a word probably related to notions of lightness, unimportance, and inferiority.¹⁷

STATE AND CORVÉE

As the Mesopotamian city-state remade its environment and attempted to irrigate more and more land, it did so not by organising slaves but by compelling peasants living nearby to work on the canals as forced labour. This involved giving them rations and direction, though it may not have involved much physical punishment. People subject to this corvée – *dullu* ‘forced labour, misery’ in Akkadian, *dusu* ‘basket’ in Sumerian – may have been marched some distance from their homes and set up in camps. But the obligation probably fell during agricultural off-seasons and did not last more than a month or two. Through all Mesopotamian history corvée was an important power of the state, always more important than slavery. And it is not obvious that corvée labourers were necessarily viewed as dishonoured.¹⁸ Scribes and officials too sometimes were called upon to do corvée, and corvée workers and their labour were not sold. Still, the meticulous labour texts from the Ur III period (2112–2004 BC) show that small numbers of workers attempted to run away.¹⁹

UR III SLAVES IN COURT

Texts from southern Mesopotamia document the ‘final judgements’ of courts in a couple of cities. Twelve of the texts show results of cases in which slaves tried to dispute their slave status, and their arguments reveal some details about slave life we would not otherwise have known. In one case the court reaffirmed the slave status of a woman who had run away with her daughters from her master. The master held the slaves as punishment since their husband and father had murdered the master’s father, a court musician. The runaway had spent most of her life as a free woman and had been a slave only for five years. She clearly knew how to pass as free, and perhaps some of her old friends had harboured her, since she eluded her master for a time.²⁰

¹⁶ Gelb *et al.* 1956: E 232.

¹⁷ Gelb *et al.* 1956: Q 64–6.

¹⁸ Sharashenidze 1986.

¹⁹ Snell 2001: 48–54.

²⁰ Falkenstein 1956–7: no. 41.

A more typical case involved a slave who argued that his father had been freed more than fifteen years previously. But the current master produced witnesses who affirmed that they had seen the father receive rations from the household, apparently implying that he must still have been a slave. It was not clear if the father had been living away from the household and perhaps paying a fee to the master and so appearing to be a free craftsman. The son may have been confused about the status of the father, but the court was also stacked against him.²¹ There was no legal barrier to a slave's appearing in court at least to argue his case for freedom. This society divided up the roles of slaves as things and as persons differently from the societies influenced by Roman law with which we are more familiar.

A few cases show that there was a recognised class of freedmen who had lower status than the freeborn but could claim to be locals by birth. The freedman was not, however, a 'son of the city', with political rights, but simply a 'free son'.²²

PRICES

'Blind ones' were cheaper than 'heads' in the Early Dynastic period (c. 2400 BC), once costing fourteen shekels of silver versus twenty,²³ but prices could vary. The shekel was a weight of about 8.33 grammes, and sixty were sometimes the equivalent of a month's wage for an unskilled worker. Silver was paid by breaking it and weighing the pieces. In the Old Akkadian period (2334–2195 BC), a letter writer asked for two slaves in exchange for his fifteen shekels, though both were to be 'young and beardless', and so perhaps cheap.²⁴ Ur III (2112–2004 BC) slave prices varied from two-thirds of a shekel to fifty-five, but most were under ten shekels.²⁵ In the Neo-Babylonian and later periods (605–333 BC), prices ranged from nineteen to more than a hundred shekels.²⁶

From the Old Babylonian period (c. 2004–1595 BC), we have a number of documents that allow us for the first time to study price changes over time. As in the Early Dynastic period, male slaves cost about fifteen shekels of silver. But there were fluctuations. Since we have several other commodities priced in the period, we can see that the inflation in slave prices corresponded to an inflation in other prices, especially in the reign of one of the Old Babylonian kings, Abi-eshuh (1711–1684 BC), whose loss of territory may have affected his city's ability to procure grain and slaves.²⁷ The availability of slaves from northern Mesopotamia fell off under the later kings of Babylon, probably because of the rise of the state of Mitanni

²¹ Falkenstein 1956–7: no. 34. ²² Westbrook 2003b.

²³ Nikol'skii 1908: 293. ²⁴ Michalowski 1993: 45, text 58.

²⁵ Falkenstein 1956–7, 1: 88–90. ²⁶ Dandamaev 1984: 200–95. ²⁷ Farber 1978.

in what is now northern Syria.²⁸ There is advice in an Old Babylonian letter about selling 'lads':

So long as the lad is not fine looking, don't consider buying him. Also the slave-girl . . . so long as she is not fine looking and is small, don't consider buying her . . . We bought two slave girls for a third mana three shekels [23 shekels or 11.5 each]. Since they were thin, no one bought them. I have arranged that they now appear in good health, and I shall sell them. Don't pay attention to the low cost and buy no slave not fine looking. As long as a slave or a slave girl does not look fine, don't consider buying them!²⁹

HAMMURAPI'S VISION

From early in the Old Babylonian period, we have two monumental texts that show how slavery worked in theory. The Edict of Ammisaduga, king of Babylon *c.* 1626 BC, decreed the remission of some kinds of debt, probably in response to an agricultural crisis. Although the king ordered that free people who had been enslaved for debt should be freed, he was careful to note that other slaves were not to be freed at all. The edict may have been thought of as a 'freedom edict', but it did not apply to regular slaves.³⁰

The other and much more famous document is Hammurapi's so-called code which recorded about 282 'decisions of justice', some of which dealt with slaves. While we must warn that the connection of the text to practice is remote, the code does allow us to see fairly clearly ideas about justice, and sometimes we can see underlying social practices.³¹

Probably the most enduring of those practices is the Near Eastern descent system, in which a marriage between a free person and a slave resulted in a child of free status. In the code it was obvious that this way of reckoning descent was not applied without exception. If the father never acknowledged that the child was his, the child would not divide the inheritance with free half-siblings but would nonetheless be free. If the father had acknowledged the child, at his death the child inherited a portion equal to any other offspring, and the slave mother became free.³² This way of proceeding became the most common manner of tracing descent since it was assumed by Islamic law.³³ Its practice meant that female slaves usually could count on their children's being acknowledged and on their own being free if they had children with their masters. At Old Babylonian Mari, enslaved women actually changed their names at the birth of their free child, perhaps to commemorate this eventual change in status.³⁴

²⁸ van Koppen 2004: 23. ²⁹ Kraus 1964: text 139, 12.

³⁰ Pritchard 1969: 526–8, paragraph 21. ³¹ Westbrook 2003a: 12–13, 16; Roth 1997: 76–142.

³² Roth 1997: 113–14, paragraphs 170–1. ³³ Juynboll 1974: 3. ³⁴ Charpin 2003.

The status of the slave woman in ancient Near Eastern law was sometimes dominated by owners' seeing her as property and sometimes as a marriageable woman. Her legal personality was split between her owner and her husband, if those were different people. In an Old Babylonian text, a free man took a slave woman in marriage but was warned that if she asserted her freedom to her mistress, the mistress could simply sell her and keep what property the slave had. The husband would be left with no rights.³⁵

Another shorter-lived feature of slavery clear in the code is the issue of how to distinguish a slave. One could not count on the slave having a foreign look or accent, so 'marks', possibly tattoos, fetters, or a slave haircut, might be imposed. We do not know what the haircut looked like, but law-makers knew hair could be shaved off and so forbade such barbering except if authorised by a master.³⁶ Runaway slaves were punished by marks, possibly tattoos.³⁷

Patterson (1982: 60) argued that since hair was frequently a sign of honour in many societies, the slave had his hair removed or changed. However, cutting pubic hair was not a custom in Mesopotamia (*contra* Patterson 1982: 60–2). This idea derives from a translation of the penalty clause for repudiation of an adoptive relationship or of a slave, as in 'On the day that (a slave) says to her mistress, "You are not my mistress", she shall cut her [front] hair and sell her for money.'³⁸ '[Front] hair' is taken by Patterson, and perhaps meant by Mendelsohn, to mean pubic hair. This translation goes back to an early scholar who rendered *Stirnhaar*, explicitly 'forehead hair', and not pubic,³⁹ but the original just says 'she shall cut' and does not mention hair of any kind.

Assertions that ritual murder of slaves was widespread in the ancient Near East are also incorrect.⁴⁰ The source for this idea discussed the Ur graves, where there may have been some victims of sacrifice, but there is no clue that these persons were slaves.⁴¹ The only real evidence for human sacrifice in burials is the funerals for substitute kings, appointed in order to ward off or to suffer an evil predicted for the king; the Ur graves may conceivably have been early examples of that practice,⁴² but again it is not known if such persons were slaves before they were chosen for this dubious honour.

The acts of free persons in taking in and harbouring runaway slaves and using them as their own were of more interest to law-givers than any other aspect of slavery. Clearly harbouring was a major problem. The punishment for harbouring was basically restoration. The temptation must have been

³⁵ Westbrook 1998: 234.

³⁶ Roth 1997: 124, paragraphs 226–7.

³⁷ Reiner 2004.

³⁸ Mendelsohn 1948: 9.

³⁹ Schorr 1913: 522.

⁴⁰ Patterson 1982: 191, 222.

⁴¹ Finegan 1979: 32, 53.

⁴² Scurlock 1995: 1885.

widespread to increase one's labour force with hands that were willing to work if only to escape the old master.⁴³ We see the harbouring in an Old Babylonian letter where one writer who owned a cook complained, 'Then you corrupted my slave's views, so that my slave has run away to you from Babylon. You had the slave, who does not belong to you, taken along, and then you had him sold to someone else.'⁴⁴ The unequal power among the free persons allowed this cook to choose his master, but then he was sold off.

Hammurapi's vision of justice did not extend to freedom for slaves, but he did include wrongs against slaves among his list of punishable deeds, no matter who the perpetrator might be. Someone who hurt a slave was to be punished more lightly than one who hurt a 'man', a fully free citizen, or even a 'subjected one', from among the lower classes. But he was still punished and included among the weak whom the king wanted to protect from the strong, though this text especially was devoted to the protection of rights to property, in which slaves definitely were included. Even trusted slaves could not enter into contracts for their masters. Like children and imbeciles, slaves were not seen as fully legally competent persons.⁴⁵

From this period too we have a remarkable set of wisdom texts which reflect attitudes towards slaves. They were seen as lazy and unmotivated, as in the Sambo caricature of New World slavery. Slave girls especially were criticised for constant complaining. The rich young men to whom such texts were addressed were warned not to have sex with slave girls since they would turn on them. They brought 'pleasure, but also damage'.⁴⁶

Among such texts is an astounding set of admonitions against getting caught by slavers in the Iranian mountains. The slaves one saw in Mesopotamia came down from the mountains, and one could count on people from Mesopotamia not to enslave other Mesopotamians.⁴⁷ Slaving almost by definition lay outside the area controlled by strong governments, and so these lines in a literary text are welcome supplements to our understanding.⁴⁸

Most households had only small numbers of slaves. But in one inheritance thirty-two slave girls and slaves, along with large quantities of silver, 644 plough oxen and 120 cows, are mentioned.⁴⁹

MIDDLE BABYLONIAN EXPLOITATION

After *c.* 1500 BC, Mesopotamia underwent a dark age, in the sense that government archives ceased, and even the lengths of reigns of kings are unknown. Such conditions might have been ideal to encourage rogue

⁴³ Snell 2001: 79–86.

⁴⁴ Kraus 1968: text 155.

⁴⁵ Roth 1997: 82, paragraph 7.

⁴⁶ Snell 2003: 16.

⁴⁷ Snell 2003: 17–18.

⁴⁸ James 1988.

⁴⁹ Kraus 1972: text 244.

slaving, and it does seem that the population continued to decline. But when texts resume, the situation for slaves seems not to have changed much. We see in this Middle Babylonian period the word for 'men' clearly used to designate saleable people, along with other more usual terms known from earlier. Such 'men' and 'women' could get rations for an entire year, and their ranks included all age groups except the old. 'Lasses', the feminine equivalent of the 'lads' of Old Babylonian times, appear getting rations, while 'lads' worked as washers, butchers, eunuchs and even wranglers for horses.⁵⁰

The sources of slaves who were not debt slaves were beyond the central Mesopotamian area. In Nuzi in Northern Iraq, slaves were frequently but not always from the ethnic group called Lullubians, perhaps located in the mountains beyond Nuzi.⁵¹

The late second millennium saw a slow breakdown of the palace-centred economy especially in Syria-Palestine. Also the long-attested phenomenon of the urban underclasses joining with nomads to plunder the countryside increased, and this may have encouraged slaves to run away to join them.⁵² The Amarna letters to the Egyptian king from Asiatic lords mention the transfer of women especially from potentate to potentate, and most may have had no choice in the matter, though they may not have been slaves either (Moran 1992: texts 64, 268, 301, 309; 365 has *corvée* workers).

Archaeologists have found an intriguing item of evidence for slavery in a grave on a hillside at the site of classical Pella overlooking the Jordan Valley after 1350 BC. Two upper-class men were buried there with grave goods, but with them was another man with a manacle on his ankle. The constrained man might merely have been a criminal or prisoner of war, but of course both criminals and prisoners were sometimes made slaves. The shackled man apparently was executed and died violently on the spot.⁵³ There are no texts from Pella in this period, so we cannot reconstruct the story of these men, but we may guess that it had to do with slavery and oppression. Further inland a sanctuary near the modern Amman airport dating from about 1300–1200 BC clearly was a centre for human sacrifice. The status of those killed is impossible to determine, and even their ages and sexes are problematic, but it is possible that they were slaves.⁵⁴

FIRST MILLENNIUM

The Phoenicians in their seafaring heyday were said to be notoriously good at kidnapping people to be transported to distant lands as slaves.⁵⁵

⁵⁰ Sassmannshausen 2001: 117–26; Cardellini 1981: 157–67.

⁵¹ Maidman 1987: 163–6.

⁵² Liverani 1988: 541–52. ⁵³ Routledge 2003: 70–1.

⁵⁴ Hennessy 1985. ⁵⁵ Markoe 2000: 105.

The story told by Homer (*Odyssey* 15.400–50) about a boy enslaved by the devious Phoenicians reflects how the Greeks felt about them.⁵⁶ And later their descendants the Carthaginians had slaves in all sorts of jobs.⁵⁷

A set of cuneiform texts from the city of Harran, now on the Turkish–Syrian border, reveals a kind of census or population report to the Assyrian government around 750 BC concerning settlements of farmers. These people were more like serfs than slaves in that they apparently could not be sold, but they did owe service to the government, and they were not supposed to leave their posts.⁵⁸ It is not clear that these people were deportees, but there were at least a million people who were uprooted by the Assyrian government over the 250 years of imperial activity. Most were not enslaved but were forced to walk from their homes to the Assyrian heartland in northern Iraq, where they were settled on farms and forbidden to leave. Early on they were said to be ‘counted as citizens of Assyria’ and presumably allowed or forced to serve in the army. But later deportees were seen as more alien, perhaps because there were more of them.⁵⁹

The most interesting of the slaves under the Assyrians may have been the eunuchs. Though there is evidence of gender ambiguity in a statue of a singer at Early Dynastic (c. 2400 BC) Mari on the Euphrates, now on the Syrian–Iraqi border,⁶⁰ only later do we find the *ša reši*, ‘he of the head’, who, sometimes at least, was a eunuch. Such persons held high positions at court and worked among the royal harems because they could be trusted not to impregnate women. But people with that title also were sometimes generals and governors, and some even had families, perhaps through adoption if they really were castrated.

Eunuchs may have been the ‘ultimate slaves’, persons who were alienated from their pasts and who could have no future offspring.⁶¹ But we are very uncertain that the people ‘of the head’, *šalšut resi*, really were castrated, a procedure which is, understandably, not discussed in the texts.⁶² In the Bible *sarisim*, certainly cognate with the Akkadian, refers to high foreign officials, but again one cannot be sure of eunuchism.⁶³

The first Assyrian eunuchs were seen in the thirteenth century under Tukulti-Ninurta I. It is not so clear that Old Babylonian Mari’s use of the same term in military contexts really means that the persons involved were eunuchs. The etymology may actually be ‘one with two heads’ as a euphemism for one without testicles.⁶⁴ Hittite material does seem to indicate that the attendants designated by the term in Akkadian and hieroglyphic Luwian really were physically eunuchs.⁶⁵ Under the Neo-Assyrians

⁵⁶ Fitzgerald 1963: 279–83. ⁵⁷ Tsirkin 1987: 134; Markoe 2000: 91. ⁵⁸ Fales 2001: 171–8.

⁵⁹ Oded 1979. ⁶⁰ McCaffrey 2002: 380–1. ⁶¹ Patterson 1982: 315. ⁶² Meier 1938.

⁶³ Wolf 1962; Kedar-Kopfstein 1999. ⁶⁴ Deller 1999: 304–5, 309–11. ⁶⁵ Hawkins 2002.

the chief eunuch played an important role in administration and frequently led armies.⁶⁶

THE POOR AND THE RICH

In the Neo-Babylonian period (605–333 BC), there is a wealth of documentation about slaves, working in three capacities. First, there was a small number of royal slaves who did menial jobs in the palace and who had no chance of catching the eye or the favour of their master. It is not clear how a slave became a royal slave. Perhaps such slaves were prisoners of war retained by the king. Then there were slaves as janitors owned by the temples, which continued to be economic as well as religious centres. In this case the master was not even a real person, but a god, and so preferential treatment or manumission seemed to be impossible. Finally, the largest and best-known group of slaves were those owned by private persons. Among them we see great variety in the tasks performed, from agriculture to loan-sharking.⁶⁷

One became a slave by getting caught as a prisoner of war, being sold as a debt-slave, or, in the case of the temple slaves, being ‘dedicated’ by a family overwhelmed by crop failure and unable to continue caring for a child. The loan-sharking slaves could become very rich and in some ways quite powerful. They could marry in legally recognised weddings and must have known the high and mighty who gave them loans. They probably had access to amenities that very few free Babylonians could afford, and many apparently invested for themselves on the side and so controlled their own money as a *peculium*. They also owned their own slaves. But they never were allowed to accumulate enough money to buy their freedom or the freedom of their loved ones. Once the master of one of the rich slaves sold him along with his wife and children. The slave had some of his own money, but far from enough to match or to top the amount his new buyer spent.⁶⁸

Here one can see an illustration of the idea that slave status was not the same as economic status. The rich slaves could not keep their families or themselves from dishonour, though of course they cost the new buyer a very great deal of money, 24 manas (1,440 shekels) of silver, which bought the principal and his family of seven along with the loans owed him.⁶⁹

Once a slave was ordered to study to become a scribe;⁷⁰ another was apprenticed as a seal-cutter, another as a baker and another was to run a tavern.⁷¹ A unique text shows a Neo-Babylonian princess freeing a male slave, saying he ‘is free; he belongs to himself’.⁷²

⁶⁶ Tadmor 2002. ⁶⁷ Dandamaev 1984; Baker 2001.

⁶⁸ Dandamaev 1984: 345–71, 451–2. ⁶⁹ Dandamaev 1984: 361–2, 395. ⁷⁰ Dietrich 2001.

⁷¹ Baker 2001: 23. ⁷² MacGinnis 1993: 102.

There appears to have been a growth in the number of slaves through the first millennium, but texts fall off after the early Seleucid era around 270 BC. An Arsacid or Parthian period text from after 247 BC shows little girls as young as five given as slaves for building work, so clearly the institution continued, but the documentation did not.⁷³

EGYPT

In Egypt the history of slavery is harder to trace than in ancient Iraq, but it is nonetheless known that there were small numbers of slaves in early periods. They were termed *hm* meaning 'server', from a word for 'body', and free people sometimes termed themselves the *Om* of a god or king. We know that expeditions were sent south to kidnap workers termed *sgr.w-^cnh* 'bound for life'.⁷⁴ It has been argued that the 'bound for life' may have been treated like slaves, but they did not constitute a separate legal status in the Old Kingdom (2575–2125 BC).⁷⁵

There were not many 'bodies' in the earliest periods. In the Middle Kingdom (1975–1640 BC), there were many 'slaves of the king', some of whom were identified as Asiatics. These were presumably prisoners of war or people caught by other Asiatics and sold to Egyptians. In the period such 'bodies' could be inherited and bought. Slaves who repeatedly ran away could be punished with death. We know that runaway groups, including runaways from corvée duty, holed up in desert oases and were attacked by the king's police. There were also instances of individual owners manumitting favoured slaves. Some slaves owned fields, and most had names that made good sense in Egyptian and did not set them apart.⁷⁶ Runaways along with their families could be condemned to work for their lives for the state. Notable is the use of *tp.w* 'heads' for numbers of slaves, just as in Mesopotamia. The child of a slave woman was a slave, regardless of who the father was.⁷⁷

It was in the expansionist New Kingdom period (1558–1080 BC) that we see large numbers of slaves coming in as prisoners of war from Asia and from up the Nile in Africa. They were called *b3k.w* 'workers', which hardly explains their status. They were used in small numbers in domestic and other supervised labour. The government exercised active surveillance over foreign slaves.⁷⁸ Masters relied on the forbidding deserts on each side of Egypt to keep slaves from running to the east and west, limiting the problem of control to the narrow valley of the river, except down in the Delta where the swamps did allow runaways to disappear.

The New Kingdom was the time of Egypt's sustained intervention in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa. But prices in the New Kingdom seem stable

⁷³ Oelsner 1995: 120–2, 147–8. ⁷⁴ Loprieno 1997: 193. ⁷⁵ Poláček 1970: 161, 165.

⁷⁶ Helck 1984: 983–4; Berlev 1972: 23–5. ⁷⁷ Loprieno 1997: 198–200. ⁷⁸ Bakir 1952.

with men costing 2 *dbn* (a weight) of silver, or about forty shekels of silver. Women cost more, 4 *dbn* or eighty shekels,⁷⁹ presumably because they were valued for the children they might bear. Slave status could be inherited for a royal servant and for an Asiatic slave, and there was also a sizeable percentage in some texts who were native Egyptians.⁸⁰ Slaves could sometimes gain freedom by enlisting in the army.⁸¹

A document from Ramses II's time (1279–1212 BC) details the purchase by a woman of a young Syrian girl in exchange for a number of textiles and some bronze and copper vessels. The owner gave the girl an Egyptian name. The document also shows a person buying a tomb in exchange for a male slave.⁸²

Although the New Kingdom had 'houses of female slaves' apparently devoted to producing more slave children, it is also clear that some slaves could own land. In later periods in the first millennium, the roles of slaves again became murky. It seems that some forms of dependence became more like clientship than slavery.⁸³

The tasks slaves were forced to do varied from domestic service to agriculture. One Twelfth Dynasty letter (1979–1805 BC) commanded that a royal slave be made to learn to write 'without being allowed to run away'.⁸⁴

ISRAELITE SLAVERY

In the texts copied in religious circles in ancient Israel there was for the first time discussion of special concern for slaves from the in-group of Hebrews. Non-Hebrew slaves were ignored by law-givers and seem to have been treated as in the rest of the ancient Near East. Stories indicate that the Near Eastern descent rules applied, and the slave woman who bore a child to a free man, in this instance Abraham, found her son free and herself free even before the death of the father (Gen. 21:1–21). Hebrew legal thinkers limited the length of debt-slavery a Hebrew could endure to six years, while Hammurapi had limited debt-slavery service to three years (Exod. 21:2).⁸⁵ The Hebrew legalists also proposed the institution of a Jubilee year after forty-nine years, which would see the returning of land that had been sold; debt-slaves were also to go home (Lev. 25:25–8).⁸⁶ It is not known if this utopian idea was applied to non-Hebrew slaves. In later tradition if a slave converted to Judaism, he was then regarded as free.⁸⁷ But in Jeremiah's time, around 587 BC, as Jerusalem was falling to the Babylonians, the prophet complained that the six-year limit had not been observed for years and really ought to apply to all slaves. This time the owners acquiesced in

⁷⁹ Helck 1984: 984–5. ⁸⁰ Loprieno 1997: 200. ⁸¹ Shaw and Nicholson 1995: 38.

⁸² Gardiner 1935. ⁸³ Loprieno 1997: 206, 208, 213–14. ⁸⁴ Wente 1990: 86, text 107.

⁸⁵ Roth 1997: 103, paragraph 117. ⁸⁶ Chirichigno 1993: 329–39. ⁸⁷ Mielziner 1894: 3, n. 3.

freeing the slaves but then recaptured them, much to the disgust of the prophet (Jer. 34:6–22).

An important revelation of attitudes towards slavery was the Deuteronomic reforms, in which later thinkers revised parts of the early Covenant Code in a more compassionate direction for slaves and other oppressed persons. They were to be treated well 'because you were slaves in Egypt' (Deut. 5:15). The ultimate statement was the call to refuse to return runaway slaves to their owners (Deut. 23:15). If consistently applied, such a prohibition would have eroded the entire institution of slavery. It was interpreted in later times as applying only to Hebrew slaves who had returned as runaways to the land of Israel. But the statement can be taken at face value as a call to attend to the needs and desires of all humans, even including slaves.⁸⁸ It is also a kind of play on ancient Near Eastern treaties. Such treaties paid lots of attention to assuring that escapees were returned to their countries of origin, presumably for punishment by their masters. Deuteronomy as a whole is in the form of an ancient Near Eastern treaty, and the fact that it said the opposite of what such treaties usually said about runaways underlines the originality of the effort.⁸⁹

The usual term for slave in Hebrew was *ʿeved*, a term also used by free persons showing subservience. It probably just meant 'worker', like the Egyptian word.⁹⁰

Biblical sources were concerned for the slave wife, and such marrying up implied freedom for children and probably for the wife. A slave wife could be the first or primary wife of a free man.⁹¹

The Hebrews had besides the usual privately owned slaves also a group of temple slaves called *netinim*, 'given' people, who worked in the temple as long as it existed. Their origins and slave status are unclear, but they have been compared to the contemporary Neo-Babylonian temple slaves called *širku*, which also meant 'given'.⁹²

When Judahites were allowed to return to Israel by the Persians a generation after their exile around 520 BC, many brought slaves with them. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah list names of free people who returned, and the summaries say that of the 42,360 making the trek 7,337 were slaves, almost one in every six (Ezra 2:64–5 = Neh. 7:67–8).⁹³ This did not make the returners from exile a slave society, but it may have approximated the proportion of slaves in the Neo-Babylonian society they were leaving behind.⁹⁴ The irony of a recreated Israel celebrating its freedom with the help of slaves was lost on the exiles.

⁸⁸ Snell 2001: 129–30, 143. ⁸⁹ Weinfeld 1992: 169–71. ⁹⁰ Westermann 1975.

⁹¹ Kessler 2002. ⁹² Healey 1992; Dandamaev 1984: 469.

⁹³ Mowinckel 1964. ⁹⁴ Dandamaev 1984: 218, 648.

HITTITE SLAVES

The laws from the Hittite area in central Anatolia, what is now Turkey, from between 1400 and 1200 BC show three classes of serfs being manipulated by the government: deportees, 'taken ones' – probably meaning prisoners of war – and craftsmen. A term that is widespread in the newer version of the laws, written as 'prisoner' using an Akkadian word as a logogram, may stand for Hittite /Eipparas, which might be related to a verb for buying; these may have been chattel slaves.⁹⁵ Slaves could marry free women, and they were assumed to be able to pay a bride price for them; it may be that the free women became slaves for three years as a punishment for this, but then reverted to free status. The children of such unions were assumed to be free. The flexibility in this arrangement may be due to the shortages of labour, so slaves were to be rewarded for staying on the land and accumulating wealth.⁹⁶

Slaves were frequently used as herdsmen in the lucrative herding industry; this was lonely and undesirable work, though probably allowing for chances to escape.⁹⁷ Prices in the Hittite laws were twenty shekels of silver for ordinary slaves, and this was the same as the price of a draught horse; a slave trained as an expert on omens could cost twenty-five shekels.⁹⁸ Hire was one shekel of silver a month for a male labourer, half that for a female.⁹⁹

AEGEAN SLAVES

The Minoans in the third and early second millennium BC may have had slaves used in domestic capacities.¹⁰⁰ The evidence, of course, is entirely from art and from continuities with the later culture, since Minoan writing has not been deciphered.

The Mycenaean documents on clay tablets in the syllabic Linear B script show a number of slaves in the workforce, termed *do-e-ro* and *do-e-ra* for later *doulos* and *doula*. The slaves appear to have derived from captives. The greatest number of slaves were slaves of a god or goddess and so were attached to temples. Some had grants of land that they worked as part of their duties. One text implies that children of a slave father and a free mother were slaves. This would go against archaic Greek practice and the custom of the Near East in general, where one free parent tended to confirm freedom. But the passage is not unequivocal (Ventris and Chadwick 1973: 123–4, 166–8: 'Six women, reapers, their father a slave and their mother from [a place]').

⁹⁵ Güterbock 1972; Roth 1997: 224–5, paragraphs 48–9. ⁹⁶ Bryce 2002: 51–5, 121–3.

⁹⁷ Bryce 2002: 83. ⁹⁸ Bryce 2002: 52, referring to laws paragraph 177.

⁹⁹ Bryce 2002: 80 to laws 158. ¹⁰⁰ Castleden 1990: 25–6.

Although the subservience of the slaves seems obvious, they probably were not regarded as private property, but 'slaves of the god' were the largest group of smallholders of land at Pylos. They seem to have been dependent on private individuals, gods, and another social class of free or freer persons.¹⁰¹

AFRICAN SLAVES

Aside from the expeditions of the Egyptians, we know little of African conditions in ancient times. There were many chieftain-level societies that probably indulged in slavery, and some states that certainly did. One aspect of African thought about property and consequently about slavery proved important later. Many Africans apparently did not see land as capable of being owned.¹⁰² Perhaps this feeling derived from the very fecundity of the African environment where almost anything would easily grow. Owning particular bits of land did not make sense since there was more than enough to go around. But land ownership in Muslim areas did sometimes coexist with slavery, and slaves could be assigned to work particular fields of their masters.¹⁰³

The way to power was through controlling people, and one way to get more people was to enslave them. The status of slaves was inheritable, though slaves in Africa probably did not reproduce enough to replenish their numbers in the next generation. Useful slaves would be rewarded by being granted more freedoms and eventually might become full members of the master's community.¹⁰⁴

As elsewhere in the ancient world, such access to eventual freedom for some did not mitigate the dishonour or the horror of exploitation, and the membership in the kin group might not involve complete assimilation.¹⁰⁵ The distinction between servants who might be paid and slaves who were not is known in several African societies, and the happy story in which slavery ended in kinship was not necessarily frequently acted out.¹⁰⁶

CONCLUSION

The literate Near East had at least two thousand years' experience of slavery by the time the Greeks under Alexander arrived with their own take on the institution. And the varieties of experience slaves had has been rivalled only in the two thousand years since. To the argument that such enslaved people were not quite chattel slaves, we must answer that it is true that most

¹⁰¹ Uchitel 1985: 137–8, 173, 177. ¹⁰² Bohannon and Curtin 1971: 120–8.

¹⁰³ Fisher 2001: 216–17, 277. ¹⁰⁴ Lovejoy 2000: 9–15.

¹⁰⁵ Kopytoff 1982: 222. ¹⁰⁶ Fomin 2002: 13–15.

slaves were not sold in the course of their lifetimes. But many slaves could be sold. And the rights of slaves to appear in court, marry and do other things that some slaves in other societies could not do does not lessen the dishonour that was felt. When one of the richest men in Babylon was sold, he was not in a position to object, though he doubtless had many friends in high places. Society had contrived to demean him and to exploit his family, who were sold with him.¹⁰⁷ And still down the ages echoes the assertion in court in the late third millennium of a feeling shared by all who would ever be exploited for their labour and denied some of their humanity. To the court that would find against him and continue his slavery a man asserted, 'I am not a slave.'¹⁰⁸

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

A brief introduction in English is Mendelsohn (1948), to be supplemented by Chavalas (1997), Snell (1997) and (1998), and Ricks (1998). The only modern study of a whole period is Dandamaev (1984). Westbrook (1995) has considered legal aspects especially of the Old Babylonian period. Cardellini (1981) collected the legal texts. Texts in translation may be found still in Pritchard (1969) and also in Hallo and Younger (1997–2002). Hebrew institutions may be seen in Westermann (1975) and Healey (1992). Sasson (1995) gives a general overview of the ancient Near East. Several studies by Gelb elucidate Mesopotamian labour. Bakir (1952) remains the basic study for Egypt. Mycenaean labour has been studied by Uchitel (1985). Pre-contact African systems are surveyed by Kopytoff (1982). Tsirkin (1987) examined Phoenician and Punic labour. For ideology see Snell (2001).

¹⁰⁷ Dandamaev 1984: 361–2.

¹⁰⁸ Falkenstein 1956–7: no. 34, lines 4, 11.

CHAPTER 2

SLAVES IN GREEK LITERARY CULTURE

PETER HUNT

INTRODUCTION

Slaves are as conspicuous in the culture of the classical Greeks as they were important in their society. The action of the *Iliad* begins with a quarrel over a captive slave woman. In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus must re-establish his relationship with his slaves as well as with his wife to complete his homecoming. Philosophers and tragedians explored the relationship of luck and character using enslavement as a paradigm of catastrophe. The ‘clever slave’ in New Comedy took over important and subversive aspects of the comic hero of Old Comedy. Only in the genre of history with its increasingly narrow focus on politics and war were slaves largely absent. But even Greek historiography – and political discourse in general – though mainly devoid of actual slaves, cannot be understood without reference to the central concepts of political freedom or slavery. And politics was not the only place: Greeks used the metaphor of slavery in an astonishingly wide variety of contexts.

This mass of evidence is, however, obviously one-sided. The surviving literature of classical Greece was almost all written by slave masters and for its free, male citizens. Slaves – like women – are represented, especially in epic and drama, but they do not represent themselves.¹ Even if we confine ourselves to the views and attitudes of the free and of masters, the burning questions modern interlocutors would ask do not find ready answers: how did they justify and defend slavery? Or, to put it more stridently, why did they not see that slavery was, in essence, morally repugnant in its treatment of people as things, as well as oppressive and violent in its practice? Although contempt for slaves is well attested, for the explicit justification of slavery we rely on a few passages in ancient Greek literature. For criticisms of slavery there is even less to go on. If we divide our subject in three – the portrayal of slaves, the use of the slave metaphor, and debates about slavery – the last may be the most interesting to modern students. It is least represented in our evidence.

¹ For a possible exception, vase painting, see Lewis 1998–9.

Given this situation, it may seem ahistorical to give the issue of slavery's justification the prominence that we, rather than the Greeks, accord to it. But even the bugbear of anachronism will not silence the insistent questions. And what history is not anachronistic, at least in the questions it asks? In this chapter, the slave metaphor and the representation of slaves will be examined, but the main reason that this subject is of compelling interest will not be neglected.

THE SLAVE METAPHOR

Slavery gave rise to metaphors and analogies that permeated Greek culture. In addition, the contrast with slaves was basic to the self-conception of Greek male citizens. Thomas Wiedemann (1987: 11) aptly claimed of the Greeks: 'They were not thinking *about* slavery so much as using the concept "slavery" to think *with*.' The analogy with the relation of master and slave could denote control or be used to describe any steeply hierarchical relationship. For example, in a comic fragment, a slave argues for the ubiquity of slavery, to a master, to the law, to a tyrant, to fear, to the gods and, for the gods, to necessity.² Plato uses the analogy of slavery to describe the relation of the body and soul and in his cosmology.³ As David Brion Davis (1988: 6) sums up, '[S]lavery was taken as a model for certain religious, philosophic, and political dualisms, and was thus implicitly connected with some of the greatest problems in the history of human thought . . . any future attack on slavery would be bound to produce reverberations through the vast range of Western culture.' These connections and the positive use of the slavery metaphor did indeed become more and more important in religious and philosophical thought. Its constant use could naturalise the relationship of slavery. Even more common in classical Greece, however, was use of the slave analogy, not in approval of a natural hierarchy, but to condemn the subordination either of one state to another, or of its subjects to an unjust government. The converse of the condemnation of political slavery is the high value placed on freedom, an ideal fated to have a long and illustrious career. The development of this central classical value presupposes experience with slavery, but seems to have required more than this – since it did not develop in other societies with slavery.⁴ The use of the metaphor of slavery to condemn the servitude of Athenians, a large number of whom seem to have fallen into some sort of debt-bondage, is first attested in Solon's political poems in the early sixth century (4.18, 9.4

² Philemon, Fr. 31 (Kock). Other examples: Soph. Fr. 940 (Radt); Eur. *Hec.* 864–9; Antisthenes in Stobaeus 3.8.14; Pl. *Symp.* 183a; Xen. *Oec.* 1.17–23.

³ Pl. *Phd.* 79e–80a and the conclusions of Vlastos (1941); cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.1.28.

⁴ See Patterson 1991: 20–44. On the absence of the political metaphor of slavery in the Muslim world, see Lewis 2002: 54–56.

[West]). After a lapse – whether in our texts or in its use – of about a century, the value of freedom finally and decisively rose to prominence in reaction to the Persian Wars, which combined the threat of the external domination of Greece by what was viewed as a barbarian despotism with that of the imposition of tyrannies. The Persian Wars were – very soon afterwards and from then on – described in terms of the contrast between slavery and freedom. Later, the appeal to the need for external freedom was a rallying cry against first one and then another of the large cities that threatened to dominate Greece. It was, of course, subject to abuse: almost any compromise or reasonable accommodation to another state could be represented as ‘slavery’. For example, Thucydides (1.141.1) represents Pericles as claiming that imperial Athens would be submitting to ‘slavery’ if, in order to avoid war, it acquiesced to Spartan demands.

The internal use of the slave metaphor to condemn a government could be used at either the oligarchic or the democratic end of the political spectrum.⁵ For example, according to Thucydides (4.86), when Brasidas tried to convince the people of Acanthus to revolt from Athens, he gave the following assurance: ‘I do not think that I should be giving you real freedom if I were to take no notice of your own constitutions and were to enslave either the many to the few or the few to the many.’ (trans. Warner). In the face of this general consensus against political slavery, only a few outspoken critics of democracy, such as Plato, either could speak approvingly of a citizen’s slavery to the laws or to rulers or could imply that poor citizens are no better than insubordinate slaves (Plato, *Laws* 3.700a5, 6.762e1–5; *Republic* 8.563d3–e2; [Xenophon], *Constitution of Athens*, 1.10). But even Aristotle, none too enthusiastic about democracy, was reluctant to compare any relationship between free men with the steep hierarchy of slavery (Aristotle, *Politics* 1.1 1252a7–17; cf. Pl., *Statesman* 258e–261a and Xen., *Oeconomicus* 5.14–17). In less philosophical circles, the political use of the slave metaphor was overwhelmingly negative, both for the relations of states and within a state.

Was there any tension between the vocal condemnation of political enslavement and the acceptance, or even warm approval, of chattel slavery? In the Old South, slaveholders were warned not to let their slaves attend Independence Day celebrations, lest the talk of freedom ‘confuse’ them.⁶ Apparently no text argues that, if the citizen’s freedom was a moral good, so was that of the slave (cf. Pl. *Resp.* 8.563b6–7). It may be, however, that the growing prominence of the idea of political freedom in the fifth century contributed to another contemporary trend, one we shall remark on below, the increasing feeling that non-Greeks and non-Greeks only were fit for slavery. Certainly this attitude made for a convenient distinction between

⁵ See Raaflaub 2004: 203–49.

⁶ Genovese 1979: 126.

the Greeks who deserved political freedom and the non-Greeks whose slavery was unobjectionable.

Freedom continued to be valued highly in a wide variety of historical contexts, but the associations with actual slavery influenced the connotations of 'freedom' to a variable degree. Were the actual daily practice and experiences of chattel slavery present to his audience's mind, every time a Greek statesman invoked his city's 'freedom'? It seems likely that the practice of slavery contributed much more to the concept of political slavery or freedom in a slave society such as Athens than it does today.⁷ There are, however, some signs that the constant use of the metaphor of slavery did blunt its edge and take its shock value away. In the second half of the fourth century, Demosthenes uses the metaphor of slavery and freedom often in his attempts to rouse Athens to war against the encroachments of Macedon.⁸ After more than a century of both large and small city-states fighting for 'freedom', Demosthenes has to add details of slave life to maintain the impact of comparing Athens' plight or future position with that of actual slaves. He needed to talk of 'blows and torture of the body' (Demosthenes 8.50–1 = 10.27) or, of the people of Eretria under Philip, to say that 'they are slaves, whipped and slaughtered' (9.66). The mention of slavery by itself no longer carried such shameful and concrete associations.

In general, rather than any impetus to grant to slaves the political freedom attained by the poor citizen, we find that the opposite attitude predominated. The slave served as the 'Other' against which all citizens, from rich slaveholders to poor artisans, defined themselves as a unity. Thus, although the philosophers consider slave and master a natural pair, in popular discourse the opposite of slave was citizen – despite the fact that at least half of the citizen body did not own slaves and artisans sometimes worked next to slaves at identical jobs.⁹ In the same way that the system of slavery minimised subordinating economic ties between rich and poor citizens, the dichotomy between slave and citizen smoothed over their relationship on the ideological level.¹⁰

HOMER

Although the focus of this chapter is the classical period – and necessarily Athens from which the vast majority of our evidence comes – a few themes in Homer's treatment of slaves foreshadow or contrast revealingly with later representations.

⁷ DuBois 2003: 125.

⁸ There are more than twenty uses of the slave metaphor in Demosthenes' assembly speeches.

⁹ Mactoux 1980: 215; Randall 1953.

¹⁰ See e.g. Wood 1988: 121; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 163–4; Patterson 1991: 99; Mactoux 1980: 215.

To begin with, Homer treats enslavement of women as a blameless catastrophe. Accordingly, his portrayal of such newly captured slaves is sympathetic. For example, it is Odysseus himself who is likened to a woman facing slavery (*Od.* 8.523–31; cf. *Il.* 6.454–8). Slavery is also regarded as a disaster for a man. But, since men, like the husband in the simile, were supposed to die fighting, their capture was never so simple a catastrophe. At the very least, it requires a particular explanation. For example, Eumaeus, Odysseus' swineherd and the most fully developed slave character in Homer – and, perhaps, in Greek literature – was kidnapped as a child and sold to Laertes (*Od.* 15.381–8, 15.415–84; cf. *Il.* 21.37–40, *Od.* 14.336–9). This distinction between attitudes towards male and female slaves meant that women slaves continued to play a greater role when authors, especially tragedians, used slavery to represent a non-fatal reversal in status to which no blame attached.

Nevertheless, Yvon Garlan (1988: 120) argues that for Homer enslavement in war resulted from 'a temporary but irremediable weakness for which the gods or fate were really responsible'. He continues: 'the war captive was in no way predestined to be a slave through some inferiority connected with temperament, culture, or ethnic origin'. This formulation makes military prowess and the favour of the gods seem external to a man's worth, when in Homer's world they were central to it – and this feeling never disappeared entirely. In addition, there are hints that slaves were sometimes regarded as inferior. To begin with, the act of enslavement made a man worse. Eumaeus himself says, 'Zeus of the wide brows takes away one half of the virtue from a man, once the day of slavery closes upon him' (*Od.* 17.322–3, trans. Lattimore), and another passage (*Od.* 24.252) implies that slaves are inferior in appearance to the free.

These caveats and complexities notwithstanding, the way that slaves are presented in Homer is significantly different from their portrayal in the classical period, when slaves were typically viewed as foreign, opposite, inferior and hostile. To begin with, in Homer's world, there is little suggestion that Greeks are different from and superior to non-Greeks; slaves could not come from ethnic groups regarded as foreign and inferior. Secondly, Homer does not conceive of society – much less the universe – as basically divided into two opposites, free and slave. In many cases, it is hard to determine – and does not seem terribly important – whether a servant is a chattel slave or not.¹¹ Relationships between slaves and masters are often represented as intimate and almost familial – most obviously in the case of slave concubines who occasionally approach the position of free

¹¹ Finley 1978: 53–4; Garlan 1988: 36–7; Beringer 1982: 28; Raaflaub 1997: 639; Raaflaub 2004: 30–1; cf. Finley 1981: 132.

wives.¹² Finally, Homer depicts an idealised slavery marked by loyal service on one side and benevolent care on the other. His conception of slavery is essentially paternalistic. After hearing the story of Eumaeus' enslavement, Odysseus consoles him (*Od.* 15.488–91): 'But beside the sorrow Zeus has placed some good for you, seeing that after much suffering you came into the house of a kindly man, who, as he ought to do, provides you with victuals and drink, and the life you lead is a good one' (trans. Lattimore).

The *Odyssey* repeatedly explores the proper conduct of masters and slaves towards each other. Masters win over their slaves with gifts of clothing, kindness, and small talk over food and drink (14.139, 15.368–79). Their generosity to a faithful male slave such as Eumaeus might go so far as to include 'a home of his own, and a plot of land and a wife much sought after' (14.61–7, trans. Lattimore; cf. 14.449–52). Most conspicuous and emblematic are the cases when a good master or mistress is described as treating a slave as a parent would: Penelope treated Melantho as a daughter – though the ungrateful slave woman did not reciprocate her care (15.363–5, 18.322–5). Naturally enough, the suitors and their regime have done the opposite. In a vivid description of an anonymous slave woman's plight, Homer presents her curse (20.116–19): 'On this day let the suitors take for the last and latest time, their desirable feasting in the halls of Odysseus. For it is they who have broken my knees with heart-sore labour as I grind the meal for them. Let this be their final feasting.' The paternalistic ideal requires not only the master and mistress's care for the slaves, but also the loyalty of the slaves. And, indeed, many of Odysseus' slaves are extremely loyal: Eumaeus prays for Odysseus' return and 'calls him master even in his absence' (14.147), goes to sleep outside to protect the pigs (14.524–33), and condemns the servants who have not been taking care of Odysseus' dog (17.318–23). He displays the ultimate in devotion by fighting alongside Odysseus and Telemachus against the suitors. Whereas classical historians found it awkward to depict slaves proving their worth in battle, for Homer (22.113, 22.201, 22.265–70, 279–82) this behaviour was just another proof of Eumaeus' heroic fidelity to his master. Homer's representation of disloyalty is equally prominent: twelve of the fifty serving women had gone over to the suitors and were killed in a disgraceful way as punishment for their defection (22.424–5, 22.461–73). The disloyal Melanthios suffered mutilation and castration for his aid to the suitors (22.186–200, 22.474–7). For Odysseus to complete his return required not only his reunion with his wife Penelope, but also the re-establishment of his paternalistic ties with and control over the slaves of his household.

¹² Close relations: *Od.* 15.363–5, 24.409–11. Concubines and wives: *Il.* 1.112–15, 3.409, 19.290–300, but see the proviso of *Od.* 1.430–3. Children from such unions were inferior to those from legitimate marriage but still belonged to the nobility (*Od.* 4.11–12, 14.200–4).

Also telling for the conception of slavery in Homer, and probably also for the society which applauded his epics, the highest reward that slaves can hope for is not manumission; for Homeric slaves, freedom would mean separation from their protecting, heroic master. As Kurt Raaffaub puts it (1997: 639 on *Od.* 21.214–16), Eumaeus and Philoitios are ‘promoted within the household rather than emancipated from it’. They will be given the wife, house and property that loyal servants deserve.

To sum up, Homer’s picture is ambivalent: slavery is both a disaster and a mutually beneficial and respectful relationship. I began this discussion by emphasising a contrast between classical views of slaves as hostile outsiders and the Homeric picture of slaves as loyal family members. But we should not exaggerate this difference: even in the classical period where one common attitude towards slaves was one of hostile contempt, the loyal and hence admirable slave, devoted to his or her owner, continues as an ideal. We see it mainly in tragedy, but also in the epitaphs of some slaves whose masters praise them as ‘good men’ or ‘good women’, and in particular for their loyalty and obedience.¹³ So, too, slaves are included as loyal attendants on their masters’ and mistresses’ grave reliefs. Most striking, Plato introduces a discussion of slavery in the *Laws* by characterising the opposite opinions people hold about slaves. On one side we have contempt for slaves, a common and well-attested attitude as we shall see. But Plato (6.776d–e; cf. Pomeroy 1994: 65–7 on Xen. *Oec.*) is also aware of a strongly positive view:

Why, slaves have often enough before now shown themselves far better men in every way than brothers or sons; they have often been the preservation of their masters’ persons, property, and whole family. No doubt you know that such language about slaves is common.

(trans. Taylor)

In addition to providing evidence for a different, but also apparently common, attitude towards slaves, Plato’s comparison of slaves to ‘brothers or sons’ suggests that slaves were members of the *oikos* and could even be compared to immediate family members.

HISTORIANS

Although some archaic poems refer to slaves, it is not until two hundred years after the first written texts of Homer, not until the classical period (500–323 BC), that we again find slaves or slavery playing a substantial role, in classical historiography, comedy and tragedy.

¹³ Schumacher 2001: 248–9.

The classical historians, Herodotus, Thucydides and Xenophon, refer often to political freedom and slavery, but rarely to actual chattel slaves.¹⁴ In all three historians, captives are occasionally sold as slaves, and sometimes slaves use the opportunity of a siege to flee from their masters. Herodotus has some occasion to mention slaves in his descriptions of the familial politics of archaic tyrants and of the Persian court. But Thucydides and Xenophon focused on the political and military aspects of history; at first blush, it seems obvious why slaves are not prominent in their accounts. A political narrative required few references to slaves: they were accorded no political rights, and it was illegal for them even to speak in the assembly. The traditional view was that the situation was just as clear-cut when it came to slave participation in warfare. The seeming incongruity of resentful slaves fighting hard for their masters found support in the widespread classical ideal that military service gave a claim to political rights. Since slaves were not to earn or to seem to deserve such rights, they should not have been allowed to participate in war. More generally, warfare was the arena in which a man's greatest virtues could be shown; but slaves were usually seen as utterly lacking these important qualities. Such ways of thinking would make the participation of slaves in war awkward ideologically, and, so the argument goes, they were not recruited.

This view has not, however, gone unchallenged.¹⁵ Practical problems with recruiting a disaffected population exist, but they have been surmounted in many armies and navies throughout history; the advantages of being able to man more ships, for example, could be decisive in a crisis – and Greek wars produced many crises. The ideologies that would prohibit the use of slaves in warfare did not, in fact, determine the military policies of city-states. Rather, these ideologies manifested themselves in a pattern of neglect of slave participation in historiography. Sometimes, a passing allusion in a historian reveals a submerged pattern of slave use. For example, at one juncture in the Peloponnesian War, Thurian and Syracusan ships made up a small fraction of a much larger navy. According to Thucydides (8.84.2), their crews demanded their back-pay more vehemently since 'they were mostly free men'. From this we can infer that the Thurian and Syracusan crews contained some slaves and that all the other contingents contained even greater proportions of slaves.

Other genres of literature sometimes reveal patterns of slave participation in war not mentioned in historiography. Books of stratagems, for example, tend to revel in underhanded tactics such as the recruitment of slaves – or the incitement of slave revolts – and thus tell us things that the historians

¹⁴ Hunt 1998: 46–52, 128–9, on Herodotus and Thucydides; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 3.5.12–13, 4.8.2, 5.4.1, 6.1.12, 7.1.44.

¹⁵ Van Wees 1995: 160–5; Hunt 1998.

do not. Philo of Byzantium (5.4.14–15), for example, states that it is a good idea for besieging armies to promise freedom for deserting slaves, so that the besieged city will be unable to arm its slaves and will have to feed them better and thus run out of food sooner.¹⁶ The absence of slaves in the genre of history-writing does not reflect their non-participation in warfare; such participation was ideologically awkward and was under-reported as a result.

COMEDY

Comedy was set in contemporary Athens; although its free characters sometimes portray themselves as average citizens, they invariably own slaves. These serve often as the butts of jokes and violence. So, Aristophanes in *Peace* (743–50) claims that he will avoid the vulgar practice of arousing laughter by having slave characters beaten up and mocked. But he does not stick to his promise: several scenes depend on sadistic amusement at the expense of slaves.¹⁷ So, too, female slaves in comedy are primarily represented and provide amusement as objects of free men's lust (*Wasps* 1342–81; *Acharnians* 271–5).¹⁸

All this abuse was rather more pointed than, for example, the destruction of property and the humiliation and injury of bystanders in a Hollywood chase scene. A crucial contrast between free and slave in Athens was that the bodies of the former were inviolate whereas slaves were not only subject to whipping or sexual exploitation but were tortured when they appeared as witnesses in legal cases and could be branded if they tried to run away.¹⁹ Comic abuse is not just funny but also evokes the physical power of masters over the bodies of slaves and thus reaffirms a central distinction between free and slave.

Rather more surprising than sadism towards, or caricatures of, slaves, is the process by which certain slave roles became prominent. The actual development from the Old Comedy of the fifth century to the New Comedy of the late fourth and third centuries cannot be traced with much precision since we possess texts of only a small fraction of the comedies performed.²⁰ That being said, Xanthias in Aristophanes' *Frogs* (405 BC) is the first important slave character attested. As Kenneth Dover (1972: 206) summarises: 'he establishes a remarkable ascendancy over his vain and

¹⁶ Inscriptions can also reveal slave participation neglected in the historians: see Robert 1935; Laing 1966.

¹⁷ Dover 1972: 206, on *Vesp.* 1292–1325, *Lys.* 1216–24 and *Av.* 1313–36.

¹⁸ See Zweig 1992.

¹⁹ Contrast Dem. 8.50–1, 22.54–5, 24.166–7. Legal torture: DuBois 1991; Mirhady 1996; Thür 1996; Gagarin 1996. Branding: Ar. *Av.* 760; Xen. *Poroi* 4.21.

²⁰ *Pax* 742–3, produced in 421, already mentions tricky slaves.

cowardly owner. He is tough, courageous and resourceful, and . . . before long Dionysos is reduced from the status of master to that of a suppliant.' Xanthias is also addressed twice as 'noble', a striking epithet for a slave (179, 640). Of even more significance for the future course of comedy is Carion in Aristophanes' *Wealth*: his combination of smarts and low motivations foreshadows the typical slave role more than does Xanthias.²¹ The clever slave often plays an important role in the comedies of Menander and in other Greek plays that we know only from the Roman versions of Plautus and Terence. The clever slave is also attested in the papyrus fragments of other authors of New Comedy.²² A typical statement, from Menander's *Perinthian* (Fr. 3 [Sandbach]), combines contempt for his master and a delight and pride in tricking and making a fool of him. Despite the variety in this large group of distinct plays, each with its own dynamics, we can make some broad observations about the clever slave. On the most basic level, comedy does not represent the world as it is: we certainly should not imagine that most slaves spent their time repairing the love affairs of their masters' sons. Indeed, we can start to understand the appeal of the clever slave by remembering that a world turned upside-down is intrinsically amusing.²³ The appeal of the protagonist and comic hero in Aristophanes depended to a large extent on his frank disregard of conventional morality and his flouting of authority figures.²⁴ The identification with such a character has an obvious appeal. The tendency of comedy to tone down its more bawdy and iconoclastic aspects over the course of the fourth century led to a convenient split: the protagonist remained a free citizen but was now a much more well-behaved character than an Aristophanic hero. A clever slave did most of the scheming and flouting of authority.²⁵ So the slave took over a role whose appeal was like that of the Aristophanic comic hero: 'Anyone in a relationship of servitude – a son in relation to his father, a conscript in relation to his commanding officer, a poor man or freedman bound in clientage to his patron – all these could relish the triumph of the downtrodden slave and his fantastical inversion of all structures of power.'²⁶

Clever slaves were allowed an active role and their wily triumphs, but in several ways they were not fully objects of identification for the audience.²⁷ To begin with, the clever slave is clever; he is not brave, virtuous or high-minded. In Aristophanes' *Wealth*, Carion and his master Chremylus list in alternation the things that people strive for. The master lists love, culture, honour, valour, ambition, high command, but the slave comes up

²¹ Dover 1972: 205. ²² Harsh 1955.

²³ Dover 1993: 46; see also Whitman 1964: 237–9; Segal 1968: 99–169.

²⁴ Whitman 1964: 52; Dover 1972: 35; Salinger 1974: 93.

²⁵ Dover 1972: 207; Salinger 1974: 107; cf. Parker 1989.

²⁶ Wiles 1988: 66, on clever slaves in Plautus.

²⁷ McCarthy (2000) argues for the complexity of the audience's reaction to Plautine comedy.

only with different types of food (189–93; cf. Xen., *Cyropaedia* 8.1.43–4 and [*Athenaion Politeia*] 14.657c). His typical bombastic pride serves also to highlight the triviality of his pursuits.²⁸ The masks slave characters wore in performance also reinforced a condescending attitude towards clever slaves: masks represented slaves as red-haired foreigners with asymmetrical – and hence ugly or suspect – raised right eyebrows.²⁹ In terms of the plot, the clever slave does not act on his own behalf as much as for the sake of his master, most commonly a young man trying to trick his father. The slave is not the main character. Although he does trick and defeat an authority figure, the edge of his effrontery is blunted by his loyalty to another master. Finally, emancipation is rarely the goal of the clever slave.³⁰ Thus, the success of the clever slave is not at odds with the reintegration and reaffirmation of the household with which New Comedy typically concludes. The inversion effected by the clever slave is a limited one.

TRAGEDY

Like Homer, the tragedies of fifth-century Athens present slavery as an appalling catastrophe. Most strikingly, three plays of Euripides, *Hecuba*, *Andromache* and the *Trojan Women*, revolve around the enslavement of women. Here the degradation of slavery is in sharp relief. Hecuba, for example, exclaims: ‘I must work the bolt that bars their doorway, I whose son was Hector once; or bake their bread; lay down these withered limbs to sleep on the bare ground, whose bed was royal once.’³¹ Her emphasis is on the reversal of fortune involved in being captured and enslaved rather than the justice or injustice of slavery. In another passage (509–10; cf. Hdt. 1.32; Arist., *Nicomachean Ethics* 1.10.1), when Hecuba bemoans her lowered state, she does not conclude with an anti-slavery statement, but rather with the Solonian moral: ‘Count nobody lucky until they have died.’

Nevertheless, since drama gives voice to all classes of people, it sometimes presents a ‘worm’s eye’ view of slavery far different from slave-owners speaking in their own voice.³² Typical tasks for female slaves – grinding, kneading and baking bread, cleaning the floors, nursing and raising their masters’ children, bolting and guarding their masters’ bedroom doors, or sharing his bed – are depicted from the point of view of the slaves doing them. We hear about the humiliation of being put up for sale, the hopelessness of arguing with a mistress or master, the discomfort of sleeping

²⁸ E.g. Plaut. *Bacch.* 925–77, based on Menander; see Salinger 1974: 109–10, 117.

²⁹ Wiles 1988: 63.

³⁰ McCarthy 2000: 212; see also Salinger 1974: 109; Segal 1968: 164–7; contrast the more subversive *Life of Aesop* (especially 78–90).

³¹ Eur. *Tro.* 474–99 (492–5 quoted, trans. Lattimore); also Soph. *Trach.* 296–306, Eur. *Hec.* 349–68.

³² Hall 1997: 123.

in straw sacks on the ground, and the long, weary days of work (Aeschylus, *Libation-Bearers* 749–62; Sophocles, *Ajax* 489–91; Eur. *Tro.* 190–6, 506–8; *Hec.* 357–68; *Andr.* 186–91). On a less concrete level, we learn that slaves who loved their masters provoked hostility from their fellow slaves, a perhaps unique piece of evidence that some slaves did possess and enforce a degree of ‘us against them’ solidarity (Eur. Fr. 50 [Nauck]). The desire of slaves for liberation and a return home can also be vividly depicted.³³

These descriptions seem to show an insight into and pity for the experiences of slaves. To modern readers, to whom slavery is anything but inevitable and necessary, this empathy would seem naturally to lead to questions about the justice of the institution and attempts to change it: in the nineteenth century, slave narratives were powerful weapons in the arsenal of abolitionists. A number of scholars have taken this tack and regard Euripides, in particular, as a proto- or a crypto-abolitionist.³⁴ Although we shall eventually want to revise this conclusion, such scholars can point to a number of passages that imply a critical attitude towards slavery. On at least one occasion, we hear a condemnation of slavery in general terms: ‘Alas, what an evil slavery has always been / It endures what is not right, overcome by force.’³⁵ In addition, the basic worth of slaves is repeatedly asserted in Euripides, apparently in opposition to the claim that slaves are intrinsically inferior to the free or noble.³⁶

If we put these passages together with the chorus from *Hecuba*, we can construct a Euripidean criticism of slavery in terms of the common sophistic distinction between nature and convention and, thus, in much the same terms as the anonymous opponents of Aristotle, whose attacks on slavery we shall discuss below.³⁷ This line of argument has two main tenets: first, the difference between slaves and the free depends on convention – it is a matter of the ‘name’ – rather than nature; secondly, slavery is based on violence and thus unjust.³⁸ So the plays of Euripides give voice not only to the complaints of individual slaves, but also to general criticisms of the institution.

Such critical voices are a function of the ‘multivocal’ aspect of Athenian drama. They should not be dismissed out of hand and are of great interest since they tell us what opinions were possible in Athens. But such statements and descriptions turn out not to be a dominant strain of thought

³³ Eur. *IT* 447–55. See also the chorus of slave women in Aesch. *Cho.* 76–85, 101–4, with Patterson 1991: 111–15.

³⁴ e.g. Nestle 1901: 348–61; Daitz 1971: 224; Synodinou 1977; Moritz 1998; cf. Vogt 1975a: 18.

³⁵ Eur. *Hec.* 332–3. See also Philemon Fr. 95 (Kock): ‘Even if somebody is a slave, he has the same body. For nobody was ever born a slave by nature . . . fortune enslaves the body.’

³⁶ Daitz (1971: 224) lists six passages: *Ion* 854–6, *Hel.* 728–31, 1640–1, Fr. 495 40–3, Fr. 511, Fr. 831 (Nauck); cf. Fr. 51, where the ‘slave’ is actually Alexander/Paris.

³⁷ Daitz 1971: 225–6; cf. Nestle 1901: 360–1.

³⁸ Nestle 1901: 359–60; Kannicht 1969: 208.

even within the dramas of Euripides, much less those of Aeschylus and Sophocles. Rather, the ideology of intrinsic worth dominates tragedy, and the slavery that is subject to the most intense questioning – that of nobly born women – is one safely distant from the institution in contemporary Athens.³⁹

To begin with, the particular type of nobility that slaves most often claim consists of determined loyalty to their masters: ‘Slaves, if they are true / find no glory greater than to perish for their masters’ sake’.⁴⁰ This brand of nobility was probably more comforting to masters than subversive of the system of slavery.⁴¹ Not only do slaves claim to prove their intrinsic worth in their fidelity, but they also seem to accept, and even to embrace, the importance of social barriers and boundaries. One of the most famous declarations of slave nobility comes from Euripides’ *Ion* (850–6): ‘To pay the debt I owe my masters, thus, / to live or die. A slave bears only this / disgrace: the name. In every other way / an honest slave is equal to the free’ (trans. Willets). This statement is motivated by loyalty, but also by the abhorrent thought that the child of a slave woman might be introduced into the noble family of his masters (836–8). The claim of nobility is also undercut by the fact that the slave is advocating, and later attempts, murder by poison (1210–16).

The complaints of the enslaved noblewomen of Troy turn out to be even less subversive. Slavery is presented as horrible for those who were originally and naturally noble. The enslavement of a princess might be presented as a dismal and undeserved fate, but such judgements could be kept quite separate from judgements about the average slave – who was not, after all, the daughter of a mythical king.⁴² Indeed, in *Hecuba* (365–6), the newly enslaved Polyxena fears that she might suffer the horrible and degrading fate of having to share the bed of a money-bought slave.

In tragedy, the distinction is generally maintained between born or long-standing slaves and the sad fate of those newly reduced to slavery. The former – who most resemble actual slaves in Athens – may voice their petty complaints, but their fate cannot be compared to the tragic fall of the Trojan nobility. As Edith Hall (1997: 112) concludes: ‘in the case, however, of the never-free, slaves from birth, the tragic texts everywhere assume that the slave/free boundary is as fixed, natural, and permanent as the boundary between man and god’.⁴³ Tragedy does give voice to slaves, but

³⁹ Hall 1997: 93; see also Dover 1972: 207–8.

⁴⁰ Eur. *Hel.* 1640–1; cf. 726–33. As in Homer, this emphasis on a slave’s duty is matched by occasional references to the virtues of a good master (Aesch. *Ag.* 950–5, 1035–46; Eur. *Alc.* 767–71).

⁴¹ Garnsey 1996: 64–9. ⁴² Hall 1997: 111; DuBois 2003: 152.

⁴³ See also Vogt 1975a: 21; DuBois 2003: 144, 148–9, 152; contra Daitz 1971: 222–3; Synodinou 1977: 24.

other characters display contempt for them. It is completely unremarkable when, for example, a character asks, 'Are we slaves?' to exhort his fellows to avoid cowardly passivity. Throughout tragedy, to act like a slave has entirely negative connotations (e.g. Soph., *Philoctetes* 995–6, 1006; *Trachiniae* 453–4; Eur., *Alcestis* 675–8; see Vogt 1975a: 17). And, if we have slaves defending their worth, we also see derogatory attitudes towards slaves, even in Euripides (e.g. Frs. 49, 86 [Nauck]). Finally, the concerns of slaves by birth, however laudable – especially in their concern for their masters – often serve to highlight the loftier concerns of the noble characters: '[slaves] are allowed no share in tragedy'.⁴⁴ To conclude, it is far from clear that the statements we consider appealing – the condemnation or questioning of slavery – show the real and main Euripidean or the tragic attitude towards slavery.⁴⁵

CONTROVERSY ABOUT SLAVERY

Nevertheless, as Garnsey (1996: 11) argues, there were occasionally open and contentious discussions about slavery and 'rather more than a universal, passive acceptance of the institution'. Indeed, the development of explicit justifications for slavery, most notably by Aristotle, suggests that the institution sometimes came under attack.⁴⁶ Even though we do not possess extended critiques of slavery, so much of what was written – not to mention what was spoken – in the classical period has been lost that we cannot rule out the possibility that the most intense and sustained criticism has not survived.

Two groups are particularly under-represented in our sources. First, our most conspicuous loss is of the thinking and the words of actual slaves.⁴⁷ Antisthenes, the reported son of a Thracian slave woman, wrote an entire treatise *On Freedom and Slavery*. The one surviving quotation (Stobaeus 3.8.14) refers to metaphorical slavery to fear, but it is hard to believe that the whole work operated on this metaphorical level and contained no judgements about actual slavery. In one lawcourt case, Apollodorus, the son of a freedman, thought that describing Phormio, a freedman, as an ungrateful, foreign slave would move the jury of Athenian citizens against him (Dem. 45.30, 45.81). What Phormio or even Apollodorus' father, Pasion, thought about such prejudices can be surmised from *For Phormio*, a vigorous defence speech, but one by Demosthenes rather than in Phormio's own words. It presents Phormio as intelligent, hard-working, virtuous

⁴⁴ Vogt 1975a: 19. ⁴⁵ Vogt 1975a: 16; contra Nestle 1901: 352.

⁴⁶ Garnsey 1996: 124–7; Kraut 2002: 277–8.

⁴⁷ This makes the repeated claim that they did not criticise the system of slavery (e.g. Finley 1981: 119) as much an act of faith as any claim of proto-Marxian revolutionary consciousness.

in his personal dealings and possessed of an outstanding reputation for trustworthiness in his business (28–32, 43–52, 57). Phormio's defence seems quite at odds with any theory of slaves' intrinsic inferiority. Phormio himself may well, however, have taken the tragic view of slavery as a necessary evil that he had fortunately escaped. What we know is that Phormio and Pasion continued to employ slaves in their businesses; so, despite their experience of slavery, they must have fallen well short of becoming abolitionists.⁴⁸

Secondly, most free citizens, whose views have not been preserved, did not own slaves. If such poorer citizens succumbed entirely to the ideology that united all citizens in opposition to slaves – possible but not certain – they may have had no more sympathy for slaves than slaveholders. Non-slaveholders did not, however, have the strong, vested interest in slavery that owners had – and this could have made a difference.⁴⁹ It is our conclusions about the views of slaveholders that can be firmly based in our surviving texts – and they are the group least likely to question slavery, an institution on which their wealth and lifestyles depended.

POPULAR THINKING AND JUSTIFICATIONS OF SLAVERY

These caveats notwithstanding, many treatments of Greek thinking about slaves posit a sea change in the fifth century. As Steven Daitz (1971: 218) sums up:

[T]he Greeks, who had previously considered slavery the result of accident or chance (*tyche*) – such as war, piracy, or indebtedness – , in the course of the fifth century after the Persian Wars, in a radical swerve of concepts, came to consider it the result of the nature (*physis*) of the enslaved. And they assumed, at the same time, that the nature of an individual was inextricably bound to his nationality.

This picture is too simple in one respect. We have already seen that for Homer capture in war was not simply a matter of bad luck. Military prowess remained a cardinal virtue in the classical period, so defeat – and especially surrender and enslavement – could hardly fail to suggest inferiority: in Plato's *Republic* those guardians who fail in courage and surrender to the enemy will not be ransomed – presumably because they deserve to be enslaved (5.468a; see also *Apology* 39a; Thuc. 4.40; Xen. *Hell.* 4.5.14; Andocides 3.30). Just as military prowess, or at least service, justified rule or citizenship, defeat in war went a long way to justifying enslavement.⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Pasion persistently refused to allow one of his slaves to be tortured in a legal case (Isoc. 17.13–17), but it is unknown whether he was motivated by self-preservation, a general humanity or fellow-feeling for a slave.

⁴⁹ Only one source suggests that they held the opposite interest: Timaeus in Athenaeus, *Deipnosophists* 6.86.

⁵⁰ Hunt 1998: 146–60.

Therefore, as we saw in Homer, it is mainly for women that slavery is pure, undeserved misfortune.⁵¹ So, rather than two alternatives, three ways of thinking about slaves competed and sometimes combined: the militaristic view, the ethnocentric view and the view of slavery as a misfortune.

The assumption that non-Greeks were inferior and, in one sense or another, fit for slavery grew in prominence during the classical period.⁵² A concise presentation of this view comes from Euripides' *Iphigenia in Aulis* (1400–1): 'It is right that Greeks rule barbarians and not barbarians Greeks, mother, for the barbarian is a slavish thing while the Greeks are free people.' That this statement was not an outrageous or idiosyncratic declaration is clear, since the chorus immediately praises Iphigenia. Such views became more and more persuasive as the tendency for Greeks to consider themselves a group in opposition to non-Greeks grew during the fifth century and especially during and after the Persian Wars.

Two other trends reinforced this way of thinking. First, as the political concept of freedom became more prominent, especially in the fifth-century Athenian democracy, a tendency developed for the Greeks to look down on the people living under monarchy as lacking freedom (e.g. Eur., *Helen* 276).⁵³ It was easier to believe in the intrinsic slavishness of peoples who already lacked political freedom.⁵⁴ Secondly, there also sprang up a number of biological theories that correlated a country's climate and psychology with its system of government and political independence ([Hippocrates], *Airs, Waters, Places* 16, 23; Arist. *Pol.* 7.1327b23–33; Hdt. 9.122.2–4).

Although neither popular nor intellectual opinion about non-Greeks was homogeneous or always consistent, this prejudice provided a convenient rationale for slavery.⁵⁵ Indeed, the assurance of Greek superiority and especially these climatic explanations of it were the closest classical Greece came to a racist justification of slavery. All of this emphasis on the slavishness of barbarians made sense, because a majority – perhaps a vast majority – of slaves at Athens were in fact non-Greeks.⁵⁶ But, as this justification of slavery grew more prominent, Greek slaves become an increasingly awkward anomaly. While slavery in general remained widely accepted, condemnation of the enslavement of Greeks was commonplace. Plato's *Republic* provides a famous statement of this view: his model city

⁵¹ Note that tragedies can focus on the plight of enslaved women, but not of enslaved men; cf. Dem. 19.196–8, 19.305–7; Aeschin. 2.4–5, 2.153–8.

⁵² Weiler 1968; Rosivach 1999: 142–8; Isaac 2004: 257–303. Conversely, negative stereotypes about slaves tended to be transferred to non-Greeks (Rosivach 1999: 143, n. 63.)

⁵³ See Schlaifer 1960: 95; Davis 1988: 66–7; Kraut 2002: 292–3, 303.

⁵⁴ Davis 1988: 66–7.
⁵⁵ Pl. *Plt.* 262c–263a, for example, criticises the lumping together of all non-Greeks. See Hirsch 1985; Redfield 1985; Miller 1997.

⁵⁶ Garlan 1987; Rosivach 1999: 129–36.

will consider wars among Greeks as deplorable, intestine struggles and will not enslave the defeated (5.470e–471c; cf. Xen. *Hell.* 1.6.14–15). Such sentiments did not represent the first step towards the elimination of slavery altogether, but rather the sharpening of ethnic distinctions. They grew out of a notion of natural slavery rather than in opposition to it. So Aristotle (*Pol.* 7.1334a2–3) opposes the enslavement of Greeks captured in war but was so far from being an abolitionist that he argued that one of the legitimate purposes of military training was to allow a state to reduce to slavery those people who are natural slaves – apparently no other justification for war was necessary in such cases.

SLAVES IN UTOPIAS

Although these rationalisations of slavery are well attested, the main reaction to slavery may have been simple acceptance of the status quo: slavery was long established and seemed likely to continue. In one place, however, in utopian thinking, one might hope that such cultural inertia would be less binding. The conscious design of a utopian society minimises the unreflective acceptance of traditional practices. Most important, if some Greek thinkers found slavery an immoral and arbitrary institution but felt that it was so central and basic to their society as to be unalterable, they could have expressed their repugnance for the institution in a hypothetical construction. It is striking, however, that the overturning of an institution we find so objectionable was not a major aspect of Greek utopian thought and is indeed barely attested.

Only in the utopias furthest removed from reality (those of myth and fantasy rather than those providing an ideal for, or a critique of, contemporary society) do the Greeks envision societies without slavery – and not always then. In Hesiod's *Works and Days* (III, 116–18), we hear about the age of Cronos, in which a golden race inhabited the world and 'the fruitful earth unforced bore them fruit abundantly and without toil'. At the Cronia, an exuberant harvest festival, one source reports that slaves and masters exchanged roles.⁵⁷ This reversal suggests that the age of Cronos may sometimes have been conceived of as an egalitarian one without slavery. In some comic fragments, we see descriptions of similar ages or places marked by abundance and supernatural convenience. Sometimes such worlds are said to have had no need of slaves. A speech in Crates' *Wild Animals*, produced in fifth-century Athens, depicts a place in which slaves are simply not needed since fish, for example, fry themselves for your benefit.⁵⁸

⁵⁷ Accius in Courtney 1993: 34.

⁵⁸ Crates, *Wild Animals* Fr. 14 (Kock). Women replace slaves in Pherecrates' *Savages* (Ath. 6.263b); cf. Pl. *Leg.* 7.805d–e; Hdt. 6.137.

It is not surprising that some such fantastical worlds do not have chattel slaves. What is shocking to modern sensibility is that several of Aristophanes' otherwise egalitarian fantasies preserve slavery. In *Women of the Assembly* (612–29), not only property but also sexual opportunity is equalised: for example, old and unattractive women have first shot at good-looking young men. But slaves benefit not at all. They figure in the sharing of property only by being evenly distributed: no longer will one man have dozens of slaves and another none (593–4). Brothels will be closed down, so that slave women cannot compete sexually with the free (717–24). These are the only abuses involving slavery that the unfettered imagination of Aristophanes sees fit to correct (cf. *Plut.* 517–26).

We risk, however, taking too serious a view of comic playwrights by judging their whimsical fantasies as if they might aim at a serious programme of reform rather than amusement. But, if we turn to the works of political theorists, who did not aim to be funny, the picture is the same: however radical their other reforms, in no case do they even consider the abolition of slavery.⁵⁹ This is certainly true for the ideal states of Aristotle (*Pol.* 7.1330a26–32) and Phaleas of Chalcedon (*Pol.* 2.1267b14–18). If one expected better from Plato, one would be disappointed. The 'second-best city' of Plato's *Laws* will depend on slave labour, so Plato proposes a number of laws to regulate the slaves. As Glenn Morrow (1939: 194, 198) noted, in every case where the laws in the ideal city of Plato's *Laws* differ from contemporary Athenian law, it is in the direction of greater harshness towards slaves and of accentuating the gulf between slave and free: 'No American slave code was so severe.'⁶⁰

Finally, the ideal state in Plato's *Republic* stood considerably further away from contemporary practice than did the states of Phaleas, Aristotle or Plato's own later *Laws*. In addition to radical innovations such as abolition of private property among the guardians and a public system of education, Plato argues at length for what amounts to the abolition of the household among the elite. Consequently, some women, freed from the constraints of the family, may join the ruling class of philosophers.⁶¹ Plato's city could hardly be more alien to mainstream Greek practice. Nevertheless, Plato offers no arguments against the institution of slavery. Slaves are treated in the *Laws* only when Plato gets to the issue of property, so in the *Republic* he probably considers slavery a mere matter of property ownership among the third class of citizens, a topic in which he shows little interest.⁶² His almost complete silence about slavery and especially his failure to mark its appearance in the evolution of the city have led some scholars to deny that slaves existed in the *Republic*.⁶³ Slaves seem not to have been important to

⁵⁹ Garlan 1988: 128. ⁶⁰ Davis 1988: 66. ⁶¹ Okin 1976; contra Jacobs 1978.

⁶² Vlastos 1973: 141, n. 6. ⁶³ Calvert 1987; Schüttrumpf 2003: 245–56.

his whole conception of the city, but, on balance, the fact that he does not address the issue explicitly, together with a couple of oblique references to slavery, suggests that Plato assumed the continued existence of slaves even in his perfect state.⁶⁴

To conclude, Joseph Vogt (1975b: 27) claimed that Greek utopias reveal ‘the extent to which Greek thought found slavery repugnant, even if these sentiments were not strong enough to put a stop to such inhumanity’. One might more reasonably conclude that the extent to which Greek thought found slavery repugnant was minimal.

CRITICS OF SLAVERY

In the winter of 370/369 BC a Theban-led army marched into the Peloponnese and liberated Messenia from Sparta. The Helots of Messenia were a serf-like class, but the Spartans had long referred to them as ‘slaves’ and general Greek opinion was more prone to acquiesce in the judgements of its most powerful state than to object that the Helots were not true chattel slaves. The transformation of this ‘slave’ population into a Greek city-state – with walls, armies and allies – was a shocking development. Three intellectual reactions are attested. First, the Messenians were Greeks and had been unjustly enslaved; the enslavement of other people, non-Greeks in particular, was still unobjectionable. Secondly, the Messenians were truly slaves and thus their liberation was deplorable. Thirdly, the emergence into freedom of a previously enslaved population undermined any notion of intrinsic slavery. Thus, in his *Messenian Speech*, Alcidas, an intellectual from Aeolis who was active in Athens, states: ‘God made all men free. Nature has made nobody a slave’ (Scholia to Arist. *Rhet.* 1.13.2).

It is, however, the ‘Anonymous Opponents of Aristotle’ who head the depressingly short list of ancient critics of slavery. Their view, described in Aristotle’s *Politics* (1.1253b20–3), was that slavery is contrary to nature. They attacked the institution using the distinction, common especially in the fifth century, between nature, *physis*, and convention, *nomos* (e.g. Ar., *Clouds* 1421–9; Arist., *Sophistical Refutations*, 173a8–18), and made two arguments why slavery is contrary to nature and thus unjust (a sentiment seen already in tragedy). First, the difference between slave and free is one of convention rather than due to a natural distinction between different kinds of people. Secondly, slavery depends on force, and natural institutions do not need to be maintained this way.⁶⁵

⁶⁴ Vlastos 1973 on Pl. *Resp.* 5.469b5–471c3 and 4.433d; Fragomichalos 1984.

⁶⁵ Schütrumpf 1991: 233; Williams 1993: 113; contra Kraut 2002: 298, n. 38. Heraclitus’ view of nature as constant change could imply the opposite view: violence and change were according to nature, and all-powerful war made some people free and others slaves (Fr. 53 with Kirk, Raven and Schofield 1983: 193–4).

A related criticism of slavery appears when Aristotle (*Pol.* 1.1255a8–11) discusses the convention by which those captured in war belong to their conquerors: ‘But many of those conversant with the law challenge the justice of this . . . Their supposition is that it is monstrous if someone is going to be the subject and slave to whatever has superior power and is able to subdue him by force’⁶⁶ (trans. Reeve). The capture of slaves in war depends upon superior force and does not distinguish between natural slaves and those defeated in what might even be an unjust war. Here we have a thoroughgoing condemnation of, at least, one main source of slaves – a condemnation with which Aristotle himself agrees. It is easy to imagine somebody taking the next step and arguing that people – or at least Greeks – captured in war should not be enslaved. And amazingly enough, one tantalising passage in a late source seems to describe a law of Lycurgus, a prominent politician in Athens from 338–322, that may have prohibited the purchase of war captives as slaves. Alas the scope and duration of the prohibition are obscure.⁶⁷

ARISTOTLE ON NATURAL SLAVERY

These two passages reside in Aristotle’s *Politics*, within his theory of Natural Slavery, a doctrine of immense and pernicious influence. Some scholars argue that Aristotle’s views are idiosyncratic. I hope to show that this view is mistaken: most of Aristotle’s arguments about slavery find parallels in the common beliefs of his time. These connections go some way to explaining why the coherence of Aristotle’s theory is only the rough-and-ready consistency one expects of popular thinking and has usually been found wanting in philosophical terms: ‘a battered shipwreck of a theory’.⁶⁸ The congruence between popular and philosophical views is not the result of Aristotle’s *endoxic* method of first explaining and then interrogating conventional, informed opinion, since he does not rely heavily on this method in his discussion of slavery.⁶⁹ But, as we shall see below, at crucial points he adduces popular views in defence of his theory; more generally, the overall direction and limits of his inquiry were determined by presuppositions pervasive at the time.⁷⁰ Contextualising his views will also suggest how he could rest content with such arguments, and, most important, it will illustrate vividly the cultural forces against which his anonymous opponents, or any critics of slavery, had to contend.

Aristotle justifies slavery in two ways: he presents an argument ‘from above’ and an argument ‘from below’.⁷¹ Aristotle first argues that the system

⁶⁶ See Saunders 1984; Schütrumpf 1991: 276–80.

⁶⁷ [Plut.] *Xorat.* 841f12–842a4, with Pritchett 1991: 417; contrast Klees 1998: 334–54. On the equally obscure story that the tyrant Peisander banned the purchase of slaves, see Picard 1984.

⁶⁸ Garnsey 1996: 107. ⁶⁹ Schofield 1999: 121. ⁷⁰ Cartledge 1993b: 142.

⁷¹ Williams 1993: 114.

of slavery is necessary and natural. In line with contemporary practice and belief, he treats slaves as property: slaves are 'animate tools', ownership of which is necessary to the household, the fundamental building block of the city-state ('a community naturally constituted to satisfy everyday needs': 1.1252b12–14; cf. 1.1253b30–9), because they provide its basic necessities of life (1.12534b1–8). No doubt, many upper-class Greeks considered slavery necessary because slaves' earnings, products or services were necessary for their masters to maintain their lifestyle. For Aristotle, this was a matter of the greatest importance: slaves freed the citizen for the intellectual and political tasks that constituted the highest end of life.⁷² So, Aristotle elevated the undeniable profits and conveniences of slavery for masters to a level that implied the moral as well as practical necessity of slavery. For him – as for Plato – the primacy of the virtue of the elite, the ruling class, could all by itself justify slavery.⁷³

Such a view could have led to a picture of slavery as a necessary evil. But this was not Aristotle's opinion. Rather he believed that it was natural for every composite thing, such as the household, to contain both a ruling and a ruled element. Furthermore, such a natural hierarchy is beneficial to both the ruling and the ruled, since it is in accordance with nature and thus benefits the whole (1.1252a26–34, 1.1254a20–4). The tendency of Greek culture to understand relations in terms of the analogy of slavery had been systematised in Plato's philosophy; now Aristotle completed the circle and used a nature conceived in terms of the slave metaphor to naturalise slavery.⁷⁴ The particular hierarchy that Aristotle invokes most persistently is the rule of the soul over the body.⁷⁵ As we shall see, this hierarchy has a particular relevance, since natural slaves are suited for the performance of bodily activities while masters are distinguished by their performance of intellectual functions (1.1252a31–4; cf. 1.1254a34–7, 1.1254b16–21).

For Aristotle, a full intellectual life for the elite required slavery which was in harmony with the hierarchical nature of the universe and, in particular, was parallel to the rule of the soul over the body. As several commentators have pointed out,⁷⁶ Aristotle could have left things there with the argument 'from above'. But, in response to the attacks on the institution, he wanted to show that human beings fit into his grand theory of a hierarchical and beneficent universe (1.1254a17–20). His argument rests on the existence of sharp differences in capability among people (1.1254b16–21): 'Therefore those people who are as different from others as body is from soul or beast from human, and people whose task, that is to say, the best thing to come

⁷² See Arist. *Pol.* 1.1252a4–7, 1253a24–5 on the priority of the city-state.

⁷³ Cf. Vogt 1975a: 25. ⁷⁴ Cf. Davis 1988: 63, 68; DuBois 2003: 202–3.

⁷⁵ Schütrumpf 1993: 112–13, with Pl. *Phd.* 79e–80a.

⁷⁶ E.g. Garnsey 1996: 38; Kraut 2002: 282; Williams 1993: 113.

from them, is to use their bodies are in this condition – those people are natural slaves’ (trans. Reeve). From a modern perspective, this move draws Aristotle onto the thin ice of ascribing intrinsic inferiority to a large and varied group of people, but in the context of his time this argument ‘from below’ was probably more persuasive than that ‘from above’. Despite their linguistic usages, I doubt that most free Greeks conceived of the whole world as consistently and beneficently hierarchical. They did despise slaves,⁷⁷ and Aristotle knew that popular prejudice against slaves would be on his side when he argued that they fitted naturally into the severe hierarchy his argument required. Nevertheless, Aristotle chose carefully where to take his stand on the basis and nature of slave inferiority.

As we have seen, Aristotle considers and then rejects a militaristic justification of slavery. He does not rest content with the view of slaves as proved inferior by the fact of their capture.⁷⁸ There also existed a stereotype of the physical appearance of slaves, the inverse of a common association between good looks and good breeding.⁷⁹ Aristotle puts his own intellectual twist on the notion that the body reflected status and worth (I.1254b28–34):

Nature tends, then, to make the bodies of slaves and free people different too, the former strong enough to be used for necessities, the latter useless for that sort of work, but upright in posture and possessing all the other qualities needed for political life . . . But the opposite often happens as well: some have the bodies of free men; other, the souls.

(trans. Reeve)

Since nature does not always succeed in its aim, the body cannot provide a sure discrimination between slave and free.

Aristotle argues finally (I.1254b23–4) that mental insufficiency makes slavery natural: ‘[H]e who shares in reason to the extent of understanding it, but does not have it himself (for the other animals obey not reason but feelings), is a natural slave’ (trans. Reeve). Scholars have found it difficult to pin down the exact nature and extent of this mental incapacity that would make someone a natural slave.⁸⁰ The more Aristotle insists on an extreme incapacity, the more might slavery appear natural and beneficial for slaves. But an exaggerated view of slaves as idiots would have little relevance to the actual slaves in Athens – working as skilled craftsmen, farm overseers or even bank managers.⁸¹ Indeed, Aristotle himself – in contrast to Plato – advocates reasoning with slaves rather than simply giving commands (I.1260b4–6; *Pl. Leg.* 6.777e–778a). The best case that

⁷⁷ Garnsey 1996: 73; also Brunt 1993: 379, and Dover 1974: 114–15.

⁷⁸ But see I.1254b.22–3.

⁷⁹ E.g., *Hom. Il.* 2.211–19; *Od.* 24.252–3; *Theognis* 1.535–8 (West); see Serghidou 1997.

⁸⁰ E.g. Schlaifer 1960: 121–2; Kraut 2002: 283–90.

⁸¹ Brunt 1993: 360, on *Pol.* I.1255b24–30, 3.1277a37–b3; *Eth. Nic.* vi.4.

can be made for Aristotle is that it is the higher-level capacity to deliberate in politics or about the best life that marks the free man from the slave. Some basic competence in crafts or the conduct of daily life might not be incompatible with a lack of this deliberative faculty.

The issue of rational deliberation especially in politics brings us to the main way in which Aristotle uses popular prejudice to reinforce his argument for the existence of natural slaves: the portrayal of non-Greeks as natural slaves. Much of Aristotle's argument about natural slavery is philosophical and derives from first principles, such as natural hierarchy.⁸² But when it comes to the position of non-Greeks, he turns to popular opinion and tragedy for confirmation (1.1252b4–9; cf. 1.1255a28–35, quoting Eur. *IA* 1401):

Among non-Greeks, however, a woman and a slave occupy the same position. The reason is that they do not have anything that naturally rules: rather their community consists of a male and a female slave. That is why our poets say 'it is proper for Greeks to rule non-Greeks', implying that non-Greek and slave are in nature the same.

(trans. Reeve)

In the case of those captured in war, Aristotle had admitted that not all such slaves were natural slaves. But, since most slaves at Athens were imported from outside the Greek world and the conditions of their original enslavement were unknown, Aristotle's theory of natural slavery would seem to apply, more or less, to the actual slave system.

HELLENISTIC PHILOSOPHY

A brief coda on Hellenistic thinking about slavery will tie together our survey of ancient Greek thinking about and thinking with slaves. It is likely that general prejudice against slaves, as well as the Greek ethnic chauvinism continued among the ruling Greek elites of the Hellenistic period. Accordingly, some version of Aristotle's theory of natural slavery no doubt persisted.⁸³ Nevertheless, the main intellectual reaction to slavery, especially among philosophers was altogether different, if no less perplexing to modern sensibilities. Whereas Aristotle tried to justify slavery, the main Hellenistic schools of philosophy gave up that attempt. Rather they denied its importance and devoted their energies to the problems of metaphorical slavery, not so much political slavery as slavery to fears and vices.⁸⁴ They were concerned mainly with the internal freedom of the spirit, which, it seemed, could trump the slavery of the body.⁸⁵ Menander, the early

⁸² Schofield 1999: 121. ⁸³ Wiles 1988: 64. ⁸⁴ Ste. Croix 1981: 417–19.

⁸⁵ Patterson 1991: 181–99.

Hellenistic writer of comedies, is typical of the Hellenistic intellectual reaction to slavery (Fr. 857 [Kock]): 'Be a slave in a free-spirited way; then you will not be a slave.'

It must be admitted that the original Cynic, Diogenes, denounced all possessions and, hence, slavery. In one story, Diogenes hears that his slave has run away, but does not pursue him, 'it would be ridiculous if Manes [a typical slave name] lives without Diogenes, but Diogenes cannot live without Manes' (Diogenes Laertius 6.55). But Cynicism was a philosophy of perfection for a small number of people. Most Cynic sympathisers 'were no more expected to abandon families, slaves, and social distinctions than they were expected to abandon property'.⁸⁶ What was important was a critical and detached attitude.

Zeno, the founder of Stoicism, agreed with Aristotle's anonymous opponents that slavery was contrary to nature.⁸⁷ The main Stoic response to slavery consisted, however, of denying its reality: since slavery was the result of Fortune and not something intrinsic or natural, the good man was always 'free' regardless of his social position; the rest of us are always slaves to something, gluttony, lust or even ambition. Thus, Stoics spared themselves the moral dilemma of responding to an unnatural and deplorable, but firmly entrenched, institution and turned their attention to the avoidance of metaphorical slavery.⁸⁸ Unlike Aristotle, for whom the metaphor of slavery could be reversed to justify the institution, for Stoics the metaphor of slavery provided a potent distraction. This attitude has evoked a variety of caustic comments by scholars more concerned with actual slavery. The Marxist historian G. E. M. de Ste. Croix (1981: 418–19) described Stoic beliefs as 'a wonderfully comforting set of doctrines for slave-owners', and added: 'I fancy that such austere philosophical notions are of greater assistance in the endurance of liberty, riches, and peace, than of slavery, poverty and war.' So, too, Bernard Williams (1993: 116) complained: 'Seneca [a Roman Stoic] and his various associates can let the social world be unjust, because they can, in accordance with one or another of their fantasies, suppose that one can get out of it.' These attitudes, alas, foreshadowed the main early Christian response to slavery: 'slave and free are one in Christ', but not in this world.⁸⁹

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Scholarship about slavery in Greek literary culture takes place within a variety of different disciplines and sub-disciplines, many of which have independent trajectories of interest and methodology: for example, the

⁸⁶ Dawson 1992: 136. ⁸⁷ Vogt 1975b: 35–7; Dawson 1992: 172, 178. ⁸⁸ Garnsey 1996: 105.

⁸⁹ The unity of slave and free is stated in Gal. 3.28; 1 Cor. 12.13; Col. 3.11.

role played by the decipherment of Linear B in studies of Homeric slavery and the influence of Bakhtin on the interpretation of slaves in comedy can hardly be encompassed under one framework. Nevertheless, I offer here first a few broad generalisations about the ebb and flow of historical interest in the subject, and then record some key works on the different genres covered in this chapter.

It is still illuminating to consider historical approaches to slavery in Greek culture in terms of the influence of M. I. Finley. In *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (1998 edn.: 84–5, 93–4, 126–8), Finley reacted harshly against the entanglement of moral judgements with historical studies in, especially, the work of Joseph Vogt (1975a, 1975b). He argued that the issue of whether slaves were 10 per cent or 50 per cent of the population should hardly influence our condemnation of slavery. The role of slaves in the political economy of classical society – Finley’s main interest and an issue which controversies about Marxist theories of history had thrust to the foreground – was a question quite separate from, and of greater historical importance than, our judgements of the individual morality of slaveholders, the value of classical culture, or the complicity of Christianity in the institution’s continuation in late antiquity (64–6). Finley’s defence of social history against a moralistic intellectual history has stood the test of time – as have his distinctions between societies with a spectrum and those with a dichotomy of slave statuses. But as history has in general moved away from a concern with social *realia* towards the study of worldview, mentalities and ideologies, ancient thinking about slavery has attracted renewed interest (see Cartledge 2002a).

Surveys that emphasise the justification or criticism of slavery in Greek culture include Schlaifer (1960), Davis (1988: 62–90), Bradley (1997), Cartledge (1993b: 133–66) and DuBois (2003) (note the hiatus in that generation of scholars most influenced by Finley). Garnsey (1996) draws mainly on the philosophical and theological tradition but provides the most comprehensive treatment. Garlan (1988: 119–200) takes a Marxian approach to understanding Greek thinking about slavery, while Vidal-Naquet (1986: 159–67, 205–23), Mactoux (1980) and DuBois (1991) are influenced by structuralism and post-structuralism. The chapters collected in Joshel and Murnaghan (1998) focus on comparisons of the women and slaves, while Hunt (1998: 42–52, 121–64, 185–205) considers slaves as the opposites of citizen soldiers. The closest we come to comprehensive treatments of slaves in Greek culture are the books on the development of freedom as a central Western value by Pohlenz (1966), Patterson (1991) and Raaflaub (2004; a revised edition of Raaflaub 1985).

These more holistic treatments notwithstanding, most scholarship on the subject considers slaves in a single genre rather than in Greek literary culture in general:

Homer: scholarship here tends to focus on the gender of slaves, the proportion of slaves among servants, and the extent to which the epics represent an historical society. Finley (1978: 53–9) and Garland (1988: 29–37) provide brief overviews, while Seymour (1907: 258–81) collects and discusses all passages referring to Homeric slaves. Gschnitzer (1976: 60–8) argues for large numbers, Beringer (1982) for small numbers and a minimal importance of slavery. Raaflaub (1997: 639) and Garland (1988: 35) use ‘paternalism’ of Homeric slavery, a term whose application is most thoroughly developed in Genovese (1972).

Historiography: Vidal-Naquet (1986: 168–88), Harvey (1988) and, most extensively, Hunt (1998) examine the portrayal of slavery in historical works. On slave and Helot participation in war, see also Welwei (1974–7). Graham (1992, 1998) focuses on the use of slaves in the Athenian navy.

Comedy and tragedy: discussions of slaves in comedy include Ehrenberg (1962: 123–41), Dover (1972: 204–8; 1993: 43–50) and Wiles (1988). Several perceptive studies of the ‘clever slave’ consider Roman as well as Greek comedy: Segal (1968: 99–169); Salinger (1974: 76–128); McCarthy (2000). The influential work of Nestle (1901: esp. 348–61) portrays Euripides as almost an abolitionist – and a progressive in other respects. It seems to be followed in many articles that focus on slaves in Euripides or in tragedy (Daitz 1971; Synodinou 1977; Moritz 1998; Vogt 1975a is less sanguine)). But mainstream recent scholarship – e.g. Garnsey (1996: 64–74); Hall (1997); cf. Kannicht (1969: 208–9) – paints a less positive picture and emphasises the predominance of traditional and hierarchical values in tragedy and the limited extent to which a fundamental challenge to slavery was possible.

Utopias and philosophy: on the treatment of slavery in Greek utopian thinking see Garland (1988: 126–38), Vogt (1975c; cf. Vidal-Naquet 1986: 205–23). Finley (1975) and Dawson (1992) give a more general picture of utopian thinking and its limits. On slave characters in Plato’s dialogues, see Gera (1996); and for a contrary view DuBois (2003: 163–7). The analogy of slavery in Plato’s thought is treated by Vlastos (1941). Schütrumpf (1993, 2003) considers the issue in both Aristotle and Plato. On whether the ideal city of the *Republic* contains slaves, see the divergent views in Vlastos (1973) and Schütrumpf (2003). Morrow (1939) treats slavery in the *Laws*. The bibliography on Aristotle’s theory of natural slavery is immense, but the following provide an entrée: Williams (1993: 109–18); Garnsey (1996: 107–27); Schofield (1999); Kraut (2002: 277–305). Schütrumpf (1991) provides a detailed commentary. Cambiano (1987) focuses on the ‘anonymous opponents’ of Aristotle who criticised the institution of slavery. For Hellenistic and Christian responses to slavery, see Ste. Croix (1981: 418–25); Garnsey (1996).

CHAPTER 3
CLASSICAL ATHENS

T. E. RIHLL

INTRODUCTION

Classical Athens (500–300 BC) produced many of the modern icons of ancient Greece: the Parthenon, democracy and tragedy. But classical Athens by itself is not ancient Greece. Ancient Greece was a much larger and more diverse entity than ancient Athens, for the Greeks were not united politically: Athens, Sparta, Argos, Corinth, Thebes and thousands of other *poleis* or microstates were independently governed.¹ Yet there was cultural unity, dependent on language, religion and a common, if variable, set of distinctive norms. Within that general Greek culture, Athens developed a unique portfolio of institutions and traditions, just as Sparta and every other Greek microstate did.

A huge array of extant sources demonstrates clearly that slaves were an integral part of ancient Athens, and scholars regularly refer to classical Athens (rather than ancient Greece) as one of the only five ‘genuine slave societies’ in world history. What does that term mean? Why does classical Athens qualify for inclusion under that label? This chapter is an extended answer to those questions.

To begin with the basics, there are two principal factors for qualification as a ‘slave society’ (rather than simply a society with slaves): the sheer number of slaves, relative to the population as a whole, and the significance of the role slaves played in the society at issue, especially economically. For most scholars,² economics is fundamental to the classification: a society is a slave society if slaves played a vital quantitative and qualitative role in production, and the material basis of that society absolutely depended upon slave labour. But there are social structures as well as economic ones, and for some scholars³ this is actually more important. Slaves are not just ‘workers’: they interact with the master, shaping his sense of self as dominant, as powerful and paternal. How many slaves were there in classical Athens?

¹ Davies 1997: 27.

² E.g. Garnsey 1996: 2.

³ E.g. Bradley 1994: 12–30.

In the late second century AD, Athenaeus (*Sophists at Dinner* 272b–d) gives a figure for the number of slaves in Athens (and in Aegina and Corinth as well), citing sources that help us fix approximate classical dates. The largest figure he gives for the number of slaves in any Greek *polis* is 470,000 in Aegina. This he cites apparently from Aristotle's now lost *Constitution of the Aeginetans*. The next largest, 460,000 in Corinth, he cites from the lost *Histories* of Epitaimaios. The third largest, 400,000, in Athens, he cites from Ctesicles' lost *Chronicles*, which may be based on Demetrius of Phaleron's census of (probably) 317/316 BC. Hence, all Athenaeus' figures seem to come from and refer to the fourth century BC, but none is independently verifiable. Another source for the number of slaves in Athens in the fourth century BC is much later, a tenth-century AD lexicon; this gives part of a speech written by the fourth-century Athenian Hyperides immediately after the battle of Chaeronea in 338. Hyperides anticipated a follow-up attack on the city by Philip II of Macedon and proposed that the slaves, along with metics, state debtors and the disfranchised, should all be freed of their various bonds in order to help defend Athens. He stated that there were 'more than one hundred and fifty thousand slaves in the silver mines and across the rest of the country'. Even allowing for rounding, guessing and stylisation of the numbers by both Ctesicles and Hyperides, there is a big difference between 400,000 and more than 150,000. If the figures are remotely reliable, it is far from obvious how or why the number of slaves in Athens should have more than doubled between 338 and 317. Consequently, most scholars think one of these sources, if not both, has the numbers very seriously wrong.

We can excavate from several of Aristotle's statements his view of proportional figures in the fourth century BC, when he lived in Athens as a resident alien (metic). First, his definition of a democracy is rule of the poor and not simply of the many (*Politics* 1279b18–1280a6). Secondly, he observed (*Pol.* 1323a6–7) that the poor man has to use his wife and children as servants since he does not have a slave. Thirdly, he says (*Pol.* 4.6.6) that the free poor who live off state payments have more leisure than others because they do not have to spend time managing slaves they do not have. Together, these statements imply that when Aristotle formulated his view of democracy, he thought that slaveholders in Athens were in the minority: the free poor, the majority, were not slaveholders. Aristotle's evidence is thus that less than 50 per cent of Athenians were slaveholders, and this presumably relates to the urban population, of which he had experience.

For the classification of Athens as a slave society, the uncertainties on numbers do not actually matter, for even the lowest modern estimates put slave figures at around 15 per cent of the total population, which is enough

to qualify on the quantity of slaves test.⁴ The highest modern estimates see the slave population of classical Athens as around 100,000 souls, closer to 40 per cent of the total population.⁵

Athenian slaves were generally indistinguishable not just from the free but even from citizens in appearance and, apparently, in demeanour. How then did an Athenian citizen demonstrate his status to the world? He did so by participating in activities that were forbidden to slaves: going to assemblies and political meetings, to the courts, to gymnasia to exercise or be oiled, to a rendezvous with a youth, or to religious festivals and sacrifices. Assemblies and courts were the exclusive preserve of the citizen where he could affirm his status in society, his ability to make sensible and fair decisions, and his willingness to take responsibility for the future of himself and his *oikos*, that is, the persons and property that constituted his household. By participating in the democratic process, the Athenian citizen ensured that when and if a magistrate gave him orders, he himself had been involved in the formulation of those orders; he was master of the state, not its slave. If, because of his appearance or occupation, he were particularly concerned about being mistaken for a slave, he would be more concerned to avoid participating in activities that were performed by slaves.⁶ Here perhaps lies the root of the hostility to craft and service work that we find in some literary sources. He would also be more sensitive to physical attacks on his person, for therein lay another great difference between masters and slaves: unlike citizens, slaves could be punished physically for their crimes, through whipping or beating.

What was special about Athens in comparison to other Greek states? Athens was atypical in a number of ways. First, Athens was much bigger physically than almost all other Greek states, in both territory and population. This had important consequences for the economy, among other things. Secondly, for fifty years Athens built and led a maritime empire that ultimately encompassed hundreds of Greek states, enjoying a prominence in international affairs for a century afterwards. No other Greek state possessed such an empire, and Pericles could apparently claim that Athens was 'an education to Greece' (Thucydides 2.41). Of all the reasons he gave – all military or political, not artistic or 'cultural'⁷ – the fact that the Athenians committed a lot of their life to writing is not one of them. However, it is precisely for that reason that we now know so much about classical Athens. The evidence is uneven, so that on some topics we know much and on others disappointingly little. For example, price information, such as we have, comes mostly from inscriptions, as does most data involving numbers,

⁴ Patterson 1982: 353.

⁵ E.g. Cartledge 1993a: 135.

⁶ Davidson 2000: 160.

⁷ Hornblower 1991: 308.

which were usually irrelevant to literary plots or historical narratives. But figures were essential parts of a magistrate's financial record. The orators provide significant information on a few slaves in service roles, but little on domestic slaves, while comedy furnishes a lot of evidence on domestic slavery but little on artisans or service slaves and freedmen. We know of eighty-four lost comedies whose titles suggest that trades, services, slaves and freedmen were thought to be good subjects for comic performance in the competitive environment of Athens' dramatic festivals. Unfortunately, they were found less appealing to the generations that followed and have not survived beyond isolated quotations.

Was Athenian slavery typical of Greek slavery? The answer is probably not. The extent of slavery in the typical Greek state is debatable.⁸ Slave labour assumed multifarious forms in classical Athens that are probably not representative of slavery in most Greek states, which were smaller, less imperialistic and less cosmopolitan.

THE SOCIAL DOMAIN

One cannot discuss slaves in Athenian society without simultaneously discussing their masters, for each stands and acts in relation to the other. Sometimes the story progresses best by focusing on the slave, sometimes on the master, but the other is never far from view.

Athenian slaves were chattels, bought and sold at market. Various terms were used to signify slaves but the one most appropriate in this context was *andrapodon*, 'man-footed thing'. The conception was based on the model of four-footed animals, *tetrapoda*, and the cattle market. Other common terms for slaves, in principle interchangeable, included *oiketes*, a term that emphasised the slave's membership of the *oikos*, the household; *oikogenes* or *oikotrips*, stressing birth in the *oikos*, *therapon*, accentuating the role of personal servant, and *dmōs*, pointing to the slave as captive – as the glorious general Lamakhos' slaves are so styled in Aristophanes' *Acharnians* (887, 1174).

Owners had almost complete freedom in law and custom to treat slaves as they wished. However, there were two significant cultural inhibitions on owners. One was a general Greek belief that killing someone, including a slave, incurred religious pollution (e.g. Isocrates, *Panathenaicus* 181), and religious pollution could bring down divine wrath on the entire community, not just the perpetrator. The histories of Troy and the legends of heroes furnished examples of such wrath for the curious or the doubtful. In many Greek states there was also a written or unwritten law against

⁸ The classic discussions are Finley 1959 and Ste. Croix 1981.

killing anyone, slaves included (Antiphon 5.48). Greece was quite unlike Rome and many other slave societies in this regard.

The second inhibitor was a specifically Athenian law that has no known analogue elsewhere. This was the *hubris* law created by the law-giver Solon c. 594 BC. His aim was apparently to discourage a particular kind of offensive behaviour, that of aggressive, abusive arrogance. His law protected slaves as well as citizens. Consequently, Athenian slaves as a rule seem to have been spared this unpleasantness, at least in public. In certain other Greek states they certainly were not, because those suffering what they considered to be unjustified abuse could seek sanctuary in Athens – there seem to have been similar refuges in other Greek states – either that of Theseus, to which Aristophanes makes several references, terming a slave who frequently takes refuge a *theseiotrips*;⁹ or the shrine of the Erinyes. It seems that a slave could seek a new master from the safety of either of these sanctuaries. Eupolis (*Poleis* Fr. 225), an older contemporary of Aristophanes, likened the imperial ‘allies’ to slaves, and has one *therapaina* demand to be sold on grounds of bad treatment by her master Athens.

Anyone could be enslaved in Athens, men, women and children, Greeks and foreigners. Pretty boys and girls were liable to be recruited into the sex industry by pimps and madams or bought as sex slaves by sexually hungry men (cf. Menander Fr. 438). Men and women with manufacturing, service and entertainment skills were sold as such, and generally were bought by someone who intended them to continue working in the same sector. There were good and bad slaves, good and bad masters.

Masters tried to choose good slaves of course, but the blessing that such achievement brought speaks at once to its difficulty and its rarity (cf. Ar. *Ach.* 400). Lost comedies entitled *The Bad Bargain* appear to have elaborated on the opposite situation. Slaves had less control over whose slave they became, though they were not helpless. When put up for sale, Diogenes the Cynic declared from the slave block, ‘Sell me to him: he needs a master.’ It would be naive to think that slaves being offered for sale did not make snap judgements about potential purchasers and act according to whether they liked or disliked the prospect of serving a particular person who was inspecting the goods for sale: ‘To alien slaves good masters are new homes’, as Antiphanes put it (Fr. 265, trans. Edmonds). It might not always work, and the snap judgement might be wrong, but whatever they did, slaves were actors in these situations: they were not part of the scenery (cf. Men. Fr. 195).

Heraclitus famously said (Fr. 53) that ‘war is father of all and king of all . . . he makes some men slaves and others free’. Slaves were overwhelmingly captives, losers in a physical contest, reduced to their status by stronger

⁹ *Eq.* 31, 1311; *Thesm.* 224; Frs. 458 and 567.

people.¹⁰ Enslavement could happen to anyone, which wise men like Solon knew, even if kings like Croesus of Lydia, and for that matter Plato, did not.¹¹ In such circumstances, the only thing that slaves would have been perceived to have in common was weakness, either their own, or their community's. Warfare between Greek states was routine and would have brought a regular harvest of captives; Pritchett (1991: 226–34; cf. Kuleska 1999) has tabulated the extensive evidence for enslavement of the defeated in Greek battles and sieges. Another common method of enslavement, though operating on a much smaller scale, was through piracy and kidnapping. By the time of the Sicilian expedition (415 BC) it appears that there was still little slave-breeding. Among the forty-five slaves sold from owners convicted of vandalising the Herms, only three are recorded as being 'house-born' (*oikogeneis*). One assumes that external sources were generally adequate to meet demand at the time.

It is often said that there was a change in Greek attitudes towards slaves with the Persian invasions of 490 and 480–79 BC: the large number of foreign troops enslaved in those wars led to the assimilation of the hitherto separate notions of slave and barbarian. There is a large measure of truth in this, but it is important not to lose sight of the continued presence of slaves of Greek origin (cf. Philostratus, *Lives of the Sophists* 9.493, on Gorgias). The Spartan navarch Callicratidas' refusal to sell into slavery those Greeks captured at the siege of Methymna in 406 BC (Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.6.14) is sometimes cited in support of a hypothesis that the Greeks moved from enslaving anybody to enslaving only non-Greeks. However, Callicratidas' restraint did not extend to anyone who was already a slave, or more importantly to any Athenians captured. The Spartans consistently differentiated between Athenian and other prisoners in the later stages of the Peloponnesian War – a strategy that proved highly successful in isolating Athens from its allies – and therefore it seems unwarranted to single out this episode as significant in the history of Greek slavery.

Before he himself was apparently put up for sale, Plato asserted *c.* 370 BC (*Republic* 469b) that Greeks should not enslave Greeks, while the defendant in a speech of Demosthenes (47 (*Euergos*)), dated to after 356, mistook the plaintiff's son for a slave. In 348, Olynthus, capital of the Khalkidian League, fell to Philip II of Macedon. The surviving population was enslaved, and because they were accidentally met, we happen to hear that some thirty women and children among them were taken by a Greek from Mantinea (Theophilos Fr. 3; cf. Dem. 19.305). In 330 or thereabouts, Lycurgus introduced a law prohibiting Athenians and Athenian metics from buying, during the sale of captives taken in warfare, anyone

¹⁰ Rihll 1993.

¹¹ Diod. Sic. 15.7.1; see also Diog. Laert. 8.79.

of free birth without the consent of his or her former master (Plutarch, *Moralia* 842a). Two points about this last example are notable: there is still no ethnic distinction drawn between Greeks and non-Greeks, and the qualification shows that Lycurgus was thinking only of those who were already slaves when captured. The law did nothing to protect the category most at issue here: those who were free before the Athenians captured them.

In Athens at least, slaves were not distinguishable on sight into the fourth century and beyond, long after the Persian Wars. Evidence from literary sources suggests that a person's appearance was more a function of occupation than social status. The Old Oligarch ([Xen.], *Constitution of Athens* 1.10) observes that, because the Athenians did not make their slaves wear certain clothes or behave in certain ways, a ban was instituted against assault in case a citizen was struck by someone mistaking him for a slave; infringement could result in a prosecution for *hubris*.

Hubris was in this context a deliberate physical or verbal assault on someone's status. Charging a man with committing *hubris* was glossed as treating a free man as a slave. It was a criminal offence carrying the death penalty. To discover that the *hubris* law applied even when the victim was a slave then seems paradoxical: it implies that one could be prosecuted for treating a slave as a slave.¹² The explanation offered by Demosthenes (*Against Meidias*) and Aeschines (*Against Timarchus*) was that the law aimed to stop the offending behaviour, rather than protect the victim, in which case the status of the victim was irrelevant. The logic is faultless. The implication is that bullying per se was frowned upon in this particular world of masters and slaves: it was behaviour unbecoming of an Athenian, as Aeschines put it. At first sight bizarre, this is in fact consistent with other evidence on social relations in classical Athens.

Fourth-century self-improvement texts encouraged their adult male audience to control their tempers when slaves (or subordinate family members) upset them, and to take a cooling-off period. Only then, and not in the heat of the moment, should they choose punishments appropriate to the crime. Hitting slaves, or shouting at them, in public, came to be considered uncouth and boorish (see e.g. Aeschin. 2.156). Meanwhile old, middle and new comedy trade on more or less brutal assaults on slaves, of threats of such, including flogging, shackling, sending to the stocks and suspension by the wrists, though branding was considered extreme and was generally reserved for recovered runaways.¹³ 'Cultivated' manners were thus nurtured in a relationship founded on and underwritten by violence. The contradictions of slavery are many and various.

¹² See Fisher 1995.

¹³ On branding, see Ar., *Babylonians* Frs. 64, 88, and Eupolis Fr. 318.

The preponderance of slaves in the trade and service sectors fed the prejudice that led some fourth-century authors to label these jobs 'slavish'.¹⁴ Clearly there was potential for reinforcing cyclical development here. A prejudicial mind could view crafts and services as slave work practised only by slaves (natural or otherwise) and ex-slaves. But I believe it was a view not shared by all sectors of society, especially in the fifth century and earlier. It has long been observed that Athenian pot-painters sometimes depicted with pride rather than disdain artisans at work: pot-painters, cobblers, metalworkers. Clearly people commissioned such scenes of craft activity, or else the painters anticipated that they would readily find buyers. But we also find a pro-technology ideology: 'Craftsmanship's our best asset; it will stay when war and change take other things away', wrote Hipparchus in *The Painter* (trans. Edmonds), adding '*tekhne* saves'. Similarly, Philemon (Fr. 213, trans. Edmonds) wrote:

[A] poor man who's not learnt a trade can no more live secure than a sailor can save his skin if he doesn't make the shore. If one of us makes harbour in the trade he wants to ply, he drops anchor and ties up and lets the storms go by; if one who's never learnt his job gets a bit tossed about, he's in for trouble every time and won't see his way out.

In the worst case, if people were captured, either as individuals or as residents of a conquered town, the possession of a skill could save one's life, and if enslaved, a skill gave a much better chance of manumission and a decent life.

At the same time, many of the ancient criticisms of crafts and services are legitimate: many of these jobs were boring, or degrading, or had associated health risks, and anyone who could choose an occupation would have sound reasons to avoid them. The prejudice against crafts and services had a basis in experience, but it was not the case that all craft and service providers in Athens were slaves or descendants of slaves. Those who protested most loudly did so perhaps because they were closest to the boundary.

Psychologically slaves nourished Athenian minds as well as Athenian bodies, for better and worse. Cartledge (1993b) argues that slavery 'warped and poisoned' free men's views of women and of work, and we have just seen some examples of such distortions. But the impact of slavery on the Greek psyche was not wholly malign; the Athenians developed a vigorous and robust culture with a 'can-do' mentality, high aspirations and a strong sense of superiority over others. That state of mind in turn helped them – no less significantly than the physical help they received from slaves – to construct great temples in stone, to wage war against numerically superior enemies, to stimulate and manipulate the whole range of human emotions

¹⁴ Cartledge 1993a; 1993b: 147–50.

through song and art, and to aspire audaciously to understand the workings of nature. They believed that the dominance of master over slave, and of Athens over other states, rested on superior physical and intellectual strength. People are not all the same and thus are not equal: they vary in their abilities as they vary in height, weight and in every other measurable characteristic. What the Greeks wrote about human nature was based on their experience of people in a violent and unstable world, where physical strength was all too often the most important characteristic and might often was right. When they marched out to battle, they knew that they might die or leave the field as a slave, and if they lost, their families, young and old, might face the same fate too.

A legal case reported by Demosthenes (36 [*For Phormion*]) throws up an intriguing aspect of master–slave status relations in fourth-century Athens. Phormio was not a Greek. He began his life in Athens as a slave, achieved manumission and then, unusually, citizenship. The other party to the case was Apollodoros, the citizen-born son of an ex-slave called Pasion, who is characterised by Demosthenes as an appalling snob, far more keen to assert his citizen's and master's rights over an ex-slave than an 'ordinary' Athenian would be and than Athenian law allowed. Demosthenes speculated that Apollodoros thought that he, Apollodoros, ought to have some of Phormion's money because Phormio had once been his father's slave. To counter this, Demosthenes observed that Apollodoros' father Pasion was once the slave of Arkhestratos, and so Arkhestratos' destitute son Antimakhos had some claim on Apollodoros, as well. Yet the right-thinking Antimakhos did not sue Apollodoros or Phormio. Demosthenes, scandalised by Apollodoros, won the case. Phormio was acquitted, while Apollodoros failed to win even a fifth of the votes and was fined. The second-generation citizen Demosthenes portrays so vividly as over-zealous in defence of his real or imagined rights over slaves lost to the enfranchised slave with an insecure command of Greek. Especially interesting is Demosthenes' assertion that, once manumitted, a person's previous status should not be mentioned. Among cultivated men freedom included liberation from a humiliating past. Demosthenes' words imply that enfranchisement happened much more often than is evidenced; it was not normally discussed so we do not hear about it. In light of this, it is possible that the claim to be *eugenes*, well-born, was really saying 'freeborn'.

Manumission was apparently common in classical Athens, and was formally effected in a number of ways. A simple public announcement by the master was sufficient at least until the second half of the fourth century BC (Aeschin. 3.41, 44). Thereafter a number of different procedures are attested. Those who were paid could save a portion of their earnings to buy their own freedom, effectively giving the master all earnings previously received except for costs of living at better than subsistence level. But the

slave never really owned anything anyway, since in law a slave's possessions all belonged to the master.

By the late fourth century purchasing freedom had become complex. One method was by the legal procedure of collusive litigation,¹⁵ understanding of which is helped by comparative evidence.¹⁶ It invoked a private legal suit known as a *dike apostasiou*, 'standing apart'. This was a lawsuit brought by a master against a freed slave for failing to observe the conditions of manumission, which generally involved continued service to the master (Photius s.v. *2 lukambis arche*).¹⁷ The case was heard before the magistrate called the *polemarkhos*, who was responsible for all cases concerning metics, which included freedmen. If the defendant were found guilty on this charge, slave status was resumed; if innocent, the master's claims for service were rejected and the defendant was thus truly free (Harpokration s.v. *apostasiou*). To utilise this procedure as a method of formalising an unconditional manumission required that all relevant parties agree in advance that the slave would be acquitted of the charge of abandoning the master; this was not difficult to implement when the master failed to appear in court. The decision was then inscribed in stone (e.g. *IG II² 1576.21–4; II² 1578*). The successful slave normally paid a hefty fee for the lawsuit in the form of a dedication to Athena of a silver bowl (*phiale*) worth 100 drachmas. This was apparently in addition to whatever the master required for himself. Osborne's calculations (1995: 34) suggest that slave artisans could realise their capital value in four to five years; one would expect the master to require at least this much for the manumission payment.

The monies were sometimes raised by an *eranos*, a loan group with a citizen 'head' whose members worked together to raise money as quickly as possible. They pooled their savings until one member's freedom could be bought. The freed worker, no longer required to give part of his earnings to a master, then generated more savings which continued to go into the common pot and produced funds to free the next in line more quickly than otherwise until all were set free. The system may not have relied entirely on trust, since although most slaves had no access to law, slaves involved in commerce did for cases involving property.¹⁸ Surviving documents testify not only to the existence of this loan system, but also to its success, and to the names of those who formed such groups to help each other to earn their freedom. Despite an additional financial outlay for the slave, collusive litigation had several advantages as a method of manumission. The ex-slave obtained a publicly displayed permanent proof of free status (in a world without personal papers or certificates). The state had proof of tax liability and required appointment of a *prostates* (citizen representative).

¹⁵ Tod 1901; Lewis 1959 and 1968. ¹⁶ See Patterson 1982.

¹⁷ Harrison 1968: 182. ¹⁸ Garland 1988: 42; Cohen 1992: 96–8.

The *polemarkhos* met the petitioner in the course of presiding over the case. And the loan group had proof of the debt. It was a remarkably efficient method for all concerned (cf. *IG II²* 1559.26–31). But it was not a legal fiction. In some cases the master won the case, not the slave. It also appears to have been short-lived. Philippides (Fr. 9), preserving a trace of citizen hostility to this very public act of dedicating *phialai*, perhaps suggests why.

Fragmentary inscriptions list at least 171 slaves freed *c.* 330 BC by this method (*IG II²* 1553–78). The number is tiny but not negligible. One inscription (1570) lists several wool-workers (females), a couple of butcher-cum-cooks, a farmer, a honey-seller, a fish-seller, a porter and, apparently, a public slave. The high proportion of freed slaves described as workers in crafts and services is striking. Zimmern (1928: 131) long ago pointed out that slaves who earned their freedom emerged from a severe process of natural selection based on ability and economic value. Most of the women were wool-workers, a few were craftswomen (for example a tailor and a cobbler) and most of the men were farm-hands or workers in metal, leather, ceramics or wood. A significant number worked in services, particularly as sellers of foodstuffs. A relatively small number were entertainers, bankers, cooks and barbers. Many belonged to different demes from their masters, though since demotics were hereditary a citizen's deme was not necessarily where he lived. The evidence suggests that there were a significant number of manumissions per year by this procedure. But there were other means as well. In Aristophanes' *Philonides*, a *therapaina* appears to be freed simply by a symbolic act involving drinking water (cf. Antiphanes Fr. 25; Xenarkhos Frs. 5, 6). More slaves seem to have been freed through testamentary manumission. Domestic slaves were disadvantaged when it came to saving for the purchase of their freedom: 'small uncertain treats' and compliments (Anon. Fr. 103g, trans. Edmonds) were no substitute for cash for a slave wanting to buy his freedom. Aristotle (*Economics* 1.5.6) recommended term slavery for domestics, though he gives no indication how long it might be. Zimmern (1928: 124–6) made a good case for thinking it quite short. Someone employed to look after a child might expect to be liberated on marriage (Anon. Fr. 582).

THE POLITICAL DOMAIN

In the Athenian democracy, citizen equality was preserved by the actions of slaves, from cleaning floors to arresting traitors.¹⁹ Educated Greeks thought that domestic chores such as grinding grain and other laborious

¹⁹ Fisher 1993: 57; Osborne 1995: 37.

tasks were to be done by someone else. Working the mill was considered so unpleasant it was regularly used to threaten recalcitrant slaves.²⁰ By contrast, 'a life ready-ground' was proverbial for a life of ease (Amphis Fr. 9). Throughout Greek literature it is assumed that anyone, including a slave, would want a slave if possible for domestic chores.²¹ The poor man who could not afford a slave used his wife and children instead (Arist. *Pol.* 1323a5–6). Aristotle (*Pol.* 1293a1–9) explains that the poor can participate in politics not because they have slaves to work for them, but because they are paid by the state when they participate. Thus political participation in extreme democracy has nothing intrinsically to do with slavery; it depends instead on public finance, paying day or wage labour on a regular piece-rate model for political meetings or court cases attended. The Athenian poor could make a living as the foot-soldiers of the political system. This is presumably what Aristotle (*Pol.* 1296b29) was referring to when he said that if the masses were predominantly artisans (*banausoi*) and wage labourers (*mistharnai*), the democracy would be radical, as Athens was. He assumes that adequate food, shelter and other necessities were available for purchase.

In some states with relatively vigorous craft sectors, artisans were denied citizenship; Aristotle cites Corinth as an example. Corinth's oligarchical constitution confined citizenship to landholders, and free people working in trade and service had a lower status. There were also reputedly very large numbers of slaves in Corinth – 460,000 to be precise, a figure that most scholars find impossibly large.²² In view of how the term 'slave' could be used by people like Aristotle to mean (free) artisans and service providers who sold their skills, wares or labour to the general public, this figure, if it has any basis in fact at all, may represent the total number of slaves and free non-citizens. (The other microstate with reputedly huge slave numbers, Aegina, was an oligarchy too.)

The creation of the concept of the metic, the resident alien, the immigrant who was not allowed to participate fully in society but who was free and not a slave, was a key development in the history of slavery in ancient Athens. A slave manumitted in Homeric Greece joined the master class. A slave manumitted in classical Athens became a metic. Whitehead (1977: 140–7) dates this development to Cleisthenes' reforms at the end of the sixth century BC, which laid the basis of the Athenian democracy.

The metic was prohibited from participation in the political, religious and legal life of Athens. The metic was also liable to some burdens from

²⁰ E.g. Ar., *Babylonians* 93; Theopompos (com.) Fr. 60; Lys. 12.1.

²¹ E.g. Hes. *Op.* 405–6; Arist. *Pol.* 1252b13, 1323a.4–5; Ar. *Ecc.* 593; Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.3; Lys. 24.6.

²² Salmon 1984: 165.

which the citizen was free, such as sale into slavery as a judicial punishment, examination under torture for evidence, and direct head tax. It was in many ways a middle status between slave and free, foreigner and citizen, and its creation may have had as much to do with the manumission of slaves as it did with the voluntary immigration of free foreigners into Athens. The fact that the penalty of slavery was imposed automatically on a metic convicted of certain crimes that involved impersonating a citizen suggests the same. Metic status also institutionalised the master's continuing dominance over the slave, even after manumission. For metics were required to have a *prostates*, a citizen patron to represent them in any dealings with the state. For ex-slaves, the patron had to be the ex-master, or the ex-master's patron if the master was himself a metic.

A slave could become a citizen through the status of metic. Pasion is the most famous case, who started his life in Athens as a slave banker, was set free and became a metic. Continued success and generous donations to the Athenian state resulted in his being awarded *enktesis*, the right to own land and a house in Attica. After more years of outstanding civic generosity, he was awarded citizenship by the sovereign assembly of citizens. His slave Phormio followed his example, from slave to citizen, working in the same bank. His story is told in Demosthenes 36 (*For Phormion*). Phormio's route to citizenship included guardianship of his ex-master's youngest son and estate until the boy came of age, and marriage to his ex-master's widow (both specified in Pasion's will). Marriage to the widow was a common adjunct to guardianship of that woman's son – it happened to Demosthenes himself (see 27.4–5). The logic of this action – even when it involved making a newly manumitted slave the step-father of one's own citizen son – is explained by Demosthenes (36.28–30).

In Athens, though not everywhere, there were slaves owned by the state. The convention seems to have begun with the sixth-century tyrant Peisistratos' mercenary bodyguard of foreign archers, which developed into the Scythian 'police' force of Pericles' time. The Scythian archers outlasted the tyranny to become the sole state-sponsored source of physical power available to magistrates. They wore characteristic Scythian clothing and carried bows and quivers, which served as insignia rather than weapons. Their principal roles were to eject disruptive citizens from the Athenian Assembly when ordered by the Presidents, and to arrest people in the presence of and on the orders of a magistrate. They also guarded the prison. Classical Athens employed more slaves to undertake tasks that people regarded as unsuitable for either citizens or metics: tasks such as sewage removal ([Arist.] *Ath. Pol.* 54.1), assaying silver for new coin, keeping the records of state debtors and measuring out the grain allowance (Dinarchus 7.2).

We rationalise their employment in such responsible roles with the argument that the public slave was perceived as less corruptible than a free man or private slave, since only the state could free him and he was independent of connections with any citizen or metic. The public slave could also be threatened with corporal punishment, though he was not supposed to be beaten by private citizens (Aeschin. 1.59–60). The state executioner was also a public slave, and the reason for this might be religious: whatever divine wrath might be visited on the executioner as killer would not extend to the citizen community since the slave was an outsider. Another reason was because citizens were the only other ‘civil servants’ in classical Athenian society. Citizens were allotted to almost all of the 1,200 public posts to be filled annually by random selection.²³ Some were selected for council duty, others for priesthoods, others for trading standards, and so on. It is not obvious how a citizen picked at random could be made to serve as executioner against his will, and easy to imagine how the citizens would vote against any motion that they should take turns performing this role.

Some public slaves had more unexpected jobs. Pittalakos, who is known to have lived independently, ran a gambling and cock-fighting den (Aeschin. 1.59, 68). According to *IG II² 1672.4–5* (329/8 BC), they received a daily allowance of three obols, implying that they fended for themselves with respect to food and lodging. But this is all that is known of how Athens supported public slaves. The only publicly funded meals available were those served in the Prytaneion. There is also some evidence of public slaves being freed (*IG II² 1570* line 79).

THE ECONOMIC DOMAIN

Most Athenians were farmers, but Athens unusually had a relatively large manufacturing and service sector in which slaves were heavily involved. This allowed owners to engage in education, politics and sport. As Aristotle observed (*Metaphysics* 1.1), the necessities of life have to be secured before there is time for luxuries like philosophy. However, not all Athenians lived parasitically off slaves, nor did slaves alone produce the material base of Athenian culture. Not all Athenians owned slaves. The oft-cited case of the disabled cobbler whose case for a means-tested state pension of an obol per day included the point that he could not yet afford someone to help him in his work is not evidence that people ‘well down the social scale’ owned slaves,²⁴ but that such a person aspired to owning a slave. In this case aspiration was probably unfulfilled. Note especially that the slave was sought to help, not replace, the master.

²³ Hansen 1991. ²⁴ Contra Millett 2000: 33.

Where the household had only one slave, the slave lived and worked alongside the master as a partner, as Aristotle put it (*Pol.* 1260a39–40), drawing a contrast between the slave and the free artisan whose ‘slavery’ was ‘limited’ to his artisanal function. In such circumstances, the slave’s principal economic function might be farming, fishing, herding or making objects for sale, but he would also help with everything else – marketing, performing religious rites, acting as a batman in war if the master were summoned to fight. On the verge of defeat in the Peloponnesian War, the citizens in the Assembly voted to override their own property rights, as private individuals, by offering freedom to any slave who volunteered for service in a forthcoming battle and survived it (the battle of Arginusae in 406 BC; Ar., *Frogs* 694). A later parallel is Hyperides’ proposal to free slaves who came forward to defend the city against an attack by Philip II, which Hyperides anticipated (wrongly) after the Athenians were defeated at the battle of Chaeronea in 338 BC.

AGRICULTURAL SLAVERY

The scale and significance of agricultural slavery in classical Athens has been much debated.²⁵ Without quantifiable evidence, arguments turn on the interpretation of qualitative evidence and comparative studies. Of the latter, a key datum from traditional farming practices in modern Greece is that a hectare of cereals is required per person for subsistence, so that four hectares under grain would support four people.²⁶ This seems more realistic than carrying capacities of triple, quadruple and even quintuple this rate.²⁷

Rosivach (1993) offers an alternative to the plantation or *latifundia* model of agricultural slavery that is universally recognised as inappropriate for Athens, which did not have monoculture, large estates or large slave gangs in fields, but comprised small to middling independent subsistence farmers who aimed to be self-sufficient. Rosivach points out that a similar situation obtained in the northern colonies of America in the second half of the eighteenth century and argues that both there and in Athens the social relations between masters and slaves were a function of the kind of agriculture practised. He observes that like Athens, the northern colonies held slaves in an environment of small-scale subsistence agriculture, a regime based on growing grain with an independent peasantry based on the household in a democracy. In one town examined in census detail, 52 per cent of households with slaves had only one slave, and a further 20 per cent had only two slaves. The largest number of slaves in any household was eight. But the number of households with any slaves at all was relatively small:

²⁵ Fisher 1993: 37–47.

²⁶ Osborne 1996: 66.

²⁷ Cf. Foxhall 1997: 130.

less than 20 per cent of all households. We cannot know if these figures were similar in democratic Athens, but they are instructive.

The problem with historical analogies is that the supposedly analogous society developed differently from classical Athens. In this case, slavery disappeared in the northern colonies but continued in ancient Athens. Rosivach's model can account for this, however, through the operation of well-recognised economic parameters. The availability of labour is key. In any society, labour may be thinly spread or dense relative to the work available. In a thin market, there are few people relative to the amount of work to be done and the worker is valuable. In a thick market, there are many people relative to the amount of work to be done, and the individual worker is replaceable and less valuable. Rosivach argues that new immigrants to America provided a new pool of labour in the northern colonies; this thickened the market, and the value of labour fell. As a result, the poor free would have earned less, because with more labour around to take available work, employers could drive down the rate. The first step implemented to help the poor (white) immigrants was to stop importing even more (black) labour. This did not happen in Athens. Labour markets remained thin because of the Athenian ideals of self-sufficiency and personal freedom, which were manifested in the reluctance to work for others. Consequently, there was no opposition to the continuing importation of slaves to Athens.

But this does not explain the Athenian situation. Importing more slaves to Athens would have functioned as effectively as the immigration of free workers did in the northern colonies of America to thicken the market, and in Athens there was no moving frontier to make more land available. Such a thickening of the labour market in Athens would have brought down the price of slaves as well as of wage labour. All those who aspired to slave ownership, as well as the master class, would have welcomed this, and only the slave-traders, and perhaps the metics, would have perceived it negatively, if at all. The practical limits on this trend to continually increase the number of slaves were twofold: the carrying capacity of Athens' hinterland (Attica), and the supply of slaves from outside. The first limit appears to have been reached and, in fact, exceeded, in antiquity, since classical Attica supported more people than at any other period until modern times and depended on supplemental supplies of grain from abroad.²⁸ The second limit was not reached; the supply of slaves was plentiful in the chronically insecure and bellicose world of the ancient Mediterranean until the Pax Romana started to bite centuries later. Further support for this argument can be found in the fact that classical slave-traders did not make much money; those of whom we hear were not wealthy, and no rich person is

²⁸ Garnsey 1988: chs. 7–9; Sallares 1991.

said to have made money trading slaves. (Slave-making on the other hand, if conducted on the grand scale, i.e. with an army, was a different matter: large fortunes could be and were made there.)

This in turn suggests that other Greek states had thick labour markets too, and that throughout classical Greece the supply of slaves was adequate to the demand for them. Greece was not saturated with slaves, but those who wanted them and could afford them could obtain them. Imports were in part offset by the practice of manumission, which resulted in a constant outflow of slaves but not a thinning of the labour market. Millett (2000: 35) effectively compares the place of slaves, as status symbols and labour-saving devices in classical Athenian homes, with consumer durables in ours. Our durables have an anticipated lifespan, and we replace them periodically – frequently if their status as symbols matters more than their effectiveness. So too probably did the slave-owner with means. On manumission, slaves joined the ranks of the free, especially the free poor. This did not thin the labour market as a whole unless those freed left the country, which sometimes was forbidden, and demonstrably did not in some cases happen. What manumission did do was move experienced workers from the skilled slave pool into the skilled, landless, free labour pool.

It seems pointless to speculate on what effects this might have had on economic competition between the two pools of labour for work, competition that we see in comparative societies but do not see in the ancient Greek evidence. The costs and benefits of free versus slave labour in better-documented societies have been argued at length. What is clear in the Greek case is that the demand for artisans created by big public building projects sometimes exhausted regional supply.²⁹ What is also clear is that wage labourers found work all over Attica at harvest-time, when for a few weeks landowners needed and hired additional help. Obviously, other farmers would not be available to work in this way until they had harvested their own crops, and family members, including children and agricultural slaves, would have been fully employed with harvesting. This opportunity for paid work was probably taken up by casual labour.³⁰

ARTISAN AND SERVICE SLAVES

Artisans and service providers, whose work involved artistic skill, professional knowledge or sound judgement, were exploited for their special skills. Such slaves sometimes lived independently, most apparently in the city and the Piraeus. The Greeks understood well that slaves were motivated by reward as well as by punishment, and that incentives were a better motivator for skilled slaves and for those performing jobs requiring care

²⁹ Burford 1969: 34.

³⁰ Osborne 1995: 33 and n. 36; 1996: 66–9.

(Xen., *Oeconomicus* 5.15–16). This phenomenon is widely confirmed historically and is now explained with reference to the counterproductiveness, in jobs requiring high skill or care, of feelings that are created by threats and violence, such as high anxiety levels and ill-will towards the master.³¹ All owners had to spend some time managing their slaves, but some Athenians managed with minimal supervision.

The skilled slave could earn a living much as a free worker did. Artisans and service providers were normally paid on a piece-work basis: so much per pot or per foot of plaster, or in the prostitute Klepsydra's unusual case, per hour spent with a client (Athen. 13.567d). Phrynichus (*Revellers* 15) refers to a potter making a hundred wine cups a day. The principal capital asset that the slave used to perform the work, that is, his or her own body, was not his or her own. Therefore the slave had to hand over to the owner part of the slave's earnings as rent on the body. This rent was sometimes called *apophora* (Men., *Arbitrants* 380), sometimes *ergasia* (Hyp. 3.22). The rest of the slave's income was his own. This residue (*kermation*) would have provided an incentive payment for the slave to work without supervision.³² An obol per day seems to be a common *apophora* or *ergasia* rate for Athens, but we have only a handful of sources, and they may not be representative. In the fifth century Nicias' slaves paid him each an obol per day. Xenophon (*De vectigalibus*, esp. 4.23) assumed the state would earn an obol per slave per day if it followed his plan for large-scale slave leasing in the 370s, and Demosthenes' couch-makers (27.9) were paying him the same a little later in the fourth century. But we have one case of two obols per day, from approximately the same time, being paid by leather-workers (Aeschin. 1.97). When a citizen was paid three obols per day for service in the courts or the assembly, and a state pension was one obol per day, one or two obols as *apophora* seem reasonable.

Of all the different types of people living in classical Athens, in economic terms independent slaves lived the life most familiar to moderns. They worked in manufacturing or the service sector rather than in agriculture, they were paid in money rather than in kind, they functioned in a cash economy rather than a barter system, they bought their food rather than grew it, and they chose how to spend or save their residual cash on a daily basis.³³

On the Acropolis of Athens and elsewhere, citizens, metics and slaves worked side by side, receiving the same pay for completion of the same task. An inscription (*IG* 1² 374) recording the monies paid to stone-masons to flute the columns of the Erechtheum tells us that Laossos of Alopeke, Philon of Erkhia, Parmenon of Laossos, Karion of Laossos and Ikaros were

³¹ Fenoaltea 1984: 637–8, 654–8. ³² Fenoaltea 1984: 639.

³³ Cf. Goldin 1976 on the American South.

each paid twenty drachmas for their work on the column next to the altar. We can tell that Laossos and Philon were citizens from their demotics. But Parmenon's nomenclature indicates that he was either a son or a slave of Laossos. Karion has a common slave name, indicating the slave's origin or purchase in Caria. Ikaros' status cannot be decided from his name alone, but he was probably not a citizen because no demotic is given. He was probably a metic or an independent slave. The piece-rate was the same for everyone, which demonstrates the status-blind nature of the work on this public project as far as the Athenian people were concerned.

Aristotle reports (*Pol.* 1267b14–19) that one Diophantos (possibly the eponymous archon of 395/4) once proposed unsuccessfully in Athens that only public slaves (*demosioi*) be employed on public projects, and said that such a scheme was followed at Epidamnus. On the face of it, this was a very odd proposal for someone to make in a radical democracy, where many citizens made their living in the stone-building trades. It may have concerned competition between free and slave labour, though Aristotle's language elsewhere suggests otherwise. Aristotle sometimes indicates (e.g. *Pol.* 1278a12–13) that the *demiourgos* (public servant) or *banausos* (artisan) or *mistharnes* (wage labourer) is a sort of slave, one who works for anybody, in contrast to the private slave (i.e. the true slave), who works just for one master. If that is what he meant here, Diophantos' proposal might have been to restrict jobs on public projects to the free, since all real slaves had a private master. But on the day at issue, most Athenians must have wished that slave and free could continue to work side by side on public projects.

There is an economic argument, as made by Fenoaltea, that, all things being equal, slave labour is cheaper than free labour in unpleasant working conditions because slaves cannot choose their work or conditions and free people have to be paid a premium to motivate them.³⁴ But all other things are never equal. Fenoaltea's model assumes the availability of slave and free wage labour to compete for the work. This is a large assumption given ancient Greek attitudes to labouring for others but is exactly what we seem to find on the Erechtheum. There the free were not paid a premium, but the slaves had the expense of *apophora* to deduct from their wages, so the effect was the same: the free took home more pay than the slaves for doing the same job. The 'employer' was the state, which in Athens meant the same free people who might be working on the building, receiving the rate that they themselves had set. They had no interest in driving it down.

The 'unpleasantness' of work is physically and culturally determined, and a free person's pride may be priceless. Ancient Greeks would not

³⁴ Fenoaltea 1984: 655.

have understood the idea that 'every man has his price' except in terms of enslavement, and by the fourth century slavery was the *sine qua non* of civilised life, to judge from the evidence of philosophy. The Cynics demonstrated in name and deed that life was possible without slaves, but their exceptional example probably reinforced other people's belief in the necessity of slavery.

The average Athenian's sense of personal honour should not be underrated; it can surprise even professional ancient historians.³⁵ In Athens the judicial penalty of disfranchisement (removal of citizen rights) was called *atimia*, which literally means dishonour. Personal honour qualified a man to attend the assembly, serve on a jury and participate in a public sacrifice. At the same time, there were people who put 'gain before shame', as Kallias (Fr. 1) put it harshly. 'Born on the fourth of the month' like Heracles, physically strong but mentally sluggish, was a gentle joke aimed at those who worked for others (Ameipsias Fr. 28). Of course, some Athenians behaved dishonourably, but overall the culture's modest interest in the material and its strong sense of personal honour and public respect meant that slaves were recruited into jobs that respectable people did not want to do.

The slave-trader Lampis stands at the extreme end of the independent slave category.³⁶ He did not just live independently of his master; he sailed abroad, handled large sums of cash, bought and sold property, and fought a lawsuit arising from his business affairs. He was a slave agent, and he supervised the other slaves who constituted ships' crews. Slave agents were less likely than many other slaves to receive manumission, since their value to the owner was to act in the owner's name and interest,³⁷ which legally the free could not do. Lampis' overloading of a ship that led to a trial suggests that he was motivated by residual income after expenses.

Slave workshops seem to have grown significantly in size after 403 BC, when Athens lost the Peloponnesian War. Thereafter Athens had to raise public revenue internally from taxes and could no longer supplement income with revenue from an empire. Whereas most fifth-century workshops seem to have been staffed by a handful of slaves, some described in legal speeches had more, for example nine or ten in a leather shop (Aeschin. 1.97). We need to allow for exaggeration in these speeches because it is usually in the speaker's interest to inflate the value of the property in question. Nevertheless, in an extreme case, jurors were evidently expected to find it plausible that a shield-works owned by the metics Lysias (in the fifth century) and his brother had more than 100 slaves (Lysias 12.8, 19). The next largest workshop known was one-third of that size:

³⁵ van Wees 2000: 83–4.

³⁶ Dem. 34 (*Against Phormion*); for comparative evidence see Ewald 2000.

³⁷ Cf. Fenoaltea 1984: 657.

Demosthenes' blade workshop, with thirty-two or thirty-three slaves (Dem. 27.9). Pasion's shield works is sometimes said³⁸ to have had about sixty, but the source (Dem. 36.11) does not mention numbers of people involved, only income generated (1 talent per annum). Many assumptions are needed to arrive at a particular number of workers involved in creating such income, and since this high number is so abnormal, the procedure seems unsafe. It is no coincidence that all three of these large establishments involve armaments and metalworking, and they are probably not representative of the manufacturing sector as a whole. Shield workshops would obviously thrive during wartime, and the more than a hundred slaves in Lysias' works represent what this business had become at the end of a long episode. Metalworking was the most difficult and dangerous of the crafts, historically the first specialised craft, and one open to economies of scale.

MINING SLAVES

Slaveholding was practised in an altogether different way and on an altogether different scale in mining. The classical Athenian silver mines supply examples of two extremes in ancient Greek slaveholding practices simultaneously. There was chain-gang labour in horrible conditions, but mining slaves were also the most expensive slaves. To make sense of this conjunction, comparative examples and economic models can supplement the relatively small amount of literary and archaeological evidence.³⁹

The silver bonanza at Laurium in the 480s BC led to massive development of that mining area. The smallest estimate for the number of slaves employed here by the beginning of the Peloponnesian War (431 BC) is 11,000. Breaking rock above or below ground is hard labour requiring no skill and was performed by slaves whose only valuable asset was their strength. Consequently, these slaves worked in shackles and were driven hard, probably until death. Agatharchides' description of gold-mining in Egypt, which Diodorus Siculus (3.11.2–3) claimed to have validated, distinguished between the physically strongest, who hammered the rock without respite (3.12.5–6) in tunnels illuminated by lamps bound to their foreheads (3.12.6), the immature males who moved the mined rock (3.13.1), the mature males who pounded the mined rock with pestle and mortar until it was the size of a vetch seed (3.13.2), and the women and older men who laboured at lines of mills, two or three per handle, to grind the grains of rock until they resembled fine flour (3.13.2–3). All worked in chains (3.12.3), none was clothed, no respite of any kind was given to the sick, the injured, the old

³⁸ Garlan 1988: 65.

³⁹ Particularly useful comparative material: Bezis-Selfa 1999 and Dew 1966; for a relevant economic model, see Fenoaltea 1984.

or the weak, but all were driven on by blows to keep working ‘until they die in their bonds as a result of their bad treatment’ (3.13.3).

When the ordinary Athenian threatened his slave with being sold to Laurium, this was presumably the sort of image that he meant to implant in his slave’s mind. But not all slaves in Laurium fell into this category (cf. Diod. 3.12.5, 3.14.1). Various tasks that must be performed to make silver out of rock were highly skilled, especially smelting. The slaves who performed them could waste a huge amount of material and time by sabotage if so inclined, and creating worker ill-will through the exercise of condign power was counterproductive.⁴⁰ Consequently, these skilled slaves would have been motivated by compensatory power, either retaining residual income or receiving manumission once certain conditions were met.

Quite apart from the technical demands of metallurgy, big mining operations also needed good managers. These people commanded the labour of hundreds of slaves, and the fact that the most expensive slave in Greek history is to be found at Laurium should not surprise us. The Athenian Nicias bought the slave Sosias for a talent (6,000 drachmas). The putative average price for a slave at this time was about 200 drachmas. Sosias came from Thrace, an area rich in gold- and silver mines that had long been exploited by both Thracians and Greeks. Nicias bought Sosias specifically to manage his huge mining concessions (Xen., *Memorabilia* 2.5). He got on with his civic and military duties while simultaneously receiving an income from Sosias of 1,000 obols (one obol per managed slave) per day (Xen. *Vect.* 4. 23). If Nicias’ ‘per day’ did not recognise holidays, this works out at an impressive ten talents and more per year for the absentee slaveholder. One understands why Xenophon said that others emulated him, buying as many slaves as they could, and why Xenophon (*Vect.*) proposed that the state do likewise. One can only assume that Sosias kept any marginal income earned by the slaves he managed. His job required skill and care – he was supervising others and did not need supervision himself – so he would have been motivated by reward.

WHY AND HOW DID ATHENS BECOME A GENUINE SLAVE SOCIETY?

It is unknown why, how or even when Athens became a slave society. In 1909 Alfred Zimmern (1928: 107–8) said: ‘the historians are agreed neither about the chronology, nor the importance, nor the manner, nor the causes, nor the consequences of the introduction of slave-labour into the Greek City-States’. The situation is no different today.

⁴⁰ Fenoaltea 1984: 640–1; Galbraith 1984.

Slaves are present when Greek society first appears in view, in the epics of Homer. So there were probably slaves in Athens when those poems were written down, probably in the eighth century BC, and when the poems first originated as oral compositions. But there is little contemporary evidence for Greek history in the next two centuries, just bright images of two very different societies before and afterwards: heroic but 'primitive' Homeric society, and democratic and 'civilised' classical society. Hard evidence on what happened during those two centuries (the 'archaic' period) to transform the one into the other is meagre and open to numerous interpretations that depend heavily on intuitions of what archaic Greek society was like. In these circumstances, plausibility and persuasiveness are the principal tests of any hypothesis offered.

All are agreed that the population of Attica was significantly greater in the classical period than at any previous time. Growth consisted partly of immigration, free or forced. We can speculate that in expanding communities like Athens, the opportunity would have arisen for those who could make knives, or furniture, or textiles, or bread (for example) to do so as their principal means of making a living. Those who began to perform these tasks, whether under orders as slaves or under lesser constraints as poor free, were, in ecological terms, moving into new habitats; they were not displacing others from pre-existing habitats. As society grew in size and complexity, and particularly as the number of landless increased, new spaces opened up, especially in trade and service. There was conversion from agriculture to industry (cf. Antiphanes Fr. 21). This growth could not have happened without the simultaneous development of the food market. The first priority for the landless would have been the availability of daily food for sale or exchange, or else they must beg, starve, or leave the country in search of it. As Aristophanes supposedly said (Fr. 898a, trans. Edmonds), 'A poor man loves whatever land yields him his keep and never lets him starve.'

The development of a market was a crucial part of the growth of the numbers of non-producing consumers. Its coexistence with subsistence agriculture, simple technologies and a largely embedded economy is not as problematic as it was once thought to be. The 'peasant mentality' that leads subsistence farmers to implement agricultural strategies that maximise survival prospects, not yields or profits, and minimise risk, not costs, nevertheless normally produces a surplus. (A surplus so small it could be carried by one donkey was cause for a joke: Diphilos Fr. 89.) Some of the surplus was normally sold because no one was truly self-sufficient, despite aspirations. Regularly or occasionally, everyone had to look beyond the farm to obtain goods that could never be produced on their land, such as metals, salt or purple dye (cf. Philemon Fr. 105), or to compensate for crop shortfalls in bad years. In addition, cash was sometimes required

for other purposes: marriage, death and taxes were unavoidable demands on the family purse. Unless the farmer sold some of his surplus, he had no access to cash. How much cash his product could earn depended on market forces, modified only in the case of grain prices, and only after the start of state intervention to control them, which is not evidenced before 386 BC but might have begun during the Peloponnesian War.⁴¹ In any case, we are looking to the classical period for any sort of state control over prices. Consequently, there must have been an active market operating in Greece, more active and larger in the larger centres of population than in the smaller.⁴²

It is obvious from Herodotus and Thucydides that the market was well established by the time they were writing, in the middle to second half of the fifth century BC. A fragment from Aristophanes' *Seasons* (Fr. 569) suggests much more explicitly how developed the food market was by c. 415 BC, even asserting that out-of-season foods are available. Similarly Dionysius wrote (Fr. 2.21–2): 'Anything's to be got, almost, at any time you like, but it doesn't have the same delight and sweetness.' From other scraps of old comedy, we hear of a variety of other goods offered for sale in the Athenian agora in the second half of the fifth century beyond foodstuffs. Silphium, hides, papyrus, sailcloth, cypress-wood, ivory, slaves, mercenaries, cushions and rugs; incense, perfumes and books; crests for helmets; cosmetics; wine ready-watered by the cup for the poor; and even snow to cool wine for the profligate.⁴³ In its heyday, the Athenian market supplied daily food to 10,000 metics⁴⁴ plus, say, 6,000 citizens living off political day wages, plus however many independent slaves we think there were. The number of landless consumers such as these would have grown with the market, for each required the other. Pericles' introduction of pay for political service in (probably) the 430s was a watershed in the process, because it created about 6,000 potential consumers overnight. Cleophon's extension of pay for assembly service in 409 BC was another.

What about the slave market? The aim to minimise risk and avoid 'monoculture' operated for the slave-owner and trader as well as the farmer. The slave producer needed to sell his product.⁴⁵ Anyone owning a number of slaves would want a mix, for as Plato (*Laws* 777d) put it, management is easier if the slaves do not come from the same country, nor speak the same language. This principle of slave management fostered growth in the demand for and supply of slaves from a wide variety of foreign cultures.

⁴¹ Garnsey 1999: 139–42; but note that Alexis Fr. 125 suggests that fish prices came under state control c. 323/3.

⁴² Garnsey 1999: ch. 2.

⁴³ Hermippos, *Porters* Fr. 63; Eupolis Fr. 304; Ar. Fr. 812; Ameipsias Fr. 3; Ar. Fr. 683; Euthykses Fr. 1; Alexis Fr. 9.

⁴⁴ Whitehead 1977: 97. ⁴⁵ Rihll 1996.

Probably the most famous piece of evidence on this topic is an inscription dated to *c.* 414 BC (*IG I³ 421* col. 1 lines 33–49). It lists sixteen slaves belonging to the metic Cephisodoros. They bore a variety of ethnics. Five came from Thrace, one from Scythia, one from Colchis, one from Lydia, one from perhaps Melitene, three from Caria, two from Syria and two from Illyria.

Garlan (1988: 54) asserts that slave sales took place only once a (lunar) month in the Agora, presumably on a narrow reading of a passage from Aristophanes (*Knights* 43). But there is no other evidence to support it. Nicias, mentioned above, owned 1,000 slaves. Hipponicus had 600 and Philemonides 300. All these slaves worked alongside at least 9,000 others owned in smaller groups or individually by hundreds of Athenians and metics exploiting the Laurium mines. Thousands more worked in the city and port, and in the homes and fields of Athenians throughout Attica. It is hard to see why or how such a vigorous slaveholding society could limit itself to one slave sale per month.

CONCLUSION

Classical Athenian slavery was multifaceted and multilayered. Slaves were at the heart of Athenian society, physically and psychologically. In the home, in the market, in the workshop, on the farm, slaves accompanied Athenians from cradle to grave, putting food on the table, wine in the jar, clothes on their backs and money in their hands. They executed criminals, minted coins, helped build the Parthenon, and much else, even manning the oars of the fleet on occasion. Most were physically indistinguishable from the population at large. Some classical Athenian masters developed management skills far more complex and sophisticated than brute force and the whip, skills that could be applied to free persons as well.

The desperate ease with which people could become slaves, and relative ease with which they might, especially if they were skilled, escape slavery again, impacted strongly on the Greek psyche. Greek culture is deeply fatalistic. The presence of slaves made the free – including, or perhaps especially, the ex-slave – sensitive to what needed defending in order to preserve or deserve their liberty, and it was freedom not just from physical abuse and exploitation, but also freedom from humiliation. Great philosophers considered the nature of human society, and especially power relations between ruler and ruled. They speculated on the real and ideal structure of communities, and tried to find rational bases for the unequal distribution of power, wealth and prestige. No ancient Greek community, as far as we know, seriously entertained the idea of living without slaves,⁴⁶ but a

⁴⁶ Garnsey 1996; Garlan 1981.

number of playwrights played with it.⁴⁷ They remind us that more than half of all classical Athenian homes were slave-less.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

For a selection of primary sources in English translation, see Wiedemann (1981). For general surveys of slavery in ancient Greece, see Garlan (1988) and Fisher (1993). For attitudes to and theories of slavery in antiquity, see Garnsey (1996). For the fragments of the comedians (text and translation), which I have plundered for examples, see Edmonds (1957). The basic sociological model of society I adopt is Giddens' theory of structuration; see Giddens (1979), (1984), (1987). My understanding of power draws on Galbraith (1984). My discussion of economic matters owes much to Fenoaltea (1984).

The emergence of slave society in Greece is the specific subject of essays by Finley (1980: ch. 2), Rihll (1993) and Rihll (1996: with further bibliography). Finley's hypothesis (1980: 86–7) connecting the growth of slavery in Athens to Solon's *seisakhtheia* seems to have been quietly abandoned (cf. Mitchell and Rhodes 1997, omitting reference to slavery). Taylor (2001) challenges scholarly disbelief in the sources' high figures for slaves held in and traded in Greece. Whitehead (1977) has full discussion of the Athenian metics. Harrison (1969) and (1971) is comprehensive for Athenian law. On Athenian democracy, see Hansen (1991). On the manumission documents, see Tod (1901). For an introduction to the loan groups see Westermann (1960: 23–5).

⁴⁷ Kratinos, *Gods of Wealth* c. 436; Krates, *Animals* c. 433; Telekleides, *Amphiktyones* c. 431; Pherekrates, *Miners* c. 431, *Persians* c. 425 and *Savages* c. 420; and Diphilos, *Greedy Man* c. 295. See Garlan 1981.

CHAPTER 4

THE HELOTS: A CONTEMPORARY REVIEW

PAUL CARTLEDGE

INTRODUCTION

‘Helot’ has entered the contemporary English lexicon to refer to a member of a singularly oppressed or exploited underclass. This is a tribute to the enduring power of the Spartan myth or mirage.¹ ‘Helot’ also occasioned an ancient Greek verb with general reference, *heiloteuein* (Isocrates 4.131), meaning to be reduced to the status of Helotage, which is a tribute of a different sort to the singularity of the institution in antiquity. Helotage, a modern English term of art for what the Spartans would have called *douleia* (see below), lasted throughout the rise, climax and decline of the Spartan polity – right up to the Roman conquest in the second or first century BC, as noted by the Augustan-period Greek geographer and cultural historian Strabo (8.5.4). Sparta, or Lacedaemon as the *polis* was officially known, was the largest Greek state in extent of territory (c. 8,400 sq. km.). The largest by far in fact: more than double the size of the next (Syracuse) and over three times as large as the most populous (Athens) of the 1,000 or so Greek citizen-states.²

Yet although Sparta had a smaller overall population than Athens, it had the highest density of slave to free, followed, not by Athens, but by the island-state of Chios (Thucydides 8.40.2). As Plato, or the pseudo-Platonic author of the *First Alcibiades* Socratic dialogue (I.122d), observed in the fourth century BC, ‘no one could doubt that their land in Laconia and Messenia is superior to our [Athenian] land, both in extent and quality, not to mention the number of their slaves and especially the Helots’.³ That was written, or refers to the situation, before 369, a period when

¹ On the ‘mirage’ or ‘myth’, see further Ollier 1933–43; Rawson 1969/1991.

² For the publication of the results of the Copenhagen Polis Centre’s database of Greek *poleis*, compiled under the august auspices of Danish Academician Mogens Herman Hansen, see Hansen and Heine Nielsen 2004.

³ The author uses for ‘slaves’ *andrapoda*, a word that more particularly tended to be used of slaves captured in war and sold as war-booty. The Helots were probably never sold, at least not outside Laconia and Messenia, as we shall see, but both the Laconian and the Messenian Helots, and more especially the latter, were widely regarded as owing their status to an original conquest by their Spartan masters.

'Lacedaemon' or *he lakonike* (sc. *ge*) embraced Messenia as well as Laconia, including thereby the valley of the Pamisos, 'good to plough and good to plant', as the Spartan poet Tyrtaeus (Fr. 5.4 West) had put it in the seventh century, on top of the original core valley of the Eurotas in Laconia.⁴ Apart from its confirmation of the general Greek perception, shared by moderns, that the Helots were an unusually numerous servile body, the *First Alcibiades* passage also usefully distinguishes between 'slaves' and the Helots. As we shall see below, the Helots both were and were not *douloi* (the commonest Greek word for the unfree).

Plato, in his final work (*Laws* 776c, composed over a long period chiefly in the second quarter of the fourth century), noted that 'the Helot-system of Sparta is practically the most discussed and controversial subject in Greece, some approving the institution, others criticizing it'. What caused the controversy, above all, were two facts: first, the Helots, unlike the vast majority of *douloi* in Greece, were themselves native Greeks, and by the time Plato was writing it was becoming a matter of some discomfort at least in intellectual circles blatantly to own or otherwise exploit Greeks as slaves; second, the Messenian Helots had within Plato's lifetime succeeded in emancipating themselves from servitude en masse, crucially with the help of one of Sparta's most important Greek enemies (and former ally), Thebes.

Plato's own attitude to that emancipation was equivocal at best. 'Man', according to the anonymous Athenian interlocutor in the dialogue (a surrogate for Plato himself):

is a hard thing to manage, as has often been shown by the frequent revolts of the Messenians, and the great problems that arise in states with many slaves ['oiketai' – the second most common word for 'unfree'] who speak the same language... Two remedies alone remain to us: not to have the slaves of the same ethnic origin nor, if possible, speaking the same language.

(*Leg.* 777BC, trans. B. Jowett, adapted)

Aristotle, Plato's most distinguished pupil, concurred. A couple of decades later, in the final books of his *Politics* where he was adumbrating his own version of an ideal polity, he wrote (1330a25–8): 'The very best thing of all would be that the farmers should be slaves, not all of the same people and not spirited; for if they have no spirit, they will be better suited for their work and there will be no danger of their making a revolution [*neôterizein*, lit. 'do too new things']'. That passage has to be read in the light both of his defence of a doctrine of natural slavery at the very start of the work, and of his overriding practical concern to preserve and at most ameliorate rather

⁴ There is no possibility of determining with any sure degree of accuracy the total population of Helots at any time during the Spartans' Helot regime. For some possible approximations, see Scheidel 2003b.

than revolutionise existing polities. Some few exceptionally enlightened Greeks had by Aristotle's day come to take the view that all slavery, of whatever kind and however instituted, was in principle morally wrong. But not even they went so far as to advocate universal abolition, and Aristotle's views on slavery were far closer to the conventional Greek normative belief that slavery not only was not wrong nor merely desirable, but unavoidably necessary.⁵

ORIGINS

In the opening section we noted the emancipation of the Messenian Helots, which occurred in 369. Here, we try to establish how the Messenian and Laconian Helots originally came to suffer their common servile lot. One scholar has very powerfully spoken of 'the imaginary conquest of the Helots'.⁶ This does not mean that the Helots necessarily felt that they had been conquered only in the imagination of the Spartans, but that the Spartans imagined the origins of their control of the Helots in terms of a conquest. That seems to me to be also a highly likely real-life explanation of the status of the Messenian Helots at least. At any rate, there is no contradiction between this explanation and the report of Herodotus (1.66–8) that in the first half of the sixth century the Spartans set out in effect to helotise the Arcadians of Tegea on their northern border through military conquest followed by enslavement and land distribution. The origins of the Helots of Laconia are unfortunately much more contested and much less clear.

One of the earliest Greek historians to try to make rational sense of the Greeks' multiple myths and legends about their far-distant ancestors was Hellenicus of Lesbos, who wrote towards the end of the fifth century BC. He opined (*FGrH* 4 F 188) that 'the Helots are those who were not by birth the *douloi* of the Spartans but those occupying the city of Helos who were the first to be defeated'. Helos turns up in the 'Catalogue of Ships' in Homer's *Iliad* (2.581) as a 'city on the sea', which would aptly enough explain its etymology, since it means 'marsh'. Unfortunately, however, the derivation of 'Helots' (*heilotai*) from Helos is linguistically impossible – had Helots in fact taken their name from Helos, they would have been called 'Heleioi'.⁷ This is indeed what the fourth-century 'universal' historian Ephorus of Cyme (in Asia Minor) calls them (*FGrH* 70 F 117), linking

⁵ Cartledge 1993b/2002: ch. 6, esp. 135–41; Garnsey 1996; see Peter Hunt's chapter in this volume.

⁶ Luraghi 2003.

⁷ The fourth-century BC historian Theopompus of Chios does indeed preserve a form 'Heleatai' (*FGrH* 115 F 13), but this is a back-formation, not otherwise attested, designed precisely to corroborate the prior and linguistically unsubstantiated derivation from Helos ('the Heleatai formerly inhabited Helos').

them explicitly with the site of Helos, but his origins story of conquest in Laconia has neither independent validity nor intrinsic plausibility: 'Agis son of Eurysthenes robbed them [the Perioeci] of their equal political status and compelled them to pay contributions to Sparta. They obeyed, but the Heleioi, those who held Helos, revolted and were conquered by force of arms and adjudged *douloi* on fixed conditions.'

Ephorus, in other words, was trying to account not only for the origins and status of the Helots, but also for those of the Perioeci, the free citizen inhabitants of *poleis* in Laconia and Messenia other than Sparta, who were not themselves citizens of Lacedaemon on all fours with the Spartiates (full Spartan citizens).⁸ And in order to explain both, he used a model of revolt and subjugation in very early Laconia (King Agis I, if historical at all, might be dated notionally to the second half of the tenth century) that was appropriate only in the much different and later conditions of the Spartan conquest of Messenia – if indeed there was a single Spartan conquest of Messenia (below). We might as well accept, however, that the extant sources preserve no really sure idea about the origins of the Laconian Helots.⁹ It would be an act of faith, for example, to try to make anything substantial out of a notice in Antiochus of Syracuse, a late fifth-century historian (*FGrH* 555 F 13): 'After the Messenian War the Spartans who did not participate in the expedition were adjudged *douloi* and called Helots, while all those who had been born during the campaign were called Partheniae and deprived of full citizen rights.' That has not stopped some modern historians from inferring that the Laconian Helots somehow acquired their status originally by some process of internal demotion and degrading.

As for the subjugation of the Messenians, in time a rich and plastic narrative of a war or wars of Spartan conquest and national resistance was fabricated, especially by and for ex-Helot Messenians and their descendants following the liberation of most of Messenia from Spartan control in 370/369.¹⁰ A certain impression of this original narrative is preserved in the fourth book of the Roman-period travelogue (*Periegesis*) of Pausanias, who explicitly claims the authority of two writers of the Hellenistic era (Myron of Priene and Rhianos of Bene in Crete). This narrative does have some basis in good contemporary evidence, such as the traditionally preserved verses of the Spartan war-poet Tyrtaeus (seventh century). But much of

⁸ Recently, Mertens 2002.

⁹ On the other hand, the weakness of the evidence does not in my judgement require us to believe, with Ducat, that the Laconian Helots were not helotised until as late as the mid-fifth century, that is, long after the Messenians. Nor do I share the faith of Luraghi (2003) that one can trace the fairly precise evolution of Helot status by reading between the lines of the travel book of Pausanias, composed in the second half of the second century AD.

¹⁰ Pearson 1962.

it, especially that involving the resistance leader Aristomenes, was sheer fiction, the necessary invention of patriotic tradition.

Of the more sober and reliable sources who embraced the conquest model for the Messenian Helots, apart from Antiochus the most prominent is his Athenian contemporary Thucydides. In the course of a truly laconic description of Greek affairs between the Persian War and the Atheno-Peloponnesian War in the first book of his *History*, he wrote (1.101.2): 'The majority of the Helots were descended from the Messenians who were enslaved (*doulothenton*) of old. Hence all were called "Messenians".' The context of this remark is his account of the great Messenian Helot revolt of the 460s, which made almost as powerful an impression on the outside world as the revolt of 370/369. What Thucydides may have meant therefore was that, as a consequence of this and an earlier revolt or revolts, in which the Helots of Messenia took the major role, 'Messenians' came to be used as shorthand by outsiders like himself to refer to all the Helots, including the Laconian.¹¹

At any rate, it was certainly not the term the Spartans themselves used, since 'Messenians' would carry for them the connotation of political identity and indeed autonomy. Thus, for example, it was as 'Messenians' that the ex-Helots resettled by the Athenians at Naupactus in the 450s joined in the discomfiture of the Spartans at Pylos and Sphacteria in 425; as 'Messenians' that Helots, ex-Helots and their descendants celebrated their victories over the Spartans in the Atheno-Peloponnesian War; and as 'Messenians' that the ex-Helots established their new or re-born *polis* after their emancipation in 369.¹² For the Spartans, however, as we shall see in the next section, the Helots, Laconian and Messenian indiscriminately, were collectively the slave group.

STATUS

The ancient Greeks were notoriously less jurisprudentially sophisticated than the Roman jurists and legal writers. But even the latter had definitional problems with, for example, the legal status of the later Roman imperial *coloni*, whom they were driven on occasion to classify as 'slaves of the soil itself' (*servi terrae ipsius*), an egregious legal fiction. The problem was that the *coloni* were not in every respect and unconditionally either free or unfree.¹³ Likewise the Helots, though rather less so: whereas the *coloni* were more free than not, it was vice versa with the Helots. The

¹¹ See Luraghi 2002b.

¹² Naupactus 'Messenians': Thuc. 2.9.4 *et al.* Victory dedication at Olympia, c. 421 (extant inscription attached to statue of Nike by Paionios of Mende): Meiggs and Lewis 1988: no. 74. Liberation of 370/69: Cartledge 2001a: 255.

¹³ Later Roman 'colonate': Shaw 1998: 35–7; see Cam Grey's chapter in this volume.

legally crude Spartans did not bother themselves with such niceties. For them, the Helots were individually all *douloi*, and collectively and officially they were 'the slave population' (*he douleia*), being bluntly and publicly so labelled in the treaty of alliance that the Spartans concluded separately with the Athenians in 421 (Thuc. 5.23.3). The latter usage was, however, a unicum. No other Greek servile population is so labelled, collectively and abstractly. That linguistic coinage by itself serves as a pointer to the fact that Helotage was in some ways or senses different from all other Greek servile systems. In just what ways or senses, it is the aim of this section to determine.

To begin with the one quasi-legal attempt at a catch-all definition, we find that C. Julius Pollux, an Egyptian Greek lexicographer of the second century AD, preserves the following formula (3.83): 'Between free men and slaves (*douloi*) are the Spartan Helots, the Thessalian Penestae, the Mariandynian Dorophoroi, the Argive Gymnetes, and the Sicyonian Corynephoroi.' Two points should be noted at once. First, the precise reference of *douloi* is here radically unclear – since, as Pollux or his source (probably Aristophanes of Byzantium, working at Egyptian Alexandria, some four centuries earlier) presumably well knew, the Helots could plausibly be labelled simply as *douloi*. Secondly, the Helots' status is defined comparatively: they are likened, in respect of their in-between status, to a series of other subaltern groups, two of which (Penestae and Dorophoroi) were certainly also *douloi*, the other two (Gymnetes and Corynephoroi) probably more or less free.¹⁴ A little more precision, but only a little, may be obtained from two other Greek, Roman-period sources. Strabo in his *Geography* (8.5.4) wrote that 'the Spartans held [the Helots] as slaves (*douloi*) of the community as it were'. Pausanias in his travelogue, making the same time-honoured etymological mistake as Hellenicus and Ephorus, states (3.20.6) that the inhabitants of Helos 'were the first to become slaves of the community (*douloi tou koinou*) and the first to be called Helots'.

What emerges relatively clearly so far, then, is that the Helots constitute some kind of collective, more precisely an ethnic, group, and that they are public slaves. The full import of this is best grasped by making another sort of comparison – with the slaves of, for example, Chios or Athens. The latter *douloi* were chattel slaves, mostly privately and individually owned, having been bought and sold by market-exchange. They were as a result a heterogeneous, polyglot, essentially foreign and usually non-Greek mass. They were, in a word, outsiders; or, to use the more sophisticated language of comparative historical sociology, natively alienated and socially dead outsiders.¹⁵ In all those respects, these *douloi* were the antithesis and

¹⁴ Lotze 1985. ¹⁵ Patterson 1982 is definitive.

indeed the anti-type of the Helots. They, both Laconian and Messenian, were insiders in language and on other criteria and indicia of ethnicity, and were born and bred precisely as a collective servile group.¹⁶ There are clear indications that the Spartans did also own chattel *douloi* (esp. Pl. *Alc.* I.122d).¹⁷ But these were a minority both numerically and, above all, in terms of their historical significance.

It took a very long time, however, for the Greeks themselves to perceive this essential qualitative difference between Athens' and Chios's chattel-type *douloi*, on the one hand, and Sparta's Helots and other superficially Helot-like servile groups. What seems to have torn the veils from their homogenising slave-owning eyes was the successful revolt of the Messenian Helots in 370/369. As Vidal-Naquet (1986) was among the first to bring out, it was this watershed event that seems to have prompted the following pioneering observation of Theopompus (*FGrH* 115 F 122):

The Chians were the first Greeks after the Thessalians and the Spartans to make use of slaves (*douloi*), but they did not acquire them in the same way as these. For the Spartans and the Thessalians . . . recruited their slave populations from the Greeks who previously inhabited the country they now control, the Spartans from the Achaeans, the Thessalians from the Perrhaebi and Magnetes; and they called those whom they had enslaved Helots and Penestae respectively – whereas the Chians were the first to buy slaves for cash.

Theopompus, not coincidentally, was himself from Chios, writing his histories in the third quarter of the fourth century; there is indeed a somewhat disconcerting note of patriotic pride in his claiming his own ancestors as the 'first discoverers' of what we would call chattel slavery. Historiographically and analytically, though, his comparison was doubly fruitful. Not only did it distinguish the Helots from chattel slaves, it also discovered an essential classificatory similarity between Helots and some other such unfree ethnic collectives. Unfortunately, as we have seen, other classifiers were sometimes too quick to label as 'slaves' certain other social or ethnic groups that should be seen rather as free Greek 'underclasses', second-class citizens at best. But Theopompus and his followers were surely not wrong in linking the Helots and the Thessalian Penestae at least. Both groups might be invoked in internal political conflict, both had some rights and privileges denied to outright chattel slaves, and both were in some sense insiders rather than outsiders.¹⁸

¹⁶ On the collective, 'inter-community' nature of the Helots' servitude, see Garland 1988: 93–102.

¹⁷ That can be assumed too as a matter of course for the Perioeci; half a dozen late fifth/early fourth-century manumission inscriptions from the sanctuary of Pohoidan (Poseidon) at Laconian Tainaron (*IG* v 1.1228–33) are surely to be attributed to them, not to Spartans, even though some of the documents are dated by the relevant eponymous Spartan Ephor: Ducat 1990: 25–6.

¹⁸ Ducat 1994 is the fullest study of the Penestae.

One aspect, however, of their common status is eminently disputable. Penestae were, apparently, at the beck and call of individual Thessalian grandees, and it is usually thought that they were owned and inherited individually, on certain conditions fixed legally by the various Thessalian cities and communities. Helots, on the other hand, were owned, not individually, but by the corporate body of the Spartans as a whole, in at least one key respect: only the Spartan citizen body could manumit a Helot. During the Atheno-Peloponnesian War such manumissions became a regular act of policy, both to divide and so more easily rule an ethnically homogeneous and potentially rebellious group or groups, and in order to provide a new kind of garrison troops drawn specifically from these Neodamodeis ('New Damos-types'), as Sparta's imperial stretch increased to the point of extensive overseas empire from 404 onwards. That much is generally agreed. So too that Helots could not be in any way or by any means disposed of beyond the frontiers of the *polis* of Lacedaemon, except by act of parliament, so to speak: in Ephorus' quoted words (*FGrH* 70 F 117), 'Their master was permitted neither to manumit them nor to sell them beyond the frontier.'

What remains at issue is whether individual Spartans might trade 'their' Helots, that is the Helots attached to land they owned or possessed, internally, by selling them to other individual Spartans. A passage of Aristotle's *Politics* (1263a35–7), where the philosopher is firmly criticising the principle of communal ownership of property advocated for the Guardian rulers of Plato's ideal Republic, has been interpreted as compatible with that interpretation. After enunciating the general principle of private ownership tempered by some degree of shared use, Aristotle cites in supportive illustration Sparta, where 'they use each others' slaves [*douloi*] almost as if they were their own, and horses and dogs too; and if they need food on a journey, they get it in the country as they go'. This has been taken to mean that the Spartans' slaves, that is Helots, were as much private property as were their horses and hunting dogs and provisions available on country estates, and, therefore, that they might just as well be exchanged internally. Confirmation for this possibility has been sought from a passage of Strabo (12.3.4) dealing with the Mariandyni (also known as Dorophoroi or 'Gift-bearers': Callistratus, *FGrH* 348 F 4) of Heraclea on the Black Sea, a collective ethnic unfree group likened to the Helots in the most general and vague way from Plato onwards: according to Strabo, they 'could even be sold, but not beyond the borders'.¹⁹

¹⁹ van Wees 2003: 46. One of the penalties imposed on the leading Spartiates who were imprisoned in Athens after their surrender in 425 and eventually returned to Sparta in 421 was an embargo on buying and selling (Thuc. 5.34.2). That is usually thought to refer to land – a subject too complex to enter into here; but it could, conceivably, have applied also to Helots.

The interpretation seems to me moot, since the Spartans' unique central control over formal manumission is in formal conflict with the possibility of private alienation of Helots (quite a different thing from a temporary loan).²⁰ However, it is certainly worth bearing the possibility in mind, as this would have offered yet another technique whereby Spartans could have sought to control potentially unruly Helots. Helots certainly lived in family groups – indeed, Helot 'wives' are referred to by both Tyrtaeus and Herodotus. The threat of breaking up *de facto* slave families was a notoriously effective method of slave-control in the Old South of the United States.

FUNCTIONS

The Helots, or the vast majority of them, were above all else primary producers of food for the Spartans. On their labour as farmers rested the entire Spartan politico-military edifice. As an apophthegm in a collection attributed to Plutarch (*Moralia* 223a) laconically put it, Homer was the poet for the Spartans, Hesiod (an agrarian writer) for the Helots. Or, as Aristotle had expressed it (*Pol.* 1271b40–72a2), 'the Cretans' institutions resemble the Spartans'. Helots are the farmers of the latter, the *perioikoi* of the former.' The point of the system was that the Helots provided the generous food surpluses that enabled the Spartans to devote themselves to their unique military style of communal life. Huge dispute, however, surrounds the issue of how and how much the Helots' agrarian labour power was exploited to fulfil that end.

Tyrtaeus (Fr. 6–7 West) seems to speak of a system of literal *métayage* in Messenia, half-and-half sharecropping: 'Like asses exhausted under great loads: under painful necessity to bring their masters full half the crop their ploughed land produced.' But that was in the seventh century, before the Helot system had had time to be fully developed in Messenia, and we should probably allow for fluctuations and variations over time and according to place during the five centuries or so that Helotage lasted in Laconia. Plutarch in his *Life of Lycurgus* (8.7) gives absolute figures for the amounts of cereal and other produce that each lot (*klaros*) allocated to a Spartan nuclear family would be expected (on average? or minimally?) to yield (70 *medimnoi* of barley for a man, 12 for a woman, and corresponding amounts of fresh fruits). But there is a suspicion that those figures either are derived directly from, or have been somehow influenced by, the transformation of the agrarian regime in Laconia that the revolutionary kings Agis IV and Cleomenes III between them effected in the mid- to later third century.²¹

²⁰ 'To affirm that there were Helot markets in Laconia would probably expose one to not being followed' is Ducat's (1990: 22) delicate formulation.

²¹ Cartledge in Cartledge and Spawforth 2001: ch. 4.

They may not, that is to say, apply to the high ‘Lycurgan’ regime of between, say 650 and 350.

On the other hand, the ‘curse’ mentioned in another Plutarchan work (*Instituta Laconica*, *Mor.* 239de) seems to me thoroughly ‘archaic’: ‘A curse was decreed to fall upon [the Spartan] who exacted more than the long-established rent (*apophora*), so that [the Helots] might serve gladly because gainfully, and [the Spartans] might not exceed the fixed amount.’ This ‘fixed amount’ could just as well have referred to the fifty-fifty distribution mentioned by Tyrtaeus as to any absolute figures of the kind mentioned by Plutarch in his *Lycurgus*. Indeed, it could very well have been one of the ‘fixed conditions’ on which, according to Ephorus (*FGrH* 70 F 117), the Helots had originally been ‘adjudged slaves [*douloi*]’. It is a separate question whether the payment of a ‘rent’ and quasi-legal protection from breach of ‘contract’ by the Spartan master seriously modified the Helots’ status as slaves and made them more like ‘peasants’.²² That the Helots worked under threat of summary execution as enemies of the state (below) seems to me to override that particular hypothetical element of ‘freedom’.

The very few literary sources that bear on the question of the Helots’ domicile (e.g. Livy 34.27.9, *castellani* inhabiting *vici*, ‘rural people’ living in ‘villages’) are unhelpfully ambiguous, but the latest archaeological research suggests that at least in a certain productive part of western Messenia the Helots lived collectively in villages rather than scattered in individual family units on more or less isolated farms.²³ As for social differentiation within the Helot populations, we are reduced to relying on such scraps of information as an entry in an early Byzantine lexicon that seems to refer to a ‘controller of Helots’, implying presumably some kind of overseer system. That seems only sensible in principle – partly, again, politically to divide and rule, but also partly to place the responsibility for delivering the harvests on the shoulders of known favoured individual Helots.

Failure to deliver the required quota had the disastrous effect for the Spartan master that he was unable to meet his mess bills, that is, pay over to his *suskanion* (alternatively called *sussition* or *pheidition*) the minimum of natural produce required to maintain his membership both of the mess and by definition of the citizen body as a whole. One of Aristotle’s several cutting criticisms of the Spartan regime (*Pol.* 1271a28–36) is that many Spartans within living memory had been deprived of their full citizenship on these economic grounds. But the consequences were presumably even more drastic for the Helot overseer involved and those Helots within his supervision: at the limit, death by summary execution.

²² As argued by Hodkinson 2003; cf. Hodkinson 2008.

²³ Alcock 1999, 2001, 2002b, 2003.

Not all Helots were farmers, or at least not necessarily farmers all the time. A made-up (Theban) speech in Xenophon's *Hellenica* (3.5.12) claims tendentiously that Helots might even be appointed as harmosts – city or area governors in Sparta's post-Peloponnesian War empire. More plausibly, we learn in Herodotus (6.75.2) of a no doubt exceptionally trusted Helot serving as an armed guard in Sparta – over an imprisoned and possibly demented king (Cleomenes I). Some Helots were occasionally recruited as hoplite soldiers while still enjoying or suffering Helot status and only freed later after the campaign was over (Thuc. 4.80). But most Helots who fought as Helots did so as light, auxiliary troops (Hdt. 9.28–9, 80.1, 85; with Hunt 1997), whereas hoplite arms and armour were entrusted typically only to liberated Helots (Neodamodeis). Herodotus (7.52.5–7, 63.1), Xenophon (*Hell.* 5.4.28; *Lakedaimonion Politeia* 7.5), and Plutarch (*Lys.* 16; *Agisilaus* 3.2; *Agis IV* 3.2) all mention Helots as personal domestic servants, both male and female. Most of these would normally have been concentrated in Sparta most of the year, though they would have accompanied their masters both on campaign as batmen (Hdt. 6.80–81) and (as we have noted) on hunting expeditions as beaters and net-men.²⁴

TREATMENT

'Above all, there was the great mass of Helots spread over the whole of Lacedaemon whom it was considered best to keep constantly employed so as to crush their spirit by perpetual toil and hardship.' Whether Plutarch (*Solon* 22) had any good independent evidence for this assertion is unclear, but, given the – justified – Spartan fear of Helot spirit (see below), it is entirely plausible that the Spartans should have aimed to keep the Helots as busy as possible throughout the year, and not only during the agricultural labour cycle. As Aristotle observed (*Pol.* 1269b7–10), 'the mere necessity of policing [the Helots] is a troublesome matter – the problem of how contact with them is to be managed. If allowed freedom, they grow insolent and think themselves as good as their masters; if made to live a hard life, they plot against and hate them.' So, of course, the ideal was an Aristotelian golden mean between excessive harshness and excessive leniency. Aristotle himself, influenced no doubt by the fact that the Helots did not only plot but actually broke out in collective open revolt, believed that the Spartans had got it wrong, erring on the side of excessive brutality. 'It is clear therefore', he added, 'that those whose Helot-system works out like this have not discovered the best way of managing it.'

A key aspect of the Helots' treatment caught his eye and imagination, and it was no doubt from the *Lakedaimonion Politeia*, the lost treatise on

²⁴ Spartan hunting: Cartledge 2002b: Appendix.

the Spartan polity compiled by him or more likely his Lyceum students, that Plutarch (*Lyc.* 28) picked it up. This was ‘the so-called “Crypteia” of the Spartans, if this really is one of Lycurgus’s institutions, as Aristotle [Fr. 538 Rose] says’. Here is Plutarch’s (Aristotle’s) graphic description of the Crypteia, which is variously confirmed in other sources:

The officials [sc. the Ephors] from time to time sent out into the country those who appeared the most resourceful of the youth [18- and 19-year-olds], equipped only with daggers and minimum provisions. In the daytime they dispersed into obscure places, where they hid and lay low. By night they came down into the highways and despatched any Helot they caught. Often too they went into the fields and did away with the sturdiest and most powerful of the Helots.

The kindly Plutarch found it difficult to credit that the Spartans should have indulged in, or indeed even engaged in, such systematic brutality. At any rate, he comforted himself, such an institution could only have been introduced after the great earthquake and massive Messenian Helot revolt of the 460s and perhaps 450s. This suggests that he at least envisaged the Crypteia as applying more particularly to the Messenian than to the Laconian Helots.

Modern scholarship, however, has improved hugely on Plutarch by reinterpreting the Crypteia as an originally at least partly religious adolescent initiation ritual remodelled to serve mundane and secular police functions.²⁵ But even in its secularised form a key religious dimension remained, reminding us of Herodotus’ (5.63.2, 9.7) acute perception that the Spartans were quite the most religiously driven of all Greek societies known to him. For the Spartan adolescent or rather proto-adult *kryptoi* (eighteen- and nineteen-year-olds engaged on secret missions) carried out their killings under the auspices of the annual declaration of war on the Helots made by each incoming board of Ephors (Arist. Fr. 538 Rose). That is to say, the Helots were publicly designated enemies of state who might therefore be legally and legitimately killed without incurring the taint of religious miasma that normally accompanied all homicide, whether deliberate or involuntary.

Plutarch would presumably have been a little more comfortable with the information provided, unfortunately, only by the not conspicuously reliable third-century historian Myron of Priene. Myron (*FGrH* 106 F 2) wrote of the Spartans:

[they] assign to the Helots every shameful and degrading task. For they ordained that each one of them must wear a dogskin cap and wrap himself in skins and

²⁵ Best are Vidal-Naquet 1986 and Ducat 1997a, 1997b and 2006; but Jeanmaire 1913 is still well worth reading.

receive a stipulated number of beatings every year regardless of any wrongdoing, so that they would never forget they were in a state of servitude. Moreover, if they exceeded the vigour proper to a slave's condition, they imposed death as the penalty; and they allotted a punishment to those controlling them if they failed to rebuke those who were growing fat.

The death penalty may seem a touch extreme for merely excessive vigour, but perhaps that is a coded reference to Helots who were not merely refractory and recalcitrant but openly rebellious, even revolutionary. At any rate, the Spartans' fear of Helot spirit is a recurrent feature of the sources – Thucydides, Plato, Xenophon and Aristotle prominently among them.

Plutarch was much happier to record that the Spartans regularly treated the Helots with institutionalised contempt, along the same sort of lines as Myron's report of compulsory animalisation of dress. For example, he says (*Lyc.* 28) the Spartans forced Helots to drink a lot of unmixed wine (like barbarians such as the Scythians), then exhibited them in a state of paralytic drunkenness in the messes 'to show the young men what drunkenness was like' and, by implication, how a Spartan should not behave. They also required Helots to make fools of themselves by singing vulgar songs and dancing grotesque dances, and, conversely, forbade them to sing the poems of Terpander, Alcman and Spondon that the Spartans themselves did sing. Some modern scholars (esp. Ducat 1974) lay more stress on this sort of cultural and psychological contempt than they do on physical brutality in explaining how the Spartans were able to maintain the Helot system intact for as many as three to five centuries.

ATTITUDE OF HELOTS

The Spartans' institutionalised fear of the Helots was prompted of course by the Helots' actual ability as well as willingness to go into open and outright revolt. Reasons for wishing to revolt on the part of the Helots are clear enough: a desire to be personally free and, in the case of the Messenians especially, politically independent. A famous passage of Xenophon (*Hell.* 3.3.6), dealing with an abortive conspiracy led by a degraded Spartiate called Cinadon in c. 400, spells this out particularly graphically: 'The secret [i.e. of the Helots, Neodamodeis, Hypomeiones and Perioeci] was that, whenever among these mention was made of Spartiates, none was able to conceal that he would gladly eat them – even raw.'

But to hate the Spartiates virulently was one thing; translating those vengeful cannibalistic desires for freedom and independence into permanently effective practice required a whole host of further enabling or encouraging factors also to be present, in sufficient quantity and force.

I would single out the following, not necessarily in order of symbolic or motivational significance: self-consciousness as members of a solidary group with an ever acute sense of political as well as personal loss, or rather forcible deprivation, of identity; a fairly robust sense of what a future of independence and empowerment might be like; the geographical advantages entailed by the Spartans' distance from the Messenian heartland and their separation by a massive mountain chain; the numerical advantages enjoyed by the Messenians both absolutely and relatively (the Messenian population appears to have been either growing marginally or remaining static, whereas the Spartan citizen population suffered an abnormally sharp decline between *c.* 480 and 370); structural and conjunctural factors such as Spartan overstretch abroad caused by an abnormally prolonged conflict like the Atheno-Peloponnesian War, and the occurrence of a devastating earthquake in *c.* 464 that both killed many young Spartans and destabilised the city psychologically as well as physically; and finally, but not least, splits within the Spartan ruling class such as that which caused the Spartan authorities in the 460s to fear, or at least claim to fear, regent Pausanias' alleged plans not merely to free but also to enfranchise certain Helots (Thuc. 1.132.4).

On the other side, there were also powerful forces conspiring towards the Helots' quiescence, or even acquiescence in their servitude, especially powerful perhaps so far as the Laconians were concerned. Many Helot women and some Helot men, as we have seen, served as domestic servants within the individual homes and on the individual farms of their Spartan masters and mistresses. Personal relationships of often conflicted intimacy will have developed between them, of the kind that house slaves (as opposed to field hands) experienced in the American antebellum South. Such domestic servant Helots would typically have been Laconian, not Messenian. It was usually such Laconian Helot men, I further suggest, who would have served as batmen when their masters went on campaign. It was also they who were the beneficiaries, or at least the recipients, of public largesse in the form of manumission into a variety of grades of ex-Helots.

The other side of that coin was the exemplary massacre – at night, presumably (cf. Hdt. 4.146) – of 'dangerous' Helots either routinely by the Crypteia or in a particularly extensive 'cull' such as that in the 420s chillingly described by Thucydides (4.80).²⁶ Other male Helots served in the public messes in the centre of Sparta, figures of fun on occasion, but probably as complicit with the system that oppressed them as the typical staff of a London club. The elite among such public-servant Helots were those who served one or other of the two royal houses, for instance as grooms or maids. Also a cut above the rest were the overseers on the farms

²⁶ See Cartledge 2001b: 127–30.

in Laconia and Messenia, the ‘kulaks’ or ‘Uncle Toms’ of a system that depended for its effective operation on the tried-and-tested principle of divide and rule.

THE END OF HELOTAGE

It was only when the Spartans themselves became too divided internally and too stretched externally, by the 370s, that the Messenian Helots were able, with crucial Theban help, to achieve their liberation and independence. But the Laconian Helots’ servitude was to last for almost two centuries more. In the third century, as the whole Spartan system creaked to a standstill, it underwent a distinct evolution or rather revolution. The four named categories of manumitted Helots listed by Myron (*FGrH* 106 F 1) are plausibly to be interpreted as the Spartans’ attempt to ease the increasing pressure for liberation exerted by the Laconian Helots in their desire to emulate their Messenian brethren. Things reached such a pitch, however, that revolutionary measures became necessary.

First, King Cleomenes III manumitted 6,000 Helots in the late 220s, as a desperate last throw in the face of Macedonian incursion. But whereas the Spartans of the 420s had manumitted Helots unilaterally on their own terms, for nothing as it were, Cleomenes in the 220s was obliged to demand a fee – he needed the money (to pay mercenaries), and the Helots concerned were sufficiently flush with cash to be able to afford to pay the very large sum of 500 silver drachmas. Second, the dictator Nabis who ruled Sparta from 207 to 192 so ‘modernised’ Sparta as practically to do away with Helotage altogether. In the best Greek historiographic manner, Livy (34.31.11) wrote a speech of self-justification for Nabis in which he protested: ‘the name of “tyrant” and my actions are held against me, because I liberate slaves’. Strabo says that Helotage lasted ‘down to the Roman conquest’, which could mean either 146 or 27 BC, but to all intents and purposes Roman Sparta was a chattel slave, not a Helot, society.²⁷

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

General

Students and scholars are now in the extraordinarily fortunate position of being able to work from a dedicated collection of articles, the product of the world’s first Helotological conference (Luraghi and Alcock 2003). One notable absentee from that work is Jean Ducat, but he is rightly included in Whitby (2001), a valuable recent survey of scholarship on all

²⁷ Ducat (1990: 193–9) offers some salutary reflections on the ill-documented process of ‘la fin de l’helotisme’.

important aspects of ancient Spartan history. Ducat's (1990) monograph (cf. 1978, 1997a and 1997b), together with its companion volume (1994) on the Thessalian Penestae, are presupposed throughout. For a stimulating introduction to 'Researching the Helots', see Alcock (2003). These works come some two centuries after the first modern scholarly work on all aspects of ancient Sparta, including the Helots, by J. C. F. Manso (1800–5), though note that the Helots were provoking debate as early as *c.* 1500: Schulz-Falkenthal (1986) and (1987); though 'Forschung' is, I think, a little optimistic even for the eighteenth century).

Other major landmarks of modern scholarship include Lotze (1959; cf. 2000), Oliva (1971), Ducat (1978). See also Cartledge (1987/2000: ch. 11 and 2001d: ch. 10 and Appendix 4). A flurry of revisionism aiming to diminish the general significance of the Helots for Sparta and so Greece as a whole in antiquity – Roobaert (1977), Talbert (1989) and Whitby (1994) – has, I trust, been responded to adequately by myself (Cartledge 1991, 2001b) and others. The index entry s.v. 'Helots' in Rawson (1969/1991) indicates the continuing fascination they have exercised across the ages within European and American culture.

Lotze (1959) discusses other ancient Greek subaltern (not necessarily servile) groups labelled, not entirely helpfully, in antiquity as 'between free men and *douloi*.' The other very important work on the second most important such group after the Helots, the Thessalian Penestae, is Ducat (1994). See also on 'serfdom' in ancient Greece generally, Ste. Croix (1981) and Cartledge (1988). For a wide-rangingly comparative approach, from a great comparative historical sociologist of slavery, see Patterson (2003; cf. 1982).

Historiography

The evidence for the Helots falls foul of the systematic problem of general lack of evidence for all Spartan history from the Spartan side; *a fortiori* the Helots as *douloi* were a silenced majority. On the Greek historiography of slavery in general, see Vidal-Naquet (1986). Hunt (1998) tellingly shows how the major ancient Greek historians systematically under-reported or under-emphasised the role of slaves/unfree in Greek warfare.

Origins

Birgalias (2002) and Luraghi (2003) are the latest contributors to this perennial and undecidable debate. The Spartans chose to treat the Helots symbolically as a conquered population, and myths were developed that 'historicised' that symbolic representation.

Status

Ducat (1990) and Luraghi (2003), by claiming that internal sale of Helots was both legally permissible and (*ex hypothesi*) quite regularly practised, seek to narrow the gap between Helots and what moderns call 'chattel' *douloi*.

Functions

For the Helots' vital contribution to Sparta's agrarian economy, see now Hodkinson (2003/2008).

On the role of Helots in war, see, besides Hunt (1997) and (1998), Welwei (1974–7).

Treatment

Vidal-Naquet (1986) and (1992) are fundamental. For a view privileging Spartan contempt, see Ducat (1974).

Attitudes

Part of the revisionism of Roobaert (1977), Talbert (1989) and Whitby (1994) is to deny that the Helots constituted a major threat of servile revolt. See Cartledge (1991) and (2001b) in *riposte*.

End of Helotage

Besides Ducat (1990: 293–9), there is Cartledge in Cartledge and Spawforth (2001: chs. 4–6).

CHAPTER 5

SLAVERY AND ECONOMY IN THE GREEK WORLD

DIMITRIS J. KYRTATAS

INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the location of slavery within the ancient Greek economy or, rather, economies.¹ Its approach will be quite different from the little that the Greeks themselves, although surrounded by slaves, had to say about slavery as an institution. To most it seemed sufficient to know that slavery depended ultimately on war, but even philosophers never really cared to give a clear presentation of the way slavery functioned in the Greek world or of its contribution to production and to their civilisation at large. Since I shall claim that slavery was an important element in Greek material life, some explanation for the failure of Greek authors and thinkers to tackle the problem as I see it will have to be offered. It will, I hope, become clear that this negligence is perhaps more apparent than real, and that by expressing themselves in their own way, the Greeks sufficiently grasped the essence of slavery and the way it worked within their own society.

CHATTEL SLAVERY AND SERF-LIKE SLAVERY

To the Greeks the distinction between slavery and freedom was very meaningful, underlined not only by custom and convention but also by law.² But learning from experience rather than contemplation, they felt the need to make a further distinction between two very broad categories of slaves. Although their vocabulary was blurred, they knew that the slaves of Athens were different as a type from the slaves of Sparta. The slaves of Sparta, commonly called Helots, were prone to rebel; the slaves of Athens were not – the most we hear about Athenian slaves being that, when Athens was under extreme pressure from the Spartans, large numbers of them ran away (Thucydides 7.27), but fell prey ultimately to other masters (*Oxyrhynchus Historian* 12.4). Such observations led Greek thinkers to investigate further, though not too much further. Helotage, they declared, was a controversial

¹ Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1977; Cartledge 1998a. ² MacDowell 1978: 79–83.

institution in a way that slavery of the Athenian type was not (Plato, *Laws* 776c–778a).³

According to tradition, the Helots were a Greek population subjected to bondage through conquest of their land by other Greeks (Theopompus in Athenaeus 6.265c; but cf. Antiochus in Strabo 6.3.2). The same was said about the Penestae of Thessaly (Ath. 6.264a), the *a(m)phamiotai* and *mnoitai* of Crete,⁴ as well as of some other Greeks or non-Greeks in various areas. Conquest was seen to lead to a particular type of servitude in which slaves had significant common characteristics, above all enjoying family lives through which they regularly reproduced themselves.⁵ Also, although they were often liable to harsh treatment, they were recognised as a community with their own traditions and religious affiliations.⁶ Thus, a late Greek lexicographer felt it best to refer to them as occupying a position ‘between free men and slaves’ (Pollux, *Onomasticon* 3.78–83).

From a modern point of view, these conquered or subjected people resembled the serfs of the Middle Ages – which does not mean that the Spartan, Thessalian or Cretan social organisation resembled in any meaningful way mediaeval feudalism. Thus to distinguish them from the other common variety of slaves, we may call them serfs or serf-like slaves.⁷ The main activity of most of them was probably agricultural, under conditions that differed from area to area (and time to time). But it seems reasonable to assume that their employment worked best on relatively large estates.⁸

In Athens and, probably, most other classical Greek cities, the situation was quite different.⁹ Individual masters were able to buy their own slaves in whatever quantities they felt desirable or appropriate. So widespread had the custom become by the fourth century that Aristotle (*Politics* 1326a19) could take it for granted that cities were ‘bound to contain a large number of slaves and resident aliens and foreigners’. (Reference to resident aliens and foreigners makes it clear that Sparta was not included.) According to local traditions, this way of acquiring slaves was a novelty of the archaic age (cf. Timaeus in Ath. 6.264c). It was generally believed that there was a time when free people had to perform all the required tasks, without assistance from slaves (Herodotus 6.137; Pherecrates in Ath. 6.263b). Before the sixth or, possibly, the seventh century, almost all slaves in the Greek world were either natives or captives. As is well illustrated in the *Odyssey*, bought slaves were an extreme rarity at that time. In the early archaic age, free people were being enslaved either through conquest, as in large parts of the Peloponnese and in Thessaly, or through debt, as in pre-Solonian Athens. Following the

³ Cartledge 2001b; see Paul Cartledge’s chapter in this volume. ⁴ Willetts 1967: 13–17.

⁵ Cf. Vidal-Naquet 1986: ch. 3.2. ⁶ Finley 1981: 116–32; Cartledge 1987/2000: 170–6; 1988.

⁷ Ste. Croix 1972: 89–93. ⁸ Jameson 1992: 136–9. ⁹ See T. E. Rihll’s chapter in this volume.

lead of the Chians, it was said (Theopompus in Ath. 6.265b), many Greeks turned at some point to trade as the major source for their slaves.

In classical Athens and other cities with similar social institutions, some people were born into slavery inside the Greek world. In several, perhaps most cities, Greek parents occasionally exposed their unwanted infants, knowing that those who cared to bring them up were allowed to treat them as slaves. Further, the offspring of bought slaves became slaves themselves. However, all these were clearly sources of secondary significance. The proportion of slaves bought from abroad was so large that in the fifth and fourth centuries, outside Sparta, Thessaly, Crete and perhaps a few other areas, being a slave became synonymous with being a 'barbarian' from almost all neighbouring countries of the Greek mainland, including Illyria, Thrace, Phrygia, Caria and Syria. The trade that provided many Greeks with their servile workforce was predominantly an international one.

Greek masters were never really concerned with the internal situation of the foreign lands that produced so many slaves or with the very existence of a reliable international trade. That there would ever be a time when slave-traders would not risk their lives to provide them with their valuable commodity seemed to them unthinkable (Aristophanes, *Wealth* 510–26). Even Aristotle, who made acute observations regarding commerce (*Nicomachean Ethics* 1133a–b), had nothing to say about what seems now a significant issue: the transformation of human beings into chattel. Nor do we hear much about a moral justification of this transformation. The fact that the majority of slaves were barbarians, i.e. outsiders, seemed sufficient enough justification.¹⁰ They were thought to be morally inferiors and were often likened to animals.¹¹ Barbarians, it was claimed, were meant by nature to serve the Greeks.

That Greek slavery ultimately depended upon war and violence seems obvious enough.¹² The view that all the property, including the bodies of the victims of war, belonged, justifiably, to the victors was shared by almost all Greeks (cf. Xenophon, *Cyropaedia* 7.5.73). But war can hardly be considered the real cause of slavery. There is no universal or eternal law by which the victors should keep numbers of the defeated in bonds. After the termination of hostilities, captives may be released, ransomed, kept in prison, tortured or executed. The choice depends on the mentality, the interests and strategic calculations of the victors.

In the Homeric poems that depict an early archaic age practice, the defeated warriors are generally massacred. Only certain women and children are enslaved, and even these do not become articles of trade but are offered as prizes to the leading victors, Eurycleia and Eumaeus being the

¹⁰ Hall 1989: 101.

¹¹ Bradley 2000a.

¹² Garland 1987.

most notable exceptions.¹³ There was only one kind of war that led directly and inevitably to the commodification of human beings, and that was slave hunts. Slave hunts are not often mentioned in the sources but seem to be implied by Aristotle (*Pol.* 1256b23–6) and can be considered as regular.

The transformation of captives into commodities to be sold through trade to distant lands depended primarily not on military tactics and strategic calculations but on economic and social conditions: first, the existence of a reliable international trade and second, and more importantly, a demand for slaves. A society that is interested in buying large numbers of slaves is a society that can keep them under control and make use of them. Above all, it is a society that finds it desirable or, perhaps, necessary to employ them. It is therefore to the societies that bought slaves that we must turn to in order to grasp the essence of chattel slavery, leaving aside, just as the Greeks did, the nature of the societies that produced slaves (an important but altogether different topic).

The first observation to make is that only societies that had reached a certain degree of commercialisation were interested in the commodification of slaves. It is difficult to envisage a large-scale slave trade in a world that did not yet use money, that had not yet established international trade routes and that had no easy access to appropriate markets. The second observation is that societies that turned to international trade as the major source for their working forces were those that lacked sufficient or suitable (i.e. sufficiently cheap and/or submissive) workforces of their own.¹⁴

The Greeks did not make a clear connection between the importation of slaves and the unavailability of an indigenous workforce. They did record, however, traditions regarding the abolition of debt-bondage in Athens in the early sixth century. It appears that until then numerous native Athenians were obliged to offer their services in a servile manner to wealthy landowners either because they had fallen into debt or because they were unable to cultivate their own small plots of land in a profitable way. At some point their grievances led to unrest, and a civil war was threatened, but the mediator Solon provided Athenians with acceptable laws and regulations. One of the most important was the prohibition of loans secured on the person of the debtor. All enslaved Athenians were freed, and it was agreed that never again would Athenians be enslaved in their own city.¹⁵ Such traditions explain why the wealthy landowners found it necessary to look elsewhere for a cheap and manageable workforce.

The cancellation of debts and the abolition of debt-bondage are recorded exclusively for Athens. But the conditions that led to Solon's reforms were not confined to Athens alone. The strength of the poor Athenians lay in their ability to bear arms. Much more than offering a cheap workforce,

¹³ Beringer 1982.

¹⁴ Finley 1980: 67–92.

¹⁵ Andrewes 1982: 375–84.

poor Athenians were needed to defend their city. The Greek world was increasingly finding itself in constant warfare: city against neighbouring city, alliance against alliance. One after the other, many Greek communities started to bestow citizenship rights on all those who could provide themselves with arms. The Athenians were probably alone in taking such radical measures as those ascribed to Solon, but other cities prohibited loans secured on weapons and ploughs (Diodorus 1.79). The idea was more or less the same. Free peasants and self-equipped warriors were more important to their cities than serf-like slaves were to the large landowners. At the time of Solon, Athens was already involved in long-distance trade, as was Chios, which it was said paved the way for the acquisition of bought slaves, for which the Greeks had a vocabulary – either *arguronetoi* ('bought with silver'), *chrusonetoi* ('bought with gold'), or *onetoi* (simply 'bought'), as distinct from those won over by the sword, *doryalotoi*. There was no exact Greek equivalent to what is called in English chattel slavery or in French *esclavage marchandise*, but Greek masters called their slaves living tools or articles of property (Arist. *Pol.* 1253b31–3) or simply *somata*, bodies.

The contribution of chattel slavery to the economy of Athens and many other cities of the classical Greek world can hardly be overestimated. In classical Greece slaves were employed by all wealthy and even many poor owners of cultivable land; they worked in mines and quarries, industries and shops, brothels and temples, the stock-breeding mountains and the ships that traversed the seas, in private households and the public sector. In an ideal city, it was thought (Pl. *Leg.* 778a), a citizen should be 'provided, as far as possible, with a sufficient number of suitable slaves who can help him in what he has to do'. The basic difference between this and the more archaic serf-like slavery is that human beings acquired a twofold nature: they had a use-value as well as an exchange-value, just like other commodities, according to Aristotle's theoretical position (*Pol.* 1257a) that every article of property has a double value. Chattel slaves not only were introduced into a society through trade but also remained, potentially, articles for trade. They could be sold at their master's discretion at any expedient time.

Once discovered, this new type of slavery spread throughout the Greek world. Alongside its serf-like population, Crete had already started to introduce chattel slaves in the fifth century. The same holds true for Thessaly. Even classical Sparta did not remain altogether immune from the innovation. The availability of a local workforce and the low degree to which some cities had been commercialised did not allow (or, rather, oblige) them to follow the path of Athens and Chios full-scale. It allowed them, however, and sometimes obliged them, to catch up with the advantages of this new institution, to at least a limited degree and for some special purposes. When classical Sparta, Crete and Thessaly declined, chattel slavery became

the norm all over the Greek world, although more traditional forms of exploitation persisted in the regions conquered by Alexander.¹⁶ Having been invented under very specific conditions during the archaic period, it was able to spread throughout the Greek and, to a certain degree, non-Greek world because of its advantages over other types of unfree labour.

SLAVES IN AGRICULTURE

The ancient Greek economy was overwhelmingly rural. There is no doubt that the vast majority of the free population earned the greatest part of its income by cultivating the land and by herding. Arable land was at all times the most secure, honourable and, therefore, common type of investment, its ownership being restricted, in most cities, to full citizens alone. How many Athenians were not farmers is not easy to say. Some scholars suggest that their numbers were quite substantial.¹⁷ For most other cases we cannot even guess. But numbers, apart from being elusive, may hardly solve the real problems about the Greek economy and its structure.

Both the Greek economy and the Greek way of thinking about the economy have been topics greatly debated since the nineteenth century. While major disagreements regarding the degree to which Greek economy and economic thinking were 'primitive' (i.e. structurally and conceptually different from the economy and economic thinking of the modern world) have not been bridged but rather transformed,¹⁸ the focus of many scholars has shifted to address the problems from different angles. It is thus increasingly clear that the major difficulty in assessing the Greek economy lies not in its substance but in the way it was presented by our informants.

To most wealthy Greeks, whose perspective is represented in the extant literature, the important issue addressed was not so much the acquisition of wealth as its consumption. Thus, in a detailed treatment of household management, Xenophon's *Oeconomicus*, astonishingly little is said about production and too much about an orderly way of living. High status, it is made clear, did not depend on profit maximisation but rather on honour maximisation. This way of presentation, however, does not necessarily imply that production was not organised in a rational and optimal way. It only explains why many Greeks thought it was significant to make clear that they possessed numerous slaves without going into detail about the exact employment of such slaves.

If it were not for circumstantial evidence given by the orators and from asides in poetry and drama, we would hardly know that wealthy and even

¹⁶ For the *laoi* of Asia, see Ste. Croix 1981: 151–3, and for the *basilikoi georgoi* of Egypt, see Rowlandson 1985.

¹⁷ Harris 2002: 70. ¹⁸ Cartledge 1993b: 158.

not so wealthy farmers in classical Athens (and, presumably, elsewhere) depended to a large extent upon slave labour.¹⁹ The employment of slaves in the countryside is being increasingly established by archaeological investigations as well, but this evidence is still tentative.²⁰ From a modern point of view, the contribution of slaves and slavery to agricultural activities appears to have been not only minimised by those who made a profit out of it but in a sense concealed.

Greek historians give an even less accurate impression. Herodotus, for example, who has much to say about Sparta, never mentions that the Helots worked on the land.²¹ However, on the rare occasions that historians find the opportunity to refer to agricultural slavery, when military developments demand it, they always do so as a matter of course. Thus, while mentioning the capture of the Sicilian town Zancle, Herodotus (6.23) reports that the slaves were divided into two large groups: those in the town and those in the open country, most of whom would obviously be employed in agriculture. Thucydides (3.73) refers to rural slaves just once because they played an important role in the civil strife of fifth-century Corcyra.

He conveys the impression that the great majority of the island's slaves were to be found in the fields (for a slightly later period cf. Xen., *Hellenica* 6.2.6). Xenophon mentions in passing (*Hell.* 3.2.26) the capture of many slaves from the fields of Elis. Dionysius of Halicarnassus reported (7.9.2–3) of late sixth-century Italian Cyme that the place for enslaved aristocratic youths after the establishment of a tyranny was in the fields, while Agatharchides (*Ath.* 6.272d) found the opportunity to refer to numerous slaves owned by the Dardani because, although in time of peace they tilled the land, in time of war they were enrolled in companies with their own masters as captains. These masters, he added, owned a thousand or more slaves each. Given the indifference of historians to matters pertaining to cultivation, it is perhaps best to take Aristophanes as our guide. In a utopian society, farming should be best left to slaves (*Women of the Assembly* 651; cf. *Plut.* 26; 1105).

To the Greeks, the meaningful questions to raise regarding agriculture were not who tilled the soil but who owned the land and who was responsible for organising production by making important decisions. Slaves never owned land and only made decisions about it when they became bailiffs in control of other slaves. It is about bailiffs (*epitropoi*) that we occasionally read in our sources (Xen. *Oec.* 12.3; [Arist.] *Oec.* 1344a26).

Landowners organised production in their fields as they felt best, choosing the labourers that seemed to them most suitable. A New Comedy reference (Menander, *The Bad-Tempered Man* 328–31) gives a

¹⁹ Mossé 1973; Jameson 1977/8, 1992; Ste. Croix 1981: 505–9.

²⁰ Jameson 1994; see Ian Morris' chapter in this volume. ²¹ Harvey 1988: 47.

comprehensive list of the options available: a farmer could farm his land with the aid of either a slave, or a hired man from the neighbourhood, or the assistance of a neighbour, or alone, with no help at all. Interestingly, this last option is taken to mean with the help of family members – in this particular case the family member was the farmer's daughter. As long as an Athenian citizen fulfilled his public duties, his decisions regarding the way he organised his production attracted the attention of gossips alone.

The proper choice of bailiffs or stewards was a serious topic. The reason is clearly stated by Aristotle, who explained that a bailiff ministered leisure to his lord, so that he, 'undistracted by care of daily necessities, may not be debarred from any of those actions which befit him' (*Magna Moralia* 1198b14–17). Such bailiffs, whose task was, above all, to supervise the work of common slaves (*ergates*), could occasionally be freedmen (Demosthenes 27.19) but were more usually slaves themselves. Xenophon's Socrates thought it was of some interest to inquire whether it was best for big landowners to buy trained bailiffs or to have them trained (*Xen. Oec.* 12.3). In exactly what way the common slaves were to be employed was mostly the bailiffs' concern.

At first glance it seems as if almost all free persons living in fourth-century Athens were slave-owners (cf. *Lysias* 5.5). Only paupers were deemed to be without even just one slave (*Lys.* 24) – although how many of these paupers there were it is difficult to say. But some wealthy free persons owned hundreds (occasionally many hundreds) of slaves, whereas persons of moderate means owned just a few slaves or even one, in which case it would most probably be a female servant. Personal preferences apart, the distribution of slaves was closely related to the structure of Athenian society.

To see what a wealthy household looked like, we may turn to the case of Ischomachus (*Xen. Oec.*).²² The degree to which the literary figure corresponded to the historical personality is uncertain,²³ but the information about the land he owned and the way he exploited it should be more or less accurate for many wealthy Athenian citizens. If the information provided was fictional or altogether out of proportion, Xenophon's moralising discussion that is based upon it would have no value.

Ischomachus belonged to the so-called liturgical class, the very few hundred wealthiest Athenian citizens obligated to pay for various public expenses.²⁴ His landed property, although extensive, was not concentrated in one or two localities but, as must have been normal, was fragmented and, probably, scattered. Members of his class possessed land even beyond Attica.²⁵ Since his family consisted of himself and his wife (no children were

²² Dillon 2004: ch. 1. ²³ Pomeroy 1994: 259–61, 263.

²⁴ Davies 1971. ²⁵ Foxhall 2002: 212.

yet born), the supervision of his agricultural production must have been rather simple. His wife was expected to remain indoors in control of the female slaves. Ischomachus, unlike other members of his class, was careful not to lose contact with the agricultural activities of his household, but day-to-day supervision of his many slaves was left to bailiffs or foremen. One of their most important skills was to be able to rule the common slaves (13.4). We do not know how many foremen were needed to supervise Ischomachus' property. But the household slaves were divided into groups and closely supervised. There must have been a certain division of labour among them, of which nothing is said.

At the other end of the land-owning spectrum, slaves are occasionally reported to have been employed in agriculture in small households, but generally we are not told whether they had anything to do with rural activities. Thus it is thought that most were domestic servants rather than primary producers.

Euphiletus' household may be taken as a typical example of how a family with only modest means lived (Lys. 1). Of such households there must have been many, perhaps several thousands, and it is to them that we have to turn to obtain a more comprehensive idea of Athenian agriculture. Euphiletus' family consisted of a couple, their recently born child and a female slave serving mostly the mistress, while the master was outdoors attending his farm. (Euphiletus seems to have had just one single plot.) Since the family's life is presented in some detail, it has been generally assumed that Euphiletus was cultivating his plot with no assistance. This, however, is an arbitrary conclusion. The story we are told has nothing to report regarding agricultural activities, apart from the fact that they were Euphiletus' main preoccupation. To attend to his work, Euphiletus was obliged to spend his day outdoors and often to remain in the fields without returning home for several nights. If, as Lysias implies (42), besides his female servant he possessed an extra slave or two, we would never have been told so explicitly. Such slaves could be lodged in the farm premises throughout the year. They were of no importance to the story as presented by Lysias.

It is conceivable that the Euphiletus family had just the one female slave reported. Even in this case, her classification as a domestic servant is arbitrary and misleading. Distinguishing between servants and producers may not be an intelligent way of categorising slaves in the classical Greek world. Three centuries later, in the altogether different Palestinian countryside, Jesus had no difficulty in envisaging the life of a lonely slave serving a peasant of moderate means (Luke 17:7–8). It could not have been much different earlier. Poor families owning a single slave took advantage of his labour in all possible ways (below). One such male slave, known from a fourth-century comedy, while serving his mistress indoors, rushes out to

assist her son who was digging in the field alone (Men. *Dys.* 206–8). A farmer's labour was doubled by the use of just one assistant.²⁶

If women and daughters were expected to offer a hand in the agricultural activities (Men. *Dys.* 333–4; cf. Dem. 57.45), all the more so slaves, both male and female, who served a household. Since it would be absurd to assert that Euphiletus' female slave was not asked to make ready the things needed in the field of her master while remaining indoors with her mistress, it seems that such slaves should also be considered as contributing to agricultural production. It may, therefore, be for good reasons that Greek authors were reluctant to distinguish between productive and unproductive slaves. In spite of its significance in agricultural production, slavery may have seemed to most owners of arable land a mode of living rather than a mode of production. The exclusive employment of numerous slaves in their fields was probably the privilege of only a few very wealthy landowners.

SLAVES IN INDUSTRY, THE CRAFTS AND WAR

Slaves make more visible appearances in productive activities other than agriculture. The orators found plenty of opportunities to refer to them in the cases that were tried in the Athenian courts to resolve disputes between businessmen or over inheritances. Additional information is given in numerous inscriptions that record matters of more public interest than agriculture. The building accounts of city temples and other monuments as well as manumission lists are among the most informative. Xenophon is again a precious source. Writing a pamphlet on how the Athenians could reform their economy, he dealt in some detail with the mining business, reviewing the situation and making suggestions for the future. By adding information preserved by later authors, a firm idea can be formed of the significance of slave labour in industry and the various crafts.

Slaves are reported to have been employed in almost all kinds of tasks that required skilled or unskilled labour.²⁷ Athenian manumission lists of the fourth century often give accurate details. It is more important and interesting, however, to observe that in whatever occupation free persons could make a living, slaves were found working either at their side or in their stead.²⁸

Of slaves working in mining and factories, we have some precise numbers. The Athenian general Nicias was known to have owned as many as a thousand slaves who were let out to a mining contractor; another Athenian owned 600 mining slaves (Xen., *De vectigalibus* 4.14–15). The shield factory of Lysias and his brother may have been manned by as many as 120

²⁶ Jameson 1992: 143. ²⁷ Jones 1957: 14–15; Westermann 1955: 12–14.

²⁸ Harris 2002: 80–3, 88–99.

slaves (Lys. 12.19). One thousand slaves may seem too many for a single master in classical Athens – although the same number is given by various authorities for other slave-owners of the same period from Phocis, Sybaris and Dardania (Ath. 6.264d, 273c, 272b, 272d). But the 120 slaves, certainly the largest number recorded for a single factory, are not given as a curiosity or an extreme case. In a knife-making factory thirty-two or thirty-three slaves are reported to have been permanently employed, while a factory making couches employed twenty slaves (Dem. 27.9).

Slave miners normally worked under very harsh conditions.²⁹ Although not all of them spent their working time in the dark and badly ventilated galleries (many were needed to perform skilled and unskilled tasks outside the pits), it was generally acknowledged that their lives were miserable in the extreme. In the Athenian silver mines of Laurium, many slaves, at times tens of thousands, were constantly overworked. Many (perhaps most) were stigmatised by their owners and kept in chains by contractors. Regarding them as very profitable, Xenophon thought that it would greatly benefit the city to invest its funds in such slaves.³⁰ During the Peloponnesian War, many of the more than 20,000 slaves who managed to escape were probably miners. In the second century, the first great slave rebellion in Sicily sparked a revolt in Laurium. More than a thousand slaves were said to be involved (Diod. 34.2.19). Later in the century the slave miners revolted again. They ‘murdered the superintendents of the mines, seized the hill of Sunium, and for a long time plundered Attica’ (Posidonius in Ath. 6.272e–f). These were among the few serious uprisings of chattel slaves in the Greek mainland throughout antiquity.³¹ The only other case of a slave rebellion was in third-century Chios (Nymphodorus in Ath. 6.265d–266e), where the concentration of slaves was notorious.³²

In all classical Greek cities, the upper section of the population consisted almost invariably of big landowners. It was mostly such people who were also engaged in other forms of profit-making. There are no indications of a separate and independent class of wealthy merchants or large industrialists. The only entrepreneurs not simultaneously landowners were some few wealthy Athenian citizens involved in maritime loans,³³ and some metics such as Lysias (presumably some non-citizens in other cities as well). Since non-citizens were not permitted to acquire arable land, those who could accumulate a large capital invested it in all other kinds of enterprises – mostly operated by slaves.

How far down the social scale masters were accustomed to employ their slaves in this type of investment is unknown. It is unlikely that people of moderate means, let alone the poor, were able or willing to buy slaves

²⁹ Lauffer 1955–56/1979. ³⁰ Gauthier 1976: 136–67. ³¹ Vogt 1975c: 39–102.

³² Cf. Thuc. 8.40; Vogt 1975c: 39–102; Cartledge 2001b: 29–37. ³³ Millett 1983.

to work in factories or large mining units. Nevertheless, when they were craftsmen themselves, they regularly bought slaves to assist them in their work (Xen., *Memorabilia* 2.3.3). By employing household slaves as artisans, some Athenians became really rich (Xen. *Mem.* 2.7.3–4). An Athenian invalid thus complained that he was so poor that he could not even afford to buy an apprentice (Lys. 24.6). Exactly how poor the invalid was is disputed,³⁴ but the assistance he expected from the public fund certainly does not make him a person of means. In the building business, craftsmen were rather commonly assisted by a small number of slaves who worked by their side.

Wherever chattel slavery predominated in the classical Greek world slaves were commonly divided into two very broad categories. In one fell those who lived in the households of their masters and were supervised by them or their bailiffs. In the other were slaves who lived apart from their masters. These slaves could be profitable in two different ways. They were either hired out to contractors who paid their wages (*misthos*) directly to the owners, in which case they were often known as *andrapoda misthophorounta* (wage-earning slaves), or allowed to live on their own, paying themselves regularly to their owners an agreed sum (*apophora*), in which case they were mostly known as *choris oikountes* (living apart). In mining, most slaves were apparently hired out to contractors (cf. Andocides, *On the Mysteries* 38). Skilled slaves and slaves trained in a craft often lived on their own, as did shepherds who, understandably, were allowed to move freely with their flocks.³⁵

Wage-earning slaves brought in a steady income. It could not have been high, but it was secure. The contractors were often obliged to take care of them, to clothe and to feed them, and to replace them. Slaves living on their own were often more profitable. To be able to perform their duties properly, they were given great freedom in organising their work and in promoting their businesses. Although evidently not numerous, slave bankers such as the Athenian Pasion could sometimes be very successful.³⁶

Most prostitutes were slaves or ex-slaves. Masters made considerable profits by prostituting their slaves, both female and male, although this was hardly an honourable means of profit-making. The lives of slave prostitutes could not have been easy, but they occasionally had the opportunity to earn extra money and make appropriate connections. Coercion was certainly the easiest and most common method applied, but not necessarily the most efficient. Given a certain degree of freedom, slave prostitutes could attract more clients. When able to free themselves, either by using their savings or with the help of friends and appropriate loans (below), they normally carried on their former profession. Successful prostitutes

³⁴ Wood 1988: 178–80.

³⁵ Perotti 1974.

³⁶ Cohen 1992: 65–6, 88–90.

are known who were able to open their own houses and train their own slaves to succeed them (Dem. 59). Socrates was said to have paid a visit to a thriving woman and to have held a conversation with her on profit-making (Xen. *Mem.* 3.11). In Athens there may have also been state-owned brothels (Ath. 13).³⁷

Slaves were also extensively employed in warfare. Almost all hoplites needed their assistance to carry their arms and provisions. In a few exceptional cases when cities were in grievous situations, slaves were promised their freedom if they were willing to fight for the safety of their masters. The contribution of some during the battle of Arginusae (406 BC) was even remembered with pride (Ar., *Frogs* 190–1).³⁸ Although not publicised by Greek historians, slave involvement in military affairs was probably considerable. In Athens many slaves rowed the ships that secured not only the strong position of the city in international affairs but also its democracy.³⁹

A few extremely wealthy slave-owners earned their income by exploiting large numbers of slave craftsmen. To those who could let out their slaves on a daily basis, slavery would have probably seemed a useful mode of bringing in additional income, without affecting the household economy in any considerable way.

INDOORS SLAVERY

Production in the ancient Greek world was normally performed at the level of households as entities. Even big industrial units, the mining business and extensive landholdings, were normally seen as somewhat detached affairs of households. When it came to what we call economics, individuals did not count for much. The Athenians of whose activities we are informed were almost invariably heads of families, not individuals in a modern sense. We are practically never told about members of the same household pursuing, independently, diverse enterprises (cf. Arist. *Pol.* 1253b1–4, 33–4). The modern approach of assessing separately the contribution of each individual goes contrary to the way the ancient Greeks thought of and wrote about their economy.⁴⁰

Albeit as ‘tools’, household slaves were employed in the same tasks as free labourers, sometimes working side by side with the free members of their slave-owning families – and in at least the poorer houses also sleeping by their side.⁴¹ It is highly unlikely that masters ever cared to calculate their exact contribution as distinct from the contribution of free household members. The exact profitability of slaves was known when they were hired out by the day or when they lived apart from their masters and paid

³⁷ Pomeroy 1975: 88–92. ³⁸ Kyrtatas 1994: 46–7. ³⁹ Hunt 1998.

⁴⁰ Finley 1973; Foxhall 1989. ⁴¹ Jameson 1990: 191–2.

in their agreed sums. But even then, there is no evidence that such inputs were calculated in any different way from the other earnings of households. Household members, both free and unfree, were assigned tasks according to the household needs and not according to an abstract division of labour.

While the demand for labour remained more or less stable and constant in most of the crafts (unless the craft was related to war equipment and military affairs), it varied greatly in agriculture, both annually and seasonally.⁴² Greek farmers had various alternatives in cultivating their land, but many of them may have opted for bare fallow, leaving their farm uncultivated for a year or two. When the land was being intensively cultivated, twice a year, during the time of ploughing and sowing and during the time of harvesting, the amount of labour required was far greater than during the rest of the year or during the years that land was not intensively cultivated. Slaves who could be pressed to work longer hours and harder than most free persons were clearly of great value at seasonal peaks. The problem was that no person, especially no slave, should be allowed to remain idle for a year, a month or even a few days. But this was one of the main advantages of chattel slavery. When slaves were not needed in the fields they were expected to offer their services elsewhere.

'Elsewhere' could mean both outdoors and indoors. Households with more slaves than needed could always hire them out to households with fewer slaves or none at all to assist neighbours with unfinished work in their fields. They could also hire them out to entrepreneurs to be employed in jobs unaffected by seasonal variations. This commonsense rationality was taken for granted. It did not require special discussion and creeps into our sources only incidentally (cf. Dem. 53.20–1).

A significant proportion of slaves were females. Greek authors convey the idea that, festivals and funerals apart, the place of women was indoors. In the wealthy house of Ischomachus, male slaves work in the fields under the direct supervision of a bailiff and the indirect supervision of their master, but female slaves remain in the house under the direct supervision of a housekeeper and the indirect supervision of their mistress. This idealised picture is greatly exaggerated. In a working day the streets of Athens were probably filled with both men and women,⁴³ and there should be no doubt that women, including freeborn women, assisted in the fields, at least occasionally (Men. *Dys.* 333–4). It was something for which an apology could be made (Dem. 57.45). But the modern assumption that female slaves had nothing to do with agriculture is erroneous. Homer (*Iliad* 18.559–60) and Hesiod (*Works and Days* 405–9), who did not share the scruples of

⁴² Osborne 1995. ⁴³ Jameson 1997: 103–4.

classical authors, make this perfectly clear. The poorer women of Athens and, presumably, of other cities also worked for wages or maintained their own businesses outdoors.⁴⁴

Most women, both free and slaves, spent much of their time indoors. It is generally understood that they were mainly engaged in what could be termed domestic work. They were expected to keep the house in order, to cook, to look after the children and the elderly, to entertain guests. In wealthy families with numerous slaves, the impression is that many slaves (both male and female) were maintained to impress rather than to contribute to the wealth of the household. Since domestic work is often regarded as unproductive, domestic slaves are often thought of as resembling modern servants.

The distinction between productive and unproductive labourers was not conceptualised in Greek thought. In a properly organised household the labour of men and that of women were considered complementary: men were expected to bring in fresh supplies from without, while women were expected to keep safe what lay within.⁴⁵ More significantly, women were regarded as superior in some productive tasks, men in others ([Arist.] *Oec.* 1344a3–6; Xen. *Oec.* 7.29–43). Accordingly, labelling slaves as either servants or productive labourers is anachronistic and misleading when applied to the classical Greek world. Indeed, classification of domestic work as unproductive is misconceived even in the modern world.⁴⁶ For a garrison of about 480 men, 110 women were needed to do the cooking (Thuc. 2.78). To think of these women as unproductive servants betrays a modern prejudice.

Among the tasks most commonly assigned to women, as all Greeks took for granted, were spinning and weaving; these were indoor tasks, in which respectable women of wealthy families, such as the (partly fictionalised) wife of Ischomachus, took pride. Mistresses were expected in their turn to train and to supervise their slaves. Ischomachus thought that his wife, by training their slaves this way, could double their value (Xen. *Oec.* 7.41). Since the vast amounts of textiles needed in the ancient Greek world were produced indoors, it may be appropriate to view a typical Greek house as, beyond everything else, a workshop.⁴⁷ We are incidentally informed that the Megarians made a good living out of making cheap working smocks. For their production they bought foreign slaves whom they forced to work the way they wished (Xen. *Mem.* 2.7.6).

Respectable Athenians were happy to know that they could produce (almost) all they needed for consumption at home but reluctant to admit

⁴⁴ Pomeroy 1975: 73; Foxhall 1989; Cohen 2002. ⁴⁵ Foxhall 1989: 30.

⁴⁶ Ste. Croix 1981: 98–111. ⁴⁷ Pomeroy 1975: 71–3; 1994: 61–5.

that what their womenfolk produced indoors ever reached the market. Xenophon (*Mem.* 2.7) reports the story of an Athenian who was surprised to realise how profitable the work of his female relatives could be. It was certainly strange to have fourteen free women spinning and weaving for the market. But otherwise, when, as was normal, free and slave women worked together, their products could be sold without any comment. We are not told what Euphiletus' wife was doing at home along with her maidservant. But spinning and weaving were certainly part of her tasks. Slave labour in this enterprise would have more than doubled the household production of textiles. To masters possessing at least one or more domestic servants, slavery would have seemed, beyond all else, a mode of supplementing their household labour in whatever way was felt necessary or sensible.

THE EXPLOITATION OF SLAVES

As the Greeks saw it, having been bought at a price, slaves were property and could be used like other belongings. As property, they had no property of their own. All they possessed, their labour power and the products of their labour power included, were seen by definition as belonging to their masters. The only issue worth consideration was that a human being was dominated by another human being, not that a labourer was given or not given his due. Consequently, topics that we would tend to examine as pertaining to the economy, the Greeks examined as pertaining to politics or ethics – hence, Aristotle's observations on slavery were included in his *Politics* and *Ethics*. Indeed, Greek intellectuals tended to assimilate almost all kinds of labour to slave labour.⁴⁸

Accustomed as we are to wage labour, we tend to distinguish the labourer (free or slave) from labour power. It was the labour power of slaves, as we see it, that could be productive and profitable. But we then realise in a way the ancient Greeks did not, that not all that slaves produced belonged to their masters. Slaves had been bought or raised at their masters' expense. If they were ever to become profitable, the original capital invested in them had to be economised first. Also, slaves had to be fed, clothed, housed and nursed. Occasionally, to be able to perform their duties properly, they were allowed to live much above subsistence level, especially those living apart. This means that part of what slaves produced either went to their reproduction or to their maintenance.

Greek masters certainly knew that buying and sustaining slaves cost money, but they do not seem to have realised that this money, in a sense, 'belonged' to their slaves. By stressing the legal and political categories of domination and ownership, ancient authors overlooked the economic

⁴⁸ Kyrtatas 2002.

category of exploitation. But exploited slaves were.⁴⁹ It was by putting them to work that their masters were able to make profits, and far greater profits than those from wage-earning labourers.

Owing to their subordinate condition (their domination, as the Greeks would have it), slaves were exempt from the (mostly military) obligations of the free, especially of free citizens, and thus in a sense physically more secure. They were disciplined and could be asked to work for longer hours and harder than free members of families and wage labourers. More importantly, as was generally determined by custom and law, it was appropriate for most slaves to live much nearer to mere subsistence than almost any free person performing the same tasks. A common slave asked to perform unskilled labour was normally expected to live at the minimum subsistence level, while a very poor free person, especially if of citizenship status, was justified in asking for subsidies and assistance. A slave banker, to take another example, was expected to live in a less luxurious way than an equally successful free banker. The Greek economy was a slave economy, because a significant proportion of its labour power was exploited to a degree that free labour power could never be within its social, political and military systems.

The prevalence of chattel slavery over a great part of the classical Greek world had significant repercussions both for individual slave-owners and for the economies of whole cities. Having been raised outside the community which was to profit from their labour, imported slaves cost less to a community than slaves or serfs produced within that community. It does not matter much whether the Greeks had themselves enslaved the prisoners they imported or whether they had bought them from foreigners who had fought against each other. Nor is it important to determine the exact proportion of imported slaves – although it is clear that most chattel slaves were not of Greek origin.⁵⁰ Even if a relatively small proportion of slaves were former captives (in all likelihood the proportion was large), they would have made the overall exploitation of slave labour profitable. The superior profitability of chattel slavery helps explain its rapid expansion in the Greek world after its introduction in the archaic age.

Chattel slaves were also profitable to their masters in one further important respect. Masters were entitled by custom and law to manumit their slaves at their discretion, and did so, occasionally, out of generosity at their deathbeds or through their wills. They could not do this with their serf-like slaves, at least not the Helots. Manumissions, however, were often commercial transactions. According to such arrangements, slaves were given their freedom by paying their masters an agreed sum. The slave was thus able to end his enslavement and begin his life as a free person, while the master

⁴⁹ Ste. Croix 1981: 42–69.

⁵⁰ Garlan 1987: 12; see David Braund's chapter in this volume.

would be able to buy a new and, presumably, younger slave to replace the old. It was understandably skilled slaves, especially those living on their own, that were mostly able to amass the required sums, although other slaves could also be assisted by contributions (Dem. 59.29–32). Agricultural slaves and slave miners are almost absent in the manumission records because they seldom had the opportunity to save money or to make the necessary connections.

The Greeks, as far as we can tell, understood slavery almost exclusively as a form of domination. Trying to explain it as a form of exploitation as well helps us grasp its difference from the wage-labour to which moderns are mostly accustomed and hence to think of slavery as a mode of production functioning alongside and in combination with various other modes of production, exploiting the labour of free family members and of wage-earners.

THE STRUCTURE OF CLASSICAL GREEK SLAVE ECONOMIES AND SOCIETIES

Although of great significance to the overall economy of the classical Greek cities, slavery does not seem to have affected any particular sector more than others. There was no special task in which masters felt that the employment of slaves could lead to significantly more efficient or productive results. Miners, prostitutes and domestic servants were overwhelmingly slaves. But this was due to the often unhealthy and humiliating conditions under which they were expected to work. There are no signs that any special goods were ever produced or any special tasks performed because slave labour was available. Contrary to later developments in the Roman world and in some modern slave societies, commercial goods reaching local or foreign markets in classical Greece were not offered more cheaply because slave labour was used to produce them. Slave-owners never felt that they could take advantage of the low cost of production to throw out of business competitors who depended on their own labour and that of their families.

When hired out by the day, slaves normally cost their employers as much as free labourers. The public accounts of the construction of the frieze and columns of the Erechtheum are revealing on this matter.⁵¹ Employers of hired slaves did not hope to do their work at the lowest cost. Accordingly, there are no indications of noteworthy competition between slaves and free persons.⁵²

Slaves living apart from their masters and paying in regularly an agreed sum were employed in various ways. We are told more about skilled and

⁵¹ Randall 1953; Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1977: 276–82.

⁵² Westermann 1960: 15; Jones 1956: 199.

competent slaves, but they were not necessarily numerous. In any case slaves living apart from their masters and organising their work themselves behaved, from an economic point of view, like free persons. There is no evidence that they offered their services any more cheaply because they were slaves. On the contrary, since they had to pay their masters a certain agreed sum, they would obviously try to make as much out of their skills as possible. Investors in banks run by slaves could not have hoped for a more profitable outcome.

Numerous slaves worked in the fields, the workshops or the houses of their masters. The use of such slaves was obviously profitable. Masters spent much less on the maintenance of their slaves than they would have had to pay as wages to free labourers. But in this sector too, they never seem to have offered their products at lower prices because they had been able to produce at a cheaper rate, and again there was no notable competition between slave-run estates and estates cultivated by free peasants.⁵³ This attitude also explains why so many masters employed their slaves in what we would tend to regard as unproductive activities. The distinction between productive and unproductive servile labour had no appeal to masters caring only to know that using slaves meant spending less.

Thus, although individual owners made profits, sometimes very substantial profits, from owning slaves, and although societies that introduced slaves from outside took advantage of their strong position in international trade as well as of their ability to exploit the spoils of war and piracy, the Greek economies were not made structurally any different by the presence of numerous slaves. How masters benefited from slave-ownership while the Greek slave economies were not made significantly more competitive is a topic worth closer examination.⁵⁴

Almost anyone who was not very poor could invest money in buying slaves. It has been calculated that unskilled slaves in classical Athens cost about a year's keep.⁵⁵ Slaves were not only introduced in Greek societies as commodities but also circulated as commodities. Their main advantages were their flexibility and mobility. Greeks who wanted to make a quick profit, such as some Athenian metics or some citizens who possessed more capital than they could use to buy new land, tended to invest their wealth in slaves. Land was limited in all Greek cities; slaves were not. If all went well investors secured high returns. The more slaves they owned the greater their earnings.

If, however, almost anyone could buy a slave or two, only the wealthy could buy ten, and only the very wealthy a hundred or a thousand slaves. The distribution of chattel slaves in Greek societies was very uneven, and this contributed greatly to deepening class divisions within the free

⁵³ Cartledge 1993b: 163.

⁵⁴ Kyrtatas 2005.

⁵⁵ Jones 1956: 191.

population. Chattel slavery sharpened the social structure of Greek cities. It made the lives of many free persons of moderate means easier and more comfortable, while allowing the wealthy to become rapidly much more wealthy. Possessing slaves made leisured lives possible and secured the position of slave-owners in the social structure. In this sense, by securing the dominance of the dominant classes, slavery can be seen as the principal if not exclusive mode of production in the classical Greek world.⁵⁶ The Greeks seem to have realised this well. If an egalitarian society was ever to be established, the land and the slaves should be equally distributed (*Ar. Eccl.* 591–3). The rest would follow easily. If a comprehensive treatment of slavery and the economy has not survived in the extant sources, it is because slavery may not have seemed to Greeks so much a factor of their economy. Almost all aspects of life depended upon its existence.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Wallon (1847/1988) is sometimes regarded as beginning modern research on slavery in antiquity; it is notably preoccupied with moral issues and has relatively little to say about the employment of slaves or their significance to ancient Greek economies. Although showing that slaves were to be found everywhere, Wallon was mostly interested in stressing the demoralising effect of their use on the free population. Westermann (1955) is more comprehensive and accurate in the use of sources. His treatment is also less antiquarian than Wallon's, but the work lacks a theoretical framework. Vogt (1975c) is concerned with human relations between slaves and masters, the slave wars and humanitarian aspects of the institution of slavery, but also offers a useful assessment of modern scholarship. Jones (1956) and (1957) are pioneering studies on slavery and the Greek economy (and especially the significance of slavery to Athenian democracy). The estimates given of Athenian slave numbers are too low, and the contribution of slavery to the structure of the Greek economy is underestimated, but Jones correctly saw the great significance of slavery to wealthy and well-to-do citizens. Lauffer (1979) is the standard work on the mines of Laurium.

Finley (1981, containing articles from 1959 onwards) and (1980) are landmark studies, placing theoretical issues at the forefront of research, especially the issue of the location of slavery in Greek society and in the Greek economy. Their influence has been immense. Garlan (1988), for example, still the most satisfactory full-scale treatment of Greek slavery, clearly shows the effects of Finley's work; and Jameson (1990), (1992), (1994), (1997), arguing especially from archaeological evidence, shows how

⁵⁶ Ste. Croix 1981: 52; 1988: 20.

substantial the contribution of slaves was in Greek agriculture (but the matter is still open to debate). Ste. Croix (1981), an openly Marxian study, takes issue with Finley in almost every respect and is especially important on the theory of exploitation. The influence of both Finley and Ste. Croix can be seen in the work of Cartledge (summarised in Chapter 4, this volume), the leading contemporary historian of Sparta, especially in his views of 'class struggle'.

CHAPTER 6

THE SLAVE SUPPLY IN CLASSICAL GREECE

DAVID BRAUND

APPROACHING THE GREEK SLAVE SUPPLY

How did Greeks obtain their slaves, and how did men, women and children come to be slaves in classical Greece? While statistics are elusive, no one would seriously challenge the fact that there were large numbers of slaves in the Greek world of various kinds and origins. This chapter seeks to explore the processes that brought people into slavery in Greece, and also to give some sense of the individual slave's experience of these processes. The sheer scale of enslavement meant that the supply of slaves was a central feature of the ancient economy, quite apart from its fundamental social significance within and beyond Greek culture. The slave trade was everywhere. At the periphery of Greek culture, slaves were traded all around the Black Sea, in the Adriatic and in the Eastern Mediterranean and North Africa. So too at its traditional centres – in Athens, Aegina, Corinth, Chios and elsewhere. The scattered instances about which our sources tell us are no more than drops in the great ocean of the ancient Greek slave trade, with its ripples reaching far and wide into 'barbarian' hinterlands.

The slave trade was also everywhere in ideological terms, explored by philosophers or expressed in art, from Homer through Athenian tragedy and historical and geographical writing of all kinds. Moreover, the slave trade was treated as a fit topic even for comedy, whether in satirical poetry or on the stage. For all the sufferings of individuals and communities which flowed from the Greek demand for slaves, the society and economy of classical Greece was overwhelmingly comfortable with the buying and selling of men, women and children, at least in so far as these 'goods' seemed sufficiently alien.

It is in Aristophanes' last surviving comedy (*Wealth*) that we find some of the most penetrating comment on the slave trade in Greek literature. At the centre of the play is Wealth itself (acquisition, distribution and lack). The very presence of slave-trading within the play illustrates well enough its importance in terms of property.¹ But there is scant sympathy for the

¹ Cf. von Reden 1995: 95, 198.

enslaved: in fact, the Athenian protagonist hopes for the proliferation of slaves to do more work. Enslavement and the trade in slaves are presented as facts of life. The slave's voice is a master's voice, with no challenge to the slave-owning audience. Aristophanes' slave bewails his fate but does nothing to suggest that his master is wrong in acquiring and using him. Instead, his enslavement is made an example of the power of money. In the opening speech the slave Carion opens the play by bemoaning his lack of power: slaves must share in the consequences of their masters' bad decisions. God does not allow the slave to be master of his own body but sets his purchaser in control (*Plut.* 5–7). The institution even has divine sanction. The difference between Carion's freedom and slavery is a little silver: he has been sold into slavery for a small sum of money (*Plut.* 147–8).

There is sympathy for the enslaved barbarian's plight only in the very limited sense that all may consider themselves at the mercy of Wealth. This is comedy for a society at ease with the purchase of a 'barbarian', a taste of prevailing ideology in classical Greece.²

To understand the Greek slave supply, we must come to terms with the normality of enslavement, slave-trading and the commodification of human beings. And also with its fragmented and ramifying geography: while from time to time (especially through war) large numbers of people were enslaved together, there is no sign that the slave trade operated on the grand scale or with the regular routes familiar from the Atlantic trade. Those enslaved in large numbers were immediately bought up by small-scale dealers, who thereby distributed them as they saw fit. This is not to say that the trade was disorganised; only that it was organised around the minimal needs of a fragmented and much-ramified market.³

Almost anyone might buy or sell a slave, anywhere. There were traders who took a particular interest in slave-taking and slave-dealing (*andropodistai*), and there were places particularly favoured for slave-trading at certain periods, but by and large the slave trade was an omnipresent and routine series of small-scale exchanges, made everywhere, by all manner of individuals, and with no sign of any serious challenge to its normality.

In economic terms, slaves were goods like any other. Accordingly, Polybius (4.38), when listing the best and most numerous goods exported from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean world, could list slaves with items such as preserved fish and hides. Moreover, in distinguishing between necessities and luxuries, he located slaves in the former category. Quality and quantity varied from place to place, whether for hides or for slaves. The long and notoriously dangerous voyage to the coasts of the Black Sea

² On slavery in Aristophanes, see Mactoux 1999, with extensive bibliography.

³ Contrast Taylor 2001.

will only have been attempted if large profits were to be made. This in turn meant that slaves and other 'goods' from the region must have been available in volume and at a unit price advantageous to the trader. Similarly, cabotage required that the price of a slave at source was low enough to allow for a series of profits to be taken.

This was overwhelmingly a private matter. States might decide to purchase slaves for public functions, as with the 'Scythian archers' bought by Athens in the mid-fifth century BC to enforce order under the command of the democracy's officials;⁴ but the numbers of public slaves were statistically insignificant and were in any case probably obtained through private markets and personal arrangements. Although some states had a particular concern for maritime control and taxation, none of this traffic was in the hands of states, or even of large corporations. Instead, the trade lay with individual entrepreneurs, who duly crop up in the law-court speeches that arose from their activities. Such men might have had personal penchants for particular goods, but we hear rather of mixed cargoes, attested both in texts and through archaeology from the archaic period onwards.⁵ The archaeology of Greek slavery is of course a difficult affair and can seldom throw light on the slave supply.⁶ But slaves were a high-value, low-bulk (even self-transporting) commodity, as we shall see, and could well be part of the same exchange as with other commodities (wine, for example, or salt or even fine-wares).⁷

Exchange was at its starkest on the periphery, in the marginal zones where Greeks encountered significantly different cultures. Strabo (11.2.3) describes the exchanges between pastoralists and the 'civilised' Greek world which took place at Tanais near the mouth of the Don, at the north-east corner of the Sea of Azov:

Tanais was the shared trading-centre of the Asiatic and European nomads and those who sailed there from the Crimean Bosphorus. The nomads brought slaves and hides and whatever else nomads have, while the others brought for exchange cloth and wine and the other goods which go with a civilised lifestyle.

Here slaves are among the few 'products' of the non-Greek world which were desirable to Greeks. The fact that Strabo calls attention to the provision of slaves and hides at Tanais seems to echo Polybius' notice on the export of goods from the Black Sea region as a whole. Wine is a principal item of exchange for both authors, and although we can hardly presume to generate statistics, a strong pattern emerges. The peoples of the region

⁴ Cf. Austin and Olson 2004: 292.

⁵ Foxhall 1998, esp. 299; cf. Arafat and Morgan 1994, esp. 109.

⁶ See Ian Morris' chapter in this volume; cf. Morris 1998c; but see also Thompson 2003. Note Scheidel 2003a: 579, on Schumacher 2001.

⁷ Cf. Diod. Sic. 5. 26, with Taylor 2001: 28.

(both Greeks and non-Greeks) had a thirst for wine that could only be met by substantial imports. Archaeology shows how substantial those imports were and how embedded Greek wine had become in the ideology and practice of local non-Greek elites by the sixth century BC – for Greek wine soon became a regular feature of the grave goods of major local burials. Indeed, we probably underestimate its penetration and distribution: much was evidently carried in skins, not cumbersome pottery.⁸ But unless simply seized it had to be paid for, whether by services or exchange. In large part, that meant skin, whether hides or slaves. In other words, the wine trade in the region reflects the trade in slaves. As Gavriliuk (2003; cf. 1999) has recently observed, it was the export of slaves (and hides) that drove exchange on the north coast of the Black Sea far more than the much-vaunted export of grain.

Furthermore, it would be rash to assume that the non-Greeks gained a good price for their slaves and hides. Greeks who had made the dangerous voyage from the Aegean sought exorbitant profits, and the history of exchange tends to suggest that the pastoralists would have been overimpressed by the wares and trinkets proffered by traders from the ‘civilised world’.⁹ Polybius’ observation that the Black Sea takes ‘every kind of wine’ encourages further scepticism, as do complaints among the Greeks of Olbia about the ‘cheap rags and foul wine’ that traders bring there from the Mediterranean (Dio Chrysostom 36.25). At the same time, we must consider the effect of a ready market for slaves at the coast on the societies of the hinterland. Chattel slaves were not of enormous use to pastoral societies, but the development of Greek communities and trading posts on the coast from the seventh century BC had made them extremely useful as a means of acquiring luxury goods, however tawdry. Accordingly, there seems every reason to suppose that the slave trade at the coast served to generate instability and conflict in the interior.

GREEKS AND BARBARIANS: RANSOM, BOOTY, COLONIALISM

War had a power to change everything quickly and totally in the Greek world. Accordingly, when populations went to war, they did so in the knowledge that the outcome could very well entail enslavement, whether of the individual, part of the community or even the whole population. The main issue was who would win, which at its most extreme meant who would have the power to enslave whom.

However, the horror of potential enslavement was not without some hope of evasion. For within Greek culture the treatment of the defeated was a major ethical issue in its own right. While there is scant sign of

⁸ Cf. Taylor 1994: 400; 2001: 28. ⁹ Braund and Tsatskheladze 1989: 116.

deep concern about the fate of defeated 'barbarians', the victor had more difficult decisions to make about defeated Greeks. Enslavement was a real option and was carried out, but the victor paid a price for that in the shaping of his reputation, which might well be taken to outweigh any financial gain, vengeful satisfaction or warning to others. We should take seriously the ethics implied in the tradition that Agesilaus' troops were driven to unstoppable fury by their discovery that the people of Lampsacus had gone so far as to consign to their mines the Greeks whom they had taken as slaves. Accordingly, we know of no Greeks among the slaves in and around Laurium.¹⁰

The famous Athenian debate over the treatment of defeated Mytilene in 427 illustrates the dilemma well enough, though it is wholesale execution that is primarily at issue (cf. Thucydides 3.47). Enslavement had been an obvious option from the first (Thuc. 3.28). And it is most unclear that the women and children were ever to be executed, for the focus is very much on the men. In the same year, the Spartan forces took the city of Plataea: while Thucydides (3.68) gives some detail on the execution of many of the men, the enslavement of the women and children is mentioned only in passing. Similarly, the set-piece debate between Athenians and Melians, which prefigures the defeat of Melos, is centred upon the issue of enslavement. From the Melians' standpoint, the issue is the *de facto* collective enslavement that they will suffer if they kowtow to Athenian imperialism as against the uncertain (and at once horribly predictable) outcome of resistance. Their defeat means the execution of the men whom the Athenians catch and the actual enslavement of the women and children. There is a pattern here. When cities fell, there was a recurrent tendency for the victor (even when dealing with Greeks) to kill the men and enslave the women and children. At the same time, the discourse of a more metaphorical enslavement bolstered resistance to imperial control and made the decision to enslave all the more charged. The Melian enslavements confirmed the negative image of Athenian imperialism as one of the enslavement of Greeks, not of their liberation. Accordingly, the discourse of enslavement and liberation remained a powerful factor in the ideological context of imperialism in the Greek world well into the Roman period.

Victors might well choose to do otherwise than enslave. Indeed, the lack of Greek slaves in the historical record for classical Greece suggests that Greek victors usually preferred another course.¹¹ A major example is offered by Xenophon, who shows the Spartans resisting the calls of their allies to enslave the city of Athens, finally defeated after a long and gruelling war in 404. The decision illustrates very well that the victor had choices to make, which would reflect also upon the victory and have consequences

¹⁰ Polyaeus 2.26; cf. Morris 1998c: 199–211.

¹¹ Cf. Garland 1987.

for the future.¹² For while it might be generally accepted in the abstract that the persons and property of captured cities belonged to the victor, the more important question was how the victor chose to use or abuse his dominance. It was the particular decision that really mattered, both to the parties concerned and to external observers. It is not so much law as ideology that matters in the relationships between master and slave, whether in the dramatic context of a captured city or in the everyday experience of slaves in general.¹³

As Xenophon (*Hellenica* 2.2.20) tells it, in 404 'the Spartans refused to enslave a Greek city which had performed a great benefit amid the greatest perils that had fallen upon Greece'. What Xenophon's Spartans really mean here is the Athenian role in defeating the Persians earlier. On this view, enslavement was for barbarians, but not for a Greek city which deserved so much from other Greeks. Clemency of this kind was a powerful strategy: it was much easier and more convincing now for the victor to erect a triumphal monument at the Pan-Hellenic religious centre of Delphi. And Xenophon himself most certainly approved: his favoured Spartans had shown magnanimity towards his own city with a rhetoric of implicit enmity towards the Persians against whom he personally waged war. More generally, the fact that the inhabitants of a defeated city could hope to escape the most severe consequences, including enslavement, must have done something to mitigate the communal terror of outright war. If defeat was even envisaged, then it might be endurable. However, warfare between Greeks could still generate slaves. An Athenian man taken as a child during the last decade of the Peloponnesian War was sold into slavery far away on the island of Leucas. We know of his fate only because he was ransomed and because his son became embroiled in a court case at Athens (Demosthenes 57.18–19). Other specific instances happen to be known through the survival of inscriptions, in particular honouring those who arranged and paid the ransom: what better beneficence could there be?¹⁴

Ransom was a major brake on the slave supply, but also a very profitable strategy for the enslaver. We may be sure enough that around the periphery of the Greek world there were substantial prospects of ransom, so that both Greeks and barbarians captured there might be bought back by relatives or

¹² See Garlan 1987: 8–9 on the victor's dilemma; cf. De Sensi Sestito 1999 on women in particular. While Alexander had chosen to enslave the Thebans, Cassander subsequently went out of his way to reconstitute the city, gaining renown for the act: Diod. 19.53, with Garlan 1987: 16.

¹³ Volkmann (1961: 7) begins his legalistic study by acknowledging the strength of the criticism. On everyday experience, see Finley 1980: 93. On the whole issue of enslavement upon defeat, see Rosivach 1999.

¹⁴ Notably, on Amorgos, where ransom was paid to pirates *c.* 250: *Syll.*³ 521 with De Souza 1999: 61.

others interested in them. And even when barbarians had left the periphery and been taken deeper into the Greek world, they might still be able to arrange a ransom, as did the Thracians who were travelling back on the boat which saw the death of Herodes (Antiphon, *On the Murder of Herodes*, 20). Meanwhile, especially in view of the ideological difficulty in the holding of Greeks as slaves, we may also be sure that many Greeks were ransomed: in their case communication was all the easier in every regard. Of course, almost everything depended on the wealth of the enslaved individual, or at least his access to wealth. The case of Nicostratus illustrates the process and economics well. Taken by pirates in the fourth century, this Athenian was sold into slavery close to home, on Aegina. He had written to his brother, who could not or would not raise the funds needed to bring off the deal and collect him. The ransom was reportedly 26 minae, that is roughly ten times the average price of a slave. Captors and subsequent purchasers had a powerful economic incentive to take on the trouble of ransom.¹⁵

The profits of ransom apart, Greek victors had much less reason to decide against the enslavement of defeated barbarians. The argument that had saved Athens in 404 augured badly for any Persians subsequently taken. Accordingly, when the Spartans set about the invasion of Asia Minor, they did so with the rhetoric of the liberation of its Greeks, but with the strong prospect of the enslavement of their barbarian enemies. And these were not simply Persians. A striking feature of the campaigns of the early 390s is the repeated Spartan decision to plunder other 'barbarians', who might better have been conciliated against the Persians: Carians to the south-west of Asia Minor and Bithynians to the north-west. These were not so much acts of war against the Persians as attempts to gather booty from barbarians, with whom local Greek communities tended to have awkward relationships. Chief among such booty were slaves.¹⁶ And there was nothing new in the Spartan mix of state-supported war and plunder for gain, perhaps on a more private basis. In 409, for example, as Xenophon (*Hell.* 1.2.4–5) himself tells us, an Athenian force had got into difficulties while raiding the Lydians for slaves and other goods. As for the Bithynians, Xenophon himself (*Anabasis* 6.6.38) led his own mercenary army on a detour through their lands, specifically to garner booty consisting in part of slaves.

For Greeks the enslavement of barbarians was not problematic. The well-known discussion of Aristotle in the first book of his *Politics* describes the distinction explicitly (cf. Peter Hunt's chapter in this volume). Aristotle insists that the acquisition of slaves is a key task of the master, for whom they will serve their purpose as living tools, active pieces of property

¹⁵ Dem. 53.7: the figure aroused no suspicion; cf. the apocryphal tale of Plato (Diog. Laert. 3.20), sold and ransomed on Aegina also, for a similar sum, in the range 20–30 minae.

¹⁶ The otherwise opaque purpose of these attacks has been noted: Cartledge 1987/2000: 208–10.

(*Pol.* 1253b, 1255b). The just acquisition of slaves is like a 'science' of war or animal-hunting (1255b). However, he is much less clear about the justice of enslavement through war, reflecting the dilemma of Greek enslaving Greek seen in the Spartan stance in 404 and elsewhere. Justice depends on the causes of the process of enslavement (notably the just cause of a war), while it is barbarians not Greeks who are slaves by nature (*Pol.* 1255a).¹⁷ In the *Politics* the institution of slavery is fundamental to the household and thus to human social organisation, so that the acquisition of slaves is no small matter. This concern takes Aristotle from slavery into a broad study of trade – a theoretical discussion substantially of the slave trade, couched in the discourse of property and exchange. That in turn raises a question to which we shall return: if the household is to be as self-sufficient as possible, what of the supply of slaves?

At a more empirical level, war made slaves and slaves in turn featured prominently among the spoils to be gained through war. Yet students of antiquity have been reluctant to explore the probable corollary, that is whether campaigns were launched with the specific purpose of acquiring slaves and the profit that came with them. If so, slaves and the slave trade were not simply a by-product of war, but even its objective. Garlan (1987: 10) simply asserts that 'Greeks are not seen going to war in order to increase their stock of slaves.' And yet, while it is true that accounts of the causes of substantial wars in the Greek world do not focus on the acquisition of slaves, so much as on higher and juster causes, it is also true that the booty to be gained by a war was a substantial consideration, for the state as for the individual (cf. *Thuc.* 6.15.2).

Xenophon's detour among the Bithynians exemplifies the tendency for commanders to enrich their men (and themselves) by slave-raiding. Certainly, it might be argued that this was more an act of banditry or piracy than an act of war,¹⁸ but the distinction would be a fine one. The supply of slaves was a benefit of imperial power, to be included with the other goods available by trade or seizure. Accordingly, in the 420s when the comic poet Hermippus (Fr. 63) lists goods flowing into imperial Athens in his *Basket-bearers*, slaves are included among them.¹⁹ Throughout it must be remembered that slaves were one kind of commodity circulating with and exchanged for other goods such as wine that were of a completely different order. At the same time it is Athenian imperial power which makes all these goods available, so that the connection between war and the slave trade is implicit. Later, Aristotle (*Pol.* 1257b) builds war into his discussion of slave acquisition to argue that the art of war should be directed not only against wild animals but also against natural slaves who refuse to accept

¹⁷ Cambiano 1987. ¹⁸ De Souza 1999.

¹⁹ See Gilula 2000 and more generally Braund 1994a.

their natural subordination.²⁰ In essence, it seems to be Aristotle's position that war is properly waged by Greeks against barbarians for the purpose of acquiring slaves. There is no indication that such a position is controversial, and Xenophon's account of his own activities in Bithynia confirms well enough that it was not. Theory and practice coincide.

Moreover, the small scale of Xenophon's raiding demands attention. Small-scale conflicts and raids were far more usual between Greeks and barbarians than great wars. Around the periphery of Greek settlement, there was a tendency to conflict between Greek communities and local barbarians which, taken together, will have generated a significant number of barbarian slaves new to the Greek world. While we cannot pretend to have viable statistics, there cannot be much doubt that this kind of low-intensity warfare brought barbarians into slavery in the Greek world. Similarly, ever-present banditry and piracy also contributed substantially to the pool of slaves.

Slaves were a routine part of the booty of warfare.²¹ They are often listed with livestock and other goods seized from the enemy. And it is perhaps worth adding that also in Greeks' wars with Greeks, barbarian slaves were again a key part of the booty: these were not additional to the slaves available in the Greek world, but redistributed out of the looted community. Once acquired, booty was usually sold, though particular items might be kept. So too with slaves: sale (or ransom) was the norm, not least for practical purposes. Not only did slaves need to be watched, fed and marched about, but they also presented other problems. One of Xenophon's men, for example, had only limited use for an adult and hostile male Bithynian or Thracian. Meanwhile, it is worth stressing that traders (in slaves and other goods) would also turn their hands to raiding when opportunities arose: the familiar categories of soldier, bandit-pirate and trader might be applied to the same individual or group, depending on time and place.²² Xenophon's men are a well-documented example of this merged identity. When Xenophon's force demanded to be able to trade for supplies with the cities of the north coast of Asia Minor, from Trapezus westwards, by what means do we suppose that they expected to trade? After their long and embattled march from Cunaxa, they had little else than the booty they had acquired. That included slaves, who at least, for all the difficulties of maintenance, had the virtue of carrying themselves along and no doubt portering other goods as well (cf. Menander, *The Shield* 155).

And what of 'colonisation' in all this? Xenophon and his men were potential colonists as well as soldiers, slavers and slave-traders. For the

²⁰ Garland 1987: 14–15. ²¹ Pritchett 1991: 170–3; Ducrey 1999: esp. 220–70.

²² Note, for example, the traders who seize slaves at the start of Herodotus' *Histories*. Cf. the trading pirates of Strabo 14.5.2.

archaic period it is no longer usual to worry whether colonies grew up on the basis of agriculture or trade, for we now understand that any settlers will have maximised the economic advantages of any circumstance and will therefore have engaged in both. Yet it is worth taking the argument a little further. The trade surely entailed trade in slaves, for, as we have seen, local peoples might well have little else to offer in exchange for the imported goods they desired from the Greek world. That can only have encouraged the production of more slaves in the region, whether through raiding or some other exploitation of the weak.²³ Meanwhile, the military advantages which settlers seem to have had, at least when in concert with some part of the local population, also made slave acquisition a likely prospect. Finally, it is not unreasonable to ask whether the availability of slaves, not only for purchase but also for capture, was a significant attraction for Greeks who settled around the periphery of the Greek world. On Thasos, for example, Archilochus harps on warfare with Thracians, probably in satirical vein. But was that warfare not simply a problem in the colonising process, but even part of the attraction for settlers (alias slavers and traders)? Thracians might indeed pose a serious physical threat, but they also represented a profit that could be taken. Their bodies were an important part of the booty available.

Finley (1980: 85) objected that Greek slave-raiding of this kind does not square with the fact that Chios and Corinth, though cities picked out by the sources as centres of slave-dealing, were not conquering or imperial states. However, Corinth may indeed be seen as such a state by virtue of its colonialist and indeed imperialist activities, both in Magna Graecia and up the Adriatic coast. Many of the Illyrians known to have been sold as slaves into the Greek world presumably came via Corinthian interests in that region. But the main weakness of the objection is precisely that cities with large slave markets did not need to carry forward colonialism in their own right in order to derive benefit from the process. Such is the case with Chios, which had the dubious honour of being thought the first Greek state to have invented the institution of chattel slavery. The tradition is intriguing in that among the earliest known imports into the Black Sea region was wine from Chios, found there from the late seventh century BC. Once again, wine for slaves and slaves for wine. Here the process is all the more suggestive because it seems to fit very well the hypothesis that the slave trade was important to Greek colonialism. It does not matter that the resultant colonies did not see themselves as Chian foundations: we need not even suppose that the wine and slaves were traded by Chians, but merely that Chios was a principal counterpoint (together with other places, notably Lesbos) for this trade. In short, there is no necessary direct linkage between a

²³ See Nadel 1976; Annequin 1983: esp. 648–50.

city's reputation for slave-dealing and its activities at the periphery, though such linkage can certainly occur. Accordingly, the objection has no real bearing on the fact that Greeks did engage in recurrent conflict with local barbarian neighbours at the periphery (as also with neighbouring Greeks), nor upon the strong likelihood that such conflicts produced slaves for the Greek world. More broadly still, the involvement of any state in the process of foundation was usually (and perhaps always) preceded by individual contacts and experiences, which tended to be overwhelmed by the traditions that developed around colonial settlement, not least in their concern for an appropriately grand origin-tale.²⁴

Meanwhile, although we may speak of 'slave-markets' to mean the slave trade in general, it is all too easy to overstate the prominence of particular places as markets for slaves in the Greek world. There is in fact very little evidence that particular Greek locations had especially busy markets in slaves before the Roman period. Diversity seems to have been more the rule: slaves were marketed everywhere in Greece. So too within each community. There is no real indication at all in our sources that in Attica, the region we know best, there were specific slave markets or special slave-sales. In Athens, where the main agora has been studied most intensively, it seems that slaves were traded along with other goods, and that only particular areas within markets might be used for slave-selling, rather as other goods tended to be gathered in other areas. At Athens we are told of 'the circles' where slaves were exhibited for sale, possibly with other domestic 'items', raised up on tables.²⁵

It may be concluded that the slave supply to Greece flowed in large part from a reservoir of slave labour which could be obtained from the periphery of Greek culture. Warfare on a large scale was no doubt significant from time to time. Greek victors had reasons to be slow to enslave defeated Greeks, but they had ample scope for enslaving barbarians in occasional major conflicts – in the Persian Wars and at Eurymedon, for example, in the fifth century (cf. Diodorus Siculus 11.62). However, the slave supply came more regularly and, as it seems, in larger numbers from relationships between Greeks and non-Greeks at the periphery. Certainly, there was recurrent conflict at this periphery, which fed the supply. But there were also more peaceful relationships of collaboration and exchange. While Greeks settled at the periphery might seize slaves, they were also placed very well to trade for them. For the barbarians, the Greek demand for slaves, together with their own elite's demand for Greek goods, constituted

²⁴ On Chios, see Gavriiliuk 2003; in general, Osborne 1998; cf. Braund 1994b.

²⁵ For Athens see the magisterial survey of Arnott 1996: 284; cf. Thompson and Wycherley 1972: 125, 165; Wycherley 1957: 117, 165, 205. Elsewhere in Attica large numbers of slaves were doubtless sold at Piraeus and at Sunium in the mining region: see Osborne 1985: 31–5.

a powerful drive for exchange in slaves – especially because slaves were among the few commodities available there that were wanted by Greeks. Local elites had a special interest in raiding for slaves, or simply buying them in from further inland. There can be little doubt that it was not so much slaveholding as slave-trading which drove the process of wealth concentration and social stratification observable at the periphery. Moreover, the development of strong hierarchies gave local elites another source of slaves to trade with the Greeks: if all else failed, they could sell some of their own subjects.²⁶ Meanwhile, the availability of cheap slaves and other goods can only have encouraged Greeks to come and to settle at the margins. However unpalatable the thought may be, there is not much room for doubt that the slave supply was a significant factor in driving the extended process of Greek colonial settlement.

EVERYDAY EXPLOITATION: BEING BOUGHT AND SOLD

Slaves were not all the same. Ethnicity, age and gender, as well as physical and intellectual capacities, varied enormously. We may be entirely sure that in the buying and selling of slaves these differences were of fundamental importance. It is enough to look at the description of slaves inscribed *c.* 414 in the list of property confiscated from Athenians convicted of mutilating statues of Hermes and sold by the Athenian state. There we find mention of forty-five slaves. They appear as property, alongside land and animals: the list is concerned particularly with their market value. Prices are given for each slave. Further, slaves are listed with their ethnicity, gender and, in some cases, special skills (notably a Carian goldsmith). Two children are picked out. The ethnic spread is worth observing: of the 35 slaves whose ethnicities have survived, 12 are Thracian, 7 Carian, 3 Scythian, 3 home-bred, 2 Syrian (if not 'white Syrians' from Pontic Cappadocia; cf. Strabo 12.3.9), 2 Illyrian, 1 Colchian, 1 Lydian, 1 Phrygian, 1 Cappadocian (or another Illyrian), as well as 1 Macedonian and 1 Messenian (?). The general absence of Greeks is notable. The dominance of the north in our small sample may be significant, for it is borne out by the other evidence we have, particularly in contemporary comedy and later in the clear statement of Polybius, on the situation in 220, that the most and best slaves came from the Black Sea region. At the same time, however, there is also a significant presence from Asia Minor, especially Caria.²⁷ Not that we can

²⁶ On the reservoir of slave labour, see Finley 1980: 85–6; on slavery and stratification, Sáenz 1991; and on sale of subjects, Braund and Tsatskheladze 1989: 118.

²⁷ See above on Carion in Aristophanes' *Wealth*; note also that Hermotimus was brought from Caria to Chios, where he was castrated and sold into the Persian court (Hdt. 8.104–5 and below on Panionius). He was from Pedasa and in that sense a Greek, but there was a strong linkage in myth between Chians and Carians: see Hornblower 2003.

assume that the ethnicities (whether explicit or implied in the name) are completely reliable: it is salutary to recall Daos from Phrygia (*Men. Asp.* 242, allegedly), whose name would usually be taken to indicate an origin towards the Danube. Further, quite apart from distortions in the process of sale, the application of ethnics to slaves may result from a range of factors, including place of sale into the Greek world.²⁸ Nonetheless, Syrians are expensive: they were from further afield, perhaps more rare and considered more talented than the average. The Carian goldsmith is most expensive, surely by virtue of his skills. Meanwhile, there is only a limited sign of the tendency, often suggested at a theoretical level, to have slaves from a variety of origins: the best-attested group, belonging to a metic in Piraeus, consists of seven or eight small ethnic units, though it is unclear whether he or anyone else conceived of them in such a fashion (see T. E. Rihll's chapter in this volume). Certainly they are not listed according to ethnic grouping in our inscribed record. If we knew the metic's own origin, we might have some deeper insight into the particular composition of his slaveholdings.

As for prices, the main point must be that these slaves were costly commodities. It is not hard to see how slavers could turn a fine profit, even if the slave had initially to be bought and passed through many hands on long journeys from Thrace, Colchis or Syria. For the average of the prices listed, taken in whatever form, falls in the range around 155–175 drachmas. Importantly, that figure is not much out of line with known prices of the fourth century, though it may be a little low. State-sale may not have been the best way to achieve the highest possible price, especially in the peculiar conditions of the confiscations which may have carried some sense of religious taint for some potential buyers. But our evidence strongly indicates that the major impact on pricing was not ethnicity but the skills which a slave could offer.²⁹ The point is clearly illustrated from Thracian males. The skilled Thracian overseer Sosias is said to have been bought by Nicias for a huge sum (a talent = 6,000 drachmas), probably by virtue of skills he had acquired in the mines of Thrace. By contrast, Thracians bartered into slavery in exchange for salt were proverbially cheap and therefore suitable for a short and brutal life of hard labour, for example in the mines under the likes of Sosias, whose price was equal to some forty of these lesser beings.³⁰

Estimating the regular payment of a free skilled labourer at this time as around one drachma per day, we may conclude that a slave with no particular skills would cost something approaching half a year's pay. This

²⁸ The Greek names of slaves attested without origins cannot be taken to mean that they were Greek, despite Pritchett 1956: 280; cf. 1961: 27.

²⁹ But note the later evidence of Varro, *Ling.* 9.93, with Braund and Tsatsikladi 1989: 119.

³⁰ Sosias: Xen. *Mem.* 2.5.2; *Por.* 4.14. Thracians bought for salt: Pollux 7.14. See further Pritchett 1956: 277–8.

was no trivial amount, especially when taken together with the need to feed and otherwise maintain the slave. Although the initial investment and maintenance costs might be offset by any income generated by the slave's work, there was still a significant sum to be found. Small wonder that ancient texts (e.g. Arist. *Pol.* 1252b)³¹ allow the possibility that a man might not be wealthy enough to own a slave.

Moreover, cost provides a context for the presence in our list of home-bred slaves. It made sense for owners to have slaves bear children, even allowing for the cost of rearing and no doubt grim rates of infant mortality and death in childbirth. The younger child in our list has a price of only 72 drachmas, while the older child bears an adult price of 174 drachmas: the lower price presumably allows for the extra costs and risks of ownership set against the capacity of the child to work.

There is every likelihood that we underestimate the extent of slave-breeding in Greek society. Apart from the economic advantages, there was also the brute fact that the master had sexual access to his slaves. It is enough to consider Xenophon's account (*Oeconomicus* 10.12) of an ideal household where the master will prefer sex with his wife to sex with a slave, in part because the slave has no choice but to submit to his demands, being a woman 'compelled to give service'. Beyond his own whim, the only control on the master in this regard was the attitude of his wife.³² Children surely resulted, as also from the deliberate breeding of slaves. Xenophon presents slave-breeding as an entirely unremarkable practice. The only point he seeks to stress is the desirability of control in the matter: the sexes should be kept apart in their respective quarters, so that well-behaved slaves should be bred with other good slaves, resulting in still better-behaved offspring. The general rule is stated also in the negative: bad slaves who breed with bad make still worse children. On that logic, there is little to be gained by breeding slaves who are not 'good'. Accordingly, the home-bred slave is commonly imagined in antiquity as especially loyal and trustworthy. Meanwhile, there is also an implied reward for good behaviour: sex and reproduction. At the same time, we may reasonably wonder how many masters kept the kind of close control of their slaves' sexual activities that Xenophon's account recommends. In any event, we may presume that slaves found opportunities for exercising their own initiative in the matter, resulting in unplanned offspring who would enhance the stock of slaves.

That slave-breeding was a commonplace is further illustrated by a rather neglected passage of the Hippocratic *Airs, Waters, Places* from c. 400. The author first stresses the low reproduction rates of Scythians in their native

³¹ Jones 2004: 63.

³² See Pomeroy 1994: 308–9 for examples. Note Ar. *Pax* 1138–9, and the discussion of Just 1989: 126–52.

land and explains it, on the female side, by the fatness derived from their inactivity. He triumphantly observes:

And the (Scythian) slave-women offer substantial testimony to this. For they cannot come into contact with a man without falling pregnant, on account of the hard work they do and the leanness of their flesh.

His point is that by being put to hard work, Scythian slave women cease to suffer from the restrictions on their fertility which result from their lifestyle and location. For the medical writers, the slave trade offered a ready insight into a range of problems, which include the impact of location on health and wider questions about the bearing of children (cf. *Diseases* 2.4.5). Indeed, their writings offer a series of intriguing insights into all aspects of slavery, showing, for example, that even a sickly slave woman with multiple symptoms might be bought and soon taken in search of a cure and restored menstruation. Presumably she had been sold cheap as damaged stock but was now restored and able to reproduce. Or perhaps she had been passed off as healthy, for the suspicion of fraud which hung over all exchange in the Greek world was a particular concern in the purchase of slaves, whose health and history might well be concealed. That is why Plato took care specifically to design legislative controls on the sale of slaves in his *Laws* (910a–c).³³

Childbearing, and wet-nursing, were evidently commonplace in the experience of female slaves. What percentage of the slave stock consisted of home-bred slaves is beyond our knowledge on the meagre statistics available: around 10 per cent has been suggested, but if childbearing was so common, the figure may well have been higher.³⁴ And at its highest, we may presume, for domestic slaves, for it was in the household that masters could make most use of the loyalty, perfect Greek and other talents of such individuals. It was surely only the most unfortunate of home-bred slaves who would find themselves sent to the mines. As for how many were marketed under normal circumstances, we have no figures at all, but their perceived virtues suggest that they were less likely to be sold than other slaves.

More usually, however, slaves purchased in Greece had come from alien cultures around the Greek world, especially from the north and from western Asia Minor. A few others came from further afield. Black slaves seem to have been comparatively few and were presumably prized all the more for their rarity. The fact that the makers of Greek terracottas had the fancy to depict black Africans affects the issue only in that it may mislead.³⁵

³³ See *Morb.* 4.1.38, where the doctor restarts menstruation after a pause of seven years, very possibly with childbearing in view; cf. Demand 1998. On legal controls, see Pritchett 1991: 172–3.

³⁴ Pomeroy 1994: 299–300, after Reilly 1978. ³⁵ Himmelmann 1971: 31–2; cf. Bradley 2003.

It is hard to imagine the experience of these individuals. Some slaves had been seized violently, having seen their communities ripped apart and their families slaughtered, whether by Greeks or by barbarians in the hinterland. Those with wealthy friends to call upon might be ransomed and return home: ransom was certainly frequent enough. The poorer and less well-connected had no recourse, except the risks of running away. For that reason, they might well be penned up, like sheep, or shackled and marched long distances. Those who could not keep up would be abandoned or killed as a warning to the others. They might well be loaded with other goods, like beasts of burden. Throughout, they were entirely at the mercy of their captors. Meanwhile, others had been sold into slavery by their own families, who may even have hoped that a better life for their children would follow among the prosperous Greeks. Herodotus (4.95) relates the story of Zalmoxis, which was told by the Greeks of the Hellespont and Black Sea coast: he was a former slave of Pythagoras who had been sold out of Thrace in his youth and subsequently returned to his native land as a man of wealth, knowledge and consequent power. The historicity of the story matters much less than the potential of its myth: here was a model, related by the Greeks of the region, which might encourage the idea that children sold out of Thrace were off to a better life and might even return one day to show their success. Where such misplaced optimism was not the driver, raw economic and political pressures, whether drought, food shortage or simply the exploitative desires of the local elite, can only have encouraged and expanded this kind of trade. This may be seen as a collective counterpart to the abandonment of children by the poor and disadvantaged within Greek communities, on which we are told very little by our sources.

Physically, the newly enslaved were wholly at the mercy and disposal of their masters, to whom their bodies belonged. Rape was likely, as were all kinds of other abuse, for men, women and children alike.³⁶ Some slaves were marked, largely by tattooing but perhaps also by being branded like livestock: our texts are sometimes unclear about the precise method used, but both kinds of marking were painful. They are also unclear about when marks were applied: in some cases on enslavement, though there seems always to have been an element of punishment entailed.³⁷ Slaves so treated were often marked on their foreheads. However, that practice is to be distinguished from evidence for the tattooing of Thracians (male and female) over much of their bodies, which seems to be part of local social practice. Even so, it remains unclear whether particular marks were also

³⁶ The women of Thebes expect both rape and enslavement upon the fall of their city in Aeschylus, *Seven* 333–5, with Byrne 1997: 145–6, and Paradiso 1999; cf. Omitowaju 2002.

³⁷ See Jones 1987, and cf. Corcella 1995 on the peculiar case of Pollis.

applied to Thracian slaves, perhaps by other Thracians. Were they marked in a special manner as they were sold from the Danube to the Black Sea coast or reached the sea at Pagasae in the north-west Aegean in the hands of Thessalian slavers, from whom traders would take them on for sale in Athens? Perhaps.³⁸ Yet Thracians were not alone: others are credited with tattooing as a social practice, including Illyrians, who were certainly traded into slavery in Athens (Strabo 7.5.4). Meanwhile, we happen to hear of marked Persian slaves too. That barbarians might be marked follows from the fact that sometimes, under circumstances of particular bitterness, Greeks might even mark fellow Greeks as a punitive measure (Plutarch, *Nicias* 29; *Pericles* 26). However, there is no reason to suppose that marking was routinely done to slaves. It would hardly enhance their market value.³⁹

Castration might also be attempted, though it required a certain skill: the apparent enhancement of value presumably offset the cost of the procedure and the likely deaths, while the satisfaction of a score settled may have been more important still in isolated cases.⁴⁰ Meanwhile, other barbarian slaves kept within Scythian society were blinded: they could not run away but could perform their repetitive labour well enough without vision (Hdt. 4.2).⁴¹

Mentally, all was confusion and desperation, especially once the newly enslaved had come into the hands of Greeks and others whose language they did not understand. It is small wonder that barbarian slaves are often portrayed in Greek texts as stupid. How were they to understand the commands that were given them? The climate of terror is stupefying, rendering initiative a hazard. It was wise not to be too clever, so that Greeks might well consider that 'Zeus removes half the mind of men when they are taken into slavery' (Pl. *Leg.* 777a). We may recall the Greek anxiety about clever slaves expressed, together with satisfaction over slave stupidity and slave punishment, in Greek comedy of all periods. Meanwhile, some slaves had talents which might give them hope for a better life. Special skills enhanced the value of the slave and therefore the price. That in turn offered some slight protection against abuse: the slave was a commodity, but the skilled slave was a relatively valuable commodity. In addition to all kinds

³⁸ On Danubian origins, see Ar. *Babylonians*, Fr. 90; cf. 71, 99. On Pagasae in Thessaly as a source of marked slaves at Athens in the 420s, see Hermippus, Fr. 63, with Gilula 2000. For traders selling the 'wares' of Thessalian slavers as a commonplace in early fourth-century Athens, see Ar. *Plut.* 520–4.

³⁹ Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.10–12 (on which, Garnsey 1996: 8) would be incomprehensible if significant numbers of slaves in Athens were readily recognisable in public by marks on their faces or elsewhere. So too recurrent claims in the courts (and comedy) that apparent citizens are in fact slaves. They are not an issue: e.g. Dem. 57.34.

⁴⁰ Note the activities of Panionius the Chian eunuch-maker: Hdt. 8.104–6, observing a general barbarian liking for eunuchs as being more trustworthy: Hornblower 2003, with Braund 2008: esp. 15–16.

⁴¹ Taylor 2001.

of craft skills, we must consider also entertainment of every kind, some more wholesome than others. Xenophon's mercenaries proudly displayed to a Paphlagonian ruler a dancing-girl who could do a party-piece. We are not told of her subsequent fate (*Anab.* 6.1.13).

By the time the newly enslaved reached the sea, the main highway of this world, they may very well have been sold several times already. At the coast, they could be sold on in any direction, including to another part of the periphery: we happen to know of a slave with the non-Greek name Phaylles (*SEG* XLVIII. 1024)⁴² bought at Olbia in the north-west Black Sea and sent on to Phanagoria, in the Asiatic Bosphorus to the north-east, despite the substantial numbers of slaves bought and sold more locally there. For we happen to be told of a substantial slave trade to the east of the Crimea. There slave-raiding was an organic part of an otherwise impoverished economy: the neighbouring Bosphoran kings might choose to provide a market for the slaves thus taken, presumably in order to derive taxes and other benefits from the trade (cf. Strabo II.2.12). We should not suppose that the slave trade was only centripetal, running on Greece and the Aegean. There were markets everywhere and many routes to market.

Contrast, for example, the story related by Aelian, in which the trader Dionysius bought a Colchian girl from a neighbouring people of the eastern Black Sea. He was an experienced and greedy trader, but not specifically a trader in slaves. Dionysius cheated on a deal to ransom her to her family and instead put her on sale in the market on Chios. The story's pattern is realistic enough: we may be sure that Colchian girls did find their way into the Greek world in such ways.

Greek owners sometimes gave their slaves Greek names.⁴³ Yet slaves might also be known by an ethnic formed into a name: 'Thratta' ('Thracian female') is often found, whether or not the bearer was strictly Thracian in origin. Or a name associated with their supposed place of origin might be chosen: a Thracian might be called Daos, or a Phrygian Manes, for example. Appearance was another prompt to naming, easy for the master to remember: for example Xanthias ('Blondy'). Such names show little concern for the individuality of the slave, while the slave's response to them can only be guessed at. All the more so, when names were changed, according to the master's fancy, upon purchase or resale perhaps.⁴⁴

An adult male taken into slavery with no special skills might well find himself allotted to hard and repetitive labour, whose mixed blessing was no doubt a short expectancy of survival. If not the mines, then there were other gruelling processes: for example, it would be good to know more

⁴² Braund 2002. ⁴³ Lewis 1959.

⁴⁴ Note the black slave-girl Atalous, renamed Eutykhia ('Happiness') by the fine lady who bought her in Egypt in late antiquity: Pierce 1995.

about the men who slaved in quarries. It is unedifying, but perhaps telling, to realise that a whole comic play of Aristophanes was set in a flour mill worked by slave drudges, whether or not they walked the treadmill itself.⁴⁵ Slaves, especially cheaper ones, were ripe for mindless hard labour: a comic Thracian is so deluded as to take pride in the fact that the mills are full of his people, the 'salt-bought' no doubt (*Men. Asp.* 245). Other adult males might be worked in the fields, perhaps in chain-gangs or, if they were lucky, in some rather more liberated capacity, as herdsmen for example. Only men with skills might have the dubious pleasure of working in the heat and danger of an arms-factory or supervising at the mines.

By contrast, the adult female had a wider range of occupations, including childbearing and wet-nursing but also with a range of domestic functions which varied in their demands. A female slave might well be bought specifically to perform work which could be sold at a profit, with other female slaves or she herself taking it to market. We are told (*Aeschines* 1.97) of such a woman inherited by Timarchus, who had the special skill of making the finest textiles and who herself sold the goods she made.⁴⁶

The violence and confusion of enslavement must have been all the more disturbing for those enslaved as children. They might have no idea of their origins at all, like the adult Macronian with Xenophon who only discovered his identity when passing through the land of the Macrones, an unlikely return to his homeland (*Anab.* 4.8.4–7). Subsequently, as we have seen, children might be trained for any work, but the master's investment in their upbringing would tend probably to give them a less painful future by virtue of the skills they were made to acquire and perhaps a bond that had formed over the years. We may speculate that the individuals who turn up from the late sixth century as potters and painters of Athenian fine-wares and have names redolent of slavery (Skythes, Kolkhos, Lydos, (Egyptian?) Amasis and others) had been enslaved young and taught their trades from an early age. But what of the anonymous labourers who prepared their materials, or those who made the coarse-wares and tiles that dominate the archaeological record for ancient Greece?

When the master of the house went to market for a slave, there is little sign that he gave serious thought to the slave's experiences except in so far as they affected the price and the particular kind of role which he had in mind for his acquisition. However, a slave was a big-ticket purchase, so that real care must have been taken in weighing slaves' prices against their various potentialities for work and even a return on the investment

⁴⁵ Thompson 2003: 189–91; cf. Kenney 2003.

⁴⁶ On female slave labour, see Faraguna 1999: 66–8; T. E. Rihll's chapter in this volume; Dimitris J. Kyrtatas' chapter in this volume. Cf. the manumission record of 'Thratra the trader': Lewis 1959: 219, line 493. On the produce and the other specialist slaves inherited by Timarchus, see Fisher 2001: 233–4.

in terms of profit from their labours. Presumably, especial care was taken in the choice of slaves who were to work as servants in the house, as many did.⁴⁷

But that was scant comfort to the slave, whose individual personality meant nothing beyond the tenor of his or her character, as in the purchase of an ox or mule. Practice in the markets seems to have varied. The adult male slave might be displayed naked to the shopper's gaze, perhaps on a raised dais, as apparently at Athens. And the slave was made to exercise, presumably to show physical condition (cf. Men. Fr. 150). In Menander (*Sicyonians* 7–16) we find a girl of four kidnapped from the coast of Attica with her male slave. They are taken for sale to Mylasa in Caria, where many slaves were marketed, but the market practice described for Mylasa presumably reflects the Athenian usage familiar to Menander's immediate audience. No doubt shoppers' attention was caught by the particular individuals on sale and their appearance, but overwhelmingly exchange of this kind was everyday routine. In any case, the market was full of slaves going about their business, whether buying, selling or simply passing through. In all likelihood, as with other commodities, a proportion of those engaged in the buying and selling of slaves were themselves slaves.

By contrast, most of the slaves on sale had not seen anything like it. Athens was a famously dazzling city for the outsider new in town: how much more so for newcomers who had been brought on journeys like theirs? They could only hope for the best. One of the few things familiar to them was the institution of slavery itself, but its very normality, encompassing slave, seller, purchaser and owner, tended to obviate any critical engagement.

Meanwhile, those slaves who emerged successfully could find a voice, albeit small and mediated, in their epitaphs. In particular, a scatter of epitaphs and other inscriptions have survived in south-east Attica around the mine-workings there.⁴⁸ It seems likely that the few who had memorials were like Sosias: the 'salt-bought' mine-fodder were far removed from their exalted status. One unusually extended epitaph (*IG* II².10051), from c. 350–300, takes a Paphlagonian called Atotas back to his roots, omitting only (and tellingly) the manner in which he had lost his freedom. This evidence of a slave's retained connection with his homeland is all the more significant when we recall the massive dislocation and cultural rupture of enslavement and de facto exile far from home.⁴⁹ And the epitaph is an ambitious composition, which uses grandiloquent and punning couplets to place the deceased in the glorious and mythical context of the heroic age. There is something pathetic and perhaps even humorous in the attempt,

⁴⁷ Osborne 1995: 31–2. ⁴⁸ Lauffer 1979.

⁴⁹ The cultural change involved is observed for the Laurium region by Morris 1998c: 210–11; cf. Thompson 2003: 144–56.

but also a sense of optimism.⁵⁰ Atotas had retained his association with his distant homeland and (if we can assume that he shared the sentiment of his epitaph) found more than a measure of personal pride in that origin:

ATOTAS, MINER

From Pontus Euxinus, Paphlagonian great-hearted Atotas, In a land from which, my body rested from toils.

In skill no-one supplanted me, from the family-tree of Pylaemenes am I, who, mastered by the hand of Achilles, met his death.

Atotas had probably come into slavery with skills of a miner, which would account for his apparent prominence at Laurium. He may even have cost as much as Sosias the Thracian. The importance of the skills he had gained in Paphlagonia helps to account for the pride that his epitaph shows in his work: there was potential satisfaction in that. It accounts also for the grandeur of his claims, namely that he was no less than the scion of the royal family, linked to the most famous Paphlagonian of them all, Homeric Pylaemenes. And yet there is no mention of his father: perhaps the commissioner of the epitaph did not know his name, perhaps Atotas found more respect in leaping from banal realities to heroic myth. While we are given no hint as to the real master of Atotas, we are invited to think of the pair after the manner of Pylaemenes 'mastered' by Achilles here. That was good for Atotas, no doubt, in death as perhaps in life, but it was also good enough for Atotas' real master who may have honed the epitaph. In reality, as the epitaph also acknowledges, Atotas had died after a life of toil far from his Paphlagonian home.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

There is no book-length treatment of the Greek slave supply. Traditionally, this issue has been considered as a preface to general studies of slavery in Greece, among which Westermann (1955: 5–12) is still useful, while Garland (1988) is fresh and full of ideas. Thompson's lively study (2003: 1–46) gives a new twist to the tradition, by bringing material culture to the fore. Cartledge (2001c) offers much in short compass.

Significant attention has been given to violent enslavement (Ducrey 1999; cf. Pritchett 1991 and, on piratical slave-raiding, De Souza 1999). Much attention has also been given to the impact of the Greek demand for slaves on warfare and much else within barbarian societies (e.g. Arafat and

⁵⁰ The Greek contains an awkward pun on the concept of roots, reproduced in the translation (line 4). Note also in line 3 'body' (= body and also slave) and 'mastered' in line 5, surely a deliberate choice of words.

Morgan 1994; Taylor 2001). Probably most important is Garland's exploration (1987) of the disjunction between evidence of the apparent enslavement of defeated Greeks and the absence of such persons from our data on the Greek slave population. Ransom and extensive sale overseas would help to explain the phenomenon (cf. Rosivach 1999).

The slave supply continues also to be included in studies of the Greek economy (e.g. Foxhall 1998; cf. Osborne 1995), but the economics of slave-trading require much fuller treatment. Among regional studies the Black Sea and Danubian areas stand out. The pioneering study of Finley (1962; inspiring e.g. Braund and Tsetschladze 1989) is best understood as part of a sustained engagement with the slave trade of these regions, usually by the scholars of the area itself. The latest study is available in English (Gavriliuk 2003), but Gavriliuk (1999), on Scythia's economics as a whole, has to be read in Russian.

Scholars concerned with texts, inscriptions and papyri consider the slave supply from a range of angles. On slaves in comedy see, e.g. Krieter-Spiro (1997). Philological concerns sometimes extend valuably into social history (notably Bäbler 1998) and commentary (e.g. Pomeroy 1994). Female slaves have benefited from more recent concern with the representation and reality of ancient women (notably Faraguna 1999). From the study of nomenclature, the largely negative conclusion emerges that names need not tell much about slave origins (e.g. Fraser 2000). For the ideology of which these texts, names and practices are expressions, see especially Garnsey (1996).

Very little attention has been given to the personal experience of enslavement and sale. Beyond the battlefield, it only features in isolated studies (notably Jones 1987 on slave-marking). However, slaves were ultimately bought for a purpose, and progress is possible by starting with the end of their journey and their various work roles (e.g. Jones 2004). Here Lauffer (1979) is particularly valuable (cf. Conophagos 1980). For all that, the nature of the evidence is such that empirical studies alone will never give much insight in this area: informed hypothesis and controlled inference (embracing also comparative material) are especially necessary if we are to gain some understanding of what it felt like to be bought and sold; cf. Morris (1998c), sympathetic to the dislocation of slave experience.

CHAPTER 7

SLAVERY AND THE GREEK FAMILY

MARK GOLDEN

INTRODUCTION

By the thirteenth book of Homer's *Odyssey*, Odysseus has finally reached Ithaca. At first, it seems to be yet another strange island on which he has been cast adrift as an outsider. It takes the last half of the poem for Odysseus to reclaim his identity as the father of Telemachus, Penelope's husband, Ithaca's king. The process begins in the hut of Eumaeus, his swineherd and slave. Odysseus is disguised as an old beggar and does not identify himself even when Eumaeus demonstrates his loyalty to the master who has been gone for so many years. Instead, he weaves a false tale of his origins as the son of a wealthy Cretan and a bought concubine. On equal footing with his legitimate brothers while his father was alive (says Odysseus), he was allotted only a pittance on his death (*Od.* 14.199–210). Later, Eumaeus reciprocates with his own life story. He was not born a slave but the son of a king. His slave nurse, however, took him with her when she sailed off with a Phoenician seducer. Artemis struck her down on the seventh day at sea, and Odysseus' father Laertes bought the young Eumaeus (15.403–84).

One of these stories is clearly fabricated in Odysseus' crafty fashion, the other (so far as we can tell) no more than the truth. Each reflects (somehow) the earliest Greek society of which we have any extended literary representation, the setting for a work which served as a repertory of behaviours and beliefs for later Greeks everywhere. It is unsurprising, then, that both stories sound themes which recur throughout the interactions of two central institutions, slavery and the family, in ancient Greece: nature and social status; appearance and authenticity; love, loyalty and betrayal; the roles of slave women as childminders and mothers in citizen households. Some indeed recur soon afterwards: Odysseus' disguise can fool Eumaeus and his own wife Penelope, but (despite his efforts) a tell-tale scar reveals him to Eurycleia, the old woman who brings him water to wash his feet (19.386–93).¹ Eurycleia too is a slave, purchased by Laertes for no less than

¹ Karydas 1998: 8–63.

twenty oxen. In keeping with her value (signalled not just by her price but by her noble name and pedigree), Laertes honoured her in his house like his own wife and never slept with her. (This is clearly unusual.) Eurycleia has repaid this respect: she nursed both Odysseus and his son; among all the housemaids, she loved Telemachus the most (1.429–35). As Eumaeus tends Odysseus' estate, she looks after his household as *tamiē*, 'steward, housekeeper' (2.345). Often shown together in later art (where the nurse is also named Antiphata), the two slaves play almost parental roles in their master's family:² it was Eurycleia who presented Odysseus to Autolycus, his mother's father, and suggested a name for him, and Telemachus addresses Eumaeus – whose name may mean 'good adoptive father' – as *atta*, 'daddy' (19.386–404; 16.31, 57, 130, 17.6, 599).³ 'Good servants in the poem enjoy a status almost equivalent to membership in the master's natural family.'⁴ But not all servants are good. Eurycleia and Eumaeus know that other slaves have served and slept with the household's enemies, the suitors; Eurycleia's information leads to the hanging – an unclean and ignoble death – of the twelve women who have behaved the most badly, Eumaeus takes part in the mutilation of the disloyal goatherd Melanthius (17.320–3; 22.419–76). For both slaves and their families – an intentionally ambiguous formulation – the stakes were high.

In this chapter I discuss slavery and the Greek family under three headings: slaves in citizen and other free families, slave families, and the creation of new families from the sexual intercourse of slave and free. I will concentrate throughout on the period roughly between 500 and 300 BC. As the evidence requires, most of the discussion will concern Athens and Sparta.

SLAVES IN FREE FAMILIES

There are a number of ancient Greek words for kin groups – *agkhisteia*, *genos*, *suggeneia* – but the one which comes closest to our 'family' is *oikos* or *oikia*, usually translated 'household'. In fact, the new *Oxford Classical Dictionary* directs inquiries on the Greek family to an article on 'household, Greek' and refers to this as 'the fundamental social, political and economic unit of ancient Greece'. The *oikos* comprises the house and the family members resident within it (both the nuclear triad of husband, wife and children, and such members of the extended kin group as grandparents and unmarried women) but also property, including slaves; a plenitude of slaves signalled wealth and stature – in Sparta and the colonies of the west no less than Athens, despite their ideologies of equality (Demosthenes 21.159)⁵ – and family homes often doubled as places of business. Hesiod (*Works and Days* 405–6) regards the basic elements of a farmer's *oikos*, around 700 BC,

² Schulze 1998: 95–9.

³ Demont 2003.

⁴ Olson 1992: 219.

⁵ Lombardo 1997: 21–2.

as ‘a woman and an ox for ploughing / a bought woman, not married, one who can follow the oxen’. The second line was missing in some ancient copies and is ignored (or misinterpreted) by Aristotle (*Politics* 1.1252b12), writing some 350 years later; he takes the woman in question to be a wife. This is not to say, however, that Aristotle denies the centrality of the slave to life in the household; as it happens, he lived with a slave woman and had a son by her after his own wife’s death (Timaeus, *FGrH* 566 F 157). In his discussion in *Politics* (1.1253b1–13, 6.1323a5), he notes that the *oikia* in its perfect and most developed form is made up of both slave and free (though wives and children must replace slaves among the poor); the relationship of master and slave is, along with those of husband and wife and father and children, one of the three basic to it.

That slaves were an integral part of the household is suggested by the prevalence of *oiketēs* as a term for a male slave (in particular); it even covers slaves who live outside the *oikos* (e.g. Thucydides 8.40.2). Their link with the family is suggested by another common word for slave, *pais*, and its derivatives are used to denote children as well – in each case, to indicate subordinate status.⁶ In fact, the status of the household’s children might at times be unclear to outsiders. Nicostratus sent a free boy to pick some of a neighbour’s roses in the hope that the man (with whom he was at odds) would treat the boy as a slave and so become liable for serious charges (Dem. 53.16; cf. 47.61). The lines may once have been still more blurred. Plutarch believed (*Solon* 13.3, 23.2) that Athenian fathers could sell their children into slavery until the time of Solon (early sixth century) and that even he left it in their power to sell unmarried daughters deemed guilty of sexual misconduct (though we know of no example). As with other members of the household, slaves’ roles and even their presence varied according to the dynamics of the family life cycle as well as wealth: slaves would tend to be acquired and sold in response to the family’s need for labour and ability to provide it. So households might add slaves early on in the cycle, when women were birthing and caring for young children, and sell them as the children grew able to take on more tasks. However, periodic crop crises (perhaps one year in four in Attica) might require the sale of slaves whatever their contributions to some households’ output – and perhaps permit their better-off neighbours to purchase them at bargain prices.⁷ Under whatever circumstances they were acquired, newly purchased slaves were renamed (Plato, *Cratylus* 384d) – another parallel with the family’s children – and integrated into the *oikos* like another group of outsiders: wives. Both were met at the threshold by the *katakhusmata*, a shower of dried figs, nuts, raisins and roasted grains meant to symbolise the fertility and abundance of the household and (in the preserved fruit) their continuity over

⁶ Golden 1985. ⁷ Gallant 1991: 30–3, 89, 127–32.

time.⁸ These two classes of outsiders might be associated in a less propitious way too: Aristophanic comedy and the abuse Athenian orators often borrow from it both reveal a concern that a barren wife might smuggle a slave's child into the household as her own (Aristophanes, *Peace* 674–8; *Thesmophoriazusae* 564–5; Dem. 21.149).⁹

According to Aristotle, the household is headed by an adult male, the *kurios*, 'authority'. He rules his wife *politikōs*, with the authority of an official in a Greek city (except that this office does not rotate), and his children *basilikōs*, like a king (by virtue of seniority and bonds of affection). But his authority over the household's slaves is *despotikē*, 'absolute', like the dominion of an Asiatic monarch. This looks to the benefit of the master, whereas the other forms of authority are exercised in the interests of both parties or (Aristotle asserts) essentially for those who are ruled. The science of household management (*oikonomia*) privileges the free members of the *oikos* over its slaves (*Pol.* 1.1259a40–b23, 3.1278b33–1279a2, 1285a17–25; cf. [Arist.], *Magna moralia* 1194b17).

Aristotle may speak only for himself, of course. Archytas of Tarentum was one master who apparently took a different approach. He enjoyed warm relations with his many *oiketai* and diverted himself by playing with their children, especially at drinking parties (Aelian, *Varia Historia* 12.15). Some depictions of slaves and (above all) their mistresses on tombstones may be intended 'to show a household working in harmony'.¹⁰ Hippocratic physicians treated slaves along with members of their master's family and according to identical understandings of their anatomy and physiology (despite Plato's preference for separate doctors for slave and free: *Laws* 5.720a–e);¹¹ care of sick slaves was one of the responsibilities of an Athenian housewife (Xenophon, *Oeconomicus* 7.37). (We should not forget that physicians charged fees, and so were probably summoned for slaves only in emergencies.) If their care proved ineffective, Athenian owners were responsible for disposing of slaves' remains, sometimes burying them in the family plot (Dem. 43.57).¹² The family's slaves attended sacrifices to Zeus Ktesios, protector of the possessions of the household (Isaeus 8.16). Menander's comedies (the products of a world in which both the definition of Athenian citizenship and its value were in flux) raise questions about the make-up of the family and of the place of slaves within it.¹³ In *The Bad-Tempered Man* for example, slaves offer advice on family matters – 'Gorgias treats Daos like a family member rather than a family slave'¹⁴ – and in the end find that Cnemon, the grouch of the title, is their *oikeios*, 'relative' (Men. *Dys.* 903–4). Even Aristotle recognises that a master's interests are

⁸ Mactoux 1990. ⁹ Gardner 1989: 55–9. ¹⁰ Oakley 2000: 237.

¹¹ Demand 1998; McKeown 2002. ¹² Bäbler 1998: 205.

¹³ Patterson 1998: 180–225; Cox 1998: 190–4. ¹⁴ Lape 2004: 135.

often best served by the wellbeing of his slaves (*Pol.* 3.1278b35). Still, his discussion of slaves' position within the household suggests that they were of little account. (And practices like Archytas' come into criticism from Plato: *Leg.* 6.778a.)

No doubt this was often the case, even in comparison with other slave societies. Unlike Roman slaves, for example, those at Athens were not linked with their masters by name when freed. Furthermore (and again unlike Rome), Athenian slaves could bear witness against their own masters and win their freedom as a result. On the other hand, few if any Athenian *oikoi* contained as many slaves as became customary among the Roman elite. One consequence of this must have been that Athenian slaves generally had closer and more constant contact with their masters and their families. We may speculate about what difference this might make. Here again comparative evidence is available but difficult to evaluate. For one thing, students of other societies are not always in agreement – even with themselves. In his standard study *The Slave Community*, the eminent American historian J. W. Blassingame accepted what was at the time he wrote the traditional view. House servants on large southern plantations enjoyed higher status than field hands; those closest to their masters within the household (as domestics) or in function (as artisans and foremen) were the aristocracy of slave society.¹⁵ In a later publication, however, Blassingame changed his mind.¹⁶ Slaves did not value or envy close personal contact with their masters. On the contrary, house servants were distrusted and their role resented – at least among those who had not been born to it – because life within the master's residence and day-to-day proximity to his family demanded more servility and submission. It was mobility and freedom from supervision that slaves treasured (Blassingame now thought) – the very values masters held themselves. To a significant degree, these conclusions arise from different perspectives: Blassingame first accepted the hierarchy established by American slaveholders, who did indeed tend to regard house slaves with more favour (partly because of the docility they imposed), then reconsidered the question from the slaves' point of view. (To be sure, slaves could choose to reinforce the patriarchal perception that they were members of the family in order to get better treatment.)¹⁷ Both sides are represented in our Greek sources too: while Aristotle notes that masters most often come into conflict with slaves who are used for everyday purposes, a comic slave – perhaps the 'hard to sell' character of the play's title – complains of the indignity of a young master's commands (Arist. *Pol.* 2.1263a19; Epicrates Fr. 5 KA = Athenaeus 6.262d). This was

¹⁵ Blassingame 1972: 207; cf. Stampf 1956: 337–8.

¹⁶ Blassingame 1976.

¹⁷ Fox-Genovese 1988: 132–3.

an issue for both American slaves and their owners, who feared the effects of power on their own children.

Much of this strain of criticism stems from those hostile to slavery – abolitionists, slaves and former slaves, visitors from abroad – but there were slaveholders who chimed in too. The words of a Virginia judge are especially eloquent: ‘A slave population exercises the most pernicious influence upon the manners, habits and character of those among whom it exists. Lispering infancy learns the vocabulary of abusive epithets and struts the embryo tyrant in its little domain.’¹⁸ How could it be anything but harmful for a child to command adults, whatever their status? The form that harm took was violence, a vice identified by no less an authority than Thomas Jefferson and exemplified by Henry Clay’s twelve-year-old son. Thomas was once discovered in the family kitchen ‘in a great rage with a knife drawn in attitude to stab one of the big negroes’.¹⁹ According to this line of thinking, anger and its expression were contagious, spread within the household through the presence of slaves. Did this violence affect the relations of parent and children? Sometimes. There were certainly fathers who terrorised their sons no less than their slaves. But we should not exaggerate the prevalence of such brutality. A searching investigation concludes that Southern slaveholders rarely used corporal punishment to discipline their children; by nineteenth-century standards, they were indulgent, even culpably so.²⁰ This moderation and restraint may find a parallel among the Roman elite.²¹ Here (it is argued) beatings operated to mark off slaves from the children who shared the family home. For children, reasoned correction was normally enough – a course from which slaves were ill-suited by nature to benefit.

Comparisons can carry us only so far, however, especially when the institutional and ideological contexts vary. Certainly Athenians shared the general Greek conviction that subjection to physical force was a significant marker of slave status.²² But by the nineteenth century – the period of most of the evidence I have cited – most American slaves were native-born, often on the estates where they lived, and all were deeply embedded in a racist regime in which their skin colour bespoke their status. Both facts must have shaped relations within the household, neither was true of Athens (not to the same extent, anyway). As for Rome, our texts illuminate abstract attitudes among the literary elite rather than behaviours on the ground: furious fathers may have been unable or unwilling to respect the boundaries these writers set even if they knew them. In addition, Romans regularly freed their slaves and saw them become the fathers of citizens – a very unusual sequence at Athens. They may therefore have been more

¹⁸ Quoted in Calhoun 1917–19, II: 285–6.

¹⁹ Quoted in Genovese 1972: 519.

²⁰ Bruce 1979: 57–66.

²¹ Saller 1991.

²² Hunter 1994: 154–84.

sensitive to the power of their individual acts to reveal and create these social categories than Athenians were.

Slaves performed a wide range of roles in the Athenian *oikos*: child-minding, caring for the sick, answering and guarding the door, cooking, woolworking, carrying messages, fetching water, shopping. In the course of most, they were brought into contact with the members of their masters' families. These interrelations were fostered by the layout of the Greek house. We hear of a tower room for female slaves in a law-court speech (Dem. 47.56), but this was a luxury few could afford or a necessity for special circumstances (see below pp. 144–5). Strepsiades' comic complaint, that his slave's snoring kept him awake, probably reflected the experience of more of the Athenian audience (Aristophanes, *Clouds* 5; cf. Lysias 1.9–10). The archaeological record, best preserved at Olynthus in the north Aegean, reveals very little in the way of slave quarters or indeed of rooms with specialised functions as a whole.²³ (So too for Rome.)²⁴ Even larger Greek houses featured a flow of people and activities throughout, with the same space given over to various purposes according to the time of day or year. This relatively open environment – broken up mainly by the desire to remove areas where women worked from immediate access to outsiders – was facilitated by its simple and scanty furnishings, many of them movable without great effort. It permitted owners to supervise their slaves – and slaves to gain an intimate knowledge of their masters' affairs.²⁵

Slaves were privy to the family's most intimate secrets. A household slave acted as accomplice and go-between for Euphiletus' wife in her adulterous affair with Eratosthenes, and others could confirm whether a speaker's mother was the daughter of Ciron and lived in his home (Lys. 1.8, 11; Isaeus 8.9, cf. 6.15–16). Since so many *oikoi* housed the family business too, slaves might be conversant with property as well as personal matters. (The same slaves were apparently aware of how much dowry Ciron's daughters brought.) On all, they could gossip as they worked and went on errands, threatening the family's reputation as his (or his wife's) slave did the security of Euphiletus' house and the legitimacy of his children. What a slave might know likely dissuaded some family members from illegal or improper actions from time to time (cf. Lys. 7.16). What they did must have afforded them some influence or at least protection. (A motive for Diocles to smuggle away a slave he had ordered to kill his half-sister's husband: Isae. 8.41.) This rich brew of intimacy and unease was intensified when a citizen was forced to resort to slaves in the absence of near kin. It was because Comon was an old man and childless, Callistratus says (Dem. 48.14), that he had so much faith in the slave who stole his money; the explanation is meant to

²³ Nevett 1999: 174; Cahill 2002: 265; see Ian Morris' chapter in this volume.

²⁴ George 1997a. ²⁵ Hunter 1994: 70–95.

excuse a lapse in judgement some jurors might think brought him what he deserved. For no household slave was the dialectic of trust and suspicion more potent than for childminders, male *paidagōgoi* and female nurses.²⁶

By nurses I mean both wet nurses (*tiththai*) and baby-sitters (*trophoi*): *paidagōgos* is often translated as ‘tutor’ but is used more broadly to describe a male childminder; these may have taken on a child as soon as he or she was weaned or could understand speech (Plut., *Moralia* 439–40; Xen., *Constitution of the Lacedaemonians* 2.1). Most in each group were slaves, though not all. Relatively few households could have afforded slaves who filled such narrow niches only, and even those specialists may not have been picked for their aptitude or training. Pericles (so the story goes) saw a slave break a leg and remarked, ‘There’s a new *paidagōgos*’, and his ward Alcibiades’ tutor took up his duties only after he became too old and unfit for anything else (Hieronymus of Rhodes in Stobaeus, *Florilegium* 31.121; Pl., *Alcibiades* 1 122b). It is noteworthy, then, how prominently they figure in our accounts of Greek literature and life. Perhaps it was the intimate nature of the services they provided: answering cries at night, carrying the child around to ease pressure on its tender limbs, steadying its first steps, singing lullabies, storytelling, wiping noses, changing and cleaning swaddling clothes, toilet training, pre-chewing food, accompanying older children on trips outside the home. We may think of Saul Bellow’s Sammler, scion of a prosperous family in Cracow one hundred years ago: ‘When Sammler was a little boy he had covered his mouth, when he coughed, with the servant’s hand, to avoid getting germs on his own hand.’²⁷

Surely too their role as a stable and familiar element in households often assailed by divorce, disease and death must have had some impact. At any rate, when the Athenian commander Themistocles wanted to lure the Persians into a trap at Salamis, it was his children’s *paidagōgos* he chose as emissary; Xenophon imagines that Panthea (the most beautiful woman in Asia) entrusted her last words before her suicide to her nurse (Herodotus 8.75; Xen., *Cyropaedia* 7.3.14). On stage, loyal nurses support Medea and Phaedra, and Creusa has the aid of her father’s *paidagōgos*. Orestes’ nurse Cilissa – the ethnic identifies her securely as a slave – details her duties in a long speech unique in its representation of a slave’s point of view (Aeschylus, *Libation-Bearers* 747–62). In Plato (*Protagoras* 325c), Protagoras joins nurse and *paidagōgos* with parents as those who do their best to raise a child. Much like parents, these slaves looked for their devotion to reap rewards. And indeed it did. An Athenian litigant shares his family home with his old nurse (Dem. 47.55–61; cf. Men., *Samian Girl* 236–62). Freed by his father, she fell into penury after her husband’s death and so he took her in. ‘I could not see my nurse living in want nor my *paidagōgos*’ (47.56).

²⁶ Golden 1990: 145–63.

²⁷ Saul Bellow, *Mr. Sammler’s Planet* [1969] 1971: 58.

More than this, he sought expert advice on how to avenge her after she died in an enemy's invasion of his house – she had sought to protect his property. All this, of course, is meant to redound to his credit with the jurors.

But there is another side to the relationship of slaves and the citizen children they cared for, a side glimpsed already in Eumaeus' tale. Euripides' Hecuba may have spoken for others in resenting her fate, to raise the children of her captors (Euripides, *Trojan Women* 191–6), a particular instance of the general hostility Socrates says slave-owners must fear on behalf of themselves and their children (Pl., *Republic* 9.578e–579a). And no matter how loyal and well intentioned, be they as carefully chosen and well trained as one could wish, most nurses and *paidagōgoi* were slaves nonetheless, bound by the limitations which (according to the prevalent view) accounted for their lot: cowardice, depravity, ignorance, poor judgement. Phaedra's nurse means well, but her initiative leads to her mistress's doom.²⁸ Cilissa's concern for Orestes has an unintended effect: she omits Clytemnestra's injunction that Aegisthus bring his bodyguard, Orestes gets his revenge – and then flees, Fury-haunted, from the stage. In Aeschylus' design, her intervention operates as a symptom of a city which needs other means for a cure. Such unease about the influence of slave childminders was not restricted to the theatre. Spartans and Scythians drew praise for not relying on slave *paidagōgoi* (Xen. *Lac.* 2.1–2; cf. Plut., *Lycurgus* 16.4–6; Antiphanes Fr. 157 KA); Aristotle (*Pol.* 7.1336a40–b4) – like the Virginia judge – thinks children should be exposed as little as possible to slaves. What dangers do such sources have in mind? Aristotle worries that children will see and hear things unfit for free citizens. Plato's speakers say nurses may ignore orders or tell unsuitable stories, *paidagōgoi* have taste and judgement no better than their charges, household slaves as a class undercut a father's authority and example (Pl. *Leg.* 7.790a, 794d–e; *Resp.* 2.377b–378, 3.397d, 8.549e). Other sources complain that nurses eat children's food or pass on alcohol through their milk (Ar., *Knights* 716–18; Arist., *Rhetoric* 3.1407a6–8; Arist. *Dreams* 457a14).

We cannot evaluate such criticisms, though they may not sound altogether foreign in communities that rely on illegal immigrant nannies and day care workers with poor education and worse wages. It might be thought equally fruitless to speculate on our own on the effects of slave nurses and *paidagōgoi* on the children and citizens they served. Whole societies do not fit neatly on the psychiatrist's couch. Despite the critiques of contemporaries, scholars have not unanimously accepted the diagnosis linking slavery and violence in the American South, and that was a society closer to home and much better documented than classical Athens.²⁹ Still, I wonder

²⁸ Karydas 1998: 115–80.

²⁹ Hackney 1969; Smith 1985.

whether the contradictions within our evidence do not mirror individual conflicts, contrary pulls within citizen Athenians: they had learned to care for and respect the slaves they knew earliest and best in a culture in which other slaves (and others' slaves) were devalued and despised. If so, they may help account for one of the unfunnier aspects of Athenian comedy, the gestures and jokes which threaten brutal punishment to slaves. The Athenian audience may have laughed because the scenes both evoked and released a tension around the treatment of slaves, much as they did when the citizen Pheidippides repaid his father's beatings (Ar. *Nub.* 1374–5, 1399–1451).

THE FAMILIES OF SLAVES

Athenian slaves could not form legally recognised families.³⁰ Prescriptive texts recommend measures to keep male and female slaves apart and present permission to form permanent unions as an exceptional reward, and a means to ensure compliance (Xen. *Oec.* 9.5; [Arist.] *Oec.* 1.1344b15–22). (Xenophon has Ischomachus say that marriage and children make good slaves better but bad slaves worse. The master's judgement must mediate slaves' natural proclivities.) Phormio, one of the very few slaves we know to have attained not just freedom but Athenian citizenship, probably named one son after his wife's father (not his own, a more prevalent pattern) and another after the man who had manumitted him; the names illustrate his own lack of normal kin ties (or his unwillingness to draw attention to them). As Sarah Pomeroy (1997: 191) remarks, 'Phormio's isolation demonstrates clearly that in Athenian society only the free-born are considered to have families.'

Here as often, however, reality may have been more complex. One motive for fostering slave families, to procure playmates for a master's children, was unlikely to be as important at Athens as, say, in the American South, where large plantations might be miles apart. But some Athenians may have chosen to breed slaves, especially when the supply was inadequate or expensive or unsatisfactory for some other reason. (Ancient eugenics may have had an influence here.) In such cases, mothers probably worked right up until childbirth and very soon after and also took on the responsibility for caring for their children, alone or with their partners. Wet nurses must have had babies of their own. In addition, some Athenian slaves, perhaps many, did not live in their owner's household – the numbers would be swelled by public slaves, owned by the *polis* itself. These *khōris oikountes* – 'those dwelling apart' – might establish households of their own.³¹ Syrus (or Syriscus), a slave in a comedy by Menander (*Arbitrants* 378–80, 408), lives outside the city walls with his wife and is independent

³⁰ Ogden 1996: 130–1.

³¹ Cohen 2000b: 130–54.

enough to contemplate bringing up a foundling as his own. Menander's plays feature recognisable types from contemporary Athens, and Syrus had real-life analogues. An agent involved in importing grain, Lampis was once a slave and probably still was at the time of a lawsuit brought by Chrysippus and a partner. He lives at Athens with his wife and children (Dem. 34.5, 10, 37). A series of inscriptions, dated to the 320s, details the dedications of silver bowls made in connection with legal proceedings involving freedpersons and their former masters (*IG II² 1553–78*).³² Of the 158 slaves identified, 63 are female and 51 *talasiourgoi*, probably specialised workers in wool (and so producing for the market as well as for the use of their owners' households). A surprising number seem to have been freed along with their children, sometimes in what appear to be family groups formed during their time as slaves.

How different were such families from citizens' families? Surely they were still more fragile, since the prospect of sale was added to the factors that broke up other families in a world generally vulnerable to disease, malnutrition and war. Comparative evidence for the American South is scarce and variable; the stresses of sugar production, for example, took a harsher toll on slave families in Louisiana than in the cotton states.³³ Still, it suggests that slaves on large plantations – those in which partners were most plentiful – lived in nuclear families like their masters, though with looser borders. (Owners' domestic demands and the practice of loaning or leasing labour to others will have led to disruptions.) On smaller holdings, families may have been fragmented but self-conscious nevertheless, with fathers visiting from nearby homes.³⁴ Similarly, slaves in Menander (a citizen writing for citizens) share their masters' ideas on marriage, concubinage, promiscuity and other issues of family formation and function.³⁵ This may be no more than another trace of New Comedy's tendency to assimilate slave characters to their on-stage masters: slaves in Menander's fragmentary *Hero* and in Roman adaptations aspire to fiancées, wives and marriage, and may achieve them (Plautus, *Casina* 68–78; *Miles gloriosus* 1007–9; Terence, *Adelphoe* 972–93). However, the little we can derive from archaeology may bear out the impression of cultural homogeneity. While some plantations in South Carolina and other states reveal remains of distinctive pottery with West African links – slave ware, presumably – the mining region of Laurium, heavily populated by slaves of foreign origin, retains no traces of unusual household vessels. Towers there are, like those attested in Demosthenes, but they are the masters' means of coping with the area's concentration of slaves rather than the legacy of their own native

³² Rosivach 1989; Faraguna 1999: 68–79.

³³ Follett 2003. ³⁴ Laslett 1977: 233–60. ³⁵ Cox 2002.

domestic architecture.³⁶ What family life slaves enjoyed may have looked (at least) much like free Attic households.³⁷

As with much about ancient Sparta, material culture tells us little about Helot households. This is all the more disappointing in that Helots, numerous and ethnically self-conscious, were among the few Greek slave populations expected to reproduce themselves and often lived apart from the Spartans to whom they were assigned, in the rural hinterlands of Laconia and Messenia. Tyrtaeus, a Spartan poet of the mid-seventh century, refers (Fr. 7 West = Pausanias 4.14.4–5) to a requirement that Helots and their wives mourn their masters – the kings and other magistrates. Herodotus (6.58.2–3) confirms that this continued into the classical period. In other exceptional circumstances, as at the end of the great uprising which followed the earthquake of the mid-460s, the Spartans recognised these family ties, allowing Helots safe passage along with their wives and children, some surely obtained during the ten years of the revolt (Thuc. 1.103.3). But if (as is probable) Helots could be transferred between Spartans (though not sold abroad), these families too were normally insecure.³⁸ Nor could their homes be a refuge: the slaughter of two thousand Helots who claimed to have earned the right to freedom is said by a late source to have taken place in their homes (Diodorus Siculus 12.67.4). Helot households could be disrupted in less dramatic ways as well. There was likely an ongoing circulation of Helots from their *oikoi* in the countryside to the homes of their masters.³⁹ Here supervision often fell to citizen women: their men were still less in evidence around the home than in *poleis* where collective all-male institutions were not so significant. Female Helots may have been among the Spartan nurses who apparently earned something of a reputation, but these (at least those who worked abroad, like Alcibiades') may have been chattel slaves instead (Plut., *Alcibiades* 1.2; *Lyc.* 16.3). (One of the many explanations for Sparta's decline as a great power in the fourth century focuses on an increased reliance on such nurses, who are alleged to have undermined the cohesion of the traditional Spartan upbringing.)⁴⁰ Others occupied themselves in the usual household tasks, such as working wool and fetching water (Xen. *Lac.* 1.4).⁴¹ It was to the Helots in her household that Queen Timaea confessed the identity of her son Leotyichidas' father – Alcibiades again (Douris, *FGrH* 76 F 69 = Plut., *Agésilau*s 3.1–2). (Male slaves could learn the Spartans' secrets too: Xen. *Lac.* 7.5.) The movement between their own and Spartan households was likely more significant for Helot boys. Raised alongside citizen boys, these *mothōnes* went off to war with them as adults. It is reported that they were born within the Spartan

³⁶ See Ian Morris' chapter in this volume. ³⁷ Morris 1998c: 197–211.

³⁸ Luraghi 2002a: 229–33; but see Cartledge's chapter in this volume, pp. 81–2.

³⁹ Hodkinson 1997; Lombardo 1999. ⁴⁰ French 1997. ⁴¹ Paradiso 1997.

home itself, but this is likely an expression of an ideal rather than a reflection of common practice (*Etymologicum Magnum s.v. mothōn*). Still, some of these relationships could be of long standing. One positive result for the Helots: access to benefits, including an improvement in status, especially as a result of service in war or as a means to secure it. Another, for their families, was less desirable – the need to remain compliant when their children were exposed to such direct control.

SEXUAL RELATIONS AND SLAVE RELATIVES

Delivered in an Athenian courtroom sometime between 330 and 324, Hyperides' speech *Against Athenogenes* (3) tells the story of the plaintiff, a naive young man (probably) named Epicrates. He had become enamoured of a slave who worked, along with his father and brother, in a perfume shop owned by Athenogenes (an Egyptian living in Athens as a metic). In order to gain possession of the boy and to move him into his own home, Epicrates was willing to buy and free the whole slave family and take over the perfume shop in the bargain. This turned out to be encumbered with unexpected debts, the motive for the lawsuit and Hyperides' speech.

We need not accept the accuracy of Hyperides' narrative in every respect – Epicrates' father, who is still alive, may have been a more active player than his hapless son allows. Nor do we know whether the jurors did. It illustrates, in any case, how sex could drive and complicate interactions between slave and free families and households at Athens. This instance (and others such as the homoerotic triangle which gave rise to *Lysias* 3) was in fact comparatively simple, since it could not result in the birth of children. Liaisons between the Bronze Age heroes of legend and the slaves they bought or captured in war affected succeeding generations as well. Odysseus, we recall, passed as the son of a Cretan king and a slave concubine. Elsewhere in Homer, the children of slave mothers are free, recognised by their fathers and identified by their name (the patronymic), able to inherit along with other offspring or even in their place. As for historical communities: the detailed provisions of the fifth-century law code of Gortyn on Crete set out the consequences of a number of categories of mixed marriages, including those between free men and women and what appear to be serfs, unfree agricultural labourers.⁴² The usual term for these is *woikeis*, clearly linked to *oikos*, and they are integral enough to the households of their masters to inherit in the absence of kin.⁴³ It must also be significant, however, that the word *dōlos* sometimes covers both this group and many such chattel slaves.⁴⁴ Household affiliation determines the status of the offspring of mixed marriages. If a serf goes to the home of a free

⁴² Willetts 1967: cols. 6.56–7.4.

⁴³ Willetts 1967: cols. 5.26–8.

⁴⁴ Link 2001.

woman and marries her, their children are free; if the movement is in the reverse direction, to the serf's home, the children are serfs. But the children of a free male and a female serf are apparently free in all circumstances. The code seems to take this for granted.

Sparta too took account of children of unions between free and unfree, though here again terminology poses problems. Were the *mothakes* the offspring of Spartan fathers and Helot mothers?⁴⁵ If so, then such prominent fifth-century *mothakes* as Gylippus, Callicratidas and Lysander, though partially of servile origin, were recruited into positions of authority owing to the qualities they demonstrated in the *agōgē* and after: testimony to the flexibility of this most conservative and hierarchical of societies in the face of the challenges of the Peloponnesian War. Perhaps, on the other hand, *mothakes* were identical to the *mothōnes* mentioned above.⁴⁶ They may even have had no Helot blood at all.⁴⁷ Whatever their designation, children of Spartan men and Helot women there certainly were (Teles in Stob. *Flor.* 3.3.40.8; cf. Xen., *Hellenica* 5.3.9). If they were recognised and supported by their fathers, they would undergo the *agōgē* and, if successful, enter mess companies (*suskania*) and the army; Sparta needed soldiers as well as commanders. An archaic Athenian homicide law admitted the defence of justification in the case of a man who caught an adulterer in the act with a wife or a concubine (*pallakē*) taken for the production of free children (Dem. 23.53; cf. Lys. 1.31). The juridical status of the *pallakē* seems irrelevant here, perhaps a trace of the situation encountered in the Homeric poems. But by the classical period, *pallakai* (such as those of New Comedy) were slaves; although their children might be free and eligible for the *notheia*, the bastard's portion of 500 or 1,000 drachmas – not inconsiderable sums – they were excluded from the 'closest' kin, the *agkhisteia*, and so from the right to inherit cult and civic privileges (Suda s.v. *epiklēros*; Scholiast on Ar. *Birds* 1655–6; Harpocration s.v. *notheia*; Dem. 43.51; Isae. 6.47). Children of more casual unions were likely exposed. Those (few) picked up by others were raised as slaves; the Athenians preferred to adopt adults, and less formal fostering of children was easy enough to arrange where, as in all populations with ineffective means of controlling fertility, the number of children born to citizen families varied widely.

Unmarried citizens' sex acts with slaves were essentially their own business (though unauthorised involvement with others' slaves was actionable at both Athens and Gortyn).⁴⁸ This is not to say that they were less liable to censure and abuse by enemies than other elements of what we might consider private life. A speaker brands Apollodorus as anti-democratic: 'You wear an expensive cloak and have freed one *hetaira* and married off

⁴⁵ Ogden 1996: 218–24. ⁴⁶ Paradiso 1997: 79–84.

⁴⁷ Hodkinson 1997: 55–62. ⁴⁸ Paradiso 1999.

another . . . and you take three slaves with you and live so licentiously that those who meet you on the street know about it' (Dem. 36.45). It is conspicuous consumption which is Apollodorus' civic offence, not sex with slaves in itself. On the contrary: tradition fathered upon Solon, the founder of the Athenian democracy, responsibility for the cheap brothels, staffed by slaves, which gave even poorer Athenians access to women's bodies (Philemon, Fr. 3 KA; Nicander, *FGrH* 271/2 F 9 = Ath. 13.569d–f). Matters were different when the honour of citizen women was involved. Callistratus' brother-in-law Olympiodorus lived with a slave *hetaira* and let her lord it over female family members – a count on the informal indictment in a falling-out between thieves (Dem. 48.53–5). Still worse: to bring a sex partner into the home a man shared with his wife. Already in Homer, Amyntor's wife resents being displaced by his concubine; Clytemnestra kills Agamemnon and his slave prize of war Cassandra before he can bring her into the house (*Iliad* 9.449–52; *Od.* 11.421–3). (In the *Iliad*, Agamemnon expresses his desire to bring home another slave captive, Chryseis, whom he rates higher in looks, wits and work than his wife: 1.111–15.) This was a problem Laertes was tactful and prudent enough to avoid, one of the many ways in which he escapes snares which entrap the house of Atreus.

Such legendary situations were exploited by Athenian dramatists of the classical period.⁴⁹ In Aeschylus' *Agamemnon*, Cassandra's entrance – on a cart designed to recall a wedding procession – and her language, which evokes the image of a bride's veil, underline her challenge to Clytemnestra's position, only implicit in the *Odyssey* (Aesch. *Ag.* 1178–83). In Sophocles' *Women of Trachis*, the impending arrival of Heracles' concubine Iole inspires his wife Deianira to send the garment steeped (as she believes) in a love-potion which causes his death. Euripides' *Andromache*, like Cassandra, once a princess and now slave booty from the sack of Troy, is a still more resonant figure, able to bear a son to Neoptolemus as his wife Hermione is not, and her equal or superior in both rhetorical skill and the traditional feminine virtues. Unlike Hermione again, she even nursed her dead husband's bastards and is proud of it (Eur., *Andromache* 222–7). These slave partners had a special appeal to many men in the audience, free as they were from loyalties outside their *oikos*, whereas a wife's previous *kurios* could compel a divorce until the birth of a son and perhaps beyond. (And if an Athenian tired of a slave concubine, he could simply sell her off: Antiphon 1.14.) For Euripides himself, they raise recurrent questions: can behaviour trump status and inner qualities belie social convention? The theme is recapitulated by the gold-hearted hookers of New Comedy;⁵⁰ the slave *hetaira* Habrocomon pretends to be a free Athenian citizen and

⁴⁹ Foley 2001: 87–105.

⁵⁰ Henry 1985.

succeeds in deceiving the young man who thinks he's raped her, no less (Men. *Epitr.* 513–19, 526–32).

Outrageous as ever, Alcibiades brought his whores home – slave and free – and reared a son he had had by a woman enslaved after the sack of Melos (Andocides 4.14; Plut. *Alc.* 8.3; Andoc. 4.22–3; Plut. *Alc.* 16.5). His wife tried to divorce him for the one and critics denounced the other. (No good could come of an enemy's child, divided in loyalties.) More conventional and less daring Athenians avoided the conflicts they saw on stage, as advised by Hermione and the chorus of *Andromache* (177–80, 465–70). Lysias (a metic) followed local custom when he forbore to lodge his slave mistress Metanira in his own home (Dem. 59.22); about to marry, Timanoridas and Eucrates were more punctilious yet, arranging to sell Neaera her freedom at a loss on the condition that she leave Corinth entirely (Dem. 59.29–32). The same speech draws the lines: men have *hetairai* for sex and concubines for their daily needs, but it is wives who bear legitimate children and care for the *oikos* (59.122). Nonetheless, some Athenians certainly took advantage of domestic slaves. These were often assumed (whatever the legal situation) to belong to their wives – a double betrayal. On trial for the murder of his wife's lover, Euphiletus recounts some spousal banter involving a slave girl. To his demand that she see to a fussy baby, she replied, 'You just want to have another go at the little slave girl – you used to maul her before when you were drunk' (Lys. 1.12). With his life at stake, nothing Euphiletus says is likely to be casual. This glimpse of daily life in his household assures the jurors that he (like them) is a man of the world, not the kind to kill a fellow citizen unless he was concerned about the weightiest issues – family values, public morals. We may wonder, however, whether his attitudes and activities did not provide a motive for his wife's adultery.

We have already touched on the effects of slavery on parent–child relations in classical Greece. How did it shape those between husband and wife? Over twenty years ago, Thomas Wiedemann (1987: 2) gave as an example of an outdated question, 'Was slavery inimical to family ties and sexual morality, thus inhibiting population growth?' Nevertheless, despite the lack of direct evidence, some speculation may not be amiss. Sex is only part of the picture. The more slaves worked alongside their masters, for example, the less the family business would be what North Americans call a Mom-and-Pop operation. This might minimise friction between husband and wife but at the same time (like the use of slaves for child care) reduce the fellow feeling and solidarity which can be another outcome of sharing labour as well as its profit.⁵¹ Nor – if we return to sex – was it always husbands who caused concern. Mnesilochus (in female disguise) defends

⁵¹ Cf. Saller 1987: 76–9.

Euripides because he does not tell how women have sex with slaves and muleteers (Ar. *Thesm.* 490–2). Comedy can express the unthinkable. It is noteworthy here that slander alleged that the father of the Spartan king Demareteus was an ass-keeper (Hdt. 6.68). In each case, shock and shame result from more than the social standing of the women's choice – smell perhaps. Herodotus does not say that Demareteus' father was supposed to be a Helot (or a chattel slave). But Spartans also told stories about Epeunaktai or Partheniai, groups made up of Helots who slept with Spartan women and their offspring, and helped found the colony of Tarentum.⁵² Mysterious in their origins and import, these may reflect anxiety about what went on during men's many absences from Sparta.⁵³ A story about the Scythians – their women mated with slaves who were quelled when their old masters exchanged weapons for whips – seems designed to resolve such tensions (Hdt. 4.1–4).⁵⁴

Fearful fantasies aside, our classical sources (almost all male) do focus on men's desires and their fulfilment. (It is worth noting, however, that the fifth mimiambus of Herondas, written in about the mid-third century, features a woman who rebukes her slave lover for infidelity: other times, other genres.) Explaining how to run the *oikos*, Ischomachus tells his child bride that a wife will always be more attractive than a slave – if she renounces cosmetics and puts colour into her complexion through suitable household tasks. What is more, she is willing, while a slave is compelled to submit (Xen. *Oec.* 10.11–12). Along the same lines, the sex strike in *Lysistrata* will succeed (or so its leader says) because men enjoy women's willing pleasure (Ar. *Lys.* 163–6).⁵⁵ But did some husbands pick up a taste for rough sex from slaves and force it on their wives? (A number of Athenian vases show scenes in which men wield weapons – sandals, *auloi*, dildoes – and otherwise threaten or produce pain in erotic contexts. It is usually thought that the vases represent fantasies or that the women involved are prostitutes, but these are assumptions only.)⁵⁶ Did fathers smile when their sons carried on with slaves, pleased that they would not risk affairs with citizen girls and women and the family feuds which might result? (The young, we are told, joined the poor as chief beneficiaries of Solon's sex slaves.) Did sons sigh in relief when their fathers lived with slave concubines instead of remarrying, secure that they would not have to share their inheritance with new siblings? (The downside was the chance that children might be passed off as legitimate; cf. Isae. 6.) What of the role of social class? Poorer men could afford fewer and cheaper prostitutes than better-off citizens. Did this bring them closer to their wives or breed resentment? Did elite

⁵² Vidal-Naquet 1986: 212–18. ⁵³ Paradiso 1997: 84–6. ⁵⁴ Finley 1998: 306–7.

⁵⁵ Fowler 1996. ⁵⁶ Kilmer 1993: 109–29, 199–215.

wives, married in their teens to men they need not like or always know, welcome the availability of slaves?

Such questions have no certain answers or, rather, it is certain that they have many. Perhaps this is the firmest conclusion we can reach about the effects of slavery on the Greek family: while it foreclosed options for most slaves themselves, it also expanded the range of the family which controlled the *oikos* and the individual opportunities of its free members. Multifaceted in their relationships and changing over time like all families, these were therefore still more complex.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

For about thirty years – one ancient generation – Lacey (1968) was the standard English-language book on the classical Greek family. It has now been supplemented (not superseded) by two first-rate and divergent treatments. Patterson (1998) begins with Homer to trace the enduring primacy of the household in Greek societies; she is as concerned with combating the evolutionary paradigms of such authors as Maine, Engels and Fustel de Coulanges as she is with the daily and demographic experience of individual Greek families. Insistent on change over time and variation within communities, Pomeroy (1997) makes excellent use of case studies in an overview that extends as late as Ptolemaic Egypt. She is industrious in gleaning evidence, including that of archaeology and physical anthropology, headstrong in interpreting it. Among other relevant works, Pomeroy (1994) is a full commentary on Xenophon's tract on household management, the *Oeconomicus*; Ogden (1996) examines marginal members of the family (*nothoi*, *pallakai*, *mothakes*), Cox (1998) the permeability of its conceptual boundaries, Nevett (1999) and Cahill (2002) its real spatial environment. For a sensitive reading of Odysseus' time among the lower orders, see Thalmann (1998). The nurses of epic and tragedy get full-length treatment in Karydas (1998), the iconography of nurses and *paidagōgoi* in Schulze (1998). But there have been few recent socio-historical investigations of slaves in the Greek family to rival the engaged explorations of nineteenth-century abolitionists like Wallon or Roman researchers (Saller 1987, 1991; Bradley 1991a). The distinguished American sociologist A. W. Gouldner (1965) gave a glimpse of what can be attempted. Hellenists, however, have been deterred by the strictures of M. I. Finley, directed mainly at the dean of the Mainz school of slavery studies, Joseph Vogt (1975c: 103–21): 'There are too many variables that we cannot control . . . and I remain a complete sceptic about the easy generalizations and causal statements of historians writing about a society that has long been dead' (Finley 1998: 176). My three articles on the interrelations of slaves and children at Athens are something of a start (1984, 1985, 1988). Note too the stirrings of renewed

interest in the valuable collections by Moggi and Cordiano (1997), Joshel and Murnaghan (1998), Reduzzi Merola and Storchi Marino (1999). Finley also lamented the lack of ‘any reasonable account of slaves among ancient prostitutes, or, for that matter, of prostitution itself’ (1998: 238, n. 14). Here Herter (1960) held the field even longer than Lacey, rich in references (there are 766 footnotes, some with up to fifty citations), less so in analysis. More help is now available, from Reinsberg (1989), Davidson (1997) – especially lively and accessible – and Cohen (2000a): once again, more has been done for the Romans (e.g. McGinn 1998, 2004; Stumpp 1998; DeFelice 2001).

CHAPTER 8

RESISTANCE AMONG CHATTEL SLAVES IN THE CLASSICAL GREEK WORLD

NIALL McKEOWN

INTRODUCTION

The study of slave resistance raises particular problems of method. Our reconstructions are largely dependent on the ‘footprint’ left by resistance in the record produced by slave-owners. The size of that footprint may not accurately reflect the importance of the original phenomenon. Slave-owners can exaggerate the scale of potential resistance through paranoia or downplay it to reassure themselves. Or they may have little interest in recording it at all. Different authors, even different texts, can have different intentions. Interpreting the scattered traces and disentangling dream, nightmare and reality are far from straightforward. The (sparse) evidence often allows more than one interpretation. One of the aims of this chapter is to reveal the ambiguities that can sometimes be lost in more general discussions.

SLAVE REBELLION AND THE PROBLEM WITH NARRATIVE SOURCES

Little evidence of slave rebellion survives from the classical Greek world. The encyclopaedist Athenaeus of Naucratis in Egypt, writing around AD 200, discusses (265d–266e) a band of runaways led by Drimacus on the island of Chios. The date could range from the seventh to the third centuries BC. Drimacus made a truce with the local slave-owners limiting the scale of future raiding and flight. Eventually, however, the Chians turned on him. He persuaded his (male) lover to deliver his head to the slave-owners and claim the reward offered (and freedom). The Sicilian city of Syracuse experienced a slave revolt during a siege between 415 BC and 413 BC. The rebellion was undermined by the seizure of the slave leaders at a parley and the granting of terms to the remainder so that ‘only’ three hundred fled to the enemy. The episode is reported by Polyaeus (1.43.1) writing half a millennium later.

The importance of these stories comes not from what little they tell us but how we know about them. Only Athenaeus (or rather his third-century BC source Nymphodorus) tells us about Drimacus. Thucydides wrote at

length about the siege of Syracuse, but he nowhere tells us about a slave rebellion. Polyaeus mentions it as a fine example of trickery. It is possible that both stories are fictions, but it is difficult to imagine a motive for inventing them. It would appear that some of the key Greek writers whose work survives had little interest in reporting slave uprisings.

Curiously this may also be true of modern historians. Keen to avoid discussing a slave revolution that failed to happen in antiquity, some Marxist historians have downplayed group action by slaves, stressing instead their internal divisions and the one-sidedness of the class struggle in the ancient world.¹ Where Greek myth and history report troubles fomented by exploited groups, Vidal-Naquet (1986: 205–25) has argued that these were not slaves but serfs, whose cultural and familial links allowed them greater cohesion. It is nonetheless at least possible, given the generally parlous state of the evidence, that some of these episodes contain echoes of action by slaves.

More predictably, perhaps, non-Marxists have also downplayed large-scale slave resistance. Hans Klees argued (1998: 418–21) that, while slaves were certainly involved in political crises in several city-states in the fourth century BC, they were simply used by would-be dictators ('tyrants') to bolster their support. Again there is some truth in this, but slaves could sometimes have been more than passive tools and their intervention significant even if restricted to the (far from uncommon) conflicts involving tyrants. That said, as Klees notes, the danger from slaves is ignored in the copious writings of Isocrates documenting the social and political problems of the period. Further, accusations that a 'tyrant' sympathised with slaves helped blacken his reputation, whether true or not. Nonetheless, the participation of slaves at some level in the political troubles of the time is suggested by a provision of the League of Corinth in 338 BC (imposed by Philip of Macedon), forbidding the freeing of slaves for revolutionary purposes ([Demosthenes] 17.15). Significant group action involving slaves was seen as a possibility.

Slave troubles were perhaps under-reported, but it is still difficult to believe there were, for example, unacknowledged rebellions in Athens, the source of most of the surviving classical evidence. Some have suggested (e.g. Westermann 1955: 18) that slaves failed to rebel there because they were relatively well treated and content. Paul Cartledge (2001b), however, suggested that Athens differed in key ways from modern societies that experienced slave rebellions. Athens had a lower proportion of slaves (a third or less), and they were dispersed in relatively small groups with a relatively personal relationship to their masters. Ethnic diversity and differing opportunities for social mobility (for example, through trade or manumission) further

¹ Vernant 1980: ch. 1; Vidal-Naquet 1986: 159–67.

undermined slave solidarity and removed potential leadership. Geopolitical conditions failed to provide places of refuge (Greece, a patchwork of tiny states, was relatively densely settled) and levels of economic distress may also have been lower than in some modern slave societies.

The nature of the evidence means that debate is possible concerning several of these factors, notably the impact of geography and the lack of a slave leadership. Maroon societies were possible in Chios (and in Sparta) and opportunities for social mobility did not prevent Roman slaves from rebelling. Further, large numbers of slaves (perhaps tens of thousands) were concentrated in the Athenian silver mines at Laurium (see Ian Morris' chapter in this volume). They were (probably) exploited by absentee masters in units of dozens to hundreds in very poor conditions with restricted possibilities of social mobility. They therefore satisfied many of the conditions that might be thought conducive to revolt, and indeed they rebelled in the later, Hellenistic, period (Ath. 272e–f). However, given the difficulties of organising a rising and the penalties for failure, the occurrence of rebellion probably requires more explanation than its absence.

OTHER FORMS OF RESISTANCE IN NARRATIVE SOURCES

If rebellion has left few traces, the same is almost as true of individual resistance. We are left with a number of interpretative choices. (1) Absence of evidence may be evidence of absence: there was little resistance. (2) Given the unlikelihood of Greeks wanting to preserve stories of resistance, the few that have survived should be interpreted as the tip of the iceberg: there was a lot of resistance. (3) A different approach to the data is required. Let us examine the differing forms of resistance before suggesting just such a different approach.

Slave flight could sometimes be on a large scale. According to Thucydides (7.27 with 1.142, 6.91; cf. 4.118.7; Xenophon, *Hellenica* 1.2.15), more than 20,000 slaves (from a total of 100,000?) allegedly escaped from Athens after 413 BC when Sparta established a garrison post at Decelea within Attic territory. Athens had recently invited war on two fronts, attacking Sicily while tensions with Sparta remained unresolved, and Thucydides could be exaggerating to illustrate the losses caused by such arrogance: the precise number should perhaps not be taken too literally. Athens itself supported flight among the slaves of Chios a few years later (Thuc. 8.40). A Spartan army invading Corcyra in the late 370s found vast numbers of slave deserters (Xen. *Hell.* 6.2.15). The besieged (and hungry) Corcyreans did not want them, so the significance of the episode is debatable.² Nor can one deduce much from the desertion of slaves travelling with armies

² See also Xen. *Cyr.* 1.24.13, 6.2.2, 6.2.11 for disguising spies as runaways.

(e.g. Thuc. 7.13 and 7.75). The decision to stay or run may have had as much to do with an estimation of who would win, the reputation of the enemy, or a concern for loved ones left behind in the masters' homes, as with loyalty or disloyalty.

Flight was not just a wartime phenomenon. Athens punished the town of Megara for (among other things) harbouring runaways (Thuc. 1.139–40). Several law-court speeches mention owners chasing escaped slaves (Ps.-Demosthenes 49.9, 53.6).³ Travelling after runaways could be a risky business, but these texts do not imply that it was unusual. There is some epigraphic evidence too (*SEG* III 92.9–19). Other evidence, however, is more problematic.

The pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* lists clever financial schemes. In one of these (1352b33–1353a4) Antimenes, an official of Alexander the Great at Babylon, sought to borrow slaves for the army's baggage train. Owners were allowed to register the value of the slaves and offered full insurance at a cost of 8 drachmas a year. It is difficult to judge the price of slaves in this period, but in the previous century many slaves in Athens might have cost around 150 drachmas. The owners here had presumably no interest in declaring a low value. For Antimenes to make money, the possibility of runaways during the campaign would appear to have been real but also relatively restricted. Whatever the truth of the story, the author expects his audience to believe him. Antimenes shows his cleverness in getting both the slaves and the cash.

Xenophon's *De vectigalibus* is a text of the mid-fourth century arguing for the expansion of Athens' silver mines, potentially exploiting tens of thousands of slaves (4.17). While foreseeing problems such as theft on the part of slaves (4.21), flight is not mentioned. This is all the more remarkable since many of the slaves who fled to Declea fifty years before may have been miners. Xenophon does mention the damage done then (4.25). He also suggests security measures (4.43–48), chiefly a series of fortifications. There is no reason, however, to see these as places of incarceration rather than of refuge.⁴ Xenophon even suggests that future wars should be less difficult for Athens since his plan would provide both extra finance and extra manpower (for fighting) so long as the slaves were treated well (4.41–42)! Admittedly Xenophon had little reason to stress difficulties while gathering support for his proposals, but ignoring recognised problems would hardly have helped his cause.

Flight certainly took place, sometimes on a very large scale. Our evidence, however, is so patchy that it is extraordinarily sensitive to the manner in which it is reported. This section illustrates the point. It began with some episodes of flight but ended with two stories implying a comparative lack of

³ Cf. Lys. 23.7 for a slave allegedly pretending to be free; also Ath. 263c.

⁴ Though cf. Morris and Papadopoulos 2005.

concern for the problem, suggesting its relative unimportance overall. One might, however, have begun with Xenophon or Ps.-Aristotle's apparent equanimity and then implied that it was contradicted by the historical examples, leaving the opposite impression. Later we shall examine how far we can escape this type of impasse.

The surviving evidence for violence against masters is also sparse, but it may nonetheless be highly significant. There are two cases of murder. A concubine who was probably a slave was executed for a poisoning (Antiphon 1.14–20: the speaker protests the woman's innocence, but may have ulterior motives. It is also possible that the speech is a rhetorical exercise). Elsewhere a man accused of murder argues that courts should not condemn on appearances alone. He cites the (recent) case of a twelve-year-old slave who killed his master (Antiph. 5.69; cf. 5.48). Only his attempted flight (and subsequent confession) saved 'all those within' from death: his guilt would otherwise have seemed unbelievable. This implies that the Athenians were prepared to kill an entire slave household where a murder remained unsolved, even if Antiphon argues in this case that it would have been an injustice. Such 'terroristic' action is often (though as we shall see later, not always) based on fear. We have no other evidence on this topic (unfortunate, since Greek orators cannot always be trusted to paraphrase laws correctly), nor is suspicion directed towards slaves in other murders. Indeed, Athenians sometimes contemplated arming chattel slaves in times of war (e.g. Hyperides Fr. 29; Xen. *Vect.* 4.42). This may have been a sign of desperation rather than trust and certainly need not imply mutual loyalty, but it suggests limits to any paranoia.⁵ Hyperides and Xenophon apparently did not expect their proposals to be laughed at.

Law-court speeches contain several allegations of slaves stealing or otherwise acting against the interests of their masters. According to Demosthenes (48.15–17) Callistratus complained that a slave, Moschion, had stolen 8,000 drachmas from his master Comon (equivalent to wages for an unskilled worker for more than a decade). His opponent apparently denies that this happened: typically, both sides had good reason to lie. We are told by Isocrates (17.12) of an allegation by a banker (Pasion) that one of his slaves (Cittus) had been bribed and corrupted by the speaker. The speaker himself later claims that Pasion had suborned the slaves of one Pyron to alter the wording of a legal affidavit (17.23). If the speeches seem to modern eyes wildly (and entertainingly) inconsistent and improbable, they were presumably not meant to seem so to an ancient audience. It is, however, impossible to judge their truthfulness.⁶

⁵ The Hellenistic author Philo of Byzantium (97.34–98.1) does discuss the ways in which besiegers might turn the loyalty of slaves and prevent the besieged from arming them. There is, however, little in the fourth-century writings of Aeneas Tacticus suggesting that slaves were distrusted (as opposed to being capital, like farm animals, that needed to be protected).

⁶ Cf. Ps.-Dem. 45.80–5.

Slaves were used sexually by their masters, but they might occasionally have been able to use their sexuality to their advantage. In Lysias (4.1) we learn of a case of assault involving two men who jointly own a slave-girl. The defendant claims that the girl had switched her allegiances one way and then the other (4.9: note that the prosecution claims that the girl is free, 4.12). Demosthenes 59 alleges that a former slave-prostitute (Neaira) has been able to inveigle her way into Athenian citizen society with the help of her lovers, but it is moot whether (a) it should be regarded as 'resistance' and crucially whether (b) we ought to believe the prosecution's claims about her origins. There are occasional statements as to the danger of bringing an enemy into one's home (the probably spurious Andocides 4.22, where Alcibiades has a child by a captive Melian woman; cf. Euripides, *Andromache* 519–22). The plots of Aeschylus' *Agamemnon* and Euripides' *Helen* also raise the issue of the possible supplanting of the mistress of the house by a war captive (Clytemnestra by Cassandra and especially Hermione by Andromache). It is, however, difficult to judge how far the stories of the mythical princess-captives of drama relate to historical reality and how far Athenians typically would have used their own war captives as slaves.⁷ Menandrian comedy produces the image of the kind-hearted courtesan: Chrysis in *The Samian Girl* and Habrotonon in *Arbitrants* are portrayed as loyal and helpful, but Krateia utterly enthrals (and turns the tables on) her captor Thrasonides in *The Man She Hated*. We have only hints of sexual contact between free women and male slaves (Dem. 45.84; cf. Plato, *Laws* 930d). Solonic law apparently forbade male slaves being the lovers of freeborn boys (Aeschines 1.139).

Slaves also knew secrets and could use them to their advantage. The curiosity of slaves is sometimes stressed in Athenian tragedy (e.g. Phaedra's nurse in Eur., *Hippolytus* esp. 176–361). We shall see myriad examples in our discussion of Athenian comedy below. The phenomenon is, however, more difficult to trace beyond the stage. There was little reason for it to enter the public record. In one court case we learn of a slave-girl who is aware of her mistress's infidelity, but there is no implication that she has used the information to her advantage (Lysias 1.8, 16–22). There are, however, criminal cases (notably involving impiety and treason) where slaves could gain freedom by informing against their masters. The speaker of Lysias 5 complains about the use of slave evidence (5.3–4). In Lysias 7 the speaker protests his innocence on a charge of impiously digging up an olive stump sacred to Athena: he would never have given his servants power over him by doing this in front of them (7.16–17). In 415 BC slaves gave evidence against their masters concerning allegations of sacrilege (Thuc. 6.27–28;

⁷ See further McCoskey 1998.

Andoc. 1.11–12, 17, with Lys. 6.22 for a slave reportedly murdered before he could give information).

The power that this gave to slaves may be exaggerated, however. Athens was a democracy of slave-owners who could change the laws concerning informers if they became problematic. Slaves did not give evidence without risk: one can imagine their fate if the prosecution failed. Jurors may well have been slave-owners and Athenian courts judged more by character than material evidence or witnesses, so the strongest slave testimony did not mean certain prosecution. In summary, using information against one's master was a possibility, and there may have been a degree of self-censorship among masters because of it, but it is difficult to tell how significant it actually was.⁸

The least obvious, probably safest and presumably commonest way of resisting exploitation was simply to work badly. It is not something one would, however, expect to be traceable in our narrative historical sources, though a metaphorical passage in Herodotus (5.48) is sometimes cited in support. It is easier to trace in more literary works, to which we now turn. Rather than ask how often Athenians mention slave resistance, let us ask a different question. What did Athenians *think* about this phenomenon? We shall focus on the texts that supply the vast bulk of our evidence. The context of the material needs always to be kept in mind, since the writers involved are typically dramatists or philosophers rather than historians. We shall examine the comedies of Aristophanes and Menander, the *Oeconomicus* and *Memorabilia* of Xenophon, Plato's *Laws*, Aristotle's *Politics* and the Pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica*. What mark has slave resistance left in this material?

THE COMIC SLAVE

The comedies of Aristophanes (c. 445–385 BC) and Menander (c. 342–292 BC) have the advantage (unlike Greek tragedy) of being set in contemporary Athens rather than a mythical past. Slaves are prominent characters. Since comic writers competed for prizes in popular contests, we may assume that they reflected the views of their audience (probably the majority of Athenian citizens) to some extent. But how far? How do we disentangle reality, comic exaggeration and utter fantasy? And to what extent might individual authorial styles affect this evidence?

In Aristophanes' *Frogs* a slave, Xanthias, is ordered by his master Dionysus to swap identities (496–97). Aeacus, another slave, is unaware of the arrangement and wonders how Xanthias will escape punishment for

⁸ Cf. Lys. 4.16–17; Isoc. 17.55; Lyc. 1.30.

impersonating a free man. Let Dionysus try to punish him, boasts Xanthias. Aeacus, aroused, joins in the fun (743–53):

A: Now you're acting like a real slave, just the way I enjoy acting.

X: Excuse me, but how do you enjoy it?

A: Well, I feel I'm in heaven whenever I secretly curse my master.

X: And how do you mutter when you charge outdoors after getting a good beating?

A: Oh yes, I love that too.

X: And how about meddling?

A: I know nothing like it!

X: O Zeus of our common heritage! How about listening in when your master's having a chat?

A: But oh, that works me up into even more of a frenzy!

X: And how about blabbing what you've heard to people outside?

A: I? Whenever I do that, I come.

The knowledge slaves have of their masters' affairs is a commonplace in Greek comedy (see e.g. Men. *Epit.*, esp. Frs. 849K and 850K, 425–7, 575–7; *Sam.* 298–300; *The Shield* 189–204; and Aristophanes, *Wealth* 1–55). Aristophanes' slaves often inform the audience of events within their masters' households (*Knights* 35–70; *Wasps* 54–136; *Peace* 50–81). Slaves with such information are, however, depicted as loyal (e.g. Men. *Mis.* 15–100, 959–72 and *The Shorn Locks* 318–21). Even the long-suffering Xanthias is true to his master, whatever the carping described above. The scene quoted could hint at a darker reality, but we should remember its context. It was written when Athens had exiled those involved in a recent coup but was willing to free slaves who fought for Athens in battle. The world (to Aristophanes) was indeed upside down (see 686–737). The quoted scene, emphasising the way that slaves could behave (not necessarily the way they *usually* did) may have been particularly pointed.

Providing a context for possible exaggeration does not, however, prove that Aristophanes exaggerated. He expected the idea of the prying and gossiping slave to resonate with his audience, and if such slaves are nonetheless depicted as loyal, comedy is an unlikely place to find the evil or disloyal. It is symptomatic of the difficulty of interpretation that, when Dionysus in the *Frogs* imagines a slave having his front teeth knocked out for watching the master have sex with a flute girl, we cannot tell whether the offence was the watching, or the accompanying masturbation, or both (542–48).

There are, however, other areas where conclusions are easier to draw. Slaves are not depicted running away from their masters in comedy, even if they sometimes beat a temporary retreat (Menander, *The Bad-Tempered Man* 144; *Sam.* 324, 641–57, especially 654–5; and the fragmentary *Girl from Perinthos*). They do, however, discuss the possibility of flight or even suicide (Ar. *Eq.* 20–26, 73, 80–84; cf. *Plut.* 1146–50; Theophrastus, *Characters*

12.12–14). Aristophanes depicts how things forbidden on earth are allowed in cloud-cuckoo-land, including beating one's father and running away: whip marks will help one fit in with the other mottled birds (*Birds* 760–61). His *Peace* lists those who profit from war as including shield makers, men who want to be generals – and slaves thinking about running away (451; cf. possibly *Acharnians* 1187–8). The opportunity of escaping to the enemy may explain Strepsiades' complaint (*Clouds* 6–7) that he cannot punish his slaves because of the war. Even Menander with his generally positive portrayal of slaves mentions running away as something associated with the 'bad' slave (e.g. *Pk.* 350) and 'runaway' is used as an insult (*Asp.* 398; *The Carthaginian* 35). One loyal slave is (ironically) insulted for lacking the manliness to flee (*Asp.* 238–45, cf. Herodotus 4.142). Gauging the scale of flight from such comments is obviously difficult, and there is certainly nothing like the evidence available to historians of modern slavery, but it does imply that Athenians saw flight as a significant problem.

Theft is also significant. Aristophanes' *Wealth* contains a series of references to the thievery of Karion (e.g. 27, 318–20, 672–95, 1139–45). Aristophanes assumes that slaves steal food (*Ran.* 980–88; *Vesp.* 449–51; cf. 836–38; *Pax* 1053), or wine (*Eq.* 101–2; cf. *Vesp.* 10). *Acharnians* (272–75) mentions the theft of wood. A slave preparing food for a giant dung beetle in *Peace* (14) is relieved he will not be accused of taking some himself. The picture is one of low-level pilfering. If Menander supplies fewer examples, we should nonetheless be wary of exaggerating the differences with Aristophanes. Pyrrhias is accused (unfairly) of theft in *The Bad-Tempered Man* (142) and there may be another reference in *The Shield* (465–66) (though they may be free women). Hired cooks are clearly distrusted (*Asp.* 226–32). In *The Shorn Locks* 'careers' are imagined for the slave Parmenon that presuppose a continuing underlying stereotype of the thieving slave (275–90: managing a cheese shop apparently requires no honesty).

Other elements of a negative slave stereotype are less obvious. The lying slave is largely absent in Aristophanes, but Menander depicts Daos in *The Shorn Locks* telling his master what he believed the latter wanted to hear (327–53). If slaves lie in Menander's plays, however, they generally lie in the interests of others, not for themselves, even if hoping for a reward (e.g. *Sam.* 315; *Epit.* 511–80; *Asp.* 315–90). The cunning and deceitful slave is far more prominent in later Roman comedy, which derived from Greek New Comedy. Some have interpreted this as indicating a Roman fear of servile subterfuge. It would be difficult to argue the same for Greek comedy from the small number of examples we have.

Greek comic slaves are sometimes cheeky behind their masters' backs (e.g. *Ar. Vesp.* 1299–1306; *Eq.* 40–3; *Pax* 54; *Men. Pk.* 172–4, 185–8; cf. *Dys.* 403 and possibly *Asp.* 385–6). Direct rudeness is, however, more prominent. Xanthias in the first half of Aristophanes' *Frogs* derides Dionysus as

cowardly, Karion at the start of *Wealth* despairs of Chremylus, and Trygaeus' slave in *Peace* (90) accuses his master of madness. Menander offers comparable examples (*Dys.* 562–70 and 874–8; *Asp.* 338–9 and 353). Parmenon in *The Samian Girl* is prepared to tell his master that he is talking nonsense, even *after* he has been struck for questioning him (690). How 'realistic' are such slaves? Fitzgerald (2000: 32–47) argues that the freedom of speech allowed to later Roman comic slaves was part of 'carnivale', a licensed inversion of normally expected behaviour, and McCarthy (2000) maintains that slave characters offered a means for the poor or young to (indirectly) mock their social superiors or elders. We must be careful, therefore, before we draw too many conclusions from the interplay of slave and master, particularly when Greek slave characters could also be used metaphorically (famously in Aristophanes' *Knights* where two of the slaves are usually assumed to represent the politicians Nicias and Demosthenes).

One could, therefore, simply dismiss the outspokenness of the slave as fiction. While some contemporaries praised Athens for the freedom of speech given even to slaves, others suggested that it was precisely the need to hold one's tongue that defined slavery (Dem. 9.3; Isoc. 5.93; cf. Eur. *Andr.* 186–90; *Phoenician Women* 391–92; *Ion* 674–5, but note the Aristotelian *Constitution of Athens* (59.5) for a law to prevent slaves slandering citizens). Flattery and an over-eagerness to please are often seen as the failing of the slave, not cheekiness (Pl., *Theaetetus* 173a, 175c; Arist., *Rhetoric* 1373a15–16, 1415b22–3; *Nicomachean Ethics* 1149a25–7). To reject the evidence of comedy entirely, however, smacks of special pleading. The idea of comic transgression, of 'carnivale', perhaps works better for the Roman slave characters of Plautus than those of Aristophanes and Menander. Greek comic slaves neither control the action nor invert traditional ethical norms in quite the same manner as Roman (most, particularly those of Menander, share the morality of the free). On the other hand, even if the cheeky slave is 'real', he proves steadfastly loyal. One could, of course, argue away the significance of such loyalty. As suggested earlier, comedy may be unlikely to reflect uncomfortable aspects of reality, perhaps even deliberately reversing them. The cheeky stage-slave may therefore be either realistic or unrealistic or metaphorical. In the absence of more contextual evidence (and no other genre generates a comparable picture), it is very difficult to decide.

If the cheeky slave appears only occasionally, the 'slow' slave appears frequently. In Aristophanes' *Birds*, Peisthetaerus hurries up Manes, insulting him as *blakikos*, 'lazy' (1317, 1324; cf. 1328). In *Wasps*, Philocleon worries that his son's steward will prepare food slowly, cursing while serving it (614–17). In *Peace*, War's servant Uproar is struck for not acting quickly enough (255–58), as is Parmenon in Menander's *The Samian Girl* (and for asking too many questions: 679, cf. 657–64, 203 and 105). Menander hints that quickness was something to be praised (*Asp.* 391 and *The Necklace* Fr.

333, lines 15–16). Context, however, may again be important. Most references to hurrying up can be interpreted as orders rather than complaints (e.g. Ar. *Vesp.* 187, 1361, *Thesm.* 1186; *Pax* 727, 842, 960; *Av.* 464 and 1309; Men. *Dys.* 454, 596; *The Cithara Player* 52, *Per.* 10, *Double Deceiver* 52). The impatience of owners may imply deliberately slow work, but again it does not necessarily do so. Free characters are asked (even told) to hurry up too (e.g. Ar. *Nub.* 88, 182, 506, with several dozen more references in other plays). Sometimes slaves tell the free to hurry up (Ar. *Pax* 1126; *Ran.* 480; *Plut.* 57, 768; Men. *Asp.* 379; *Dys.* 866; *Pk.* 992; *Sam.* 691). Isolated statements hurrying up slaves might, therefore, appear to hint at resistance but in the context of the statements directed to the free they become more problematic.

On some occasions, however, slaves clearly work poorly. At the opening of Aristophanes' *Clouds*, Strepsiades complains that his slaves are getting away with idleness because of the war. Given, however, that Strepsiades has also lost control of his wife and son, a contemporary audience might have viewed his slaves' behaviour as reflecting more his peculiar weakness than any wider problem. The beginning of Aristophanes' *Wasps* has Xanthias and Sosias preferring sleep to work (though they recognise they may suffer for it). Xanthias is caught napping again later (395). In the *Knights* 'Demos' has apparently ceded authority in his household to a violent Paphlagonian slave (43–72; cf. 1120–30). The latter is a rare example of a thoroughly bad slave, a depiction possibly affected by being modelled on Aristophanes' political enemy Cleon. Demos' other slaves wallow in despair rather than work. While they, like Xanthias and Sosias in the *Wasps*, quickly move on to political jokes and operate as mouthpieces for the free, the domestic parody must have had some basis in the everyday expectations of the audience, though perhaps as an extreme rather than a commonplace. The same is possibly true when we see Hermes being bribed to disobey his master in *Peace* (416–25). Surviving Menandrian comedy lacks explicit examples of such insubordination (though a full text of the *Girl from Perinthos* might have supplied one). In *The Farmer*, however, it is claimed that 'barbarian' slaves all too willingly leave their master in the lurch (56–8, though lacking a full context). Getas in *The Bad-Tempered Man* aims a few well-chosen insults at a lazy slave-girl, more interested in sex than work (459–63). So, even if the 'bad slave' appears seldom in comedy, the idea of the bad slave remains just below the surface, implying some difficulty of control.

Violence directed at slaves might indicate a reaction to resistance. In *Wasps*, Xanthias famously envies tortoises their hardened backs (1292–6; cf. 429). Again, however, the context may be significant: his master Philocleon's almost pathological willingness to use violence against anyone he meets. And if historians often quote the subsequent joke linking *país* ('slave') with *paiein* ('to beat': 1297), a pun is a pun, not a sociological

statement. There is, however, a limit to how far one can (or should) deconstruct this evidence. Xanthias in *Frogs* engages in a contest to withstand pain with the god Dionysus: the slave is so used to beating that he will not blink first (612–73). Aristophanes also refers to beatings or the threat of beatings in *Peace* 257 and *Clouds* 57 (cf. *Vesp.* 247 where a child who committed a similar offence is not threatened in the same way). We also find theft punished with a beating (*Vesp.* 449–51, though once again involving Philocleon, whose proclivity to violence we noted above).

Menander also mentions threats (e.g. *Sam.* 321–24: cf. 304 and, implicitly, 663; also *Dys.* 900–1 and *Epit.* 425–7). In *Arbitrants*, Parmenon may actually be struck (679: other translations are possible), and the evil Smikrines threatens to ‘break the head’ of the old nurse Sophron, probably a slave or ex-slave (1062–9). There are several references to ‘hanging up’ possibly as preparation for whipping (*Dys.* 249 and *Pk.* 269). Slaves could also be sent to the mill as punishment (*Pk.* 277; *Asp.* 245; *Heros* 3 also mentions fettering). A fragmentary comment in *The Shield* apparently connects beatings with improved behaviour (537–8). We find a statement that it is wrong to strike free women with a stick, implying that it is quite proper to strike slave women (*Sam.* 577). The insults directed towards slaves may also be significant. Some tell us little (*kakodaimon*, *athlios*, ‘wretch’, or *hierosylos*, ‘temple-robber’), but note *mastigias*, ‘deserving a whipping’ (e.g. *Men. Dys.* 139, 473; *Epit.* 1113; *Pk.* 324; *Sam.* 324, used of a brothel keeper). It is also found in the extant corpus of Aristophanes (though not often: e.g. *Ran.* 501 and 756; *Eq.* 1228).

This emphasis on punishment may indicate an expectation of poor work. It may also represent, as some specialists on Roman comedy have suggested, a way of repressing a fear of slaves by emphasising control (again implying resistance). It could also, however, be an assertion of the ideological superiority of free over slave, stressing the physicality and beast-like quality of the latter, with consequently fewer implications for judging their actual behaviour. The frequency of references to punishment is not on the scale found in Roman texts (and one doubts it would justify the kind of psychoanalytical conclusions suggested there), but it still suggests a rather different kind of world from that of the loyal slaves given such explicit prominence, particularly by Menander.

What conclusions can be drawn? At first sight comic evidence suggests Athenians were not unduly concerned with slave control. Slaves are generally loyal adjuncts of the free. This loyalty may be exaggerated, however. Comedy might be shying away from disagreeable aspects of life, unconsciously ‘repressing’ slave-owners’ fears (though this is difficult to prove or disprove). Aristophanes hints at self-censorship, tired of jokes about punishing bad slaves (*Pax* 742–6: though beware irony!). We have also seen that there is some evidence from the plays that the loyal slave is indeed a

rather one-sided representation of the reality outside the theatre. Regardless of how few references there are to overt resistance, comic language and casual remarks also indicate the existence of the concept of the 'bad' slave. Thieving was easily associated with slaves, as was gossip (though its impact is debatable). Running away was an issue, and the mark of the bad slave, but it is difficult to judge how major a problem it was. Neither Aristophanes nor Menander may fear slaves, but even the latter's generally positive picture of master–slave relations fails to hide the difficulties.

XENOPHON AND SLAVERY

Xenophon is another important source for Athenian attitudes to slaves. In his *Hiero* (4.3; cf. 6.3, 9.3) he emphasised the isolation of tyrants compared to citizens:

For citizens act as unpaid bodyguards for one another against slaves and as bodyguards against evildoers, for the purpose of preventing that any citizen should die a violent death.

The bodyguards of tyrants make them unpopular, but that need not be so (10.4):

I presume that you maintain them to guard yourself. But many masters as well have died violently at the hands of slaves. This therefore might be the first thing assigned to the mercenaries, as bodyguards of all – to render help to all of the citizens whenever they see anything of this nature: there are, as we all know, always evildoers in the cities. If, then, these men are posted to guard them, the citizens would therefore recognise that they too were being helped by them.

These passages certainly suggest serious problems (though the mercenaries are to help against external enemies too: 10.6). Xenophon devoted particular attention to slavery in his *Memorabilia* and especially his *Oeconomicus*, fictional conversations involving the philosopher Socrates. Early in *Memorabilia* (2.1.16–17), Socrates argues that men have the choice to rule or be ruled; his companion Aristippus favours a retiring life. Socrates asks whether he hopes to avoid slavery because no one wants a slave used to the high life:

S: But now let us examine this: how masters treat such servants. Don't they chasten lasciviousness through hunger, stop theft by shutting off wherever there might be something to take from, prevent running away with fetters, and force out laziness with blows? And you, what do you do, whenever you observe that there is a slave such as this?

A: I punish them with all kinds of evils until I force them to behave like a slave.

This obviously indicates potential slave punishments and the weaknesses of slaves with a fondness for the high life, but not, of course, how common

such slaves might be. How does it fit, for example, with the praise of agriculture from the *Oeconomicus* (5.10)?:

Which [trade] is more pleasing to slaves, or pleasanter to a wife, or more desired by children, or more agreeable to friends?

We shall see below passages where Xenophon assumes slaves can be made to work happily, alongside texts hinting at a different reality. One might ask which is the 'real' Xenophon. Or one might argue that we should not try to fit such passages together, but instead be sensitive to the reasons why he is producing both.

Xenophon was aristocratic, closely associated with Socrates, pro-Spartan and, for much of his life, an exile from Athens. This was an unorthodox *curriculum vitae*. His comments were probably not produced for a general audience (as comedy was), depriving us of an important control in assessing their plausibility. On the other hand, Xenophon comes from a social group used to dealing with comparatively large numbers of slaves.

Xenophon's aim, however, is not reportage or even managerial advice. Nor is his primary focus slavery. He wishes his audience to become better leaders of men. Both the *Memorabilia* and the *Oeconomicus* equate managing a household (an *oikos*) and other forms of power, notably military and political (*Mem.* 3.4.6; *Oec.* 5.14–17, 21.2, 21.12). This is more moral philosophy than economics, potentially affecting his picture of slave management. For example, using persuasion with slaves rather than violence may fit better his political aims, and he may exaggerate the need for personal supervision because he clearly believed leaders should be energetic. He may also de-emphasise 'external' constraints (such as recalcitrant slaves) that might limit the apparent applicability of his ideas. These issues import a good deal of uncertainty but may make the surviving examples of resistance all the more significant.

In *Memorabilia*, we saw that lasciviousness, theft, running away and laziness are listed as problems. It says something of the difficulty of interpreting individual comments that Xenophon says little about lasciviousness elsewhere. Sexual self-discipline is required of both estate steward and stewardess (*Oec.* 9.11, 12.13), and sex is to be a reward for good slaves (*Oec.* 9.5): bad slaves, apparently, find more ways to do ill when allowed to mate (though good slaves become better).

Theft was the second failing. Slaves should not steal if trained properly, however (*Mem.* 2.1.9). How realistic is this? Ischomachus, Xenophon's paragon of a gentleman farmer, has to apply the laws of Draco and Solon to punish thefts by slaves (*Oec.* 14.5–7). Theft may also be implied by Ischomachus' advice that a wife should know about everything entering and leaving the house (*Oec.* 7.35–6, 9.3–6, 9.9–10). Locked male and female slave quarters not only prevented unauthorised intimacy but also ensured

that nothing was moved without permission (*Oec.* 9.5). It should be noted, however, that Ischomachus feels that knowing the whereabouts of everything is also a good thing in itself (*Oec.* 8.20; cf. 8.1 on Ischomachus' wife).⁹

Running away is mentioned in *Memorabilia* (2.10.1–2): Socrates expresses surprise that people sometimes give more effort to hunting run-aways (or looking after sick slaves) than cultivating friends who are much more useful. More famously, in *Oeconomicus* (3.4) Socrates explains why some men become rich and others poor. Partly it is the putting of things in their proper place, but there is more:

What then if I show you, moreover, one place where virtually all the slaves are fettered but often run away, another where the slaves are unconstrained but want to stay and work? Will I not thus show you that the matter of estate management is a thing well worth examining?

The difficulty, once again, is deciding how typical the two ends of the spectrum shown might have been. For example, how realistic is the idea of controlling slaves without fettering? How far is it affected by the philosophical agenda mentioned earlier?

Laziness is listed last. One must encourage one's workers in the fields: working to time can determine success or failure (e.g. *Oec.* 12.20, 21.10–11, 16, 19–20). Slaves require encouragement (*Oec.* 13.9–13, 5.14–16, 7.41), and overseers should be controlled (e.g. *Oec.* 9.11–15). Ischomachus believes one should and can win over slaves. Another character, however, casually associates lack of initiative with slaves (*Oec.* 1.16–17). Ischomachus does not want his wife to sit around 'like a slave' (*Oec.* 10.10). Socrates notes (*Mem.* 2.4.2–5 and 2.10.3) how much more useful a friend is than a slave (or a horse), and Euthydemus berates himself as being as worthless (*phaulotes*) as a slave. A lack of initiative could, of course, be an effective form of resistance rather than an innate quality. On the other hand, it could also help masters justify slavery, which might lead them to exaggerate it.

There are, of course, methods of resistance that are not listed in *Memorabilia* 2.1.16. What might the violent/intemperate (*akratos*) slave of *Memorabilia* 1.5.2 do to herds or tools? Bad (*poneroi*) slaves are also mentioned (*Mem.* 2.5.5; 3.13.4: a lazy and stupid attendant fond of food and money).¹⁰ Slaves cannot, apparently, always be won over. Not all can be taught, for example, to be honest bailiffs (*Oec.* 14.3, 12.9–16; cf. 9.11–15). A good master can have bad slaves (*Oec.* 12.19). This contradicts Xenophon's general optimism and may be all the more significant for that.

⁹ But cf. Xen. *Eq. mag.* 4.1.

¹⁰ Cf. Xen. *Cyr.* 7.5.83–4. Other passages in this text presuppose troublesome servants: 1.1.1, 1.6.7, 1.6.17, 4.2.27, 8.1.4, but cf. 3.1.28. Cf. *Eq. mag.* 2.2.

Signs of resistance can be subtle. Xenophon's methods are relatively paternalistic. One should do one's duty to one's slaves (*Mem.* 1.2.48, 2.1.32, 4.4.17: the nature of that duty is left unclear). Critobulus' complaint that Socrates' masochistic lifestyle would drive 'even a slave to desert his master' implies that a slave should not be pressed too hard (*Mem.* 1.6.2). We have seen Xenophon suggest a system of rewards (e.g. *Oec.* 13.9; 13.11–12 for workers; 9.12, 13.6–7, 13.16 for stewards; 14.8 for honesty). Ischomachus' wife cares for sick slaves, hoping for their gratitude (*Oec.* 7.37). Better clothes and food should be given to the better servants to encourage them (*Oec.* 13.10) – sex too (*Oec.* 9.5). These could be regarded as concessions won by resistance.

Xenophon, however, certainly expects slavery to be profitable (e.g. *Mem.* 2.7.1–3), and the advice given in the *Oeconomicus* to be successful. Ischomachus does worry that his wife will complain about the effort required (*Oec.* 9.14–16, esp. 16), but he is also concerned that his method of training a bailiff might appear laughably easy (*Oec.* 13.4).

We should not, however, paint too positive a picture of slave/master relations from these texts. It is clear that slavery and moral inferiority are, for Xenophon, closely related ideas. The seriousness of resistance is, nonetheless, difficult to judge. One can argue that Xenophon's optimism is a product of his philosophical and pedagogical hopes, and so stress the resistance that 'leaks' into the texts. Or one could stress the author's confidence that good management can deal with the problem. Both positions seem possible. It is difficult to see from the evidence itself why one should be chosen over the other. It is striking that there is no sign here, in his most detailed of discussions of slavery, of the near paranoia of the *Hiero*, though that could be a function of the different aims of the texts.

SLAVES IN PLATO'S *REPUBLIC* AND *LAWS*

Plato left behind a significant number of statements concerning slavery.¹¹ Socrates and Glaucon famously discussed the vulnerability of slave-owners in *Republic* 578e:

S: . . . what if one of the gods lifted a man, with fifty or even more slaves, and his wife and children out of the city and placed him with his slaves and all his possessions in a wasteland, where none of the free would help? How greatly, do you suppose, would he be afraid that he himself and his children and his wife might be killed by his slaves?

G: Utterly.

¹¹ See e.g. Vlastos 1941; see Peter Hunt's chapter in this volume.

S: And wouldn't he have to fawn on some of his own slaves, to promise them much, freeing them when he didn't need to? And wouldn't he be made into a the flatterer of his own slaves?

G: By necessity, or perish.

These lines are often quoted, but one should examine how they were introduced. Socrates is discussing 'tyrants', emphasising how miserable their lives are. They are one ruling over many. He looks for a comparison (578d–e):

S: [One should spy out] each of the wealthy private citizens in our cities who have acquired many slaves because they have this in common with a tyrant – they rule over many, the difference being the number.

G: Yes, that's the difference.

S: And do you know that they hold them without fear and are not afraid of their slaves?

G: What would they be frightened of?

S: Nothing. Do you know the reason then?

G: Yes. It's because the whole city comes to the aid of each private citizen.

S: Correct. But what if one of the gods lifted a man . . .

The relationship between slave and master rests upon force. The hostility of the slave is a given. On the other hand 'Socrates' explicitly denies that masters generally live in fear.

Plato's longest discussion of slavery is in *Laws* 776c–778a (a tiny fraction of his surviving work). An unnamed Athenian suggests that slaves are a 'troublesome property' (776b–c), citing Sparta's Helots. This illustrates a key problem from a modern perspective. Plato combines comments on Spartan Helots (indigenous serfs) and Athenian chattel slaves, groups most would now analyse separately. When noting that controlling men is difficult because of their temper and that they are a 'difficult beast to handle,' he mentions rebellions in Sparta and troubles in Italy and areas where slaves 'speak the same language' (777b–c). Helotage may therefore form much of the background for the advice he gives, for example when he suggests that 'slaves' should be divided by origin and language. Elsewhere it is often unclear whether his comments are written with Helots in mind, or chattel slaves, or both.

Plato implies (776d–777a) a division of opinion about the nature of 'slaves'. Some stress their trustworthiness. Others argue that 'there is nothing virtuous about a slave's soul'. The difference of opinion, and the professed need to get oneself the 'best and most well-disposed' slaves, presupposes a problem. Apart from 'divide and rule', Plato's advice to owners is that one should not treat slaves as friends (778a, cf. 757a). 'Many senseless people' have made life more difficult by forgetting that. Slaves should be punished for wrongdoing, not just admonished, but some owners who

use whips and goads only succeed in making their servants more slavish (777a–777e). It would be better not to humiliate them ‘and mistreat them even less, if it were possible, than you would an equal’ (777d). Virtuous treatment sows the seed of virtue (777e).

Plato’s proposed form of control could represent a concession to the slaves, indicating successful resistance (as fear of familiarity may represent a fear of being taken advantage of). Note also the recommendation that slave-owners in an ideal state should decide the amount of food given to slaves (848b–c), perhaps implying a reward system similar to Xenophon’s.

Plato’s *Laws* 776–778 consequently suggests a fundamental antagonism between master and slave, though perhaps not as pronounced as in the *Republic* (578). Plato may, however, be understating conflict in the *Laws*. He seeks there to sketch out an achievable ideal state based on the effectiveness of ‘education’ (e.g. 838d). It is therefore perhaps unsurprising that Plato implies slaves can be successfully controlled by means other than force. On the other hand, the rationale for creating his laws is that some people will be impervious to instruction (880e–881a). Suspicious but successful control might be a good summary.

Most of Plato’s remaining comments in the *Laws* appear as he details the laws of his ideal state. There are Draconian punishments for slaves who kill or injure free men (868b–c, 869a–b, e, 877b, 879a, 882a–c). If, for example, a slave kills a free man in cold blood he is to be whipped in clear view of the dead man’s tomb as many times as decided by the prosecutor, and killed if he survives the beating (872b). Free men who committed similar crimes are generally treated less harshly (869d–e, 871a, d–e, 877a–b, 878c–d, 880b–c). The free who killed in anger had only to purify themselves and undergo a period of exile (867c–d; cf. 865a–866d, 868 c–869a). The harsher penalties for the slaves may imply a need to intimidate potentially violent slaves. After dealing with the ‘killing in anger’ of a free man by a slave, Plato discusses killings involving parents and children with the qualification, ‘this is a rare occurrence, but not unknown’ (868c). This might hint that the murder of a master was not seen as rare by Plato, but any statistical analysis is impossible. If, for example, the country-wardens deal with cases where a slave has injured a ‘neighbour or citizen’ (761e), they deal also with assaults by the free, and nothing in the description of their other duties suggests a particular fear of slaves (758a–b, 760b–e). Further, while the severity of a penalty might reflect the fear of the frequency of a crime, it could also represent the level of horror attached, regardless of frequency. The horror of attacks on immediate family members, particularly parents, is also expressed in heightened penalties similar to those for slaves (869b–c, 873b, 877b–c, 878e). Contrasting penalties may also reflect a desire to emphasise the difference in status between slave and free.

Violence is not the only potential form of resistance, however. Slaves are mentioned in the legislation against theft (914b, 845a–b: one stroke of the whip for each grape stolen). The free are, however, mentioned too, even if they are punished less severely (except in cases of temple robbery), possibly in accordance with their higher status (844e–845d with 853d, 854e). Curiously there is only a passing reference to the possibility of slave flight. Citizens are allowed to seize fugitives on their own behalf or that of a friend or relative (914e).¹²

Slaves can be punished for inaction as well as action. They are sometimes obliged to render help or give witness (881c, 914a, 932d). This may suggest that Plato expects limited loyalty from slaves, but resident aliens, foreigners and citizens likewise require encouragement to act. Any supposed danger arising from giving slaves the power (and incentive) to inform was apparently balanced by the good it did the state (917d, 937b).

On a more mundane level slaves were not to be left unattended (808d). The mistress and master should always rise first (807e–808a). This stress on supervision could suggest passive resistance from the slaves. Closer examination, however, again produces a potentially more complicated picture. Plato believes wakefulness to be a good in itself – it would be a source of shame, he says, for a citizen to spend the whole night sleeping and not be seen by his servants as being the first in the household to wake and rise. And, if slaves need supervision, children need it even more (808d). He is keen on supervision even for citizens (e.g. 942a), but there still seems problematic behaviour to be punished: an errant boy is to be punished as if he were a slave (809e).

Plato's negative attitude towards slaves is clear. There seems to be a core assumption that slaves are mindless and ill-disciplined, requiring constraint. If a man of forty starts fights, he will be considered a boor with the manners of a slave (880a; cf. 879e and foreigners). Acquiring a reputation for vice was apparently something that would not concern a slave (914a, though some slaves could be virtuous: 936b and 777d–e). Plato's generally low opinion of slaves could again reflect the persistence of low-level dissent.

Ultimately, once again, one has a choice. One might argue that Plato (like Xenophon) does not want to stress intractable resistance but allows reality to break through in a few explicit comments (e.g. *Resp.* 578). Or one might argue that the supposed danger seen in a few explicit comments is shown to be an exaggeration by the general complacency elsewhere. Whatever position one takes, one should remember that Plato's failure to think about slaves in more detail is due to his primary focus on the free.

¹² Though note the possibility of collusion with freemen to change masters: 879a, 936d; cf. *Crito* 52d and *Meno* 97e–98a.

Even if one were to argue that resistance is relatively absent in Plato's work, this may say more about the text than anything else.

THE SLAVE OF ARISTOTLE'S *POLITICS* AND THE
PS-ARISTOTELIAN *OECONOMICA*

Aristotle's philosophical starting point in his *Politics* is very different from Xenophon's or Plato's. Aristotle denies that running a slave household is equivalent to running a state (1252a7–9; cf. 1253b18–20, 1255b16–18). Training slaves should be left to stewards or teachers of slaves (1255b21–37). More importantly, Aristotle sees a slave as part of, or a tool of, his master (1253b29–33, 1254a28–33, 1255b11–12). This effectively philosophises opposition between master and slave out of existence (one cannot oppose a part of oneself). A community of interest between master and slave allegedly operates when the right people are enslaved: natural slaves (in effect barbarians). Difficulties chiefly arise when the wrong people are held by constraint and by force (1255b4–5). Aristotle in a sense creates an 'ideal type', passive, slave. Even if his philosophy might cause him to downplay resistance, however, he still recognises problems. Slaves apparently range in a spectrum between high-spirited (but dim) and intelligent (but cowardly), though (again by definition) not so ill-disciplined or cowardly as to be incapable of serving (1260a1–2, cf. 1327b23–9). Aristotle has no interest in discussing real situations in which slaves were indeed too cowardly or too ill-disciplined, but, by implication, such slaves existed. That there were more difficulties with real slaves than Aristotle's theoretical comments imply is also seen in his criticism of communism. It creates too much intimacy and we often quarrel with those with whom we are most intimate, such as fellow travellers – and servants (1263a18–21). Like Plato, he also advises against keeping too many slaves of one people in case of rebellion and suggests that one needs to hold out the hope of freedom (1330a25–8).

Aristotle explicitly recognises very high levels of resistance amongst Spartan Helots and similar groups (1269a36–9). Unlike Plato, he separates Helots and other slaves. Helots are seen as a standing danger to their states: they are either too insolent if given freedom or plot if too repressed. Aristotle's separation of the two groups implies that he believes that his audience will not particularly associate the problems of Helots with Athenian slaves. Aristotle allows us therefore to read between the lines and provides evidence for low-level resistance, but not for a particular fear of rebellion.

The pseudo-Aristotelian *Oeconomica* of the early Hellenistic period draws together many of the themes already seen. Only a small part deals with slaves. One should not allow them to be insolent by giving them food but no punishment. Work without sufficient food, however, saps strength (1344b1–2). The author continues (1344b3–9):

Those who are not paid cannot be controlled, and sustenance is a slave's pay. As with all others, so too with slaves: whenever the good do not get better things and there is no reward for virtue or evil, they become worse. One must therefore consider this and assign and allow each slave food, clothes, rest, and punishment according to their effort . . .

The concept that food is a slave's pay suggests recognition of a paradox: the chattel slave represented an investment masters needed to protect, thereby removing part of the slave's incentive to work. Concessions must be made, and there is a hint of something perhaps more dangerous in the background (1344b13–18):

Those who are too craven have no endurance, and the overly hot-tempered are not easily governed. It is therefore necessary to set out an end point [to slavery] for all. It is both right and expedient to offer the prize of freedom: for they are willing to work hard whenever there is such a prize and a term set. One must also use the begetting of children as way of getting hostages and also not buy many slaves from the same race . . .

In addition, a porter should check everything going in and out on larger farms (1345a33–b1). Echoing Xenophon and Plato, the author of the *Oeconomica* also suggests that personal supervision is both morally good in itself and essential for successful control of slaves, with the emphasis on the latter (1345a1–17). Owners' behaviour is being moulded by their slaves. In summary workers can be made keen, but only with concessions.

CONCLUSION

We can assume that many slaves found ways of resisting their masters. The difficulty is tracing this in our evidence. Looking at what ancient authors thought about resistance, at the 'footprints' in the consciousness of the slave-owners, is perhaps the most promising way forward.¹³ It produces a complex picture. The danger of mining isolated nuggets of information is readily apparent. Some of the most quoted statements on slave resistance (particularly from Aristophanes, Xenophon and Plato) become much more ambiguous when examined in context. It is certainly difficult to maintain that Greeks feared their slaves, particularly when our evidence is affected

¹³ One might argue that the concessions offered to slaves (e.g. asylum, manumission, allowing slaves to work away from their masters and keep some of their pay: see, most famously, Ps.-Xen. *Ath. Pol.* 1.10–12) all indicate successful slave resistance. Or that resistance is implied by those who argued that the very basis of Greek political life was the collaboration of citizens to control slaves (see Xenophon and Plato, above). Unfortunately it is very difficult to trace the scale of 'concessions' (anti-democratic thinkers may exaggerate them), and it could as easily be argued that democracy and political co-operation that freed local peasants from exploitation helped create the conditions for the spread of slavery, rather than vice versa (see Finley 1980: ch. 2).

by the tendency to bracket together Sparta's Helots (who may very well have excited fear) and Athens' chattel slaves.

The types of resistance do become clear, however. It is also evident that some forms of resistance are almost certainly under-reported (e.g. flight and perhaps even rebellion). Particular authors may also be providing an over-optimistic view of relations between masters and slaves: even Menander's often positive picture is implicitly underpinned by clear negative stereotypes. Aristotle had philosophical reasons for downplaying slave resistance (as possibly did Plato and Xenophon). To summarise the evidence that has survived, the control of slaves was seen as potentially irritating, but it was, ultimately, portrayed as a problem of 'middle management'. Athenians generally defined slaves by their powerlessness and their cowardice (however exaggerated and self-serving such a definition may have been). As stated earlier, however, the absence of evidence of resistance is not evidence of its absence. While part of the aim of this chapter has been to challenge an over-simplified orthodoxy, we should not replace a picture of 'high' levels of resistance with one of 'low' levels: interpretative choices inevitably remain.

In Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* (8.3.40–50), Pheraulus complains that wealth is a burden that one cannot enjoy without fearing its loss and that slaves are merely more mouths to feed and clothe (8.41). When his guest, an unnamed Scian, expresses surprise at such views, Pheraulus offers to give him all that he owns in return for his basic maintenance (8.3.46). The story is fictional and set in Persia, not Greece. The point, however, is not the truth of the tale, but the assumptions made by this Greek writer for his Greek audience about the fate of the two men. Pheraulus, relieved of his property and slaves, apparently lives happily ever after. And so, having gained them, does the Scian (8.3.50).

One can, however, exaggerate the plasticity of the evidence. There are still some clear conclusions to be drawn. Athenian authors were under no illusion that slavery was a form of education or an apprenticeship into a higher civilisation. While some degree of loyalty and friendship could be imagined between master and slave, there was nonetheless an understanding that slavery was a system of forced and unwilling labour, with slaves presenting a problem to be dealt with. Slaves might not have been feared, but they were definitely a 'troublesome property', albeit one that Athenians were happy to live with.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Klees (1998: esp. 100–27, 176–217, 275–96, 374–78, 409–31) is the most comprehensive treatment of this topic. English speakers can consult Garlan (1988: 148–200, esp. 176–84) or Fisher (1993: esp. ch. 6). A fascinating recent

treatment can be found in Hunt (1998: esp. ch. 6, and *passim* for the possible under-reporting of slave issues by Greek writers, also discussed by Klees). I am less confident than he in gauging the level of slave resistance. Cf. also Hunter (1994: esp. 154–84). For a fine recent approach to investigating the possibility of resistance in the ‘silences’ of Greek texts, see Johnstone (1998). The most provocative recent study of Greek slavery (with many insights into the key sources used in this chapter) is duBois (2003). I tend to agree with her (ch. 8) that fable does not constitute a literature of protest. She also discusses many of the key difficulties in the use of Greek tragedy (ch. 6). The use of fragments of drama with no controlling context is particularly dangerous. Considerations of space (and the law of diminishing returns) mean that I do not deal with this material *in extenso* here. Those interested in Drimacus or other rebellions will find further material in Schäfer and Deissler (2003: 289–90, especially the works by A. Fuks).

The seminal work of James Scott (1985, 1990) on Malayan peasants has widened our concept of the range of practices constituting ‘resistance’. Comparative work also reminds us that evidence of resistance may be found in a wide range of media, including material culture (though note the negative conclusions of Morris 1998c). Note also the recent idea of ‘resistant accommodation’, often emphasising the importance of concessions won by slaves. See e.g. Glassman (1991), Garman (1998). Modern debates also warn us against any use of comparative evidence to ‘fill the gaps’. Note, for example, the controversy over levels of slave resistance within African societies: cf. Fisher (2001), with O’Hear (1997) and Glassman (1991). This debate suggests that the difficulties of interpretation examined in this essay are not merely a function of the paucity of ancient evidence.

CHAPTER 9

ARCHAEOLOGY AND GREEK SLAVERY

IAN MORRIS

INTRODUCTION

What can archaeologists contribute to the study of Greek slavery? First, we need to know just what it is we are studying. According to Peter Garnsey (1996: 1), ‘A slave was property. The slave-owner’s rights over his slave-property were total, covering the person as well as the labour of the slave. The slave was kinless, stripped of his or her old social identity in the process of capture, sale and deracination, and denied the capacity to forge new bonds of kinship through marriage alliance. These are the three basic components of slavery.’ Some ancient historians dispute particular elements of this definition or merge chattel slavery into a broader category of unfree labour,¹ but few ancient historians dissent strongly from Garnsey’s phrasing. This immediately raises the issue that dominates this chapter: archaeologists face severe problems operationalising any plausible definition of ancient Greek slavery. Slavery was a legal category, driven by notions of property; and despite considerable ingenuity,² archaeologists cannot dig up property rights. Moses Finley (1985: 25) emphasised this in his influential discussion of the complicated arrangements involving leases, labour and capital in Roman pottery kilns, insisting that ‘archaeological evidence or archaeological analysis *by itself* cannot possibly uncover the legal or economic structure revealed by the Oxyrhynchus papyri or the alternative structures in Arezzo, Puteoli, Lezoux or North Africa’. Walter Scheidel (2003a: 581) has gone further, concluding that ‘it is unreasonable to expect archaeology to make a significant contribution to modern reconstructions of the Greek or Roman slave-systems. In that sense, there will never be a true “archaeology of ancient slavery”.’

In this chapter I suggest that while Scheidel is right to emphasise the problems, his conclusion is overstated. I sketch two ways in which archaeological evidence (defined here as artifacts without writing – thereby excluding inscriptions – plus ecofacts such as slaves’ skeletons and the remains of their meals) may yet make important contributions to understanding

¹ E.g. Ste. Croix 1988. ² E.g. Earle 2002: 325–47.

Greek slavery. First, while Finley was right that archaeological evidence alone cannot elucidate ancient labour regimes, we rarely use archaeological evidence alone. Archaeologists interested in slavery outside the classical world regularly come to the same conclusion.³ Combining different types of evidence produces insights that neither written nor unwritten sources can generate by themselves. In particular, there are parts of the ancient world where, the texts tell us, slaves were so thick on the ground that we can sidestep some problems of status attribution. Secondly, scholars of slavery today ask many questions besides economic and social questions. Attribution remains a problem for new lines of inquiry such as phenomenological approaches to past experience, and the contributions that archaeology has made to date remain rather modest; but in a field so poorly endowed with evidence, every little helps.

ATTIC SLAVE BURIALS

Students of Greek slavery are not the only archaeologists who struggle to use the detritus that people left behind them to interpret socially constructed categories that vary in meaning from one context to another. During the 1990s, gender emerged as a major research topic in archaeology. But despite producing a large literature, archaeologists of gender did not develop robust methods to deal with the kinds of problems of attribution that worried Finley. Lynn Meskell (1999: 83) points out that, despite often being housed in the same university departments as cultural anthropologists, archaeologists did not follow their colleagues' lead in bringing third-wave feminism into gender studies in the 1990s. '[W]hy,' she asks, 'did more conservative fields like history or Classics take up feminism, psychoanalysis and social theory, at a much faster rate than our own discipline?' The answer, I suspect, is fairly obvious to classicists, who probably combine archaeological and textual evidence more consistently than scholars in any other field. The only way archaeologists can raise and (perhaps) answer sophisticated questions about gender is by combining artifacts with texts – as Meskell (2002) herself does for Pharaonic Egypt. Kristian Kristiansen (2004: 85) reaches a similar conclusion about studies of agency more generally: 'a truly contextualised study of agency in the past . . . would probably demand not only richer archaeological materials but also textual and iconographic evidence'.

The basic archaeological problem is dependence on circular reasoning. We cannot distinguish between the activities of free persons and slaves, or representations of either group, unless we first identify material correlates of each; but we cannot identify material correlates of free and slave activity

³ E.g. Orser 1990; Singleton 1995; Alexander 2001; Ames 2001; Baker 2001.

(or representations of them) unless we first know which groups produced which archaeological deposits. One obvious way to square the circle is to look at the remains of rite-of-passage ceremonies, in which people made explicit their assumptions about what Garnsey, in the definition of slavery cited above, called 'social identity'. If some members of the community were slaves, we might reasonably expect that to be a significant aspect of their social identities, and to be given symbolic expression. Funerals are potentially the most useful rituals, expressing the mourners' sense of the ties among the living that were severed by someone's death, and attempting to restore the community without the deceased.⁴ Archaeologically visible burials are of course only one part of larger sets of rituals surrounding death, and this certainly limits our ability to reconstruct people's perceptions of social identities; but on the other hand, burials have the advantage that we can often separate them into discrete ritual acts (unlike, say, accumulations of sacrificial debris from sanctuaries) and link them to specific individuals whose age and sex can be known.⁵ If we could identify funerary practices through which ancient Greeks expressed the servile status of the dead, we could begin systematic comparisons of, for example, the relative nutrition, health, joint wear, age at death, and sex ratios of the free and slave populations; and as techniques for extraction and analysis of ancient DNA improve, the possibilities multiply.

Archaeologists in South Africa have used stable isotope analysis to distinguish foreign-born from local-born people in cemeteries in Cape Town, and have plausibly identified slaves by combining this evidence with bone chemistry and body treatment,⁶ but no such approach has yet been tried in Greece. Absent data of this kind, we are forced to rely on the details of death-rituals alone. The problem, however, is that the symbols through which people express relationships in rituals are culturally specific. Once again, we cannot attribute meaning to the material record unless we already know what ideas stood behind the material signifiers that we find when we excavate graves.⁷ Occasionally, the forms of funerary symbolism are so extreme that we might suppose the buriers were representing the deceased as a person of very low standing, perhaps slaves; but even in these cases, legitimate doubts remain. For instance, we might put the scores of people poisoned in Queen Puabi's tomb at Ur or beheaded in the royal tombs at Anyang in this category. But even in these extreme cases, we do not know whether these were slaves (however defined), prisoners of war, or perhaps loyal, high-ranking functionaries. The Qin First Emperor famously had the skilled artisans who knew the secrets of his tomb – plus all childless royal concubines – buried with him in 210 BC (just two years after burying

⁴ See particularly Huntington and Metcalf 1991. ⁵ Morris 1992: 1–30; Parker Pearson 1999.

⁶ Cox, Sealey, Schrire and Morris 2001. ⁷ Pader 1982.

alive 460 annoyingly critical scholars). Some of these people were surely slaves in the sense defined earlier, but most were probably not.

In ancient Greece, funerary symbolism was in any case hardly ever so extreme. A beheaded skeleton of *c.* 700–675 BC found in pyre A at Eleutherna⁸ and about thirty skeletons bound in iron shackles found on half a dozen classical and Hellenistic sites⁹ might have been slaves; but as in the Sumerian and Chinese cases, other possibilities remain, and the very peculiarity of the examples means they do not provide material correlates that we can apply systematically to identify slave burials.

Most likely, several hundred of the two and a half thousand or so fifth-century BC graves published from Athens belong to slaves, but we do not know which ones. Archaeologists sometimes assume that burials with poor grave goods must be those of slaves, but in fact very few sixth- and fifth-century Greek graves contained more than half a dozen pots and one or two simple bronze or iron ornaments. Variation between burials was low, and between about 500 and 420 BC hardly any graves had monuments. In the fourth century, the lavishness of burials and variations between them increased, but there are no strong positive correlations between grave goods, monuments, disposal forms, or orientation.¹⁰ There are no objective grounds for interpreting any specific practice or combination of practices as signifying that the deceased was a slave.

There are two possible explanations for our inability to tell free and slave apart in Athenian cemeteries. First, it may be that buriers did signify the distinction in their rituals, but we are failing to read the excavated remains properly because we do not understand how ancient Greeks constructed meaning through material symbols. Secondly, when buriers expressed their sense of the gap that a death had left in their lives, they may not have thought the juridical status of the deceased very significant. The first explanation merely restates Finley's negative conclusion about the limitations of our evidence; the second may say something important about slavery in Greek thought.

If we already knew which graves contained slaves, we could test the competing theories easily enough. This is where combining the archaeological and textual records yields results. While we lack documents telling us who occupied particular graves, we do know that certain regions – above all, the Lavreotiki area of south-east Attica, where silver-mining was concentrated – contained more slaves than most areas in Greece. The number of mine slaves in the Lavreotiki probably reached about twenty-five thousand around 420 BC, declined after 413, then revived to roughly thirty-five thousand by 340.¹¹ The Lavreotiki covered 10–15 per cent of Attica's total area.

⁸ Stampolidis 1995. ⁹ Thompson 2003: 222.

¹⁰ Morris 1992: 103–55; 1998a. ¹¹ Lauffer 1979: 140–71.

Most scholars now agree that the Attic population peaked around 350,000 people in the 430s BC, declining during the Peloponnesian War then recovering to about 250,000 in the later fourth century.¹² If this population were distributed evenly across the countryside, there would have been 35,000 to 50,000 people in the Lavreotiki in the later fifth century and perhaps 25,000 to 40,000 in the later fourth, meaning that 50–70 per cent of the people in the Lavreotiki around 420 BC were slaves, and nearly all of them were slaves around 340. Other archaeological data seem roughly consistent with this. Hans Lohmann's (1993) surveys have revealed an unusual pattern of dispersed farmsteads in classical times. There is room for debate over Lohmann's interpretation,¹³ but if he is correct, we can conclude on the one hand that the Lavreotiki had a substantial population of free farmers, and on the other that its population density was lower than Attica's main plains. The presence of towers on so many of the farms may also mean that slaves were common in agriculture in this area, as well as in mining.¹⁴ Fourth-century mine leases suggest that slaves were normally employed in teams no larger than thirty,¹⁵ but since there were sometimes dozens of silver washeries in a cluster,¹⁶ there must have been groups of slaves hundreds strong. The number of uncontrolled variables rules out precise estimates of the slave:free ratio in the Lavreotiki, but it seems to me that in the late fifth century it must have been between 1:1 and 2:1, and by the late fourth may have surpassed 3:1. Estimates of slave:free ratios in other parts of Attica can only be guesses, but they must have been lower, perhaps varying between 1:10 and 1:4.

Many free people were buried in the Lavreotiki and many slaves in Athens. But if the numbers proposed above are roughly correct, comparing cemeteries in the Lavreotiki with those in other parts of Attica should reveal whether buriers represented slaves differently in death from free people. I devote the rest of this section to the one large cemetery from the Lavreotiki that has been published properly.¹⁷ Machines destroyed much of it, but 219 graves survived. They spanned the fifth century, clustering in the years 470–440 BC. They were laid in fairly neat rows along the banks of a stream just outside Laurium. Metalworking workshops, washeries and cisterns surrounded the burials, and the buriers reused an inscription recording the sale of rights to a mine as a cover slab for gr. 1.25,¹⁸ all suggesting that this was a cemetery of silver-miners. The excavator Salliora-Oikononakou proposed (1985: 131–2) that it belonged to Maroneia, the site of the great silver strike of 483/2 BC ([Aristotle], *Constitution of Athens* 22.7). If she is correct, some of the bones in this cemetery belong to the people who made Athens' victory at Salamis possible.

¹² E.g. Hansen 1985. ¹³ Cf. Osborne 1992. ¹⁴ Morris and Papadopoulos 2005: 190–200.

¹⁵ Crosby 1950: 194, 202. ¹⁶ Kakavoyannis 1989. ¹⁷ Salliora-Oikononakou 1985.

¹⁸ Salliora-Oikononakou 1985: 128.

Table 9.1 *Mean numbers of artifacts per burial in fifth-century BC Attica*

	Adults	Children
Vases		
Laurium	0.57	0.70
Rest of Attica	2.80	2.70
Metal objects		
Laurium	0.05	0.05
Rest of Attica	0.25	0.10

Sources: Salliora-Oikononakou 1985; Morris 1998b

Roughly one burial in five was a child. We would expect a cemetery reflecting the demographic realities of a normal ancient community to have roughly equal numbers of adult and sub-adult skeletons, which is just what we find on many classical sites.¹⁹ Ancient historians often assume that most miners in the Lavreotiki were men, in which case we might be surprised that the number of children in this cemetery is so high, rather than so low; but on the other hand, mine-owners in many societies have seen advantages in child labourers, who can work in narrower shafts. No skeletal analysis has been published, so we have no idea of the sex ratio of the adults.

The types of grave goods at Laurium were typical of those in contemporary cemeteries. Almost half the metal objects (six out of fourteen) were strigils; the only surprising find was a worn silver coin in the badly eroded gr. 1.6. Almost two-thirds of the ceramic grave goods were lekythoi (81 out of 125), which were more than eleven times as common as the next class of vessels (eighty-one lekythoi: seven lekanides). Like most Attic graves, the Laurium burials contained no exotic vases or fine black- or red-figure work.

However, the Laurium cemetery differs from mainstream Attic practices in other ways. Even by the restrained standards of fifth-century Greece, it is poor (Table 9.1). A typical grave at Laurium had less than one-fifth as many objects as a typical grave elsewhere in Attica. The Laurium burials that did contain grave goods were not very different from graves in other parts of Attica, typically holding a pair of lekythoi and perhaps one other pot; the major difference is that 70 per cent of the intact adult graves and 68 per cent of the intact child graves at Laurium held no grave goods at all. The large number of graves without pots at Laurium produces

¹⁹ Morris 1992: 77–8.

Table 9.2 *Distribution of artifacts in burial in fifth-century BC burials in Attica, as measured by Gini's coefficient of inequality (G)*

	Adults	Children
Vases		
Laurium	.853	.786
Rest of Attica	.594	.555
Metal objects		
Laurium	.983	.950
Rest of Attica	.924	.967

Sources: Salliora-Oikononakou 1985; Morris 1998b

much higher scores on Gini's coefficient of inequality²⁰ than other Attic cemeteries (Table 9.2). The G scores for metal hardly differ from those of other Attic cemeteries, because the numbers of metal grave goods are so small everywhere that fewer than one grave in ten ever contains metal. It is possible that empty graves are under-reported in the rest of Attica, since so many classical cemeteries are known only from salvage archaeology (if building operations disturbed one or two burials with no grave goods, we simply would not know that they dated to the fifth century BC). This must happen, but probably does not explain much of the pattern. In fully published Attic cemeteries, the percentage of burials without pottery grave goods is much lower: 28 per cent in the fifth-century Syndagma Square cemetery,²¹ for instance, and just 21 per cent in the Kerameikos.²² We might compensate for the impact of fifth-century burials without pottery that have gone unrecognised by reducing the mean number of vessels in Attic graves in Table 9.1 to around 2.5 for adults and 2.4 for children, and increasing the G scores for Attic graves in Table 9.2 to around .65 for adults and .60 for children. On the other hand, Tables 9.1 and 9.2 might understate the difference between cemeteries in the mining region and the rest of Attica, since graves found by chance in the former region are far more likely to have no contents, and therefore to go unreported. Either way, the difference between the Laurium cemetery and the rest of Attica remains strong.

²⁰ Gini's coefficient of inequality (G) measures the evenness of the distribution of a trait, from 0 (all graves contain exactly the same number of objects, whether pots or metal ornaments) to 1 (all known pots were found in one grave, and no other graves held any examples). Most introductory books on statistics explain how to calculate G.

²¹ Charitonides 1958.

²² Kübler 1976.

We cannot assume that any particular grave at Laurium belongs to a slave while another in the Kerameikos belongs to a free person; almost certainly, Laurium includes free people and the Kerameikos slaves. Nor can we assume that the 30 per cent of Laurium adults with grave goods were free and the 21 per cent of Kerameikos adults with no grave goods were slaves. But overall, the commonsense assumption that mining slaves received fewer grave goods than free Athenians is apparently justified.

There are also similarities and differences between the treatment of the corpse at Laurium and in the rest of Attica. The main adult burial form at Laurium, as in the rest of Attica, was individual supine extended inhumation in a pit grave. Roughly 75 per cent of adults were inhumed in pit graves, as compared to about 70 per cent in the rest of Attica between 500 and 425 BC (the Attic figure falls to 33 per cent between 425 and 400 BC, and 30 per cent in the fourth century,²³ but few of the Laurium graves date after 425). In three of the Laurium pit graves (2 per cent of the total), the skeletons were laid on one side, and in three more the bodies were flexed. More significantly, sixteen graves were double burials. These represent 8 per cent of the buried adults, whereas less than one grave in a hundred was a double burial in the rest of Attica.

But the most striking difference between Laurium and the rest of Attica is in the use of stone-lined cist graves. At Laurium, 32 of the 147 intact adult graves are cists (22 per cent of the total), while only 5 per cent of adults were inhumed in cists in the rest of Attica. Cremation (nearly always primary cremation, using no urn) was the second-favourite rite in Attica as a whole between 500 and 425 BC, accounting for about 20 per cent of adults (increasing to almost one-third of the burials between 425 and 400 BC, when cremation was the most popular burial form). Yet only three intact adult burials at Laurium were cremations (2 per cent of the total).

Children's burial forms were also distinctive. Elsewhere in Attica inhumation in large pots (usually amphoras) was the preferred rite, accounting for nearly 60 per cent of the dead until 425 BC, and 30 per cent between 425 and 400 BC. Inhumation in larnakes (clay tubs) was the second-favourite Attic rite until 425 BC, and after 425 actually displaced pot burials in popularity. Together, pots and larnakes accounted for over 80 per cent of fifth-century Attic child burials. At Laurium, however, only seven of the thirty-seven child burials (19 per cent) are in amphoras, and none in larnakes. By contrast, 54 per cent of Laurium children are in pit graves, compared to 13 per cent in the rest of fifth-century Attica, and 27 per cent in cists, which hardly ever occurs in other Attic cemeteries.

Possibly the Laurium burial ground had a special area for the young, and the scarcity of amphora burials in the published cemetery is the result

²³ Morris 1992: Fig. 32.

of the destruction of that area; but I suspect that it reflects in fact a demographic peculiarity in this community. Athenians preferred amphora burial for babies and infants, who dominated child mortality in normal ancient communities, and used pits, tile graves and occasionally cists for older children. Many of the cist and pit graves at Laurium were 1.2–1.3 metres long, strongly suggesting that the living community had more older children and fewer infants than other towns in Attica – just what we would expect if children were brought to Laurium as mine-workers, rather than being bred there in families.

But the frequency of cist burial for older children as well as adults, again setting Laurium apart from the rest of Attica, might be important. Whereas excavations on early-modern slave-worked plantations in North America have recovered pottery combining various West African ceramic traditions with European styles (Singleton and Bograd 2000) and traces of West African styles of housing, no excavation report from the Lavreotiki mentions anything at all like the distinctive pottery and housing styles of the slaves' probable homelands in Anatolia and the Balkans (see below, p. 186). We should not expect chattel slaves imported to Attica to cling tenaciously to their ancestral burial customs as a marker of an essential ethnic identity;²⁴ just like the Greeks who created new sets of burial customs when they emigrated to Sicily,²⁵ we should expect them to develop new practices appropriate to their new identities. But the precise ways their rituals developed in bondage can be very informative. In an earlier study I suggested that slaves who were brought into the Lavreotiki took on material traditions strikingly similar to those of the master class much faster than slaves transported to North America twenty-three centuries later, perhaps because Athenian culture was unusually pervasive, preventing the formation of competing value systems.²⁶ If mine slaves brought cist burial with them from their homelands and maintained this custom as their death-rituals evolved in Attica, they may have retained control of important parts of their religious lives.

We have at least a rough sense of where the Laurium slaves came from, because 33 of the 104 names recorded in (mostly fourth-century) inscriptions from the Lavreotiki have ethnic associations. Twenty of these are Anatolian (including nine from Phrygia and six from Paphlagonia), and two more are Thracian. The 'Attic Stelai' of the late fifth century, listing slaves owned by rich men at Athens, contain thirty-two names with ethnic associations, of which thirteen are Thracian and another ten Anatolian. Slaves' names do not necessarily reflect origins; in the first century BC Varro (*On the Latin Language* 8.21) noted that Romans sometimes named slaves after where they bought them, not where they came from. But it would be

²⁴ Cf. Jamieson 1995: 39–41.

²⁵ Shepherd 1995.

²⁶ Morris 1998b.

surprising if Athenians were buying slaves who originally came from, say, Egypt or Italy at markets in Phrygia; overall the two sets of inscriptions seem to confirm the impression in the literary texts that most slaves came from Anatolia and the Balkans.²⁷

Is extended supine inhumation in cists a legacy of origins in either of these regions? The burials of Thrace are well known and include a bewildering variety of customs.²⁸ Thrace's spectacular warrior inhumations, in pit and cist graves or large stone and timber chamber tombs under vast tumuli, are familiar to all classical archaeologists; but humbler burials – presumably more relevant to the kind of people who worked in the Laurium mines – include poorer inhumations in cists, pits and clay sarcophagi, along with many cremations in urns, some of them under smaller mounds and others in flat cemeteries. The Laurium rites could reflect Thracian origins, but it is not at all obvious that they do. In Anatolia, by contrast, first-millennium BC cemeteries are poorly known. The famous tumulus MM at Gordion – perhaps the burial place of King Midas or his father *c.* 720–700 BC – was followed by numerous smaller mounds, containing inhumations in wooden chamber tombs²⁹ and cremations in shallow pits. Simple cremation graves were common at other cemeteries, while inhumation in rock-cut chamber tombs came to characterise highland sites in Phrygia.³⁰

Spectacular rock-cut tombs are known from classical, Hellenistic, and Roman Lycia,³¹ along with simpler cremations and inhumations in large storage jars under small mounds.³²

The popularity of inhumations in cist graves at Laurium might reflect Thracian slaves controlling their own death-rituals and preserving their ancestral traditions. But we should also note that buriers in the Lavreotiki had favoured cist graves for inhumations long before the fifth century. In Protogeometric through Middle Geometric times (*c.* 1025–750 BC), Attic buriers almost always cremated dead adults and placed their ashes in amphoras. Child burials are very rare, but most involved amphoras for babies and pit graves for older children. Between about 750 and 700 BC inhumation regained favour for adults, and at the end of this period child graves again become visible. Burial rites varied strongly both within and between cemeteries in the late eighth century, suggesting multiple interpretative communities that disagreed on the appropriate treatment of the dead, but at most sites with large samples (particularly Athens, Eleusis and Merenda), supine inhumation in pit graves was the norm for adults and older children, and inhumation in pots for babies. Buriers at

²⁷ Morris 1998b: 201–2; see T. E. Rihll's and David Braund's chapters in this volume.

²⁸ Archibald 1998: 48–78, 151–76. ²⁹ Kohler 1995.

³⁰ Haspels 1971: 112–38; Mellink 1991: 631–4. ³¹ Kjeldsen and Zahle 1975; Cevik 2003.

³² Mellink 1991: 660–1.

Table 9.3 *Burial types at Thorikos, c. 850–500 BC*

	c. 850	750–700	700–600	600–500
Adults Inhumations	0	13	0	1
Pit	0	1	1	0
Cremations				
Urn	1	1	0	0
Primary	0	0	16	0
Children Inhumations	0	4		2
Pit	0	1	0	0
Pot	1	7	29	6

Sources: Morris 1987: 227; 1998b: 32

eighth-century Trachones and perhaps Marathon favoured primary cremation (i.e. without urns) for adults; but at Thorikos (Table 9.3) and Anavyssos, supine inhumation in cist graves was normal for adults and older children. Buriers at Anavyssos even had a penchant for multiple adult inhumations in cists.³³ Thorikos lies in the heart of the Lavreotiki, just four kilometres from Laurium, and Anavyssos is at the region's western edge, ten kilometres from Laurium. Seventh-century buriers at Thorikos and Anavyssos followed the general Attic custom of primary cremation for adults. At Anavyssos cremations continued in the sixth century, and only one sixth-century adult burial (in a cist) is known from Thorikos. With this limited evidence we cannot prove that the fifth-century Laurium cist inhumations are part of a local tradition going back to the eighth century, but the fact that the Lavreotiki was the only region in Attica where people in both the eighth century and the fifth century made extensive use of cist graves for adults and older children suggests that local factors (perhaps the abundance of schist and limestone in this very rocky region) probably had more to do with the classical cist graves at Laurium than the burial customs of the slaves' areas of origin.

I draw two conclusions from the Laurium cemetery. First, its peculiarities do not offer a key for distinguishing slave from free burials in other contexts. The use of cist graves and perhaps also the use of the same grave cutting for several adults probably reflect local traditions in the Lavreotiki rather than Anatolian or Balkan customs. However, if we find other Attic graveyards with offerings as poor as Laurium and equally high numbers of graves with no artifacts at all, we might interpret these as slave-dominated cemeteries. But large concentrations of slaves may be unique to the mine gangs of the Lavreotiki. Elsewhere in Attica most slaves probably lived in

³³ Cf. Morris 1987: 222–8; 1998c: 32–3; and more recent reports in *Archaiologikon Deltion* since vol. 44 (1989).

small groups and may have been buried with their owners' families. For example, inscriptions in the fourth-century Tomb of the Messenians in Athens probably name three slaves among the dead,³⁴ but we cannot tell which of the fifty-five graves they lie in; or whether more of the dead were slaves. Even if the treatment of dead slaves at Laurium can be generalised to the whole of Attica, small groups of slaves in graves with few or no vessels will disappear against the background of restrained burials of free people.

Second, the slaves' low archaeological distinctiveness in death may itself be significant, supporting the impression created by settlement remains. Comparisons with North America are again instructive. The textual evidence for New World slave burial is much stronger than that from Greece, but Americanists actually have even less archaeological evidence than Hellenists – in part because until the 1990s few North American archaeologists were very interested in slave burials, and in part because the concerns of descendent communities in the last decade³⁵ have restrained excavators. We also know very little about burial customs in West Africa; ethnographers' accounts tend to be highly normative, and few excavations have taken place in the vast area from which slaves were taken. The little work that has been done indicates enormous regional diversity in West Africa, with positioning of the body (e.g. lying on one side or buried in a sitting position) and placement of grave goods on the surface above the grave being the only rites that are both distinctively different from Euro-American practices and relatively widespread in West Africa.³⁶

The main New World sample is a cemetery of 104 graves dating to 1660–1820 from the Newton Plantation on Barbados.³⁷ One grave dating *c.* 1700 contained a woman buried face-down, recalling West African treatment of witches,³⁸ while another contained several grave goods of African type, including a possibly Ghanaian clay pipe. But otherwise, the Newton graves were supine extended inhumations in pits with few offerings, differing little from contemporary Euro-American burials. Fifty-five of the fifty-eight graves for which alignment could be determined were East–West, like Euro-American burials. Textual sources mention African-Americans placing grave goods above burials of both slaves and masters,³⁹ but the practice is hard to document archaeologically, since such artifacts are easily moved out of context (Jamieson 1995: 50).

By the nineteenth century, African-American burials seem archaeologically indistinguishable from Euro-American burials,⁴⁰ though the processes of convergence remain obscure. Masters regularly complained that their slaves maintained African rituals; in 1712 the Reverend John Sharpe was

³⁴ Bruckner 1909: 100.

³⁵ E.g. Harrington 1993.

³⁶ Jamieson 1995: 41–3.

³⁷ Handler and Lange 1978.

³⁸ Handler 1996.

³⁹ Raboteaux 1978: 83–5.

⁴⁰ Jamieson 1995: 51–4.

horrified to find that in New York even Christian slaves were ‘buried in the Common by those of their country and complexion without the office; on the contrary the Heathenish rites are performed at the grave by their countrymen’ (quoted in Raboteaux 1977: 66). Some masters banned their slaves from holding funerals, apparently out of fear that they provided a symbolic focus for resistance.⁴¹ In 1724 the Catholic Church in New Orleans passed a law requiring all Christian slaves to have Christian-style funerals, and thirteen burials in the period 1720–1810 excavated in a slave cemetery seem to have followed this requirement.⁴² In Newport, Rhode Island, both the gravestones bought by masters for favoured slaves in the eighteenth century and those erected by African-Americans themselves after emancipation in 1800 closely followed Christian, Euro-American models.⁴³ Some masters opposed Christianising slaves’ life, while others used conversion to justify slavery itself; but on the whole, bringing African-Americans into the Church only seems to have become a major concern in the late eighteenth century.⁴⁴

I see no way to know whether the free men who ran the Laurium mines and washeries tried to control slaves’ rituals, dictating that they follow local funerary customs, or whether the slaves chose to imitate Attic practices (or some combination of the two). Certainly the Lavreotiki had no equivalent of the Christian Church, let alone the Great Awakening, encouraging proselytising among the masters and slaves; but before assuming that the Attic slaves were victims of a hegemonic civic culture that monopolised active agency, we should bear in mind that the sixth through fourth centuries BC saw the partial hellenisation of material culture all around the Mediterranean, including Thrace and coastal Anatolia (though less so in Phrygia). Greek styles of pottery, housing, burial and worship of the gods won varying degrees of popularity from Syria to Spain, regardless of the enormous differences between the social structures and cultural traditions of these regions. This striking pattern – one of the largest cultural transformations in world history – strongly suggests that people of all kinds wanted to drink wine from black-glaze kylikes, live in rectilinear courtyard houses and bury their dead individually in pit graves with Attic-style lekythoi. Mine slaves brought by force to the Lavreotiki may have felt the same way.

ARCHAEOLOGY AND SLAVE EXPERIENCE

A second archaeological approach to Greek slavery through material culture involves looking not at slavery’s economic and social structures, but trying

⁴¹ Genovese 1972: 194–202.

⁴² Owsley, Orser, Mann, Moore-Jansen and Montgomery 1987.

⁴³ Garman 1994. ⁴⁴ Raboteaux 1977: 96–108, 145–9.

to re-experience slaves' lives through the immediacy of physical remains. This phenomenological turn⁴⁵ avoids some of the problems of attribution discussed above but does so largely by lowering the bar on conventional scholarly standards of falsification. All the same, even those archaeologists whose confidence in their own powers of empathy is greatest must recognise that most aspects of slaves' lives – their everyday drudgery, their friendships and hatreds, their efforts just to get by – are indistinguishable from the same aspects of the lives of free Greeks.

Unambiguous material traces of Greek slaves are, in fact, rather few. Greek archaeology has produced no testimony of slavery quite as immediate as the thirty-six inscribed metal slave collars and *bullae* (bronze tags for attachment to plain metal collars) known from Roman Italy, North Africa and Sardinia. The inscriptions on these collars are normally some variant of the simple Latin formula *tene me ne fugia(m)*, 'hold on to me so I don't run away'. More elaborate versions give the owner's name and address, and mention rewards.⁴⁶ However, several Greek sites have yielded up iron shackles and fetters, sometimes still attached to skeletons.⁴⁷ As noted above, these unfortunates could have been criminals executed while still weighed down by iron chains, rather than slaves. That may be the explanation of iron rings found with skeletons near Sparta, plausibly interpreted as part of the Kaiadas, a gorge into which Spartan officials threw condemned men and sub-standard babies.⁴⁸ On the other hand, the excavators of eight skeletons with ankle chains at Akanthos suggested that the individuals concerned were among the two thousand prisoners Arrian (*Anabasis* 1.16) says that Alexander sent back to Macedonia to labour in fetters after the battle of the Granicus in 334 BC.⁴⁹ The most macabre find is a pair of iron fetters from Kamariza, in the centre of the Lavreotiki, with a chunk of human anklebone rusted in place. It is quite likely that the legs imprisoned in these fetters belonged to a slave. If so, we should probably also assume that the fetters were being used to punish the slaves, since shackled miners would hardly be productive.⁵⁰

Slaves may have used the iron tools found in and around mineshafts in the Lavreotiki, and several archaeologists have proposed that specific rooms at some sites were slave quarters. There is, however, no positive evidence for this,⁵¹ and it is far from obvious just what archaeologists could find that would actually demonstrate that specific rooms were or were not slave quarters.⁵² Other archaeologists have built on Strabo's comment (14.5.2) that the market on Hellenistic Delos could process tens of thousands of

⁴⁵ Cf. Shanks 1992; Barrett 1994; Tilley 1994. ⁴⁶ Thompson 2003: 238–40.

⁴⁷ Thompson 2003: 222. ⁴⁸ Themelis 1982. ⁴⁹ Faklaris 1986; Savvopoulou 1987.

⁵⁰ Lauffer 1979: 52–6, 269–70. ⁵¹ Thompson 2003: 144–56.

⁵² Cf. Klees 1998: 74–80; Nevett 1999: 40, 174.

slaves per day to argue that the compound known as the ‘agora of the Italians’, which has just two narrow entrances and lacks the shops found in similar settings, was this very market. Others deny this.⁵³ As with the claims to have identified slave quarters in the silver washeries, the archaeological evidence is simply not adequate to resolve the debate. A slave graffito has been found in a Hellenistic house on Delos,⁵⁴ but that has no probative value.

Sarah Morris and John Papadopoulos (2005) have identified a loose correlation between regions known for capital-intensive exploitation of the countryside (e.g. quarrying, mining, viticulture) and regions where classical and Hellenistic houses and farms often have towers. Arguing that slave labourers were one aspect of such capital investment, they ‘propose treating towers as material evidence for the labor of slaves in agriculture and industry’ (2005: 183–4). The rough fit between capital-intensive activities and the distribution of towers, as well as some of the details of the towers (e.g. that their doors often locked from the outside) are certainly consistent with their claim that towers were regularly used to house slaves. However, as they point out (2005: 199), the fit is far from perfect: towers had many functions as well as – or instead of – holding unfree labour; and some capital-intensive regions, such as Chios (famous both for its wine production and its large numbers of slaves), have no convincing examples of towers.

When we visit Greek towers, we may be able to experience distant echoes of what life was like for slaves, but we can assume neither that any specific tower held slaves (permanently or temporarily) nor that farms and workshops lacking towers did not include slaves.

REPRESENTATIONS OF SLAVES IN GREEK ART

Finally, we might turn to representations of slaves in figural art. We rarely know whether representations of slaves were made by slaves, catering for the tastes of free patrons/purchasers, or by free artisans. At least sixteen of the forty-four sculptors working on the Erechtheum frieze at Athens in 408–407 BC were slaves (*IG I² 374*), while sculptors such as Pheidias and Praxiteles were free men of wealth and influence.⁵⁵ Vase painters are even more obscure but probably generally had lower status than sculptors. By the fourth century gentlemen were expected to know how to draw, but not how to paint on pots. The men who signed their own work Lydos (‘the Lydian’) and Skythes (‘the Scythian’) may have been slaves or resident aliens. So

⁵³ Compare Coarelli 1982 and Le Roy 1993. ⁵⁴ Thompson 2003: 63.

⁵⁵ Stewart 1990: 65–72.

far as we can tell, Athenian potteries were small operations requiring little capital.⁵⁶ The Brygos ('the Brygian', a Balkan tribe) and Amasis (the Greek version of the common Egyptian name Ahmoses) who signed their names on some pots followed by the word *epoiese* ('he made it') may have been kiln-owners rather than (or as well as) potters, but if so they were probably slave agents or moderately prosperous metics, not sixth- and fifth-century BC Josiah Wedgwoods.

Classical Greek statues, on the other hand, were used mostly as grave markers and religious offerings, and their ideal forms left little room for obviously realistic representations of slaves. Such representations only become common in high Hellenistic art (c. 220–150 BC), particularly in Egypt. For example, Roman gems and coins preserve the arrangement of a group showing the flaying of Marsyas, perhaps set up at Alexandria in the 210s BC, and copies survive of a muscular Scythian slave, gazing up at the bound Marsyas while sharpening the knife that will slice off his flesh.⁵⁷ Other high and late Hellenistic statues show drunken old women, tired peasants and flabby fishermen. Art historians often refer to these as examples of a 'low mimetic' mode, probably meant to evoke servile characteristics, if not portray actual slaves. The repulsiveness of these figures reminds many scholars of Aristotle's comments (*Poetics* 1448a1–6, 1449a32) on representing morally inferior persons as ugly and therefore comic. Most of these Hellenistic statues are known only from Roman copies, so we do not know much about the contexts of their display, although private gardens seem the most likely settings. It certainly says something about Hellenistic aristocrats that they enjoyed smiling at caricature slaves as they wandered between the fountains and arbours of their gated parks, but we should remember that our interpretation of these statues as possible slaves rests largely on Aristotle: if we understand Hellenistic slavery better after gazing on the statues, it is because we see the images through a literary lens.

The most explicit Greek representation of slaves is a battered marble tombstone dating between 100 BC and AD 100, found at Amphipolis. The lowest of its three low-relief panels shows ten slaves linked by neck chains, and the tombstone is inscribed, 'Aulus Capreilius Timotheus, freedman of Aulus, slave-trader (*somatemporos*).'⁵⁸ Greeks perhaps did not hold slave traders in such low regard as did nineteenth-century Americans, but Timotheus is nevertheless the only ancient known to us who singled out this aspect of his life to commemorate on his tombstone. That Timotheus was himself a former slave (taking the name of his former master, Aulus Capreilius, at the time of his liberation) makes his decision seem still more remarkable to most people in our own age.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ Arafat and Morgan 1989.

⁵⁷ Stewart 1990: 216, pls. 748–52.

⁵⁸ Finley 1977: 154–66.

Vase painters at Athens began developing schemata to represent slaves as early as c. 530 BC, when Exekias made a bearded (and therefore adult) groom distinctly smaller than the other men in the scene. Their visual language grew richer in the fifth century, to include rough woollen tunics, goatskin jackets, dog-skin caps, laced boots and sandals, short pudding-basin haircuts, pointed beards, coarse faces, large penises, squatting, and above all small stature (Wielowiejski 1956; Himmelmann 1971; Ziomecki 1975; Raeck 1981). This trend parallels tragedians' growing concern with differentiating Greeks from inferior, barbaric others,⁵⁹ creating what Garland (1988: 19) calls 'a "rhetoric of otherness" founded upon certain textual constraints and a certain shared knowledge, which as a general rule turns the slave into the reverse of a free man – that is, a subversive incarnation of incompleteness and disorder'. Like the Hellenistic servile statues, the vase painters' schemata tell us a certain amount about customers' ideas of what slaves should look like, but the reduction of status to simple visual cues once again limits their usefulness.

When we look at statues or figures on vases marked as servile by such cues, we may or may not be gazing on the features of actual slaves who lived over two thousand years ago. Without better textual evidence, we simply cannot say. We should also beware of letting Aristotle's comments in the *Poetics* trap us into assuming too much about what could or could not be the face of a slave. One of the best-known faces of 1850s England belongs to Fanny Cornforth, a prostitute, who served as Dante Gabriel Rossetti's model in his painting *The Beloved* (for which an American slave modelled a second figure; Wilson 2002: 160–3). Who is to say that the beautiful and solemn marble Aphrodites of the first century BC do not reflect the features of ancient slaves better than 'low life' shepherdesses and market women?

CONCLUSION

Finley's firm belief that little can be known about ancient slavery from archaeological evidence or analysis alone is certainly justified, but Scheidel's suggestion that 'there will never be a true "archaeology of ancient slavery"' is, I believe, too pessimistic. He passed this judgement in reviewing a thorough but conventional survey of Greco-Roman slavery,⁶⁰ and this, I think, highlights the real problems. Prehistoric archaeologists interested in gender and agency have been too willing to solve the attribution problem by lowering conventional standards of empirical testing, while classical archaeologists have been too willing to give up asking meaningful questions and to content themselves with catalogues. What Scheidel

⁵⁹ Hall 1989: 137–8.

⁶⁰ Schumacher 2001.

calls ‘a true “archaeology of ancient slavery”’ calls for a sustained attack on methodological problems. Exploiting the fact that texts give us some confidence in assuming that some areas (like the classical Lavreotiki) had high densities of slaves provides one starting point; improved techniques in physical anthropology provide another. But the main question is whether classical archaeologists want to move beyond lists of shackles and ugly statues.

CHAPTER 10

SLAVERY IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

DOROTHY J. THOMPSON

INTRODUCTION

When Alexander of Macedon conquered the former Persian empire in the last third of the fourth century BC, the different forms of dependence that he found there seem likely to have exceeded those familiar to the Greek world from which he came. Following this conquest much was left in place, but the spread of Greek-style chattel slavery represented a real change in the Hellenistic world. While attempting, therefore, to place chattel slavery within a wider context of dependence, this chapter will in part be concerned with one particular aspect of the impact of Greek rule on new areas of the East – the introduction of chattel slavery to areas where previously it had not formed part of the culture. The geographical scope of this inquiry is of necessity wide, since the new Greek-speaking world stretched from Sicily in the west to Afghanistan and the bounds of India in the east. The old world of mainland Greece, the islands of the Aegean and the coasts of Asia Minor and the Black Sea remain relevant, but changes there were of lesser note than those in the new Macedonian kingdoms of the East – in Seleucid Asia, Attalid Pergamum and Ptolemaic Egypt. From Egypt, papyri preserved in the dry desert sands provide an ever-expanding source of information on the role played by slavery in at least this one of the Hellenistic kingdoms. Papyri, indeed, together with cuneiform tablets from Mesopotamia and inscriptions from elsewhere, provide most of our evidence, alongside the little we can glean from the texts of ancient historians or, even less reliably, from Hellenistic literature. If this chapter concentrates principally on data from Egypt, that simply represents the distribution of our different sources.

Chattel slavery, comprising the complete subjection of one person to another, combined with the suppression of the former's rights to any form of freedom – the rights, for instance, of movement, of legal representation, of marriage or the choice of sexual partner – was well known in the earlier Greek world (see Chapters 2 to 9 above). As an institution, chattel slavery certainly continued after Alexander. It was its geographical scope that changed, as the institution accompanied those Greeks who settled overseas in new territories. Here they were joined in rule by hellenising natives who

increasingly adopted Greek ways, including chattel slavery, in areas where it had not been practised before. Along with changes in the economy, in which the labour of slaves was now important, the spread of monetisation can be charted in both the taxation of and market in slaves. The balance between town and country was shifting. Changes in attitudes to wealth and wealth production, in family life and household make-up, were all bound up with the spread of Greek-style chattel slavery.

Before considering these developments in greater detail, a brief survey of other forms of dependent labour may serve to set the broader picture.

NON-SLAVE DEPENDENCE IN THE HELLENISTIC WORLD

Rural peasants

Drawing the line is never easy and, as remarked on more than once in the previous chapters, the boundary between dependence and slavery is often hard to define. Both are characterised by varying degrees of unfreedom. Seleucid Asia, a kingdom composed of many lands and peoples, was probably home to the widest variety of dependent statuses. Any attempt to make sense of what we find recorded must take account of the problem of the terminology employed in the Hellenistic world when Greek (and later Roman) writers used familiar words and concepts to describe what in effect were often very non-Greek forms of dependence. So, for instance, when Isocrates (*Epistulae* 3.5) advised King Philip II of Macedon that he should conquer Asia and make the barbarians subservient to him, it was the vocabulary of Helotage that he used.

Agricultural labour in the Hellenistic world is frequently portrayed as tied to the land or locality. For Greek writers, it was the Helots of Sparta or the Penestae of Thessaly who were regularly adduced to describe the position of native peoples working the land for either the citizens of Greek cities or for a dynast or king. Similarly in Latin, Varro wrote of the same groups as *obaerati* or debt-slaves (*On Agriculture* 1.17.2; cf. Papazoglou 1997: 138). When we meet such comparisons we must be wary of what is implied. Not quite the normal form of chattel slave is probably the closest meaning we can reach. And, for many such dependent peoples, little is known beyond their names.¹ The Mariandyni, for instance, were a native people long enslaved to the inhabitants of Heraclea Pontica whom they provided with labour in return for the provision of their needs; according to Posidonius (in Athenaeus 6.263d), they were also not to be sold beyond their own territory. Known as 'tribute-bearers', *dorophoroi*, to avoid the bitterness of the label 'slaves' (*oiketai*), the Mariandyni were neither slaves

¹ Davies 1984: 299–301; Garlan 1988: 102–6.

nor free and are compared by more than one ancient writer to Helots or Penestae.² In Caria, to work the land there were Leleges, whom the local historian Philip of Theangela calls *oiketai* (Ath. 6.271b); and in Byzantium, according to Phylarchos, the Bithynians were controlled like Helots.³

The essential nature of the dependence of these different rural groups may best be seen in a letter of Alexander granting autonomy to the Prienians in Naulochum; he lays claim to control of the land and its inhabitants in the immediate neighbourhood (RO 86.19–13):

... the land of the Myrs[eleioi and] of the Pe[dieis, ... and the] countryside, I acknowledge as mine, and that those living in these villages shall pay the tribute.

It is clear that this territory was carefully defined and unavailable for acquisition by others. Later it seems the Pedieis became attached to the city of Priene (*OGIS* 1.11.6; cf. *RC* 8B.2–3 with *RC* 6). Thus those in similar states of dependence might be known by different local names. Wherever we find details for the rural peasantry of Seleucid Asia we find it closely identified with its home of origin and owing dues to a lord, be he the king or a local landlord.

Besides these subservient groups with their special names were those simply known as *laoi*, who worked the land for others. But who exactly were these *laoi*, what was their position and to what extent do they belong in a study of slavery? Just a handful of texts can help to answer these questions. They come from various periods and from different kingdoms and, since close reading is crucial to their interpretation, the relevant sections will be quoted in the following discussion.

As found in the epigraphical record, *laoi* were the native peasants of Seleucid and Attalid Asia.⁴ Such a neutral translation is probably safest, though others are regularly used. For just as Greeks used the language of Helotry to describe the role of the Mariandyni and others, so in modern historiography the vocabulary of feudalism and serfdom has often been employed in an attempt to define these *laoi*.⁵ *Laoi* enjoyed no real independence but were regularly tied to the villages where they lived on the land that they worked. That they were liable to transfer together with that land is clear from various texts, which also shed further light on their rights to movement and matters of jurisdiction. So, how far – if at all – did *laoi* enjoy freedom of movement, and what was their legal status?

A close connection between people and place is found already during the early years of Eumenes' campaigns in the East. On one occasion,

² Pl. *Leg.* 6.776 c–d; Strabo 12.3.4; Pausanias 5.26.7; Ath. 6.263d–e, 264e, 14.619f–620a.

³ Ath. 6.271 c; cf. Polyb. 4.52.7.

⁴ Briant 1973: 120, n. 21; cf. Garlan 1988: 106–12; Papazoglou 1997: 113–15.

⁵ Rostovtzeff 1953: 1515, 'bondsmen'; Billows 1995: 111–45, 'peasant-serfs'; Dignas 2002: 284, 'serf-like'; Briant 1973: 100 stresses the inappropriateness of anachronistic concepts.

unable to afford their pay, Eumenes handed over to his troops some local settlements, together with their people and their flocks (Plutarch, *Eumenes* 8.4). Similarly, when in the late fourth century BC Mnesimachos received an extensive gift-estate in Lydia from Antigonos Monophthalmos, along with the villages, the land allotments and the farm-plots that made it up came with the peasants (*laoi*) who lived on the land. Part of this large estate was set aside for two named individuals (Pytheos and Adrastos) and, lying beyond their courtyard farms, gardens and farm-plots (*oikopeda*) are recorded with the houses of the *laoi* and the *oiketai*, six of whom are actually named.⁶ Attached to where they lived, *laoi* and *oiketai* clearly counted among the assets of the estate (i.11–14). The use of a father's name as provided for these *oiketai* is strikingly unusual in the case of slaves. Perhaps the term *oiketai* translates some local term, used to designate those who farmed the *oikopeda*, or else it is not their fathers but their owners who are named. For neither group, however, is their social or legal status anywhere made explicit. Forming part of Mnesimachos' land-grant, both *laoi* and *oiketai* form groups that may be described as dependent.

Somewhat later (c. 274 BC), Antiochus I included the native peasants with the land that he granted Aristodikides of Assos. Aristodikides was given permission to attach his estate to one of two neighbouring cities, as he chose, but at the same time the king made provision for the protection of his royal peasants (*basilikoi laoi*), perhaps in view of marauding Gauls (OGIS I.221.46–9 = RC II.22–5):

If the royal peasants of the area in which Petra lies wish to dwell in Petra for reasons of security we have given orders to Aristodikides to allow them to do so.

In the event Petra was excluded from Aristodikides' grant since it had already been granted to someone else, but the correspondence inscribed on stone shows the king's concern for his peasants. And in this concern for his peasantry, the king acknowledges their dependence. Similarly in 254 BC, Antiochus II included in the 'sale' to his wife Laodike of the village named Pannou kome the peasants with all their assets (*laoi panoikioi*, OGIS I.225.3–9, 21–2 = RC 18.8–13; 20.3); even those who had moved were included in the transfer (lines 11–13): 'And likewise, if there are any natives (*laoi*) from this village who have moved to other areas (*topoi*) . . .' The peasantry here was closely tied to home of origin. When their homes were sold, the peasants and their households were included in the sale. Whether emphasis is placed on the peasants' freedom of movement (Papazoglou 1997: 39–41, 133) or on the ultimate control of their master, it is clear that some degree of dependence is illustrated here.

⁶ *Sardis* 7.1.1 (c. 318–306, reinscribed after 213 BC), discussed most recently with text and translation by Billows 1995: 111–45; cf. Dignas 2002: 70–3, 279–87.

What was the juridical status of Seleucid *laoi* like these? For Coele Syria, when controlled by the Ptolemies, a royal ruling from 260 BC clearly states that the *laoi* there were legally free. Members of the native peasantry (termed *somata laika*) were 'free' (*eleuthera*); with certain exceptions, in the future they should not be sold (*C.Ord.Ptol.* 22 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 3.20–23). The need for this royal order suggests that there was indeed a market in *laoi*. Nevertheless, their free legal status was unequivocally stressed.

If we may assume that such a legal status went unchanged with the change of regime from Ptolemaic to Seleucid control, we may still ask what this meant in practice. One inscribed text from the 190s BC from near Scythopolis records correspondence between Ptolemaios son of Thraseas and Antiochus III (see Papazoglou 1997: 57–9). Ptolemaios, governor (*strategos*) and chief priest of Syria and Phoenicia, apparently controlled part of the territory, perhaps as a gift-estate, while the rest was royal land. Concerned to clarify dispute settlement in his area, Ptolemaios requests the king that any internal disputes that may arise among the *laoi* in his villages be dealt with by his own representatives; the *oikonomos* and area officer should, in contrast, deal with any that arose in the other (royal) villages. The claim is here made that, since *laoi* belonged to the villages where they lived, whoever controlled those villages should be responsible for law and order. Responsibility for the protection, or indeed the control, of those who lived on his land is here assumed by Ptolemaios. Whether or not in theory such *laoi* were 'free' was irrelevant in practice.

How far there was a similar pattern of dependent labour in Ptolemaic Egypt is still under debate. Information in the papyri, not generally written for permanent display, is of a different nature from that in inscriptions. Nevertheless, from Ptolemaic Egypt there are no examples of land-leases which suggest that peasants went with the land. In practice, of course, they might. In the Zenon archive from Philadelphia, the situation in a third-century BC Ptolemaic gift-estate is illustrated in detail. When the chief finance minister Apollonios was granted his large estate in the newly reclaimed Fayum district, labour was needed for his land. Some workers were directly hired but much of the land was let out to native farmers, recorded in the texts as *laoi*, and land cultivated by *laoi* was contrasted with that described as 'self-sown' (*idiospora*).⁷ Some such *laoi* may have been local, but many were brought in, from both nearby and further afield.⁸ Such settlement of new labour was not, however, confined to the gift-estate. How far such *laoi* came freely and how far they were forced is rarely known, but the premium placed on labour is clear.

⁷ See *P. Cairo Zeno* 2.59292.566, 650 (250 BC); 5.59836 verso.3, 6; *P London* 7.1991.8 and *passim* (251 BC); cf. *P.Rev.* 42.[11], 16 (259 BC), cultivating oil-crops.

⁸ *P. Cairo Zeno* 2.59292.566–78 (250 BC), *laoi* from Akanthopolis, Kerke and elsewhere.

How independent were these *laoi* or were they in part dependent? As estate-holder, Apollonios appears in some respects – tax registration and collection – to have held overall responsibility for the area and its inhabitants, assuming as it were the role of royal officials. In turn it was Apollonios or his local representative Zenon to whom the peasants looked for protection. On one such occasion, rather than dealing with the matter himself, Apollonios referred the case to the new legal authority (*P. Cairo Zeno* 2.59203.7–13; cf. 59204 (254 BC)):

Apollonios to the *laoi* in Hephaistias, greetings. We ourselves, due to pressure of work, have not been able to hear through your complaint. Instead we have sent Peton, one of the *chrematistai*. You should come to Philadelphia to meet with him at daybreak so he can hear your pleadings and those of Damis' representative, Sopatros. And, if Sopatros is found convicted of any of those things you complain of, he should receive appropriate punishment.

The usual justices for Egyptians were the native justices, the *laokritai* (Bagnall and Derow 2004: 288). In referring the matter to a Greek *chrematistes*, like Ptolemaios son of Thraseas (as recorded above), Apollonios simply exercised the authority that went with his position. Any theoretical legal rights of the peasants were irrelevant; in practice it was the local estate-holder – Apollonios – who exercised effective control. Control and protection were the two sides to this social relationship. Yet, though in practice Apollonios' *laoi* were in some respects dependent, legally they were neither dependent nor attached to the land.

Elsewhere in Ptolemaic Egypt the peasants enjoyed a variety of statuses. On crown land the workers were known as *basilikoi georgoi*, a somewhat privileged status which by the late second century BC involved some further legal rights; they could not, for instance, be sold into slavery in the case of debts to the crown.⁹ In practice regularly tied to their home areas with the withdrawal of labour as their best protection, the peasants of Ptolemaic Egypt remained juridically free. Dependent for their livelihood on the Nile and on those who controlled the land that they worked, their lives were tough, but these farmers were not slaves in any sense of the word. And, to judge from the Ptolemaic ruling from Syria quoted above, despite constraints on their movement and a far closer tie to the land where they lived, it seems likely that the *laoi* of Seleucid Asia enjoyed a similar juridical status to that of Ptolemaic peasants.

So far we have found dependence but little evidence for slavery as such among the rural workforce of Asia and of Ptolemaic Egypt. In Asia peasants might be transferred with their homes, but in this rural context there was, as far as we can tell, no question of personal ownership nor market

⁹ *P. Teb.* 1.5.138–43 = 155–61, 168–77, 207–47 (118 BC), with Rowlandson 1985.

in agricultural slaves, and within their own communities, *laoi* possessed freedom from constraint. In Egypt, those who worked the land enjoyed personal freedom, and yet in practice they too were closely controlled. So, when in 230 BC peasants from Oxyrhyncha proposed, as they regularly did, to visit Oxyrhynchus to celebrate the festival of the hippopotamus goddess Thaueris/Athene, a Greek official, Dionysodoros, suggested that his subordinate should accompany them to make sure they returned in time for the sesame harvest (*SB* 20.14699). The vocabulary employed for these peasants, however, was not that of slavery, and those who worked the land were generally free, though as we have seen some *oiketai* in Lydia may prove to be an exception.

Before leaving the *laoi*, the two sides of dependence should be stressed. On one side it is in the degree of responsibility assumed by the king or any other holder of land that dependency may be measured. On the other side comes control. Though in theory they were 'free', for the *laoi* of Seleucid Asia, as indeed the crown peasants of Ptolemaic Egypt or the *laoi* who worked on Apollonios' estate, freedom of movement was in reality controlled to differing degrees, and the practical provision of justice depended not on any independent judiciary but rather on whoever controlled the land. If these peasants were not actually slaves, their freedom was in practice constrained. But their lives were little affected by the consequences of Alexander's conquests.

Sacred slaves

The second group of dependants who do not fit the category of chattel slave yet were important in the new Greek lands of the East were sacred slaves, those attached in varying ways to the temples of Asia and Egypt.¹⁰ Sacred slavery is well known already from the classical period. In the Hellenistic world this institution took many different forms, with both males and females involved. Sacred prostitution, for instance, was attached to sanctuaries in all areas of the Hellenistic world (Debord 1982: 96–7). So in Pontic Comana, the prostitutes were mostly priestesses compared by Strabo (12.3.36) to the *hetairai* who served as priestesses of Aphrodite in Corinth. This was nothing new; it represents just one of the many forms of sacred slavery. From Babylonia in the east to Sicily in the west, various kinds of sacred slavery are to be found.¹¹

The Greek term for sacred slave carries a general sense which may be further specified. So, in Egypt we meet the sacred slaves (*hierodouloi*) of

¹⁰ Debord 1973 and 1982: 83–94; Garland 1988: 112–18.

¹¹ Sarkisian 1983: 131–5, in the temple of Anu at Uruk; cf. Dandamaev 1984: 472–557, in pre-Hellenistic Babylonia; Garland 1988: 112, on Sicily at Eryx.

Boubastis who describe themselves as cat-keepers (*ailouroboskoi*). Two such cat-keepers appeal to Zenon for protection. They should, they claim, be exempt from such work but are currently being forced to make bricks (*P. Cairo Zeno* 3.59451). These sacred slaves were not on the whole influential people but rather humble temple workers, known in demotic as *b3k* (*P. Count* 2.537 (229 BC)).

Connected with the temples of Egypt came many different posts involving dependency. There were the *katochoi*, those ‘detained’ or ‘held’ in the temple of Astarte within the Serapeum at Memphis, a class of self-dedicated servants who, in troubled times outside, enjoyed the protection of the temple combined with the chance to make a living there. There were *katochoi* too in the cult of Isis at Priene, while in Syria *katochoi* attached to the temple of Zeus at Baetocaece played a role in that temple’s economic life from the early Seleucid period – if not before – for at least five hundred years.¹²

Another form of self-dedication to a god is known from Egypt in which a regular payment was made. So, in the late third century BC, Onnophris, also known as Neoptolemos, dedicated himself to Anubis (Clarysse 1988). In a contract of service he undertook to pay the Egyptian jackal-god 5 drachmas a month in return for protection from all demons, spirits and forces of evil, on earth and in the underworld. In effect he became a self-dedicated servant of the god. Many such ‘servants’ lack a father’s name and these self-dedications have sometimes been linked to temple prostitution (Thompson 1938; 1940). Onnophris, however, is unusual in that both his father and mother are known; he clearly came from an immigrant settler family. And through his monthly payments he seems to have aimed to gain protection from a native god in his new home (Clarysse 1992: 53). More normally such self-dedications belonged to the Egyptian sphere, but in Egypt, as elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, the pull of the old ways was strong. Egyptianisation of Greeks occurred in many aspects of life, particularly in matters of religion.

Sacred slaves (*hierodouloi*) are equally a feature of Asia. Here, as in Egypt, the term was used for various grades of temple personnel. And more important than dependence was the protection such a status offered. This was clearly the case in the ‘law’ of Antiochus I of Commagene, inscribed at the back of the temple terrace near the summit of Nemrud Dag. For the continuation of his cult, Antiochus appointed a band of musicians whose position he ruled to protect (*OGIS* 1.383.171–91; cf. 161–2 (mid-first century BC)):

No one – no king, dynast, priest, or official – is allowed to make a slave for himself from among these *hierodouloi* whom, following divine will, I have consecrated both

¹² Memphis: Delekat 1964; Thompson 1988: 214–31; Priene: *IPriene* 195 (c. 200 BC); Baetocaece *IGLS* 7.4028, 4031, 4033; cf. 4041; Debord 1982: 92–4; Virgilio 1987.

for the gods and for my cult, nor indeed from their children or the descendants of those children, whoever may in turn continue their role for all time in the future. No one is in any respect to hand any of them over to anyone else, to harm any of them, or to forcibly remove them from this ministry. Instead the priests shall care for them and kings, officials and all private individuals shall protect them, and the gratitude of the gods and heroes shall be laid up for their protectors in recognition of their piety.

Elsewhere in Asia sanctuaries fulfilled the role of states. In Cappadocia the sanctuary of Ma at Comana formed a separate principality; at the time of Strabo's visit, in the late first century BC, its population consisted of more than six thousand *hierodouloi* under the control of a priest (*hierews*) who was second only to the king (Strabo 12.2.3; cf. 3.32). This was only one of such large Anatolian sanctuaries or temple-towns (Dignas 2002: 224–46). Of the other great sanctuaries – that of Ma at Comana Pontica, of Cybele at Pessinous, or the Persian gods at Zela – the best known is the temple-state of Yahwe at Jerusalem, left unharmed by Alexander.

Hierodouloi, we may conclude, formed part of a widespread religious *koine*. From Lydia (*TAM* 5.1 459.1; 483a.16), from Thessaly (*SEG* xxvii: 221 (first century BC)), from Pergamum (*TAM* 5.2 1253.3 (155/154 BC)) and Delos (*IDélos* 1442.B.49–50 (146/5–145/4 BC)), those attached to temples in a range of different roles might be known as sacred slaves. This was a form of religious dependence that both preceded and outlived the Hellenistic world.

CHATTEL SLAVES

In the rural areas of the Hellenistic world, we have so far found traditional structures that continued in place with little sign of change. In Babylonia, however, a well-developed system of chattel slavery preceded the arrival of the Greeks. Here, slaves were bought, sold and employed by their owners (Dandamaev 1984). Elsewhere, the expansion of Greek-speaking peoples which followed Alexander's conquests into the former Persian empire brought change to many areas. The growth and spread of chattel slavery may be charted both in the extended employment of slaves and in the wider areas from which they came. The central question to be addressed in this section is the degree to which this is simply a matter of classical slavery writ large and how far the institution and the role that it played were changed in the old and new Greek worlds of the period.

The continuation of Greek-style chattel slavery is not hard to document. Slaves formed a part of Greek households wherever these were found; wealth and status continued to be measurable in the number of slaves that were owned. In Hellenistic Egypt, where the infantilising vocabulary of childhood is regularly used for slaves – *pais* (demotic *fbhl*, boy) and *paidiske*

(*fibl.t.*, maid) are the terms most frequently found – slaves were officially listed alongside other dependants in the households of their owners.¹³ So, for instance, in 229 BC in the Arsinoite nome, the military settler Kairos son of Antipatros had two male and two female slaves (Herakleides and Kallixenos, Theopropo and Boubalon) who made up his household of five adults (*P.Count* 2.372–5). Slaves were bought, acquired (through war or other means), sold, taxed, treated as valuable objects (*PSI* 5.529, used as surety), passed on in inheritance and even freed, most often by the owner's will with conditions sometimes attached (Biezuńska-Małowist 1974: 128–9). Slaves were recognised by the law, the subject of special provisions in Greek rulings, especially affecting the cities (*C.Prol.Sklav.* 1–2). Penalties for slaves regularly involved beating, which in Alexandria could only be avoided if their owners paid a hefty fine (e.g. *PHal.* 1.186–213 = *Sel.Pap.* 2.202 (mid-third cent. BC)):

For menaces with metal. If a freeman threatens a free man with iron, bronze, stone . . . [or] wood, he shall pay a fine of 100 drachmas if he is found guilty in a lawsuit. But if a male or female slave does one of these things against a free man or a free woman he or she shall receive not less than 100 strokes of the whip, or else the master of the perpetrator shall pay the injured party double what is prescribed for a free man if he loses the case. . . . [section on drunken behaviour]

For a slave striking a free man. If a male or female slave strikes a free man or a free woman, he or she shall receive not less than 100 strokes of the whip or, if he agrees, the master shall pay double the penalty prescribed for a free man to pay, on behalf of his slave . . .

And so the detail continues in this extract of city law, which in its general approach may be paralleled from elsewhere in the Hellenistic world. So from Pergamum, an Attalid ruling for the urban police force (*astynomoi*) preserves the following clause on fountains (*OGIS* 2.483.167–83 = Austin 2006: no. 253):

No one shall be allowed to water animals at the public fountains nor to wash clothes or implements or anything else. Should anyone do any of these things, if he is a free man his animals, clothes and implements shall be confiscated and he shall be fined 50 drachmas, but if he is a slave and if he has done any of these things with the consent of his master, the same goods shall be confiscated and he himself shall receive 100 strokes of the whip in the pillory, while if he has acted without his master's consent, everything he has shall be confiscated and he shall receive 100 strokes of the whip in the pillory and he shall be held in the stocks for ten days and on his release he shall receive not less than 50 strokes of the whip before being released.

¹³ Biezuńska-Małowist 1974: 10–13; Scholl 1983: 7–9.

It was not, however, just in the Greek cities of Egypt – Naucratis, Alexandria and Ptolemais in the south – that household slaves were located, but also in the countryside, among the army and other settlers in the Delta and up-river along the Nile, wherever there were Greeks. Most slaves were household slaves, but in the towns and larger villages of Egypt slave workshops were introduced to a country where dependence was familiar but chattel slavery was little known.¹⁴ The earlier Greek settlement of Naucratis was the exception; like Corinth, this port already enjoyed a reputation for its prostitutes.¹⁵ With the arrival of the Ptolemies, the spread of chattel slavery to new areas of economic life and sections of the community is of particular interest.

The rich evidence from Egypt is easily accessible.¹⁶ Here I simply provide a set of three snapshots, selected to illustrate various aspects of the Ptolemaic slave experience. The subjects raised can then be developed further and set beside the demographic evidence for Ptolemaic slavery in the third century BC. How typical all this was for the Hellenistic world more generally and the degree of change involved are the questions to be asked.

Sometime in the mid-third century BC, the Pisidian settler Leptines made a household declaration for the tax authorities (Wilcken, *Chr.* 199 = *C.Prol.Sklav.* 87 (254–231 BC)). He had a wife, four sons and a daughter, a family of six in all. Then follow the slaves, first a large group of male slaves and thirteen female slaves with – for those that survive – Greek names, followed by a further group, of whom just three – all with Egyptian names – are listed above a break in the text. This second group of slaves was located in the Heroon close by the city. Leptines' new home was in the Arsinoite name (the Fayum), probably in its capital Krokodilonopolis, close to a workshop in the Heroon. He was clearly a substantial settler. Several interesting points emerge. First, the names of the slaves, with Greek names for the first group, most probably domestic slaves or slaves engaged in productive work within his household, and Egyptian names for the others. This may but need not signify the actual origin of the slaves since the choice of slave name was regularly that of the owner. All we may deduce from these two differently named groups is that 'Greek' slaves were preferred within Greek settler households; outside the home, perhaps within a separate workshop, 'Egyptians' were acceptable. Next, the tax liability of slaves. To judge from the figures preserved, tax rates were the same for both slave and free; masters, we may assume, would normally pay for their household slaves at least (Thompson 2001b). Finally, this declaration provides some insight into the possible forms of slaveholding

¹⁴ See Cruz-Urbe 1982, on *b3k*; Allam 2001.

¹⁵ Hdt. 2.135; Strabo 17.1.33; Ath. 13.596b–d, on Rhodopis.

¹⁶ See Scholl 1990 for texts; Biezuńska-Małowist 1974; Orrioux 1985: 215–16.

of immigrant Greeks like Leptines, who had made a career in the army but was now settled up-country in Egypt, as it were on reserve.

My second snapshot is again from the third century BC, from among the papers concerning the Memphite interests of Ptolemy II's finance minister Apollonios, whom we mainly know from the archive of his manager Zenon, already mentioned above. In the city of Memphis, Apollonios had textile workshops, one at least of which (for working wool) was based on the labour of slaves.¹⁷ These were not particularly large establishments: there were just two male weavers, who were probably free, where the three slave girls Sphragis, Bia and (probably) Kassia spun the wool. Bia, it seems, was bossy with the men (*P. Cairo Zeno* 1.59080 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 205.8), but Sphragis was a trusted individual, sent on missions by her master. On one occasion, collecting wool from Sophthis, she was robbed of all she had and asked for Zenon's help to get it back (*P. Cairo Zeno* 2.59145 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 207.2 (256 BC)). Overall, the texts of the Zenon archive provide unparalleled information on the employment of slaves, some of whom held responsible positions, like Doxaios entrusted with many household matters when Zenon was out of town, or Eutychos who was involved in managing Zenon's building projects before he absconded and took refuge in the Memphite temple.¹⁸

My final example comes from a set of wills drawn up by military settlers in the Arsinoite nome in the second half of the third century BC. Dion's is an interesting case (*P.Petr.*² 3.9–23 (237 BC)):

Dion from Herakleia of the company of Damon . . . about 65 years old . . . has made the following will. May I enjoy good health and manage my own affairs. But if I should suffer mortal fate, my wife and sons may keep the possessions they hold; the rest I leave for my funeral. Melainis and her [son] Ammonios, whose father I am, and both of whom I have reared, I set free, provided they stay with me as long as I live as faithful servants. [I remit] them the payment of maintenance. They shall be free as from a sale [to a god (?)]. None shall have the right, on any pretence, to lay hands upon them.

Many aspects of Dion's will can be paralleled in this collection, and the granting of freedom by testament is the regular form of manumission in Hellenistic Egypt. The explicit avowal of paternity adds to the interest of this case, as does the conditional freedom which Dion grants. By the time the will would be activated, his slave mistress Melainis – the 'black one', perhaps a Nubian – and their joint child would or would not in practice have fulfilled the condition of continued service.

¹⁷ Biezuńska-Małowist 1974: 66–8; Thompson 1988: 46–59.

¹⁸ Doxaios: *P. Cairo Zeno* 3.59354 (243 BC), with *Pros.Ptol.* 5.14344, for further references; Eutychos: *P. Cairo Zeno* 4.59620–1 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 79–80, with *Pros.Ptol.* 5.14198, his disappearance is ascribed to his (free) partner, mother of his children, who provided him with food in the temple; cf. Orrieux 1985: 215–16.

The reference to sale is possibly to the system known elsewhere, above all – though somewhat later – from Delphi, where the problem of guaranteeing the grant of freedom for the recipient, debarred as a slave from making a legally valid contract, was sometimes resolved through ‘sale’ to a god (Hopkins 1978: 133–71). Elsewhere, slaves were dedicated to a god (e.g. Hall 1977, from Oenoanda in Lycia), who could then act as guarantor to the ex-slave’s new, free status. Such grants were often conditional, as in the case of Dion’s Melainis, and the introduction of the gods to what was a problem of man’s making just emphasises the continuing importance of religion in the Hellenistic world.

Thus, in Hellenistic Egypt when immigrant soldiers made their wills, slaves were included in the possessions that they listed. Personal household slaves may be found wherever there were Greeks. Such is the form of detailed illustration preserved on papyrus, and these three particular snapshots introduce us to many further questions.

Where, first, did slaves come from and how had the sources changed from earlier periods? Syria remained a regular source of slaves. Slaves might come out to Egypt through various ports, such as Tyre, where the ascription of a load of slaves to Zenon once served to get them out of the hands of the customs men (*P. Cairo Zeno* 1.59093 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 41), or Gaza, where in 258 BC some slaves escaped in the harbour area during difficulties over who should pay the tax (*P. Cairo Zeno* 5.59804 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 38). Once again Zenon was involved, and the Zenon archive well illustrates how this trade might work. The actual slavers involved are rarely recorded, though an exception may be Zaidelos of Marisa in Idumaea from whom Zenon purchased some slaves in 259/258 BC. When three of them escaped, a reward of 100 drachmas was posted (*P. Cairo Zeno* 1.59015 verso = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 39). More often, trade through personal contacts was the rule. So in the case of seven-year-old Sphragis from Transjordan, the six-witness contract of sale that survives was drawn up between Zenon son of Agreophon from Kaunos, one of Apollonios’ men and a settler, and Nikanor son of Xenokles from Cnidus, described as ‘one of Toubias’ men’ (*P. Cairo Zeno* 1.59003 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 37 (259 BC)). Toubias himself, from an influential Jewish family, was clearly a key man in the area, with close connections to the local cavalry settlers in Transjordan, in ‘the land of Toubias’ (Ammanitis). On another occasion, Toubias sent on to Apollonios a group of slaves: one eunuch and four slave boys, described as from good stock and provided with physical descriptions (*P. Cairo Zeno* 1.59076 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 48 (257 BC)):

Haimos, about 10 years old; black skin, tight curly hair, black eyes, fullish cheeks and marks on his right cheek, uncircumcised.

Atikos, about 8 years only, black skin, tight curly hair, black eyes, somewhat flat-nosed, a scar below the right eye, uncircumcised.

Audomos, about 10 years old; black eyes, curly hair, snub nose, protruding lips, a scar along his right eye-brow, circumcised.

Okaimos, about 7 years old; round-faced, somewhat snub-nosed, grey eyes, ruddy complexion, straight hair, a scar on his forehead, above the right eyebrow, circumcised.

The moles or marks (*phakoi*) on Haimos' cheek may possibly designate a tattoo. They differ from the incision marks or scars of the other three. In all cases, it is hard to know whether these marks were natural ones, the result of birth or blows, whether they were applied as marks of slave status, or were simply a feature of personal adornment. The existence of such descriptions would in any case serve to guarantee the consignment; they might be of further use should a slave run away. Such, it seems, were the *eikones* ('descriptions') required for all adult slaves owned by Alexandrians either acquired illegally or home-bred slaves as specified in a royal ruling from 176/175 BC (*C.Ptol.Sklav.* 8.4–9).

With this particular consignment from Toubias, we meet the problem of names as an indication of origin. Although in some cases the owner will have exercised his power to rename a slave, in other cases unusual names may tell us where a slave was from. Of this particular batch, Okaimos and Audomos may be Semitic names, Atikos could be Greek or Aramaic and the origin of Haimos is even more uncertain; their physical descriptions, however, suggest that the last two were of African origin. Sometimes a name may be descriptive in itself. So, when slaves and slave girls are found in Egypt called Melas or Melainis ('the black one'), Kandake (a well-known Ethiopian queen) or Tekysis ('she of Kysis' / 'the Nubian'), a southern origin seems plausible or even likely. For the slave-owners of Ptolemaic Egypt, Africa was an obvious source of slaves, and both land and sea routes from the south were well used.

How else might slaves be acquired? In this respect, the main difference of this period lies not in the methods of enslavement but in their geographical scope. Of all sources of slaves, war probably remained the most common. It is striking, however, that some of the prisoners of war from Syria ended up as (free) settlers in newly developed Fayum (*P.Petr.* 3.104 = *Sel.Pap.* 2.39.1 (242 BC)), while slaves acquired in Syria and Phoenicia 'by purchase, by taking and holding, or in any other way', required registration if they were not to be confiscated (*C.Ord.Ptol.* 22 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 3 (260 BC)). The administration took note of captives of war, as it ruled to control the population both at home and abroad. One such third-century ruling required registration of captives within a certain period, combined with a 20 drachma payment a head (*P.Grad.* 1 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 4.4–16 (269 BC)); we have already met the similar ruling from a later date that applied to Alexandrian owners. Even members of the indigenous population might

be enslaved during the internal troubles in Egypt that marked the second century BC (*C.Ptol.Sklav.* 9 (197 BC); 88 (167 BC), all female).

Debt-slavery was a further feature of Hellenistic Egypt, as earlier in many parts of the classical Greek world. One interesting set of rulings which specifies the payment of different taxes levied on the sale of slaves records the existence of slaves enslaved as a result of debts to the royal treasury and those who have mortgaged their own persons and then become enslaved (*P. Col.* 1 = *Sel.Pap.* 2.205 (c. 198/197 BC)). Debt-slavery thus continued in Hellenistic Egypt, though how widespread it was is unknowable; enslavement was later replaced by imprisonment in such cases (Biezuńska-Małowist 1974: 29–49).

There was also some breeding of slaves, with home-bred slaves recorded in many further sources (Biezuńska-Małowist 1974: 49–54). Whether, as later, the village tip was a further source of slaves is undocumented, though likely. In Roman Egypt, wet-nursing contracts, where the child involved is described as a foundling slave, testify to the regularity and the profitability of this practice. The demographic pattern of third-century BC Egypt implies the exposure of unwanted girls, many of whom could have ended up as slaves through exposure (Thompson 2002: 152–3).

How were slaves employed and who were their owners? At this point in the inquiry, the colourful individual reports of the many scattered papyri can be augmented by some statistical data (Clarysse and Thompson 2006: 2.262–7). Registers compiled for the salt-tax levy in the mid-third century BC provide details of all adults for 427 household units from a limited (and heavily Greek) area in Middle Egypt. In the larger Greek households, slaves are found listed along with other non-kin dependants who were probably free – herdsmen, farmhands, nurses and so on. So, among the Cyrenean settlers of the Oxyrhynchite nome recorded in one register from c. 230 BC, seven slaves – three males (Euphrainon, Hipparchos and Philodemos) and four females (Kleopatra, Hedyle, Isias and Aristion) – joined four sons (one of whom was married) and probably the couple's daughter in the family home (*P.Count* 46.232–47). Consisting of fifteen adults, this was certainly one of the larger menages. Counted overall, among the Greeks slaves occur in one in seven households. Most of these are settler households, which emphasises the degree to which slavery was an immigrant institution. Within this group, female slaves (64 per cent) were more common than male slaves (36 per cent), a feature which recurs in the census data from Roman Egypt. A predominance of domestic slavery seems suggested, but when considered all together Greek households with slaves and other dependants divide into three main types: those with one or two domestic slaves, agricultural households where slaves were joined by farmhands or herdsmen, and a few larger slave households which seem likely to record a workshop. No household in the database, however, records the equivalent

of Leptines' extensive holding which featured in the first of our snapshots, nor indeed of the larger workshop known from the first century BC (*BGU* 10.1942 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 210), where fourteen girls are named in an alphabetical register which survives only to the eighth letter of the alphabet. Once perhaps numbering some forty in all, these girls are recorded as either sick (five out of fourteen) or as working – at spinning or working wool. Their identification as slaves is based on the combination of their names and the work that they do but is not entirely secure.

The Egyptian side of the picture is strikingly different. Slaves, like other household dependants, were rare; just three slaves are named among the greater number of Egyptian households in the *P. Count* database. One female slave is listed in the household of a religious dancer and one in that of a policeman, and one male slave is registered in the home of a certain Petechonsis son of Imouthes, an area scribe who, like the policeman, enjoyed a Hellenic tax status. All of these were urban households. Egyptian families in the villages did not own slaves. It is clear, that in the main, slaveholding was not a feature of the Egyptian community. Occurring only among a limited professional group of Egyptians, slavery can be seen to represent an aspect of Hellenisation (Thompson 2001a: 309–13). The arrival of Greek settlers with their domestic chattel slaves and slave workshops did bring new forms of slaveholding to Egypt but, in the third century at least, this appears to have had little effect on the population or indeed the economy at large.

Questions about the slave experience are not easy ones to answer. Slaves were liable to tax – not just the salt-tax – but that presumably was a matter for their owners. They might (see below) be marked or tattooed (*stizein*), despite an interesting third-century BC prohibition to this effect, the context of which is unknown (Mitteis, *Chr.* 369.13–14 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 1.13–14: 'nobody may sell persons for export, nor tattoo them, nor . . .'). Slaves also ran away, and when they did, the authorities could get involved, especially in high-profile cases. So, in one text, a certain Sosikrates writes to Zenon about four runaway slaves whom he describes as he asks for information or for their arrest (*P London* 7.2052 (mid-third century BC)):

Pindaros, a Lycian servant (*diakonos*), age around 29, medium height, with honey-coloured complexion, closely meeting eyebrows, hooked nose, a scar below his left knee.

And Philonides also called Belenouris, age around 29, medium height, honey-coloured complexion, a scar on his left eyebrow and below the lip on the right. And of the slaves formerly belonging to Alexandros who was taken hostage: Philinos, a Babylonian masseur, age around 49, short, with black skin, hooked nose, closely meeting eyebrows, and a mole by the left temple. And Amyntas, a Median coachman, age around 34, medium height, with black skin, a scar on his forehead and nose.

Their names may be Greek, but their origins and occupations are very varied. Similarly, though with a reward attached, a further notice from 156 BC survives about two runaway slaves from among the police files preserved within the Memphite Serapeum archive (*UPZ* 1.121 = *C.Ptol.Sklav.* 81). Details have been forwarded upriver from Alexandria:

Epeiph 16, year 25. The slave of Aristogenes son of Chrysispos, ambassador from Alabanda, has run away. His name is Hermon, also called Neilos, by birth a Syrian from Bambyke, age about 18, medium height, no beard, fine legs, a dimple on the chin, a mole at the side of his nose on the left side, a scar above the corner of his mouth to the left, tattooed on his right wrist with two foreign letters. He has taken with him three minas worth of minted gold, ten pearls, an iron ring inscribed with an oil-flask and strigils, and is wearing a cloak round him and a girdle . . . [Details of the reward follow.]

So, despite the trusted slaves of Zenon's household or those who might hope for freedom once their owners died, not surprisingly slaves are found unhappy in their role; for such, escape was the option preferred.

Papyri from Egypt allow us a glimpse into the Hellenistic world unparalleled elsewhere. Here, in the towns and larger villages, chattel slavery accompanied Greek immigrants and military settlers and was, to a limited degree, taken up by a few Egyptians. The manifold slave experience is likely to be mirrored elsewhere, in the Greek cities of the Seleucid empire or the traditional settlements of mainland, western and Aegean Greece. In Hellenistic Cos, for instance, silk workshops most probably depended on the labour of female slaves, while from Smyrna, household slaves are regularly depicted together with their owners on Greek gravestones from the second century BC. As an interesting reflection of their status, these male and female slaves appear in miniature.¹⁹

If, in the Hellenistic world, slaves now came from a wider geographical area, that simply reflected the spread of Greek domination following the conquests of Alexander. Slavery was everywhere that Greeks were found. War remained a key source of slaves, though the wars of Hellenistic kingdoms and leagues were often on a larger scale, involving more combatants, than those of Greek *poleis* at an earlier date (Rostovtzeff 1953: 203, 606, 1365–6, 1458). Alexander himself set the tone, selling 30,000 prisoners into slavery from his siege of Tyre (Arrian 2.24.5). Piracy too remained a standard source of slaves, and commerce in slaves was widely practised, with recognised market centres, like Byzantium for the Black Sea trade, Aegina or Actium in Greece, or later Delos.²⁰

¹⁹ Cos: *Syll.*³ 3.1000.9 (first century BC), with Sherwin-White 1978: 231 and 242, n. 122; Smyrna: Zanker 1993: 216, 222–3.

²⁰ Gabrielsen 2003, pirates. Markets: Polyb. 4.50.2–3, Byzantium: Blawatsky 1974; Actium: Reger 2003: 391–2.

Slaves were employed in the range of activities that we know from classical Greece and have seen in Ptolemaic Egypt. There were of course differences in the different kingdoms. In the Attalid kingdom of Pergamum, for instance, we hear of royal workshops, probably for wool or textiles, which relied on the labour of slaves; in 197 BC, one Artemidora, a royal slave-girl, was freed at Delphi through 'sale' to Pythian Apollo by Dameas, the man in charge of the Pergamene royal works (*SGDI* 2.2001.3–4). As a form of production, royal workshops have no known parallel in Egypt.

Enfranchisement continued to take place as before, either on individual or, occasionally, central initiative. So, according to Polybius (38.15.1–5), in 146 BC during the Achaean War Diaios, as general of the Achaean League, was responsible for the enforced enfranchisement of 12,000 slaves, both home-bred (*oikogeneis*) and home-reared (*paratrophoi*) slaves, from the cities of the League to fight in the Achaean War. Many of these former slaves ended up commemorated together with citizens in the casualty list that survives (*IG* IV² 1.28.59–162).

A few developments in how slaves were viewed have been identified in this period. In Pergamum in 129 BC, when children were given a day off school to celebrate the festival that marked the city's new relationship with Rome, then (public?) slaves were also granted a day off work (*Syll.*³ 2.694.55). A similar concession for both schoolchildren and slaves was agreed in Magnesia on the Maeander in honour of the cult of Artemis Leukophryene a few years later (*Syll.*³ 2.695.30–1). Further, in a first-century BC private cult association recorded from Philadelphia in Lydia, slaves (*oiketai*) were included along with free women and men (*Syll.*³ 3.985.6–7). These scattered examples may or may not represent a more general change in outlook.

Nevertheless, as in Egypt so elsewhere in the Hellenistic world, slaves still ran away or raised arms against their masters. In second-century BC Amyzon, a prominent citizen, Demetrios son of Pankrates, was murdered by his slave and his home was set on fire. The subsequent fate of his murderer, brought to justice and crucified alive for the wild beasts and the birds, is recorded on the commemorative epitaph set up by Demetrios' fellow-citizens (Merkelbach and Stauber 1998: 02/03/01). Others might join an uprising in the hope of better times, as with the large number of slaves (*douloi*) reported as supporting the Pergamene revolt of Aristonicus in 133 BC. It is not known how many were actually involved or whether these were rural or urban slaves. Yet this very episode has been used to support the thesis that the Hellenistic period witnessed a marked increase in the enslavement of the peasantry.²¹ In these troubled times the city of Pergamum made a decree offering the status of resident alien (*paroikos*) to

²¹ Briant 1973: 117; Wiedemann 1981: 1; cf. Diod. Sic. 34/35. 2.26; Strabo 14.1.38, on the revolt.

those royal and public slaves who were the offspring of freedmen, together with their wives, as long as they were not purchased under the last two kings or came from the royal estates (*OGIS* 1.338.20–6 (133 BC)). Clearly there were some slaves employed on what earlier were royal possessions (*ousiai*) before they were left to Rome, but how many of these slaves worked on the land remains uncertain, as indeed does the relationship of the kings' landed estates to other royal holdings elsewhere. The urban workshops of the king have just been mentioned; the aspirations and the fate of those who joined the uprising are also relevant to the question. According to Diodorus (34/35.2.26), the main concern of slaves who joined Aristonicus was to escape from their masters' ill treatment; and in their actions, he claims, they brought great misfortune to many cities. This is not then a rural context, and whereas urban slavery was clearly well established, the extent of rural slavery remains unclear. An increase in rural slavery is not to be seen in this sequence of events.

There were some changes in the period even though it is not easy to find evidence for a growth of agricultural slavery in the East. In both Ptolemaic Egypt and the Seleucid East, slaves were predominantly found in Greek households and productive spheres; agriculture remained the preserve of a peasantry that was at least nominally free. In Babylonia, slavery went on as before; there, less is known of the countryside. The situation in Greece and in the Greek cities of the Aegean coast was much the same, though the constant passage of armies most probably brought some increase to the number of war captives. As we have noted, war played a constant role in many aspects of slavery. In Rome and Italy, in contrast, where the widespread use of slaves in agriculture followed Rome's conquest of the East, the situation was transformed. It was surely in the West that in this period the greatest changes took place.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

As is the case in most studies of ancient slavery, twentieth-century discussion of slavery in the Hellenistic world was profoundly affected by Marx and Marxist historians. Following the publication of Marx's *Grundrisse* in the West (1953), for the Hellenistic world more specifically interest centred around the concept of an Asiatic model for an alternative mode of production; it is in agreement or disagreement with such views that the role and position of slaves and other forms of dependent labour have regularly been approached. Such debates dominated Soviet and former Eastern bloc historiography. The ideology is discussed and put in context by Finley (1980: 40–66; cf. Garlan 1988: 5–6, 107); the issues at stake are clearly discussed and made accessible in Dandamaev, in his study of (pre-Hellenistic) Babylonian slavery, translated from the 1974 Russian edition (1984: 67–80).

Heinen 1976 and 1977 discussed the studies of the Russian scholars T. V. Blavatskaia, E. S. Golubkova and A. I. Pavlovskaja, with reference also to other work. For Hellenistic Asia, the issues were taken up by the French scholar Pierre Briant (1973: 111), and the study of the Seleucid economy and society by Kreissig (1978) was groundbreaking. The Polish scholar Iza Biezuńska-Małowist devoted much of her career to a series of detailed studies, culminating in her two-volume study of slavery in Greco-Roman Egypt, the first volume of which (1974) is still the most useful discussion of slavery in Ptolemaic Egypt. The stimulus and, simultaneously, the constraints of these debates remain and need to be recognised.

Overall, however, there has been little more general work on Hellenistic slavery, which is normally studied as part of Greek or ancient slavery more generally. The exception is Michael Rostovtzeff, in his three-volume study *The Social and Economic History of the Hellenistic World* (1953, with helpful indices in Vol. III). Even if his overall (somewhat modernising) framework for analysis may be (and has been) criticised, his collection of Hellenistic material relating to slaves has not been bettered.

Otherwise, apart from Rostovtzeff, discussions of Hellenistic slavery regularly form part of more general works on ancient slavery; see, for instance, Wiedemann (1981) or Garland (1988). This is particularly the case for slavery in Greece, the islands and the cities of Asia Minor, where distinctions are rarely made between the classical and Hellenistic periods. The bibliography here is the same as in earlier chapters. What was new in the Hellenistic world was the addition to the Greek sphere of the former Persian empire. Slavery within the different kingdoms of the East took different forms, and for these there are separate studies to be noted. For Hellenistic Babylon, Oelsner (1977) picks up on the work of Dandamaev; Sarkisian (1983) writes on temple slavery. For Seleucid Asia, the role of the *laoi* has recently been re-examined by Papazoglou (1997: 130–3), and for Ptolemaic Egypt, Heinen's student R. Scholl has made available (with German translations) the corpus of texts relating to slavery (1990). This followed on from his earlier study of slaves in the Zenon archive (1983), which includes discussion of terminology, sources and flight, together with relevant texts. Orrieux (1985) has some interesting comments on the role of slaves in the Zenon archive, taking issue with the interpretations of Rostovtzeff. On all aspects of this archive, Pestman (1981) is an indispensable tool. On flight, see now Llewelyn (1997). Biezuńska-Małowist (1974) remains the fundamental study for Egypt, though some new material is edited and discussed by Clarysse and Thompson (2006, II: 262–7). Finally, more generally, there is an excellent new study of the role of piracy in the supply of slaves by Gabrielsen (2003), while Reger (2003) discusses the economic role of slaves in the same volume edited by Erskine.

CHAPTER 11

SLAVERY AND ROMAN LITERARY CULTURE

SANDRA R. JOSHEL

INTRODUCTION

Slaves are everywhere in Roman literature. They serve masters faithfully or plot their undoing in Roman comedy. They are topics of concern in agricultural manuals. They act as go-betweens in love poetry and as figures of ridicule and disdain in satire. They make revolts in histories and sacrifice themselves to masters in collections of paradigmatic stories (*exempla*). They figure in the letters of famous Romans like Cicero and Pliny the Younger. Roman authors dismiss them, love them, hate them and sometimes ignore them. In their writings, slaves receive whippings or rewards, serve or betray masters, stand as moral paradigms and blend into scenery of house, city and fields.

Since Rome was a slave society from the late third century BC to the third century AD, the presence of slaves in its literature will not surprise its readers two thousand years later. Yet, how we understand the ubiquitous literary presence of slaves is no easy matter. The literary scholar observes the tropes and figures that deploy the slave; the social historian finds evidence of the realities of the institution and even of the experience of slaves; and the cultural historian looks for the attitudes, notions and ideology associated with these realities. Although this chapter partakes of all these approaches, it focuses on the work of cultural history. I examine a selected group of Latin authors as representative of both Roman literature from the late third century BC to the early second century AD and the appearances of slaves in it. The discussion deals with slaves in Roman literature as a matter of discourse. The chapter then proceeds from the assumption that literary texts not only mirrored social realities; they actively framed and shaped attitudes and meanings, operating ideologically to naturalise and mask social realities. Above all, literature was not only a form of intellectual investigation, instruction, creative expression, or entertainment; it was also a stage on which to act out and resolve contradictions, ambiguities and anxieties.¹

¹ On contradictions and ambiguities, see, for example, Thalmann 1996; Fitzgerald 2000; McCarthy 2000.

Since all of the authors were male, most of them members of the Roman elite, and since they addressed an audience of their social peers – slaveholders like themselves – their texts represent what James C. Scott (1990) has called the ‘public transcript’: a description of formal or permitted interactions between elites and their subordinates. Ideologically, the public transcript ‘provides convincing evidence for the hegemony of dominant values’ (Scott 1990: 2, 4). In effect, then, I shall argue that the images and stories of slaves in Roman literature tell us a great deal about their owners. They voice slaveholders’ aspirations for their slaves: what they wanted, what they feared, and what they got. They provide sets of qualities defining the good slave – and castigating the bad slave. From this point of view, slaves exist only in the gaze of those who watched and controlled them, so the slaves themselves emerge as stock figures: literature tells us something about their lives, but little of their experience.

The chapter begins with a facet of slavery most troubling for the modern reader: what seems to be the contradiction between the slave as chattel and the slave as human being. Roman authors and lawyers speak about the slave as chattel, as human being and, sometimes, as both at the same time. Varro’s famous formulation (*On Agriculture* 1.17.1) in the later first century BC describing the slave as a ‘speaking tool’ (*instrumentum vocale*) is one instance of the Roman view of the slave as thing, comparable to a work animal or to equipment, through which the owner achieves his own end – in Varro’s case, agricultural production. Yet, Varro goes on to recommend the kind of treatment that assumes the slave is human, whose feelings, desires and perceptions can be manipulated to make him a better worker. The conjunction of ‘tool’ and ‘speaking’, object and subject, raises the question of the agency attributed to slaves in literature – in our view, an agency shaped only by the concerns, interests and anxieties of masters. I shall argue that this literary practice was founded on the very definition of the chattel slave as fungible. I refer to the term in the modern sense, though the notion applies to the condition of the slave in Rome: as a fungible thing, the slave was exchangeable, replaceable, substitutable. He or she could be turned to any use: an item for sale, the repayment of or collateral for a loan, a gift, an inheritance or an item to be mortgaged. In Roman literature, the fungibility of the slave takes two directions: in the economic sense, as a thing, property item or tool, and in an ideological sense, as a vessel or site of projection for masterly meanings.²

² Perl 1977; Hopkins 1978: 123; Finley 1980: 73–4, 98–100; Garnsey 1996: 25–6, 93–4; McCarthy 1998, 2000; Fitzgerald 2000; Bradley 2000a. On legal definitions and discourse, see Buckland 1908. On fungibility, see Johnson 1999 and Baptist 2001. For fungibles in Roman law, Nicholas 1975: 167, n. 4.

THE AMBIGUITY OF HUMAN CHATTEL

In a wide variety of texts and genres, authors speak of slaves as cash, as goods, as implements – as things. Writing to his friend Atticus after a small victory in Cilicia (*Letters to Atticus* 5.20.5), Cicero explains that he gave his soldiers all the plunder except the captives, whom he sold on 19 December 51 BC: ‘as I write, there are about 120,000 sesterces on the platform’. Cicero captures the fungibility of humans sold as slaves: he did not even count the number put up for sale, only their total cash value. For Livy in the late first century BC (39.6.7), the slave cook is an item of Roman luxury: recounting the return of the Roman army from Asia Minor generations earlier (187 BC), he notes the importation of bronze couches, expensive clothing and tapestries, fancy furniture, the new use of female musicians at banquets, and the value of the cook. Livy’s account lines up things and people, logically enough from a Roman point of view, since the people he mentions were slaves; like furniture, they are commodities to be assessed, bought and sold. Livy calls the slave cook the ‘most worthless *mancipium*’, a word that denotes not only the slave, but also other property. In his philosophical tract on anger (*On Anger* 3.34.1), Seneca, too, uses *mancipium*, but in a catalogue of things that, beside money, are ‘causes of anger: foods, drinks, insulting words, disrespectful gestures, stubborn beasts of burden and lazy slaves, suspicion and the malicious misconstruction of another’s words. Stubborn draft animals give way to lazy slaves (*pigra mancipia*). In his agricultural manual of the early second century BC, Cato the Elder advises his reader (*Agriculture* 2.7): ‘Sell worn-out oxen, blemished cattle, blemished sheep, wool, hides, an old wagon, old tools, an old slave, a sickly slave, and whatever else is superfluous.’ Yet elsewhere Cato concerns himself with providing clothing, food and housing for the very slaves that he would sell off when age or illness makes them flawed or valueless things, like broken tools and useless animals. Implicitly or explicitly, Livy, Seneca and Cato assume some sort of subjectivity for the slaves they count as things: they have jobs; they behave in ways that characterise them (albeit for the masters’ uses); they age or suffer human ills. Like Varro’s speaking tool, the object and the subject join.³

GOOD AND BAD SLAVES

At this juncture, Roman authors confront the issue of good and bad slaves. They offer their readers depictions of servile subjectivity, a subjectivity limited by slaveholders’ interests and anxieties. The Edict of the Aediles

³ On luxury, food and Roman expansion, see Gowers 1993: 18–19, 50–76. For the etymology of *mancipium*, see Richlin 1999.

regulating the sale of slaves at Rome shows that behaviour figured as importantly as physical condition in selecting slaves for purchase. The lawyers' comments map the moral character of slaves: bad slaves are fickle, wanton, slothful, sluggish, idle, tardy, timorous, greedy, quick-tempered, frivolous, superstitious and obstinate; good slaves are loyal, hard-working, diligent and vigilant (*Digest* 21.1). As modern readers are all too aware, law is not literature, yet in Rome law reflects literature – and literature law – in a society where elite buyers, lawyers and authors were all masters, participants in the same discourse and rooted in the same interests and values. In literature as in law, loyalty, obedience, good service and deference to a master mark good slaves; the opposite qualities identify bad ones.

The faithful slave makes an early appearance in Roman literature – literally on the stage in Plautus' comedies of the late third and early second centuries BC. Self-consciously loyal slaves articulate their devotion: they follow orders quickly and efficiently, without dawdling or back-talk; they do not sleep on the job; they look after the masters' interests, whether they are present or absent; their masters' interests become their own; they anticipate not only their masters' orders, but their desires and even moods; they have a healthy sense of fear and self-preservation. This kind of loyalty and obedience arises less from virtue than from fear of punishment (Bradley 1987: 39). Messenio, a slave in Plautus' *Menaechmi*, spells out the duty of servile loyalty and the cost of laziness: whippings, fetters and condemnation to working in a grain mill where the slave will be fatigued, hungry and cold. Then he explains the value of the slave's fear for his owner.

The sign of a good slave? He's one who minds the boss's business,
 He tends and comprehends and mends it too;
 When the boss is gone he'll defend the boss's business
 As brisk as if the guy was there himself (or even better).
 He better look out for his back than his belly,
 He better look out for his kneecaps than his gut,
 If he's got his heart in line,
 He should take to heart this rhyme:
 Guys who're good for nothing, what's the price they pay the bosses –
 Those lazy, worthless guys –
 Whips and shackles and a trip to the mill,
 Exhaustion, starvation and a solid chill –
 That's what being lazy's gonna cost you.
 I'm good and scared of this bad thing – that's why I'm sure
 I'm gonna be good not bad.
 'Cause I'm way more happy to put up with words than whips – I hate
 'em,
 and I like to eat grits way more than I want to grind 'em.
 That's why I snap to my boss's orders, I follow 'em meek and mild,
 And it does me a lot of good.

Let other guys be like they think it'll do 'em good;
 I'm gonna be like I should for my boss.
 Lemme just stay scared and keep my nose clean, so I can be there for my
 boss everywhere.
 Slaves who stay scared even when they're clean, they're the kind the boss
 can use;
 Guys scared of nothing, when they've earned a beating – that's when
 they get scared.
 But I'm not too scared, 'cause the day's at hand when my boss will pay
 me back for all
 I've done (967–85, trans. Richlin).⁴

Loyalty and fear, however, are only part of the slave's value to the slaveholder. Competence matters as well. In Plautus' *Miles gloriosus*, the soldier orders his slave Sceledrus to guard his mistress. When Sceledrus sees her kissing a young man (her former, and true, love), he worries that his master will respond by lashing out at him – literally, since he anticipates whipping (397), torture (279) and crucifixion (310).⁵ Sceledrus is, to say the least, not a genius. Although he distrusts his fellow slave, the clever Palaestrio (the former slave of the young man the mistress loves), Palaestrio easily fools him into disbelieving his own eyes. Even the threat of punishment cannot make loyal Sceledrus any brighter – or more useful an instrument. However, Sceledrus' anxieties belong to a running joke in comedy – corporal punishment of slaves and their fear of it (Parker 1989); though that joke reminds the audience that legitimate violence is the province of the master.

The least useful of all slaves is a dead one; however, even dead slaves serve as celebrations of servile loyalty. Where masters mourn the death of a freedman or slave, especially a young slave, loyalty figures as a cause of the master's grief. Statius (*Silvae* 2.6) consoles Flavius Ursus on the death of his favourite boy, a dutiful slave whose love and faithfulness elicit his master's tears; Martial (1.101) mourns the death of his secretary, Demetrius, whom he manumits, so he can die free. The violence at the heart of Roman slavery does not disturb Ursus' or Martial's grief at the loss of their young slaves, but then such poems display and dramatise the sentiments of the master, not the situation of the slave. For Martial, the fifteen-year-old Demetrius is both tool and subject, but a subject whose life and death are absorbed by his master. In a metonymy that slides from the young man to his hand, Martial describes Demetrius as 'that faithful hand [that wrote]

⁴ For loyal slaves, see Bradley 1987b: 21–45 (critical); Vogt 1975c: 122–45 (romanticised). Plautus' loyal slaves: *Aul.* 587–602; *Rud.* 918–25; *Pseud.* 1103–13; *Amph.* 959–62; *Mostell.* 859–83. See Richlin 2005: 1–30 for the possibility that Plautus addressed slaves in his mixed audience. For other relevant observations, see Fraenkel 1960: 234–35; Leach 1969; Segal 1968/1987: 43–53; McCarthy 2000: 34–76, esp. 70–2.

⁵ Sceledrus speaks in a comic exaggeration, intended for laughs, as if crucifixion is a certainty for him as it was for his father, grandfather, great grandfather, and great-great-grandfather (371–2).

of my literary efforts, a blessing to his master and known to the Caesars' (10.101.1–2). In death, he feels the reward (of his master's manumission): as he dies, he calls his master patron (that is, ex-master; 10.101.9–10).⁶

The meaning of servile loyalty and obedience emerges in a virtual sub-genre of Roman literature: the stories of loyal slaves who prove their loyalty by some sacrifice in conditions that lessen or even remove fear of the slaveholder's retribution. Set during periods of civil war in the Republic and under tyrannical emperors during the Principate, these stories recur in histories, philosophical tracts and collections of *exempla*. In each case, the story of the loyal slave serves the particular discursive purposes of the author; however, the accumulation of tales mitigates the anxiety of a political upheaval that reveals the mutability of the social order.⁷

In literary representations of social chaos or tyranny, events in which the social order does not support the master's power and the master himself is endangered, writers imagine slaves who remain loyal despite the absence of the whip. Some slaves endure torture but do not inform against their masters – as in the case of the slave of the orator Marcus Antonius. Despite the objections of his master, he insists that he be handed over for torture; then he endures flogging, the rack and burning without a word (Valerius Maximus 6.8.1). Other slaves, like those of Marius and of Gaius Gracchus, kill their masters at their masters' request – and then usually themselves – to rescue their masters from the cruelty of enemies and dishonour (Val. Max. 6.8.2–3). Still others impersonate their masters and accept death in their place (Val. Max. 6.8.6; Sen., *On Benefits* 3.25).⁸

These stories are exemplary precisely because, as Valerius Maximus notes (6.8. preface), servile loyalty itself is 'less expected'. Indeed, for Valerius Maximus (6.8.1), the dutifulness and courage of Marcus Antonius' slave reflect not character but chance: 'Fortune can deservedly be credited for enclosing so loyal and brave a spirit in the body of a slave.' What makes such cases remarkable is the commonly held belief, articulated over and over again in literature, that slaves lack dutifulness (*pietas*) and faithfulness (*fides*); they act in their own interests, which most often means satisfying their own bodily needs.⁹

⁶ Grief for dead boys is a topos in Martial (1.88, 6.28–9, 6.68, 9.76): cf. Cic. *Att.* 1.12.4 and Plin. *Ep.* 5.19, 6.3, 8.1, 8.16, 8.19 (cf. below). Elsewhere in Martial, boys are sex objects (3.65, 4.42, 11.22, 12.96.7–12) and often clearly slaves (1.31, 1.58, 3.58.30–1, 9.59, 11.70, 12.16); see Richlin 1992: 34–44. For visual representations of boys, see Pollini 2003.

⁷ Parker 1998: 153.

⁸ On the problem of helping the master to commit suicide for the slave or freedman who does not also kill himself, see Plin. *Ep.* 8.14. Plautus' *Captives* is an extended comic rendition of the slave taking his master's place to save his master: see Thalmann 1996.

⁹ On deceit and lack of *fides*: Plaut. *Amph.* 198; *Asin.* 250–7; *Bacch.* 639–60; *Cas.* 635–719; *Cist.* 720–30; *Pseud.* 574; Cic. *Verr.* 3.116; Cic. *Att.* 7.2.8; Plin. *HN.* 33.26; Quint. *Inst.* 4.2.69; Tac. *Hist.*

Most slaves, therefore, are bad slaves. Roman literary texts mirror Roman law in depicting slaves as gluttonous, bibulous and over-sexed. In response, slave-owners must control their bodily desires for their and their slaves' own good. The agricultural handbook of Columella (first century AD) includes extensive instructions on the management of slaves. He is at pains to ensure not only the master's control of his workmen, but his regulation of the slave manager who controls them. Control presumes a natural behaviour of slaves: indeed, for Columella, slave nature limits the slave manager's ability to command without being overly easy-going or too cruel (*On Agriculture* 1.8.10). Columella details the qualities of the bad slave, repeated in a variety of texts. They will inevitably take advantage of any weakness of the master – old age, youth, absence, inexperience (1.1.20, 1.8.20, 11.1.3). Servile dishonesty and neglect (*fraus, neglegentia*) are a particular preoccupation (1.7.5–6, 1.8.18, 1.9.5; 11.1.15–17, 26, 28). Slaves cheat and steal (or allow other slaves to do so) (1.7.7). Given the opportunity, they are lazy, loitering, time-wasting and they sleep away the day (11.1.14–16). City slaves are the worst: 'this sluggish and lethargic class of slaves, used to leisure, the campus, circus, theatres, to gambling, bars, brothels, never does not daydream about these silly things' (1.8.2). Uncontrolled, the slave manager will drink too much, oversleep, indulge his sexuality and greed (11.1.13–14, 1.8.17).¹⁰

At its most extreme, servile disloyalty results in violence against the master. Literature confirms the Roman proverb, 'You have as many enemies as you have slaves.' Roman historians recount three major slave revolts between 135 and 70 BC as well as smaller uprisings both before and after. Under the Principate, authors also record episodes of servile attacks on individual masters either as instances of a more generalised phenomenon or, at least, as indications of servile criminality for all masters to fear.¹¹ Tacitus, for example (*Annals*, 14.42–5), reports a slave's murder of Pedanius Secundus, prefect of the city, in AD 61. In his depiction of the senatorial debate on the ancient custom that required the execution of all slaves living under the same roof, Tacitus features the speech of Gaius Cassius who defends the execution of Pedanius' other slaves and dilates on the dangers of servile domestic violence. No one's rank protects him if that of the city prefect does not; if Pedanius' four hundred slaves did not help protect him, 'Who shall find help in his domestics, when even fear for themselves cannot make them note our dangers?' (*Ann.* 14.43). Our ancestors suspected the natural temperament of slaves, even though their slaves were born on the

4.23; cf. Toxilus in Plautus' *Persa*. Bodily needs and pleasures: Plaut. *Mil.* 817–68; *Mostell.* 64; *Stich.* 698–717. For the stereotype, Bradley 1987b: 26–30.

¹⁰ On Columella and control, see Bradley 1987b: 21–30.

¹¹ Proverb: Sen. *Ep.* 47.5; Festus 314L; Macrobius 1.11.13. On the major revolts, see Bradley 1989.

same land or under the same roof: 'now that our households comprise nations – with customs the reverse of our own, with foreign cults or with none – you will never coerce such a medley of humanity except by terror' (*Ann.* 14.44).¹²

Pliny the Younger (*Letters*, 3.14) carefully crafts the story of the murder of Larcus Macedo by his slaves – which he describes as a savage deed. He revels in the gory detail that he lavishes on the attack, its aftermath and Macedo's lingering death. Macedo was surrounded by his slaves while in the bath: one held him by the throat; the others beat him on his chest, stomach and genitals. He survived just long enough to see his assailants punished – executed. Although Pliny describes Macedo as a bad master, proud and cruel, he warns that even a mild and kind master cannot feel safe in a world where masters are killed by crime not reason.

Both accounts stage the violence to which all masters were potentially subject and recast the victimiser as victim. Tacitus and his Cassius (*Ann.* 14.42–3) dismiss the motive of the slave murderer – Pedanius' welching on an agreed price for manumission or his sexual attraction for a slave loved by the murderer. Pliny comments (*Ep.* 3.14.1) that Macedo remembered too little that his father had been a slave or maybe too much. What Pliny means is unclear: he suggests either that Macedo forgot his own father had been subject to the insults of a master, or, only too aware of it, he sought revenge by exercising that same power over others. Whatever his intent, Pliny implicitly admits the power of the slaveholder to insult and to inflict violence. He reduces the slaves' agency here to mere criminality and unreason. The public transcript of master–slave relations only hints at Macedo's offence: his slaves did not quickly dispatch him; they not only beat him to the point of death, but also dishonoured him by assaulting his genitals. Pliny, however, dramatises masters' fear of dangers, insults and mockeries; whatever the slaves suffered at Macedo's hands remains out of sight and off the stage of literature.

Less fatal, but no less disturbing, Roman authors depict the slave as disloyal to the master even when he appears loyal. Again, early comedy presented the image of the tricky slave who pretends loyalty but plots to undo a father, the head of his household, or a pimp, usually to help his young master get what he wants. In the *Miles gloriosus*, Palaestrio deceives the soldier, his current master, to win back the soldier's mistress, a young woman beloved by his previous master. Palaestrio flatters the soldier, appears to act in his interest and declares his loyalty even as he uses that declaration to secure the escape of his former master, the young woman and himself. His tricks succeed because, like Plautus' good and obedient slave who reads his master's face and moods, he knows his master all too

¹² Cf. Plin. *HN* 33.26, on living among a crowd of foreigners who steal.

well. The soldier's vanity and Palaestrio's intimate knowledge of it make the tricks work and result in the soldier's shaming.¹³

In Plautus' tricky slaves, the slaveholders in the audience had it both ways. In the *Miles gloriosus* the seemingly loyal slave is disloyal; even more, his good service is a pretence, his very profession of loyalty nothing more than a disguise for his disloyalty. Yet, at the same time, this disloyal slave is loyal because, although he betrays the soldier, he acts for his original master. The scenario, however, does not quite assuage the anxiety about servile trickery. It runs into the conundrum, expressed later in a wide variety of genres, in which Roman authors conflate the different jobs of domestic servants into forms of pleasing, yet the element of force always raises the question of duplicity. Motivated by fear of the whip, the slave pleases because he must, and this lack of volition makes every act of good service a piece of duplicity – and so suspect.¹⁴

Palaestrio demonstrates that even apparent willingness to please is no guarantee of loyalty, as his fellow-slave Sceledrus demonstrates that loyalty is no guarantee of good service. The clever slave, and his opposite, figure what Kathleen McCarthy calls (2000: 22) 'the crux of slavery': 'slaves become useful only when they can combine two contradictory attributes: being as much as possible an extension of the master's persona and yet exercising judgment and skills of their own. In other words, a slave who can merely carry out explicit orders is useless, and a slave who goes his or her own way is useless.' Slaves, then, embody the paradox of the coexistence of human agency and chattel fungibility.

The same paradoxical scenario shapes many of the stories of slaves loyal to their owners in times of danger. In these tales loyal slaves often behave in ways that characterise the bad slave. They seem to run away, steal, inform, betray and even kill their owners. Yet, these characteristic flaws of the bad slave turn out to be mere disguise. Instead of pretending to be good slaves, these slaves prove their loyalty by pretending to be bad ones; their pretended crimes save their owners' lives and honour, often at the expense of their own lives and safety. The social disorder that undermines the power of the slaveholder guarantees that this willingness to serve is genuine. The loyal slaves of these tales embody the contradictory attributes of volition and instrumentality: they act on their own will and desire but in a way that makes them 'speaking tools' who carry out the will and desire of their masters (Parker 1998: 162).

¹³ For revolt of the *servus callidus* and his young master, see Segal 1968/1987; Parker 1989; McCarthy 2000: 19–20. On Plautus' elaboration of the figure of the tricky slave, see Fraenkel 1960: 223–41. For the dichotomy of the *servus callidus* and *servus bonus*, see Spranger 1984: 22–6, 39 and McCarthy 2000: 26–8, 71. For a discussion of the historical connection between the trickery of the slave and Hannibal, see Leigh 2004: 24–56.

¹⁴ On pleasing and force, see Joshel 1992: 64, 148–9.

The good and bad slaves of Roman literature form two sides of the same coin. Where the good slave provides good service, the bad slave does his job poorly or not at all. The good slave puts his master and his interests first; the bad, himself and his own appetites. The good slave subjects himself to his master's will or shares in that will, whereas the bad one follows his own volition, which never aligns with his master's and, in extreme circumstances, can even destroy his master. Literature's images of good and bad slaves act out masterly hopes and fears, desires and anxieties. Whether they reflect social reality from the slave-owner's point of view or not, the images dramatise that experience for the slaveholding readers of Roman literature, and in that way provide a blueprint for readers to categorise the daily acts and behaviours of slaves: literature, that is, provides a meta-narrative in which individual slave-owners might make sense of the daily, mundane actions of their slaves, especially those who made the control of involuntary labour difficult, troublesome and a source of anxiety. The frequently moralistic tone of literature masks or disguises the social problem of involuntary labour. Columella and Seneca recognise this reality, but their solutions are disciplinary control, patronising manipulation or masterly kindness. In other words, literature's good and bad slaves are inextricably bound up with the mastery that shapes the desired subjectivity of the 'speaking tool'.

THE PRACTICE OF MASTERY

Dramatic and literary images of good and bad slaves are closely connected to the practice of mastery. Plautus' slaves serve or do not serve their masters well. As noted, they worry obsessively about the master's use of the whip and cite that as a motive for loyalty and good service. The *exempla* of servile loyalty feature not only the slave's faithfulness but also the master's qualities as a master. Columella's depiction of bad slaves belongs to his instructions on managing all slaves.¹⁵

The agricultural manuals of Cato, Varro and Columella spell out the practices of mastery in a consistent, self-conscious manner, setting out the feeding, clothing and housing of slaves, the means of ensuring their labour and techniques for preventing their disaffection. Their instructions become increasingly detailed on the practice of mastery and more attentive to what we would see as psychological manipulation.¹⁶ Varro and Columella both recommend consulting rural slaves on the work that the master wants done. For Varro (*Rust.* 1.17.6), 'they will be less inclined to think that they are

¹⁵ Parker 1989; 1998: 157–61; Fitzgerald 2000: 38; cf. McCarthy 2000: 26–7. On the problems of interpreting Plautus' plays as texts read rather than scripts performed, see Richlin 2005: 2–3.

¹⁶ Bradley 1987b: 23–4.

looked down upon, and rather . . . that they are held in some esteem by the master'. Columella explains (*Rust.* 1.8.15) that he talks with his rural slaves in a friendly manner because he thinks that it lightens their perpetual labour. He consults them on any new project, 'as if they were more experienced'. He can observe their abilities and intelligence, and they, in their master's view, become 'more willing to set about a piece of work on which they think that their opinions have been asked and their advice followed'. Cato, Varro and Columella all work on the assumption that mastery requires, on the one side, fear engendered by the threat of punishment and, on the other, favour translated into personal attention, feigned consultation, more food or better clothing, even the promise of freedom.¹⁷

In Roman literature, the violent side of mastery appears in the image of the punished slave. Although physical punishment is a running joke of Plautine comedy, from the late first century BC to the early second century AD, the beaten or flogged slave is so common in Roman literature that it virtually becomes a literary topos. The immediate excuse for punishment is often failure of service: masters whip or flog cooks for ill-prepared meals, hairdressers for curls out of place, waiters for clumsy moves or broken dishes. A loud reply, a defiant look or a muttered aside provoke a whipping or shackles. Masters also beat slaves for no reason or take out their frustrations on third parties innocent of offence. In Juvenal's satire on women, a cruel mistress barks an order to crucify a slave. Dismissing the notion that there should be a crime, witnesses, or a hearing, she retorts. 'What if he has done nothing? This is what I want; so I order; my will is the reason' (6.222–3). Women who spend the day lazing about are equally cruel. If a husband ignores his wife, she takes it out on the slave who weighs out the wool for the day's spinning, the hairdresser and the litter-bearer. Getting ready to meet a lover, she tears the hair of her maid and has her flogged when her hairdo fails to meet her specifications (6.474–95).¹⁸

Writers and poets create punished slaves to characterise their masters and mistresses. Floggings for failures of service or no reason at all delineate and criticise slaveholders' cruelty, ill-temper, or lack of self-control. Comparing the master to the ruler, Seneca argues (*Ira* 3.24.2), that if an emperor like Augustus could bear insults with equanimity, then so could the master:

¹⁷ Var. *Rust.* 1.17.7; Columella 1.8.15–19; Bradley 1987b: 24, 81–5.

¹⁸ Failure of service: cooks (Mart. 3.13, 8.23 (cf. Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 21.3), 3.94; Petron. *Sat.* 49.4–6); hairdressers (Mart. 2.66; Juv. 6.489–95; cf. Ovid *Am.* 1.14.16–8 and *Arsam.* 3.239–40); waiters (Petron. *Sat.* 52.4–6; Sen. *Ira* 3.40.2). Cf. Mart. 7.86 (*vocator* flogged as excuse for failing to invite the poet to a birthday party). Other punishments: Petron. *Sat.* 53.3 (crucifixion for cursing master's *genius*); Petron. *Sat.* 45.8 (*ad bestias* for intercourse with mistress); Mart. 2.82 (cut out tongue and crucifixion for talking?). Reply, look, aside: Sen. *Ira* 3.25.2.

Have I more power in my household than the deified Augustus had over the whole world? He was content just to disassociate himself from the man who insulted him. What right have I to make my slave atone by stripes and manacles for too loud a reply, too rebellious a look, a muttering of something that I do not quite hear? Who am I that it should be a crime to offend my ears?

In Petronius' novel, the *Satyricon* (mid-first century AD), at the dinner party of the wealthy freedman Trimalchio, the display of masterly violence serves as social criticism of this parvenu. Petronius' Trimalchio tries and fails to act the part of the great man: wealthy, self-sufficient, leisured, elegant and cultured. His many slave servants reflect his wealth and their threatened punishment enacts his power. Trimalchio orders a flogging for a cook who supposedly forgot to gut a pig (49.4–50.1) and tells a waiter who drops a cup to kill himself (52.4–6). The guests intervene to plead for mercy, and Trimalchio magnanimously pardons the offender. Whether they belong to the dramatic presentation of food or are merely repeated to represent masterly power, these scenarios of punishment and reprieve portray the power of a vulgar freedman who has wealth but not class. As a freed slave, Trimalchio cannot hold the public offices that were so closely associated with both power and honour; his slaves then enable him to exercise a power denied by his social position, and Petronius' depiction of its vulgar display makes the wealthy freedman ridiculous.

Neutral or negative, images of punished slaves in Roman literature do not deny the master's power to inflict a beating or a flogging. Punished slaves reflect social practice, assuming without question the potential power of every master to inflict physical punishment. Even Seneca, who urges self-control in the punishment of slaves, remarks (*Ira* 3.32.2) that waiting, instead of acting immediately on an impulse to flog a slave or break his legs, does not erase masterly power: 'Such power will not perish, if it is deferred.' Yet, where Plautus seems interested in the body and mind of the slave threatened with the whip, Martial, Juvenal and Petronius use the beaten body of the slave as a screen on which they project the master's character. In other words, the slave's punished body has everything to do with the master and little to do with the slave. In this way, the topos of the beaten slave holds up for masters a mirror of cruelty, imperious temper, lack of self-control, or vulgar social insecurity in their own performance of their social roles. Such masters need correction or, more often, invite ridicule. By contrast, in Plautus the slave cringing at the idea of the whip becomes the butt of jokes.

Genre plays its role in this distinction: comedy enacted on the stage cannot avoid the subjectivity of the threatened slave who speaks and acts before an audience, whereas a poem or novel read (or recited) can ignore

the slave's mind and body by its focus on the master's agency (though we might wonder about their reception by a slave reader or copyist). If we had comedies from the Principate that featured slave characters, this flattening out of the slave's imagined experience might look different. Nonetheless, even in non-theatrical texts, authors have chosen, consciously or not, to use the punished slave to figure the punishing master. Another discursive operation, too, plays its role here: when slavery in the Principate became a metaphor for the individual's relation to the emperor (see below), where senator is to emperor as slave is to master, authors use the physical reality of violence and the imagined experience of the vulnerable slave, but only to figure the experience and appropriate behaviour of senators – those men accustomed to mastery.

Images of physical punishment are only one side of the coin depicting mastery in Roman literature. The other side lies in the power to forgo punishment or to grant boons that alter the life of the slave. To play the part of the great man, the vulgar Trimalchio must be not only a strict master but also a generous one. At the pleading of his guests, Trimalchio forgives the forgetful cook and the clumsy waiter in ostentatious shows of generosity. The cook who guts the pig to reveal the sausages and puddings within is rewarded with a silver crown and a drink (Petron. *Sat.* 50.1). Trimalchio forgives his masseurs who spill fine wine because they do so in drinking a toast to their master. He frees an acrobat who fell on him, so that no one will say he was injured by a mere slave (54). Falling out of his role, Trimalchio invites his slaves to sit at the table, collapsing the distance between master and slave by chatting in an overly familiar way (70.10–13). Finally, he claims that 'slaves are people too', announcing manumissions and bequests – all of which produce servile gratitude for their master's kindness (cf. 71.1–4).

As with the scenes of corporal punishment, these scenes of the master's rewards are spectacles. For the narrator, they reveal only Trimalchio's buffoonery. He plays his role as a great man badly; the drunker he becomes, the more he falls short of his intended role. Deference, on the part of the slave, and distance and distinction, on the part of the master, are not preserved. And that is the point. Despite his millions, Trimalchio can never carry off the role to which he aspires. Petronius suggests that Trimalchio's servile past prohibits such a man from attaining this rank. He learns proper behaviour only by imitation, and so he fails. Yet, his practice – and his imitation – of mastery reveals common assumptions. Masterly punishment and reward are both supposed to produce servile obedience and respect: the former through fear; the latter from motives of gratitude and expectation. Each, however, allows the master to enjoy the experience of power. Trimalchio's problem lies in his desperate need for this display and his outlandish performance in the production.

Seneca's famous letter on master–slave relations (*Moral Epistles* 47) treats in serious philosophic discourse the masterly favour and kindness that become slapstick comedy at Trimalchio's table.¹⁹ Complimenting his addressee, Lucilius, for living with his slaves as one would with close friends, Seneca (47.1) observes that this masterly behaviour becomes Lucilius' practical wisdom and learning. Then in two scenes at the dinner table, Seneca offers up images of bad mastery. In the first, the master follows the excessively arrogant habit of dining amid a crowd of servants; he gorges and vomits, while his slaves stand around hungry and condemned to silence, their every murmur, cough or sneeze repressed by the rod (47.2–3). Passing over other cruel and inhuman practices that treat slaves as *iumenta* (beasts of burden), Seneca returns to the table, cataloguing the activities of slaves burdened with their master's basest needs (47.5–8). Some clean up vomited food; others pick up scraps left under the table by drunken guests. One slave's sole purpose in life is to carve game birds correctly. Another is forced into perpetual boyhood by depilatories and hair-plucking to serve the master his wine at the table; then, in the bedroom, he becomes a man, baby-sitting his master's drunkenness and sating his lust. Still another watches the guests, evaluating their production of flattery and consumption of food. Finally, the provisioner (*opsonator*) devotes his time to selecting food that will please his master's appetite, wearied as it is by excess.

Such slaveholders regard dining with their slaves as degrading or disgusting – an offence to their exalted dignity (47.2, 8). Yet, for Seneca, the real degradation is their own masterly practice and the excesses they perpetrate. For him, eating more than a stomach can hold and vomiting demonstrate a lack of control over appetites, which makes ludicrous the attempt to silence slave speech and quell involuntary coughs, sneezes and hiccups by the whip. The owner whose slaves cater to his basest physical needs parades an unmasterly dependence on them: 'How many masters does he have in these slaves?' Seneca asks (47.9). Such practices are not only degrading but dangerous. Slaves who do not talk in their owner's presence will tell on him as a result. In former times, slaves who spoke before and with their master were willing to bare their necks for him and take on themselves the danger that threatened him (47.4). The proverb, 'You have as many enemies as you have slaves,' misses the point: we do not acquire them as enemies; we make them so (47.5).

Against those he calls self-indulgent and disdainful, Seneca shores up Lucilius' practice of kindness and affability and suggests that he invite deserving slaves to the table, even those whose work is lowly, like the mule-driver (*mulio*) or ploughman (*bubulcus*); they should be judged by their character, not their occupation (47.13, 15). The servile quality that results

¹⁹ On Roman writers' use of dinner parties and the Saturnalia, see Gowers 1993: 27–8.

from their ordinary interchanges with lowly types will be shaken off by close association with well-born men. He adduces the model of Roman ancestors in support of such practice. They removed all ill-will from the master and all insult from the slave. They called the master father of the household (*pater familiae*) and slaves members of the household (47.14). Seneca urges that slaves should revere, not fear, their master. To be revered is to be loved, and love cannot be mixed with fear (47.17–18). He then commends Lucilius for relying on verbal punishment: only mute animals should be admonished by floggings.

Throughout his letter, Seneca imagines bits of dialogue that might occur at a dinner, interjecting the objections of men who see dining with slaves as disgraceful, who feel that any association with slaves lowers their dignity, and who might accuse Seneca of freeing slaves or instituting a sort of permanent Saturnalia (47.1, 13, 15, 17). The central point of disagreement, performed twice in the letter, lies at the juncture of the slave as human and as chattel. To his challengers' repeated assertion that 'they are slaves', Seneca answers that they are human beings (*homines*), house-mates (*contubernales*), humble friends (*humiles amici*) and ultimately fellow-slaves (*conserui*) (47.1). Although a slave, a man might have a free soul (47.17; cf. 10).

Seneca's advice about mastery rests on a kind of solipsism that considers the slaveholder's place in a hierarchical social order capped by the rule of an absolute monarch. Seneca advocates kindly, friendly treatment of slaves. He insists on the human side of the chattel–human coin, but also on the metaphor that every man is a 'slave' to something or someone – lust, greed, ambition, a rich wife, a love. And, he claims, all men are 'slaves' to fear. Even the rich and powerful have or will have masters. Moreover, any man can fall from a position of wealth and power, finding himself among the low (47.11–12, 17). The heart of Seneca's advice, he tells Lucilius, is that 'you should live with your inferior as you would wish your superior to live with you' (47.11). Seneca urges Lucilius (and his readers) that, as often as he thinks of the power he has over his slave, he should remind himself of the power his master has over him.

The sentiments voiced here and repeated throughout Seneca's letters and philosophical essays do not advocate the abolition of slavery or even a wage-earning economy in its place. Rather, Seneca espouses a benevolent paternalism that strengthens the institution of slavery. Whatever moral quality slaves might attain, Seneca preserves both masterly authority itself and the Roman sense of hierarchy. Slaves, albeit human, are inferiors; they never rise above the level of humble friends. Seneca's vocabulary and phrasing make it clear that he and Lucilius expect obedience and respect as their due. He contrasts slaves who fear their master with those who revere, honour and respect theirs (*Ep.* 47.17, *colere*). Elsewhere Seneca uses respect/revere (*colere*) in describing the worship of the gods, the reverence

evoked by a benevolent ruler, or the honour due great ancestors – giving religious tones to the appropriate relations of slave to master. The fearful slave obeys because he seeks to avoid punishment; the respectful slave, because it is the right thing to do. As always, however, the master, not the slave, is the one feared or revered.²⁰

Moreover, Seneca never lets go of slaves' fungibility. They serve to reflect the master guilty of extravagance and a lack of self-control. Slave humanity itself is a construct both socially limited and malleable in the hands of the socially – and morally – superior master. Seneca tells Lucilius that he can find friends not only in the forum and senate but also in his own house, among his slaves (*Ep.* 47.16). However, these servile 'friends' need shaping: 'Good material often remains unused without a craftsman; try and you will learn from your experience.' The master becomes the craftsman; the slave, the material whose potential is unrealised without his master's efforts. Seneca fully realises the slave's fungibility, when, despite his protestations of servile humanity here and in many other passages, he lists the slave as one item in a list of other items – many of them objects of luxury.²¹

Petronius' Trimalchio needs the affection of his slaves to experience power. Varro and Columella pretend to listen to their slaves to extract co-operation and labour. Seneca and Lucilius, however, demonstrate an independence from – and superiority to – their slaves' emotions and even labour. For Seneca, the activities of waiter, carver, cook, provisioner are not labour but forms of pleasing, and their attention to bodily needs he describes in terms designed to evoke disgust and pity. Elsewhere and often, he advises Lucilius to free himself from physical needs and the burden of possessions (*Ep.* 14.1–2, 104.34, 110.14–20, 115); neither then depends on domestic servants, as other men do. The master's dependence 'is displaced . . . by constructing a moral practice that makes the servant's labour unnecessary. The master in control of himself cannot be seen to depend on the slave for services that are not essential' (Joshel 1992: 152).

For Seneca, slaves depend on masters, not vice versa. In *On Tranquillity of the Mind* (8.7–8), he tells the story of Diogenes the Cynic, whose only slave, Manes, ran away. Diogenes did not try to retrieve his slave, since 'it would be shameful that Diogenes cannot live without Manes, when Manes can live without Diogenes'. Seneca reinterprets the saying, 'Fortune, stick to your own business. Nothing of Diogenes belongs to you. My slave has run away – but, it is I who have gotten away free.' The master is free because, for Seneca, slaves are a burden: the master must feed and clothe them, watch that they do not steal and use their services. In effect, Seneca disguises the elite slaveholder's reliance on his slaves to let him live nobly by

²⁰ Gods: *Ep.* 64.9, 90.3, 95.47; *Clem.* 1.19.8, 2.5.1; *Marc.* 13.2. Rulers: *Ep.* 73.2; *Clem.* 1.13.4. Ancestors: *Ben.* 3.37.1.

²¹ For example, *Ep.* 110.17, cf. 27.5; *Tranq.* 1.8; *Brev.* 12.5; *Poly.* 11.3

depicting the slave as dependent and, thus, reversing the truth of who needs whom (cf. Patterson 1982: 337). For Seneca, slaves are not only dependent; they become animals and body parts – the stomachs of very voracious animals, thieving hands and weepers and cursers – in need of a master's mind and reason.

CONSUMING SLAVES: THE METAPHOR OF SLAVERY

Seneca's discussion of mastery and slavery participates in a common pattern in Roman literature – what we might call 'thinking with slaves'. Using slavery as a model or a metaphor, Roman authors borrowed the vocabulary of slavery, its practices, and masters' assumptions about slaves' experience to figure other forms of domination.²² Two mental operations characterise imperial writers who participate in this thinking with slaves. The first, the use of the behaviour or treatment of slaves to depict the slaveholder, has already been discussed. In the second, the freeborn implicitly or explicitly identify with slaves and their condition.²³

The forms of domination extend from the emotional and psychological to the political. Free men who subject themselves to their own emotions, desires, passions and bodily appetites become slaves to fear, greed, ambition, lust or gluttony. Personally and socially, ambition, patronage and jockeying for place or favour all metamorphose into enslavement. The poet Horace imagines that his slave Davus chastises him for the slavish compulsion that drives Horace's behaviour with patron and mistress; then he summarises the metaphorical forms of enslavement by answering his own question: 'Who then is free?' The only free man, claims Davus, is the wise man who has complete control of himself and who does not fear poverty, death or chains; he battles his own passions, scorns prestige and remains unaffected by the turns of fortune (*Satires* 2.7.83–8). Finally, in the political realm, senators describe their tribulations under Republican dynasts and bad emperors in terms of the relations of slaves and masters.²⁴

In fact, this literary use of slavery took on a particular urgency in the late Republic and early Principate, when magnates like Pompey, Caesar, Antony and Octavian dominated aristocratic politics and emperors then took control of the state, suppressing the political power of the aristocracy.

²² McCarthy 2000: x; Beard 2002: 138–9.

²³ Slavery as metaphor: McCarthy 1998 and 2000; Fitzgerald 2000; Beard 2002: 131–43; Martin 1990; Roller 2001; Garnsey 1996: 16–19, 220–35; Konstan 1983; Thalmann 1996; Hinds 1998: 134–5; Parker 1998: 152–73; see also the other articles in Joshel and Murnaghan 1998. Uncovered here are the history of 'thinking with slaves' and the detailed examination of its particular configurations – metaphor or metonymy, model, language and imagery, screen for projection of desires and anxieties.

²⁴ For an example of the Roman version of enslavement to the body and appetites, see Sall. *Cat.* 1.2, 2.8, 4.1. On Davus and Hor. *Sat.* 2.7, see Fitzgerald 2000: 18–24. Senators: Cic. *Rep.* 2.43, *Att.* 7.7.7; Tac. *Ann.* 3.65, *Agr.* 2.3; Plin. *Ep.* 4.11.6 and *Pan.* 2.

Aristocrats in the Julio-Claudian period, the first generations of the Principate, had to come to terms with a new political order, the loss of their traditional sources of power and achievement, and their need to 'speak to power.' This was a contested process, and literature, mostly written by and for the elite, was a site in which different images of the emperor were tried out.²⁵ In one of the most compelling acts of imagination, Roman authors of the early Principate deploy the metaphor of slavery to figure relations between the emperor and his subjects, especially his elite subjects. Particularly important in the deployment of this metaphor are the deprivations, physical violence and degradation associated with slavery.²⁶

Seneca, philosopher, politician and tutor to the young Nero, who knew well the power of the emperor both to advance and to destroy senators, pursues the question of imperial power and aristocratic behaviour in painful detail. In his writings the metaphor of slavery recurs almost relentlessly: it is grist for the Stoic mill of politics and personal ethics. In the *De ira*, which focuses on the ability of the powerful to express or control their emotions, Seneca juxtaposes the behaviour of rulers with the practice of mastery (3.18–19, 3.19.2, 3.25.3–4). Seneca's cruel tyrants, Roman and foreign, act like bad masters, treating their elite subjects like miserable slaves (3.19.2; 3.25.3–4). The good master's restraint in his treatment of noisy, irritating slaves parallels the restraint of the powerful in the public arena (3.24.2). The less powerful within the household should be excused because of their weakness – children because of their age, women because of their sex, domestic servants because of their familiarity (3.24.3). In the public realm, the emperor should excuse the flaws and weaknesses that make all men, even the wise, fallible and careless – in other words, slaves to some compulsion, desire, or fear (3.24.4, 3.26.4).²⁷

In *On clemency*, addressed to the young Nero, Seneca extends the warning to bad masters articulated in *Ep.* 47 to bad rulers. As slaves take vengeance on cruel masters despite the threat of crucifixion, so will nations and people who suffer from or are threatened by a tyrant's wickedness (*Clem.* 1.26.1). Masters must 'rule slaves moderately': 'one should consider not how much [the slave] can endure without retaliating, but how much the nature of equity and right permits you, which requires you to spare even captives and purchased slaves' (1.18.1). Rulers must treat the free, the freeborn and the elite even more justly – not like chattel, but like those whom the ruler outranks. His relationship to the ruled should be that of guardian to ward, not master to slave.

²⁵ Roller 2001: 6–7.

²⁶ See Roller 2001: 214–17 for a variety of examples.

²⁷ On Seneca and slavery, see Bradley 1986a; Griffin 1976; Viansino 1979; Barton 1993; Roller 2001. On Seneca's use of philosophical and everyday discourse, see Habinek 1989: 241–5; Roller 2001: 70–7; cf. Edwards 1997; Habinek 1992.

For ruling the freeborn, especially the elite, Seneca evokes the competing metaphor of father and son (1.14.1–16.1). The father–son relationship constrains the use of violence against the child and considers his honour and status as freeborn. According to Seneca, no parent resorts to the extreme of physical punishment without first trying other forms of correction (1.14.1). The duty of a parent, then, is akin to the duty of the emperor whose title, ‘father of his country’, reminds him ‘that paternal power is given to him, which is very moderate, considering the children and subordinating his own interests to theirs’ (1.14.2). The father Seneca imagines here is nurturing, caring and loath to inflict physical punishment; by contrast, Seneca’s picture of the master focuses on the stereotypical violence and animosity of the relations of master and slave (Roller 2001: 244–5). Father and master have a logical connection, since the roles are joined in the single person of the *paterfamilias* (the head of the Roman family) who has both children and slaves in his power. This dual role then serves to distinguish the bad ruler from the good: the imagery of master and slave, projected onto the emperor–subject relationship, represents power as ‘exploitative and oppressive’; in the imagery of the father–son relationship, however, the same imperial power becomes ‘benevolent and nurturing’ (Roller 2001: 213).

Thus, the metaphor of slavery serves Seneca’s parallel of household and empire: emperor is to world as master is to household. The master of a household lives in a world ruled by an emperor – figuratively, then, he lives in the realm of the slave or the child. The question is whether he will be treated as child or slave, and if as a slave, is his owner a Seneca or the stereotypically bad owner of his own discourse. Yet, no free Roman would want to be any slave in Seneca’s literary world: bad masters inflict bodily harm and insult, and even good ones treat their slaves as less honourable social beings, whose moral character is an instance of the slave’s fungibility. In the end, Seneca reifies slavery or its central aspect – that slaves live under the complete power of their owners for good or ill.

The metaphor of slavery also serves Seneca’s articulation of Stoic ethics which ‘reconstructs the traditional Roman aristocracy as an aristocracy of virtue’ (Roller 2001: 273). Like earlier authors, Seneca uses the language of slavery to characterise mental or psychological states of subjection, but he deploys the metaphor almost obsessively to explore the subjectivity of the elite living under autocracy. In a well-worn move of Graeco-Roman discourse, enslavement defines the man who fails to control his desire for food, sex, pleasures, luxury or wealth in general. It characterises men who fear – whether they fear poverty, death or physical violence. Anger especially enslaves, as it conquers other feelings and takes over the body, mind and behaviour of the man afflicted with it. In Seneca, constraint, chance and

necessity, too, can enslave a man – and these are often associated with fear of death.²⁸

The free man (and the happy man) has no fear or desire (*Ep.* 75.18). Seneca urges Lucilius and his readers to withdraw their ‘necks from the yoke’ – whether the yoke is pleasure, desire, ambition, wealth, fear of exile, or the terror of death (*Ep.* 19.6, 104.33–4). Freedom means ‘not to be a slave to any circumstance, to any constraint, to any chance, forcing fortune onto equal footing’. Only when a man has control over his own death does he lose fortune’s dominion over him (*Ep.* 51.9). Seneca’s freedom is an internal state, impervious to the world’s insults and injuries, its pleasures or judgements: the mind (*animus*) of a free man ‘separates itself from everything external (*On the Constancy of the Mind* 19.2). Ultimately, there is a way out if external circumstances do not permit this internal independence: ‘We will show that in every servitude there is a way open to freedom’; there is always, he claims, suicide (*Ira* 3.16.3, 3.16.4; *Ep.* 70).²⁹ The willingness to commit suicide, detachment from external conditions, equanimity in the face of death, and tranquillity of mind in Stoicism mean neither fortune nor the tyrant can truly harm or degrade the Stoic aristocrat. Moreover, since tyrants are stereotypically cruel, angry and fearful – in effect, enslaved to their emotions – the aristocrat who has freed himself from ‘externals’ reverses the political order that treats him as a slave.³⁰

Seneca frequently insists that all are equally slaves and equally able to attain this sort of moral virtue. Yet, the education and leisure necessary to pursue philosophy and his own denigration of labour make it clear that his notions of freedom and a moral aristocracy are not available to the lower classes.³¹ More importantly, for the concerns of this chapter, many of Seneca’s generalisations about life could not include slaves – or could do so only with great difficulty. For example, he tells Lucilius (*Ep.* 1.3) that time is the only thing that is ours, but Roman slaves’ time was not their own – it was literally their owners’. Seneca also urges Lucilius to take orders willingly, to desire whatever circumstances demand (*Ep.* 61.2), yet in view of the slaveholder’s legally sanctioned power to punish, how could this apply to Seneca’s wine-server forced to maintain a boyish appearance, or the provisioner who must study his sated master’s every taste?

²⁸ Desires, appetites, senses: *Ep.* 14.1, 15.3, 39.6, 59.9, 66.33, 83.10, 90.19, 92.33, 104.34, 110.9. Fear: *Ep.* 24.11, 26.10, 70.19, 80.4–5, 77.15, 80.5. Anger: *Ira* 2.26.6. Constraint and chance: *Ep.* 51.9.

²⁹ Yoke: cf. Roller 2001: 274, 285. Control of death: *Ep.* 26.10, 70.9, 77.15; cf. *Ira* 3.16.1.

³⁰ Roller 2001: 285. On the Roman notion of political freedom, see Wirszubski 1950; Roller 2001: 219, n. 10, 229–33.

³¹ Poverty and virtue: *Ep.* 17, 18, 20.12; education and leisure: *Ep.* 55.1, 68–69, 72.3; denigration of labour: *Ep.* 90, 123. Cf. Roller 2001: 281–6.

Beyond the usual abstractions of moral discourse, Seneca's pervasive use of slavery as a metaphor for the human condition and for elite subjects living under an emperor drains social realities of meaning. When the moral or mental state of an aristocrat addicted to wealth, drink, luxuries or life itself is likened to the slave suffering social deprivation, physical violence and degraded status, what counts is the mind and soul of the aristocrat, not the social reality of the slave. This is at work not only in Seneca's generalisations about the human condition, but in his tendency to belittle or dismiss those aspects of slavery that constitute what Orlando Patterson (1982: 38) calls the slave's 'social death' – the loss of ethnicity, family, membership in the community, honour and integrity. Chains, torture, flogging, the destruction of one's homeland in war, forced exile and the loss of family, property and position – all conditions suffered by slaves in general and enslaved captives in particular – do not trouble the wise man (*Ep.* 24.17, 85.27; *Constant.* 5.6–7, 10.4). In Seneca, even tales about slaves become tales about the master or object lessons for his aristocratic readers (see, for example, *Ep.* 50.2–3 and *Ben.* 3.23–28, 29.1).

The rhetorical power of Seneca's arguments depends on slavery as a metaphor. The aristocratic reader must identify with the imagined subjectivity and condition of the slave to experience his own compulsions and then to achieve his own manumission in the moral and mental arena. In effect, Seneca and his readers consume the slave's subjectivity to liberate themselves. It might be said that in Seneca all are slaves, so some can become free – but not, of course, slaves themselves.

CONSUMING SLAVES: PATERNALISM AND SLAVE AGENCY IN PLINY THE YOUNGER

The themes of the slave as object and subject, mastery and thinking with slavery play out in similar ways in Pliny's *Letters* (AD 97–112). An instance of Roman self-fashioning, these meticulously composed letters craft a portrait of the self and its world, shaped by a network of unequal power and authority – including the relations of master and slave. They illustrate how good mastery, the benevolent paternalism of Seneca, consumes slave subjectivity in a literary manner, but they do so without the abstraction of metaphor. Pliny, like paternalism itself, makes slaves visible only to make disappear important components of their condition, either consuming their agency or rendering it invisible.³²

³² On self-fashioning, see Leach 1990; Riggsby 1995, 1998; Syme 1958: 85. On modes of composition, reworking and authenticity, see Sherwin-White 1966; Bell 1989; Shelton 1987. On Pliny's emulation of Cicero, see *Ep.* 1.5.12, 9.2. The analysis here is indebted to Hartman 1997.

In relations with his slaves, Pliny the master adopts the role of father (*Ep.* 2.47, 5.19). He classes himself among kind masters (1.4), treating his slaves not only mildly, but even indulgently (5.19). He does not reach for the whip when service is not up to par; he allows his slaves to carry on – at least at his Laurentine villa. He even creates a special bedroom, set off from the house and impervious to sound, so young slaves can make noise and the household enjoy the license of the Saturnalia. He provides them rooms good enough to receive guests (2.17.9). Pliny takes care of his ill or dying slaves and freedmen, exhibiting worry or grief – for example, in the cases of the ailing freedman Zosimus, a reader, actor and musician (5.19), and the ill slave Encolpius, a reader (8.1; cf. 8.16, 8.19; cf. 6.3). He offers ease in manumission – at least to young slaves on their deathbeds. He allows those who remain slaves to make a kind of will that he treats as legally binding. These privileges, he urges, support his contention that the household is a sort of state (*res publica*); membership in it, a kind of citizenship (*civitas*) (8.16).³³

It is difficult, if not impossible, to disentangle this master from the depiction of slaves' agency (their action, voice and thought). Like the slaves of all kind masters, Pliny's do not fear him. They make noise and enjoy themselves without apparent anxiety; their service to him is indifferent, yet their attention to guests aims to solicit his approval (1.4). The actions, thoughts and feelings of the ailing Zosimus and Encolpius concern Pliny – only Pliny. His depiction of Zosimus begins with qualities that define his relationship to his patron: Zosimus is honest, dutiful and cultured. It continues with talents that amount to pleasant services and ends with his simplicity and frugality – in effect, his denial of self (5.19). In Pliny's depiction, the illness of his reader Encolpius is not only sad for Encolpius but bitter for Pliny: 'Who will read my books and love them (as he does)? To whom will I listen (with such attention)?' (8.1). This slave exists in his services to Pliny, his feelings of loss that mirror Pliny's, and his interests that are identified with – and as – his master's.

Pliny's paternalism puts on display an enslavement undisturbed by the violence that lay at the heart of the slave system or the surveillance and control we see in other sources. In effect, Pliny detaches power from coercion. His slaves do not fear; although they might slough off a bit, they try to please their master – though obviously not because they are compelled to do so. Feeling, not force, shapes Pliny's treatment of them; feeling, not fear, shapes their agency. Tension and resistance haunt the households of other men, necessitating compensation or repression (3.14,

³³ Pliny does not always praise indulgence: Ummidia Quadratilla's indulgent treatment of her troupe of *pantomimi* is inappropriate for an upper-class woman – especially since the pantomimists belong to a decadence that could affect her upright young grandson (7.24).

8.15, 6.25). For Pliny and others like him, the agency of slaves and freed slaves consists of willing subordination, identification with the slaveholder's interests, deference and self-denial.³⁴

Pliny is less *dominus* – master and owner – and more *pater* – the kind, forgiving, even indulgent father. Certain effects follow from this emphasis on the father figure, especially the displacement of violence this imagery occasions. Traditionally and legally, fathers and slaveholders could impose corporal punishment on – even kill – children and slaves in their paternal power; in practice, they reserved corporal punishment for slaves. It was inappropriate to punish freeborn children with the whip, since that dishonoured them. Despite tales of fathers killing sons, their expected relations were affectionate, based on a *pietas* that consisted of warmth as well as duty.³⁵ Thus, Pliny, like Seneca, projects onto his own relations with slaves a vision of authority grounded in feeling rather than legal violence.

In her study of nineteenth-century American slavery, Saidiya Hartman (1997: 88, 81) calls this ‘displacement and euphemisation of violence’ the ‘discourse of seduction’: ‘seduction epitomises the discursive alchemy that shrouds direct forms of violence under the “veil of enchanted relations” – that is, the reciprocal and mutual relations of master and slave’. This discourse creates and sustains a ‘confusion of consent and coercion, feeling and submission, intimacy and domination, violence and reciprocity’. Pliny's slaves did not consent to join his household; ownership placed them there by force. Yet the violence of that ownership, backed by the authority and force of the state, disappears when Pliny identifies slave status with citizenship and the social space of enslavement with the public community (*res publica*), in which, in fact, slaves played no official part. Zosimus and Encolpius come into close contact with Pliny and his literary pursuits, but they do not – perhaps cannot – simply perform their jobs. Freedman and slave are too busy voluntarily and enthusiastically sharing the interests and pleasures of their master and patron. In return, their service, devotion and deference are reciprocated in Pliny's love and concern for them – especially in illness. Yet that love and concern focus primarily on Pliny; his feelings of attachment bathe ‘domination in a heartwarming light’ (Hartman 1997: 92). More importantly, he effects a reversal of power: the very weakness of Zosimus and Encolpius moves their master. Their frailty – and his feelings for them – elicits Pliny's care and concern. Pliny claims he is weakened by the very humanity that has led him to grant privileges to his dying slaves, yet he does not wish to be tougher – harder (8.16.3). In his grief, he allows his slaves to make wills. They give instructions, and the master obliges, as if obeying, in carrying out their provisions.

³⁴ On violence, see Bradley 1987b: 118–23; 1994: 165–73.

³⁵ Saller 1991; 1994: 102–50; Dixon 1992: 117–19; Crook 1967a.

There is more going on here than the construction of slaves as an appropriate mirror for a kind, indulgent master. Even more than usual, the solipsistic Pliny swallows up the voice and thought of his slave agents. Encolpius' loss becomes Pliny's; death-bed manumissions and slave wills console Pliny, not the dying slaves or their 'heirs'; the pain of death descends not on its victims, but – as ever – upon Pliny. Even the dreams of his slaves and freedmen are swallowed up in Pliny's egoism. In a letter of 102 or 106, Pliny recounts the dreams of a freedman and a slave (7.27.12–14). First, a freedman dreamt that someone sat on his bed and snipped hair from the top of his head. The next day, he found a shorn spot on his head and hair on the floor. Later, a slave boy (*puer*) dreamt that two men in white tunics came in through the window, cut his hair, then left. In the morning, he, too, had a new haircut. For Pliny, the second dream confirms the meaning of the first – a meaning that concerns Pliny, rather than freedman or slave. At the time, Pliny felt that he was in danger: had the emperor Domitian lived, he says, he would have been brought to trial. Accused men customarily let their hair grow, Pliny explains, so the cutting of his freedman's and slave's hair signals that his own danger was past. The freedman and slave dreamt of actions perpetrated against them, but their master sees those actions – and their single meaning – as his own.

This appropriation of agency assumes the slave's status as property object – as commodity. Yet, in Pliny's construction of slave agency, there is no contradiction between property and person; even ambiguity only serves to reify the slave's fungibility. In his consumption of agency, Pliny enjoys possession of his slave – not as object, but as subject. His paternalism requires agents who feel and think, rather than animals or tools with no desires, thoughts, or feelings to appropriate. In paternalistic discourse, slaves must have agency, yet their personhood must also be so transparent that they serve as blank screens onto which the master projects himself: their hair is his hair; their interests, his interests; their feelings, his feelings; their dreams, his dreams. There is no opposition, then, between slave as object and slave as human: rather, at the moment that the slave becomes visible as person, it is because he/she is most useful to the writer's discourse. In effect, in attributing human thought and feeling to the slave, Pliny anthropomorphises an object. The slave's very personhood becomes a function of the slave's fungibility; the master can turn the slave's agency to any use – even to exchange or substitute it for another's. When Pliny implicitly identifies his slaves as human, he does not quite see their humanity – only his own (see 8.16.3–5).

This consumption of agency takes place against a background in which slaves are either objectified or made to disappear. In other letters, where paternalism is not his focus, Pliny lists slaves among other things (1.15, 3.19, 9.17). Where the master as *paterfamilias* is not at issue, Pliny denies slaves

agency even in daily acts of domestic service. He routinely describes houses as if empty of slaves, although the pleasures evoked would have necessitated them (1.3, 2.17, 5.6); he relishes solitude in circumstances where domestic slaves had to have been present (1.6, 1.9). The agency of the domestic slave in the performance of work disappears in Pliny's use of the passive voice or the master's orders (3.1, 3.5, 6.20, 9.36): a book is read; notes are taken; a man is oiled; a bath is taken; or the master orders lamps, dinner, service and they appear without cause or agent. This disappearance serves the portrayal of the master, not mastery. The slave disappears, so the master can appear in a certain light.³⁶

If, as Gayatri Spivak observes (1988a: 11–12), 'the "subaltern" cannot appear without the thought of the "elite"', we see how Pliny's paternalistic discourse troubles our own calculations of slave agency. In his *Letters*, either the slave is an object on a list of other objects, or his agency is removed to leave an object and an action without an actor; or agency itself belongs to the master who orders, rather than the slave who executes those orders. Where the slave's personhood is recognised, the representation of his action, voice or thought only intensifies his subjugation. As a mirror of social reality, Pliny's *Letters*, like other Roman literature, reflect a reality shaped primarily by the interests, hopes and anxieties of its elite authors and audience.

Yet, reading against the grain of Roman literary texts gives us a different perception of the visible and invisible. In Pliny's case, recognising how his paternalism works in the depiction of slave agency fractures our implicit identification with his point of view.³⁷ For example, when his slaves die, Pliny consoles himself in thinking of his generosity in allowing them to make wills. In so doing, however, he also enlarges his ability to interfere in their lives. He, rather than a slave, distributes the dead slaves' goods to other slaves; he carries out the orders – as he calls them – but this gives him still greater access to their belongings and to other slaves. And he never goes so far as to alienate slaves' property that, legally, belongs to him. All slave gifts, bequests and distributions circulate within his own household; outside that household, a slave can give nothing to a husband, wife, sister, brother, child or friend – whatever the orders. For Pliny, that does not matter; his definition of the household as *res publica* implicitly denies any

³⁶ In Pliny's Livian tale of his uncle's heroic death and his own calm during the eruption of Vesuvius (6.16), slaves fade into the background. In his account of the ailing Domitius Tullus (8.17), Pliny compliments Tullus' wife for her support in enabling Tullus to live, not the slaves who performed the most banal tasks of movement and hygiene – including the disgusting job of washing him and brushing his teeth (8.18.9).

³⁷ This discussion cannot claim to represent what Scott calls (1990: xii) the 'hidden transcript' (the subordinate's criticism of power articulated out of sight of the dominant), only what the public transcript itself makes visible. For an example for Roman slaves, see the fables and comments of Phaedrus, the Roman fabulist, himself an ex-slave.

such relations, so he does not need to acknowledge the definitive quality of the horizontal ties of family, friendship and work that we read in the epitaphs of domestic slaves.³⁸

If we do not assume the polar opposites of rebels in open resistance or dependants in docile submission, then we glimpse the self-control slaves needed to act in Pliny's choreographed scenes. If, in the cases of the slave and freed readers, Encolpius and Zosimus, Pliny enacted in speech what he portrays in his letters, talking on and on about his speeches, his poetry and his endeavours, they would be obligated to participate. They cannot simply put down their master's book, so to speak, or skim its lines – as we can. Pliny assumes Encolpius' interests are his own, yet when his entire self was not bound up in Pliny's literary projects, he must have exercised self-control to construct the behaviour Pliny observes – or imagines. We may compare a scene from a nineteenth-century American slave narrative, Hannah Crafts' *Bondswoman's Narrative*, where we see the inner disagreement and outward civility of a female slave who 'was obliged to listen' to her mistress. The reader feels Hannah's relief, and the controlled irritation, when the master interrupts her mistress: 'How far the lady would [have] gone on, or how extravagant she might have become in her description . . . it is impossible to say, had not Mr. Wheeler, luckily for me, come into the room' (Gates 2002: 196, 198).

The material appropriation of the slave's labour required domination; that domination, with its 'pattern of humiliations', left 'its mark on personal dignity' (Scott 1990: 112–13). We might ask if paternalism – and the literary portraits of slaves in general – weaves its own distinct pattern of humiliation. If in swallowing up the action, voice, thought and dreams of his slaves, Pliny reflects the practice of lived interactions, then we must ask about that practice as the slave's experience. Slaves like Encolpius not only had to live and act out their absorption; they had to read all about it in the master's letters, and then give expression to their master's delight.

CONCLUSION

In Roman letters and philosophy, love poetry, satire and epigram, history and novels, slaves appear as the projection or vessel of masters' imagination. Caught up in a dichotomous discourse, slaves become good or bad to the degree that they become effective or, at worst, destructive instruments. Yet, the literary complexities of slave subjectivity never imagine an agency outside slaveholders' own needs, desires or anxieties. Ultimately, the complex images of slave agency turn on the practice of mastery, a preoccupation in Roman literary texts. Roman authors stage the uses of force and the effects

³⁸ Flory 1978; Joshel 1992.

of kindness to display masterly success or failure in their appropriate social roles.

Mastery and its imagined effects on the slave often, especially from the late first century BC on, involve the metaphoric use of slaves: slaves and slavery appear as metaphors for those who were not slaves and for institutions other than slavery. This is not simply because, as several scholars have claimed, slaves were good to think with; more basically, the literary practice was founded on the very definition of the chattel slave as fungible. Slaves' fungibility allowed for their consumption as agents: indeed, as I have argued, whether metaphoric or literal, paternalism requires and consumes slaves as human subjects and agents. However distant from the experience of slaves themselves, this discourse – to the extent that it represents masterly practice and is itself a practice – defines a significant aspect of the lived condition of Roman slaves. In this sense, social historians concerned with slaves cannot avoid the discourse of slavery in Roman authors; in another sense, our search for the facts of slavery at Rome so often takes us to Roman literature where those facts are embedded within the discourse of slavery.

CHAPTER 12

SLAVERY IN THE ROMAN REPUBLIC

KEITH BRADLEY

INTRODUCTION

The Republican period of Rome's history occupied half a millennium, from the late sixth century to the late first century BC. It was characterised by a form of government that distributed public rights and responsibilities among a group of interdependent entities – magistrates, senate, citizens – in a cohesive system intended to prevent the monopolisation of political power by a single individual. At the beginning of the period Rome was a small city-state, comparable to and no more distinctive than many other communities in peninsular, especially central, Italy. By the end of the period it was by far the largest city in the ancient Mediterranean world – larger than any other European city until the modern era – with a population conventionally estimated at close to one million. It controlled a vast empire embracing much of continental Europe, parts of North Africa, and regions in the Near East, and indirectly its influence extended further still. The preservation of political freedom within the civic community was a hallmark of Republican government, but it did not deter or prevent Romans from subjecting others to their will.

There are no contemporary sources to show with any certainty how the Republican form of government was instituted. Later Romans believed that it came into existence as a reaction against tyrannical rule exercised in the sixth century by a sequence of overlords of foreign, especially Etruscan, origin (which modern scholarship denies). At no point, however, was the constitution given written form. When the Republic ended was and remains a matter of debate. The year 60 BC, when three powerful men, Cn. Pompeius, C. Julius Caesar and M. Crassus, made a private compact to subvert the processes of normal government for their individual political purposes; the years 48–44 BC, when Caesar governed Rome as a virtual king; or the year 31 BC, when on 2 September Caesar's grand-nephew C. Julius Caesar Octavianus, the later emperor Augustus, defeated M. Antonius and Cleopatra at the battle of Actium and made himself master of the entire Roman world – these are just some of the possibilities. For the sake of convenience, I take Actium as a terminal date.

Romans in the last decades of the first century could scarcely imagine a time in the Republic's history when slavery had not been an essential feature of the social and cultural landscape. They knew from their religious lore of a far distant golden age when slavery and private property at large did not exist (cf. Lucian, *Saturnalia* 7; Macrobius, *Saturnalia* 1.7.26), a legendary era of equality and harmony that they celebrated and briefly recreated with traditional rituals of carnival-like social levelling each December at the festival and accompanying holiday of the Saturnalia. But latter-day historians such as Livy and Dionysius of Halicarnassus who wrote about the early Republic took it for granted that slavery had been present at Rome since time immemorial, reflecting thereby its centrality as a social and cultural institution in their own era. At that time, the early Augustan age, as for much of the recent past, slaves made up a substantial proportion of the population of Rome and Italy, though their precise numbers are unknown and unknowable. They were widely used in agriculture (both arable and pastoral farming), in other forms of primary economic activity such as manufacturing (the mass production of Arretine pottery in the first century drew heavily on the labour of slaves and former slaves), in trade and commerce, especially shopkeeping, and in a host of domestic roles ranging from the menial to the managerial. Slaves were the lowest grade in what had become a steeply hierarchical and deeply patriarchal society, lacking all rights and personhood, items of property over which their owners had complete powers of disposal. The scene on the stele of the freedman M. Publilius Satur from Capua showing a male slave standing naked on a *catasta* between buyer and seller is a stark visual reminder of the everyday Roman traffic in human property. A public letter from Augustus summarising the events of a murder trial held in 6 BC (*Syll.*³ 780) offers an equally revealing record of the routine subjection to physical torture to which the slave commodity was liable for the sake of procuring evidence in criminal proceedings. The practice of reducing some elements of the population to a state of complete non-being was no more problematical in Republican ideology than subjecting Mediterranean communities to Roman imperial rule. This chapter surveys the development of slavery at Rome under the Republic through the main phases of its political and military history.

EARLY DEVELOPMENTS

In the two and a half centuries between its foundation (traditional date: 510 BC) and the outbreak in 264 BC of its first overseas war (against Carthage), the Roman Republic became the predominant political and military force in Italy, subjecting rivals and enemies by three means: first by a commitment to militarism unique in the ancient world, secondly through the development of sophisticated diplomatic techniques by which other

polities were compelled to recognise its power and participate in its enterprises (thus permitting sustained periods of warfare), and thirdly through the establishment of new towns ('colonies') as centres of Roman influence and control in subjugated regions. In the surviving narrative sources, none of which is contemporary with the events recounted, the process of conquest seems inexorable, but the grand result of the process was not predetermined, though later Romans believed so: in the fifth century many communities in central Italy were far stronger than Rome, but through the fourth century the advance of Roman power was rapid and all-embracing. Little can be seen in detail. But the accounts of later ages, principally those of Livy and Dionysius, consistently assume that it was normal during the conquest for those successful in warfare to enslave if they chose those they had defeated and captured – it was an alternative to killing them – and there is no reason to doubt the practice of enslaving war captives, whatever the literal accuracy of the events described and no matter how affected the historians may have been by the conventions of warfare of their own time. Enslavement of the vanquished by the victors was a normal outcome of warfare among all early Italian peoples. Accordingly, if a single impulse behind the development of slavery at Rome can be identified, it must be the convention of capturing and holding by superior force the alien outsider, a convention that, while lacking aetiological legend, later Romans thought had been part of their history even in the pre-Republican era when the city was ruled by a series of kings: the mother of Servius Tullius was said to have been a woman enslaved by his monarchical predecessor Tarquin when Rome captured the Latin city of Coriculum in the sixth century (Dion. Hal. 4.1.1–3). Roman slavery, never a peculiar institution, was from the beginning a product of Roman imperialism.

The earliest firm evidence of the social and structural centrality of slavery as an institution at Rome comes from Rome's first codified body of law, the Twelve Tables, which, while known only in part and from much later sources, preserves authentic knowledge of Roman social conditions in the mid-fifth century. Traditionally dated to 451/450 BC, the Twelve Tables were compiled in an era of great internal unrest at Rome, but for present purposes the crucial point is that they take slavery for granted as a well-established social category, of long standing, that must be taken into account at the moment when for the first time law is being defined in written form. There are provisions on the financial penalty to be paid for physical injury to a slave, which is set at a lower sum than for injury to a free person, so that inherently the slave is judged of lesser value (1.14); on the penalty of flogging and execution by being thrown from the Tarpeian rock for the slave guilty of manifest theft, which is more severe than the penalty laid down for the same crime when committed by a free person (1.19); on the transmission at death of the property of a slave who has been set free (a *libertus*), which means that a mechanism for release from slavery has been established (5.8); and

on the punishment of slaves who steal and cause damage (12.2). Also, once more as an alternative to death, slavery is a penalty that can be imposed for debt (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 20.1.47), distinct from the special category of debt-bondage (*nexum*), and it is a penalty that preserves the character of the person enslaved as an outsider, in that it requires the debtor to be sold outside the Roman community across the Tiber. These details imply a considerable degree of sophistication in social conceptualisation and organisation by the mid-fifth century, in which the rightlessness of some is regarded as a fixed and acceptable counterpart to the rightfulness enjoyed by others. They show the law institutionalising the principle that property in the human being is permissible and uncontroversial, and they make the antiquity of the slave presence at Rome indisputable. If therefore liberty was a genuine mark of the early Republic, it was a liberty that defined itself against a concurrent, very real (not abstract or metaphorical) slavery, and a liberty that was not a privilege available to all. Consequently, to the extent that idioms of freedom and slavery governed political and social relations, Rome of the early Republic was already in cultural terms a slave society, with deeply embedded attitudes that easily allowed for the further enslavement of defeated enemies. It does not follow that every historical society in which slaves have been present must be called a slave society: the issue is one of how culturally dominant the idioms of freedom and slavery were.

The term 'slave society' is sometimes restricted to communities in which slaves are known to have provided most of the productive labour, constituting in some instances the majority of the population. This implies that the proportion of slaves in the overall population must reach a significant minimal level for a society to qualify as a slave society, which might be arbitrarily set in the range 20 per cent to 35 per cent. On this criterion, societies with less than the minimal requirement are distinguished from 'genuine' slave societies. The scale of slavery in the early Republic cannot be determined but was probably minor. The number of slaves acquired from warfare in the fifth century must have been small because the scale of fighting was small, far smaller than the inflated narratives of Livy and Dionysius suggest. Many of the seemingly endless annual engagements against Etruscans, Sabines, Volsci, Hernici, Aequi and others were not wars but skirmishes or plundering raids. There were other methods of slave acquisition: natural reproduction must be presumed once female slaves were available, as the story of Servius Tullius suggests, with new slaves sometimes perhaps fathered by free slave-owners. Purchase and debt were other possibilities of supply. But these methods are unlikely to have produced large quantities of slaves. There are signs of change, however, in the fourth and early third centuries. The capture of Veii in 396 BC was remembered as an event accompanied by the mass enslavement of the defeated (Livy 5.22.1), and a century later Rome reportedly enslaved more than 60,000 people in the Third Samnite

War (298–293). The establishment of a 5 per cent tax on manumissions attributed by Livy (7.16.7) to 357 and the abolition of *nexum* in 326 (or possibly 313; Livy 8.28) suggest growing numbers of slaves and an increase in demand for them. The political dispute in 312 over the tribal registration of freedmen in the censorship of Appius Claudius Caecus (Livy 9.29) and the passage *c.* 287 of the *lex Aquilia* on damage to property, which specified penalties for damage to male and female slaves in particular, point in the same direction. Three conditions can be posited as necessary for the emergence of a genuine slave society: private ownership of land, the availability of an appropriate market for disposing of the surplus produced and the absence of an internal labour supply. These conditions were met at Rome in all likelihood by *c.* 300 at the latest. During the conquest of Italy, Rome fully habituated itself to routinely enslaving captives after victory in war (or to finding its citizens themselves enslaved if defeated). The captive slaves were used as domestic servants in the households of the rich, as labourers on their farms, which grew in size as the territory subject to Roman control increased and free workers were consumed by military service and colonisation, and in trade and manufacturing. But the proportion of slaves in the overall Roman population during the conquest remains indeterminate. What continue to be important therefore are institutional indicators of the predominance of slavery in Roman culture. The establishment of the manumission tax recognised the structural presence of slavery in Roman society. The *lex Aquilia* reflected the cardinal place of the slave in Roman concepts of property, and the assimilation of the slave to a four-footed beast of burden confirmed a prejudice evident much earlier in the Twelve Tables. The qualitative continuity between earlier and later dispositions, in which the expression of power and status was all-important, is significant.

THE MIDDLE REPUBLIC

A century and more of continuous military activity between 264 and 133 led to Rome's acquisition of an extra-Italian territorial empire. Roman success in endemic warfare transformed the Mediterranean, to the astonishment of a contemporary Greek such as Polybius. Rome's ability to sustain long periods of war against its enemies depended on its ability to coerce its Italian subjects – 'allies' as it called them – into supplying men for its military machine. By the later second century, the empire included Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, the coastal areas of the southern Iberian peninsula and southern France, territory in Tunisia, regions beyond the Adriatic extending across the Balkans into Greece, and across the Aegean a portion of central eastern Turkey. Through diplomacy and patronage, Rome's domination of the Mediterranean was greater still. After 146, when it destroyed two major cities, Corinth in the east and Carthage in the west, no power was in a position to withstand the might of what had become an imperial Republic.

The habit of enslaving enemies defeated in warfare increased exponentially in this age of meteoric geographical expansion. Ancient historians were impressed by the scale of what was involved and from time to time recorded the totals of the captives enslaved: 25,000 at Agrigentum in 261 BC (Diodorus Siculus 23.9.1), 27,000 in North Africa in 256 BC (Orosius 4.8.9), 30,000 at Tarentum and 10,000 at Carthago Nova in 209 BC (Livy 27.16.7; Polybius 10.17.6; Livy 26.47.1), the stupendous total of 150,000 after the sack of Epirus in 167 BC (Livy 45.34). The value of the information they convey is dubious: the figures cannot be verified, the record is sporadic not systematic and a full demographic context is lacking. But even with allowance for immediate ransoming of some prisoners and local disposal in theatres of war of others, the figures suggest at a minimum that huge migrations of peoples took place in the third and second centuries as successive generations of men, women and children were uprooted from across the Mediterranean and forcibly transferred to the Roman heartland. Delos became notorious as a clearing house (Strabo 14.5.2). The degree of human misery the growth of the imperial Republic generated can hardly be imagined.

Literature and life cannot be separated. One cultural expression of the impact made by the influx of new slaves can be detected in the figure of the *servus callidus* in the theatre of Plautus, who flourished at the turn of the third century. Plautus' plays are historical sources as well as works of the literary imagination, important for what they take as socially credible for Roman audiences when they were written and first performed: a patriarchal, stratified and often violent society preoccupied with issues of property, including human property, especially the management, protection and transmission of property through such mechanisms as commerce, dowry and inheritance. The slave in this world is the ultimately degraded member of society, an object held in violating subjection – descriptions of punishment in Plautus' plays, real or anticipated, are graphic – compelled by the ever-present threat of force to obey the instructions of the slave-owner. But as the *servus callidus* shows (in figures such as Tranio, Epidicus and Pseudolus), through the desperate inventiveness inspired by disempowerment, the slave is able to draw on his human capacity to contest the slave-owner's authority and even at times to contrive a passage from slavery to freedom. The stereotypical clever slave gives expression to a problem universal in slave-owning societies, and one Plautus' audiences must have recognised, that of how to regulate the behaviour of human property in which the potential for disobedience is always present and which might sometimes be realised. Its manifestation in the theatre of Plautus is particularly relevant in an age when the connections between war and slavery at Rome were greater, and the presence of first-generation imported slaves more marked, than ever before. It can hardly be coincidental that when Plautus was at his most productive, Roman authorities were

compelled to take vigorous action to suppress a series of slave revolts, in 198 at Setia and Praeneste (Livy 32.26.4–18), in 196 in Etruria (Livy 33.36.1–3), and in 185 in Apulia (Livy 39.29.8–9). Beneath the surface humour of the plays, and no matter what the comfortable resolutions (or origins) of their plots, their clever slaves symbolised the dangers to established society that slave-owning brought with it.

Those dangers reached a high point in the second half of the second century, when slaves in Sicily twice revolted on the grand scale. Local landowners there relied heavily on imported slaves for their agricultural operations, and the slave population was both ethnically diverse and predominantly male. Cruelty and treachery on the part of slave-owners are stressed as the immediate causes of disaffection in the main account of the rebellions that has survived, that of Diodorus Siculus, who followed an earlier narrative sympathetic to the rebels from the Stoic Posidonius. The combination of factors was enough to produce charismatic leaders who organised initially small outbreaks of violent resistance that quickly escalated into major conflagrations affecting wide areas of the island. In both cases the revolts became wars that lasted for several years (c. 138–135, 104–101) in which the rebels displayed a keen appreciation of the practical measures needed to maintain the momentum of rebellion as Rome responded with a succession of legionary forces. They were eventually defeated, but the significance of what had happened on the doorstep of the mainland was never forgotten. When M. Terentius Varro wrote a treatise on agriculture in the thirties of the first century, he included instructions for his slave-owning readers on the management of slave workers, men (and women) imported to Italy for arable and pastoral farming of the sort who had been involved in the Sicilian revolts. The prescriptions he gave specified incentives by which to elicit good work performance from the property he dispassionately categorised as *instrumentum vocale* (*On Agriculture* 1.17.1), the regimen slaves were to follow, the suitability or unsuitability of certain races for particular farming operations (Gauls were recommended as pastoralists, slaves from Epirus as farm overseers), and instructions on how to accommodate slaves' sexual appetites (*Rust.* 1.17.1–7, 2.10.1–7; cf. 1.16.4). His prescriptions were not idle words prompted by generic convention, but practical directions from a public figure with experience of farming that reflected the real difficulty of how to control a servile population and prevent insurrection among its members. That difficulty extended all through the history of the Republic's overseas expansion.

Mass enslavements in the age of overseas expansion had an impact on the economy of Italy. In antiquity historians understood that Rome's acquisition of empire, beginning with the conquest of Italy, led to large-scale land-owning by the elite who used slaves to work their estates. Slave labourers replaced smallholders who abandoned their farms either under

pressure from the land-hungry rich or because they were required to serve in Rome's armies. Their lands were swallowed up by the powerful who made their estates larger still. When not serving in the armies, dispossessed free Italians remained landless and unemployed, while the rich drew vast profits from their estates, and the slave population increased vigorously through natural means. This is the view of the imperial historian Appian (*Civil Wars* 1.7; cf. Plut., *Tiberius Gracchus* 3) as he introduces his narrative of political crisis at Rome in the late second century. Modern historians have traditionally built on it to explain the rise of 'the slave mode of production' or the 'villa system'. These are shorthand phrases meaning intensive production for the market, predominantly with gangs of slaves, of cash crops such as grapes, olives and cereals on landholdings, sometimes misleadingly called 'plantations', that centred on substantial farmhouses containing oil-presses, winepresses and storage areas for crops, and at times – 'villa' is an elastic term – elaborate residential quarters for their owners as well. Often owners were absentees managing their estates through slave overseers. On this view, from the end of the Hannibalic War onwards (201 BC), the villa system increasingly replaced free labour with slave labour and small-scale subsistence peasant farming with large-scale market-oriented farming. Displaced peasants not consumed by Rome's armies streamed to an ever-expanding Rome, where they formed a volatile populace open to the appeals of elite politicians willing to exploit mass discontent for individual political advancement, and the personal enrichment to which through the further expansion of empire office-holding led. The slave mode of production and the problems it generated were responsible for the crisis of the late second century, which in turn led to a century of civil war and the end of the Republic. One index of what was happening was the composition c. 160 BC of an agricultural manual by the elder Cato (a forerunner to Varro) that presumed an audience of wealthy absentee landowners working a number of farms with slave labour each about 100–250 *iugera* (24–60 ha.). His injunction to sell off old or sickly slaves (*Agriculture* 2.7) is one sign of a widespread concern on their part with making substantial profits. Cato himself was remembered as a strict master, not above manipulating the sex life of his slaves in order to assert his control over them (Plut., *Cato the Elder* 21).

This broad picture requires modification, particularly because of evidence from modern archaeology. Various villa-based estates growing vines and olives that were suitable for slave labour have been identified on the ground. Perhaps the most famous is the grand estate at Settefinestre near the colony of Cosa, where rooms identified as cells in the villa may have been the living-quarters of a slave workforce. Settefinestre was built c. 75 BC and in this it seems representative: while some sites in southern Italy, at Metapontum and Gravina, date from the third century, the development of

villa estates generally appears to have been a feature of late-second-century history at the earliest and especially of the first century: the well-known Posto and San Rocco villas in northern Campania date, for example, from the early first century. The estates show a variety of farming forms. Some were complex systems specialising in olives or vines, but simultaneously produced cereals and livestock for local consumption. Others were devoted to mixed farming, including cereal production and animal husbandry, in keeping with the realistic assumptions and recommendations of the manuals of Cato and Varro. Smallholdings and peasant agriculture did not disappear. Survey evidence from the Ager Cosanus and elsewhere shows that small farms continued to be maintained alongside villa estates well into the first century and beyond; and distribution evidence suggests that the slave-run villa was concentrated only in low-lying regions of Italy, principally in the coastal plains of Campania, Latium and Etruria, the fertile plains of the Po Valley, and the northern Adriatic seaboard. These were regions that among other advantages could ship their surplus produce with relative ease to the all-consuming city of Rome, or along trade routes that profitably disposed of crops beyond the peninsula. In the first century, wine from north-central Italy was exported in bulk to Gaul and exchanged for slaves. Many areas were in fact unsuited to the slave mode of production as traditionally understood. Upland and mountainous regions naturally encouraged small-scale mixed farming, including pastoralism, which in some parts of southern Italy was extensive. Once the variables of chronology, regionalism and topography are considered, the overall picture of Italian agriculture from the third century on is one of great and increasing diversity.

In sum, the growth of slavery in Roman Italy accelerated through the age of initial overseas expansion but followed a pattern well established by the late fourth century, and altogether should be viewed in more gradualist, incremental terms than those found in many modern accounts, extending over a longer period of time. Continuous warfare did not ruin the Italian peasantry, and slaves were probably sought by more successful smallholders as well as by absentee magnates who in time began to accumulate concatenations of farms and ran them with slave bailiffs, the extensive sheep pastures of the south included. It should be assumed that the use of slave labour was at all times productive enough to meet the economic goals of landowners typified by the agronomists and their readers. (In the age of Cicero the list of identifiable Roman senators who owned estates in Italy, especially in Latium and Campania, and who can be taken to represent the agronomists' audiences, is extensive.) Cato and Varro were men who wrote from experience of farming and who farmed to make profits. Modern calculations of the time and manpower needed for the operations of intensive arable farming indicate that slaves could be fully occupied all through the year and did not drain their owners' resources. The second century was in

some respects pivotal, but continuity from one age to the next underlies the overall development of Roman slavery. The growth of empire permitted the expansion on an ever-increasing scale of a social institution inherent in the culture of the Republic from its beginning.

THE LATE REPUBLIC

To define the scale numerically is desirable but difficult and involves the history of the Republic through its final phase. The last century of Republican history was an age of revolution. Political crisis initiated by a demand for land redistribution in Italy led to a series of civil wars that were fuelled by an intense competition for personal power among Rome's political elite. Aspirants to power raised private armies which they engaged against each other, destroying in the process the traditional balance of the Republican constitution. Their soldiers incidentally were often themselves slave-owners, used to having servants such as shield-bearers on campaign with them (Caes., *Civil War* 3.6; [Caes.], *Bellum Africum* 54, 93; Plut., *Brutus* 45.1). The competition ended only with Augustus' imposition of a new form of permanent dictatorship, which a war-wearied Rome accepted with surprising alacrity. Remarkably, however, the Roman empire did not disintegrate during this period of internal chaos but expanded further to incorporate new areas of Asia Minor, Syria and (eventually) Egypt in the east, and large areas of continental Europe and additional areas in North Africa in the west. Politically ambitious warlords such as L. Cornelius Sulla, Pompeius, Caesar, M. Licinius Crassus and others sought opportunities for conquest by which to enrich themselves and to finance their pursuit of offices and honours. Warfare continued therefore to generate new supplies of captives, though natural reproduction among the existing slave population was undoubtedly at this point supplying many new slaves as well, and their enslavement made possible the full flourishing of the agricultural villa system. In this sense slaves played an integral role in the revolutionary drama.

Quantitative data from which population numbers in any period of Roman history can be safely established are unavailable. Sources are not completely lacking but their meaning is contested. For the last two centuries of the Republic there are two essential starting points: Polybius' description (2.24) of Roman military resources in 225 BC, which seems to give a total of about 770,000 infantry and cavalry under arms, and the figure of 4,063,000 recorded for the census taken by Augustus in 28 BC (*Res Gestae* 8). Both items are problematical. First, Polybius does not give a figure for the full Roman population and any total derived from what he says about the numbers of men under arms in 225 must necessarily be an extrapolation, especially because the apparent figure of military resources he gives may be a complete miscalculation. Secondly, it is unknown whether

the census figure of 4,063,000 (and the even higher figures in the subsequent Augustan censuses of 8 BC and AD 14) refers to the total of the free population of Italy in 28 BC, men, women and children, or just to the number of adult male citizens, as was the norm in earlier Republican census taking, some of whom were in any case resident overseas. Under these circumstances, population numbers can only be estimated, and estimates vary. One view holds that the total population of greater Italy in 225 BC was about 5 million and that by the time of Augustus it had grown to between 6 million and 7.5 million, with the slave proportion rising from about 12 per cent in 225 BC (600,000) to about 33 per cent or even 40 per cent or more under Augustus (a range of 1,900,000 to 3 million). This view assumes a decline in the free population consequent upon the Hannibalic War, a complementary increase in the slave population, a considerable increase in the population of the extraordinarily large city of Rome, and a low count of the Augustan census figure. An alternative view holds that the population of Italy in the time of Augustus was in the order of 12–14 million, with slaves constituting a maximum of 30 per cent of the total (a range of 3,600,000 to 4,200,000). This view assumes no decline in the free population of Italy after the Hannibalic War, a smaller proportion of slaves in the overall population and a high count of the Augustan census figure. In the present state of knowledge, all aspects of all views are open to challenge. On current minimalist interpretations, the slave population at the end of the Republic is set between 1 million and 1.5 million (a total that had been achieved nonetheless by colossal imports of captives over three centuries of expansionist warfare), and because peasant agriculture in Italy did not disappear after the Hannibalic War and the demand for slaves in the rural sector was less than conventionally thought, the proportion of slaves in the full population is set only in the order of 15 per cent to 25 per cent, with heavy concentrations in the cities, especially Rome itself. Establishing reliable if only approximately reliable figures is clearly necessary, and new demographic models reveal the complexity of the factors involved. But all calculations are provisional and concentrate on what was not possible rather than what was. Consensus remains elusive.

Modelling techniques permit nonetheless a quickened appreciation of the material conditions under which the Roman population lived – low life expectancy, a pernicious disease environment, limited medical knowledge and treatment, subjection to periods of involuntary migration, constant familial disruption and dislocation, the ubiquitous press of death – and of how Roman cities, and once more especially the exceptionally huge city of Rome, consumed massive numbers of inhabitants. It is here perhaps that their greatest value lies. Yet the picture of society that emerges is macroscopic and undifferentiated, whereas the physical conditions in which slaves lived and worked varied greatly according to their location within individual households. Conventional sources suggest the

possibilities as well as anything else. Varro (*Rust.* 2.10.1–7) anticipated a situation in which male slaves herding cattle and goats worked in remote, challenging forest and mountainous terrain, exposed to the dangers of attack by bandits and wild animals, camping out at night, constructing makeshift shelters to protect themselves from severe weather, and, although assisted by female companions, dependent on pack animals which carried their supplies. If there is any reflection here of a real working environment, which there must be, it was very different from the material environment enjoyed by the slave Tiro, the secretary and literary assistant of M. Tullius Cicero, who can be imagined at work in his master's grand house on the Palatine – perhaps large enough to accommodate some fifty slaves to judge from the excavation of a comparable Palatine residence – sharing an intimacy with his owner and moving easily among his circle of elite friends and colleagues. Tiro and the many hundreds of privileged domestic specialists he represents must have lived in much easier circumstances than Varro's herdsmen, whatever their common susceptibility to disease and other demographic hazards, and no matter how they and their lesser-ranked colleagues had to learn their place in the social hierarchy of the elite house. The particularistic and variegated texture of Roman society can be obscured by clinical and homogenising calculations, and it is important not to lose sight of the qualitative evidence that offsets them. There are many ways in which to understand how slavery changed people's lives.

The presence of slaves in the revolutionary process was felt beyond the economic sphere. If members of the elite used slaves to work the rural estates that were the foundations of their fortunes, they also surrounded themselves with elaborate bodies of domestic servants who in a public setting could become members of the personal entourages that were essential to politicians as symbols of individual wealth, authority and status (cf. *Commentariolum Petitionis* 36–7). On 15 March 44 BC, the retinue that accompanied Caesar as he processed from his house to the Forum was made up in part of lictors and magistrates, but more so of city-dwellers, former slaves and slaves still in slavery – and it was three slaves who put his murdered corpse on a litter and carried it home after everyone else had fled (*App. B Civ.* 2.118). At moments of public display like this, when elite politicians descended from their Palatine mansions to the centre of the city, the slaves' function was entirely ceremonial and depended on the lack of capacity inherent in their condition: powerlessness made the powerful all the more spectacularly powerful. It became the norm to praise the restraint of those who surrounded themselves with only a handful of domestics: the elder Cato had only five slaves with him when he went to Spain in 195 BC, two of whom he bought at the last minute (Apuleius, *Apology* 17; cf. Valerius Maximus 4.3.11; Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 10.6). But no political aspirant in the revolutionary era could afford to be so self-denying. Tiberius Gracchus

was said never to have left his house without an escort of three or four thousand men (Gell. *NA* 2.13.3), an entourage that must have included his slaves and freedmen. As personal display became more and more extravagant in the intensely competitive world of Roman politics, slaves stood front and centre.

Their role, however, was not simply passive or incidental. Appian's narrative alone makes clear how slaves were actively implicated in the vicissitudes of the age. At various moments of crisis, ambitious politicians solicited their help both in the city and elsewhere, accompanying appeals for physical support with offers of manumission, some of which were accepted, others not (*B Civ.* 1.26, 1.60, 1.65, 1.69); there is ample ancillary evidence (cf. Caes. *B Civ.* 1.14; [Caes.] *BAfr.* 88; Val. Max. 8.6.2; Plut., *Marius* 35). Slaves served in Roman armies (*B Civ.* 2.53, 2.69, 4.112; cf. [Caes.], *Bellum Alexandrinum* 2.73–4; Caes. *B Civ.* 1.24, 1.34, 1.56, 3.4), turned civil conflict to their own advantage by taking opportunities to steal or escape (*B Civ.* 2.22), organised rebellion (most famously in 73 BC when the gladiator Spartacus led an uprising at Capua (*B Civ.* 1.116–121; cf. Plut., *Crassus* 8–11)), and alternately betrayed or protected their owners (*B Civ.* 4.11–51). Appian notes (*B Civ.* 5.131) that after his campaign against Sextus Pompeius, Augustus returned to their owners in Rome, Italy and Sicily the slaves who had run away to fight with Pompeius – some thirty thousand on Augustus' own account (*RG* 25) – and put to death those who were unclaimed. The slave population was far too important to be ignored.

Appian's record is particularly full for the period immediately after the publication in 43 BC by the Triumvirs Antonius, Octavian and Lepidus of an edict that proscribed their enemies. It offered to the slaves of those named freedom and 10,000 denarii in return for information about, or the actual heads of, those listed; and it also stipulated penalties for slaves who gave aid to their proscribed owners (*B Civ.* 4.8–11). A complete breakdown of normal social relations followed: owners could no longer trust slaves who put their own interests first and broke the bonds of fidelity they were supposed to maintain. Slaves cut off their owners' heads, absconded with valuables entrusted to their safe-keeping, informed against fellow-slaves protecting their owners, deserted even teenage masters who were added to the lists. Women as well as men took action. A maidservant betrayed the husband of her mistress. An ex-slave concubine exposed her former lover because she was jealous of the woman he married – even though he had set her free and given her a dowry for when she would marry herself. Some slaves remained loyal of course and took great risks to help their owners, accompanying them as they escaped from Rome or concealing them until amnesty was declared. One substituted a murdered corpse for his owner as a ruse to help the owner escape to Sicily. Others impersonated their owners

and gave their own lives in their masters' stead (*B Civ.* 4.12–16; 4.22–51; cf. Val. Max. 6.8).

These stories illustrate the chaos and fear the Triumvirs caused. But they also hint at any number of complex emotional relationships between slave and slave-owner. A slave went off to find a boat to help his master flee, returned to see his owner being killed, attacked the killer and then committed suicide (App. *B Civ.* 4.26). Another slave concealed his master on the master's country estate and disguised himself as his owner as the executioners approached, apparently hoping to prevent his own death by a display of abject terror, but a fellow-slave revealed the truth and the proscribed slave-owner was put to death. The psychology of these real-life human dramas is beyond recovery. But the stories suggest the demands and pressures which resulted from the depressed status and the constraining expectations of undeviating loyalty that governed the lives of slaves, as well as the complexity of the decision-making process faced by individual men and women in moments of human crisis. Notably, those who made decisions and whose actions were remembered (for good or ill) were not remembered as individuals: the names of the Triumvirs' victims were often preserved but the slaves who exposed, killed or protected them remained largely anonymous. What is clear is that in this period of upheaval the fragility of the master–slave relationship was quickly exposed: keeping slaves in slavery was an occupation that required effort, and under the subverting strain of political disruption effort could easily come to nought.

Opportunistic offers of manumission to slaves depended on the maintenance of the firm distinction between slavery and freedom that was fundamental to Roman ideology and social practice. The barrier between slavery and freedom, however, was evidently porous. The slave could be translated from one state to the other, just as the Roman citizen could fall into slavery at the hands of an enemy, and formal mechanisms of transfer were developed very early in Rome's history, as shown obliquely by the Twelve Tables. In comparison with other slave societies, Rome was distinctive in conferring citizenship as well as freedom on the slave when manumission took place formally. The outsider could become an insider and integration within the civic community was possible. This was the peculiarity of Roman slavery, which Greek commentators noted with various reactions. Dionysius (1.9.4) was astonished by Roman liberalism. Appian (*B Civ.* 2.120) saw it as a source of contagion in the body politic. The Macedonian king Philip V was struck by it in a public letter he wrote to a Greek community in the late third century (*ILS* 8763). It was in fact a variation on a theme, because from an early period Rome had developed the habit of granting its citizenship to alien peoples – some of those, for example, defeated in warfare or otherwise hostile – and of expanding the civic community by assimilating external elements. It also meant, however,

that at any one time, as Appian knew, the population of Rome included considerable proportions of free citizens whose forebears had once been slaves.

The formal mechanisms of transfer were by will, meaning that slave-owners arranged for the manumission of particular slaves by testament, to take effect when they died; by census, meaning that heads of Roman households allowed slaves to be registered on the lists of citizens drawn up by the censors when the census was taken, which in theory was every five years; and by the uniquely Roman device of manumission by the rod (*manumissio vindicta*), a transaction in which collusively and fictitiously a third party claimed before a magistrate that a given slave was a free person, touched him with a rod, the slave-owner made no objection, and the magistrate declared the slave free. The history of these mechanisms is obscure. But all were undoubtedly old, and their antiquity is another reminder of how deeply permeated by issues of freedom and slavery from an early date Roman culture was. It is impossible to say which form of manumission was most common, even for the relatively well-documented period of the last two centuries of the Republic. In the age of revolution, the census was not taken regularly and cannot have been a great source of manumissions then. But the other two mechanisms were apparently used frequently: many slaves were set free if only because the slave population was higher than it had ever been before. There was also an informal mode of granting freedom. It consisted of a simple declaration by the slave-owner that the slave was free, although there may also have been a written record to authenticate the declaration. The freedom it conferred was limited. Informal manumission gave freedom without citizenship and guaranteed the slave-owner rights to whatever property the former slave held at the time of the latter's death. The children of an informally manumitted slave remained slaves. It was not until changes were initiated by Augustus after the civil wars that the position of those manumitted in this way improved. Altogether, Roman manumission practices gave slave-owners a variety of options for inducing reliable performance in their slaves through the hopes of freedom they could create. Dionysius (4.23) credited Servius Tullius with recognising how the prospect of freedom and citizenship served to elicit slaves' loyalty to their owners. But slave-owners faced no compulsion at all to manumit. Neither Cato nor Varro had anything to say about manumission in their farming manuals, and presumably they knew their readership. Freedom was sometimes the reward of faithful service, and sometimes the outcome of negotiations in which the slave paid an agreed price for leaving slavery behind, which allowed the owner in turn to purchase new slaves.

For all periods the rate of manumission is unknown. Decisions to set free must have depended on slave-owners' inclinations towards individual slaves, and on the ability of slaves to buy their freedom. Those in domestic

service who performed highly valued functions and, like Tiro, were intimates of their owners perhaps stood the best chance of being set free; rural labourers and mining slaves, who had little occasion to see their owners or to accumulate savings, probably the smallest chance. Over time enormous numbers of slaves were manumitted, and the memorials of freedmen and freedwomen in the cities of Italy, especially at Rome, are legion. It does not follow, however, that most slaves were set free: a distinction should be drawn between the frequency and the regularity, or better the predictability, of manumission. If slaves lived predominantly in cities, the rate of manumission may have been greater than if they lived predominantly in rural areas, but this remains an unresolved issue. Demographically, most slaves cannot have been set free if the slave population expanded fourfold in the last two centuries of the Republic, as conventional estimates assume, without serious effects on slave fertility that could not be compensated by other sources of supply. What does seem undeniable is that by the end of the first century a perception had arisen in elite circles that manumission practices needed to be regulated. This is evident from Dionysius' lament (4.24.4–8) that in his day criminality and ostentatiousness played too large a role in the granting of freedom and citizenship, and, more importantly, from laws passed by Augustus that set new standards and rules for manumission. In essence and with some exceptions, the laws fixed the numbers of slaves in a given household who could be set free by testamentary manumission (up to a maximum of one hundred), and stated minimum age requirements for both slave (thirty) and slave-owner (twenty) before manumission during the owner's lifetime could take place (Gaius, *Institutes* 1.13–47). Their most important feature was the reassertion of the principle, understood not least by Dionysius, that grants of freedom and citizenship were to serve an acculturative purpose and should be given only to slaves who deserved to be rewarded – 'deserved' being defined from the top down. The ability of Roman slave-owners to manumit slaves depended at all periods of Republican history on their constant acquisition of replacements.

Records from former slaves leave no doubt about the kind of social integration that was possible. Two types of evidence are informative. First, funerary inscriptions and the forms of Roman nomenclature and the titles of jobs they display. When slaves were manumitted they retained their original names, which had in some cases been given to them by their owners (cf. Varro, *On the Latin Language* 8.21), but added to them the names of their former owners (now officially their patrons) in what amounted at the moment of manumission to a remarkable redefinition of public (and perhaps personal?) identity. The practice by which the slave Tiro became the freedman M. Tullius Tiro did not allow for individual choice but demanded as a condition of manumission at a particular instant in time a guarantee that the former slave would identify himself

for the rest of his life with the owner to whom he had once belonged as property – forfeiting presumably in all formal spheres of life any lingering associations he might have had with a family of origin. The demand was profound, yet there was never in Republican history a shortage of slaves, both men and women, who were willing to meet it. The form of nomenclature they adopted as former slaves parades the Romanity to which they laid claim, but it reflects more importantly a widespread willingness to accommodate to dominant cultural norms. So too with their job titles, which in their ordinariness assert a sense of worth that came from the contributions to society the jobs made. When freedmen much less celebrated than Tiro are met – Sex. Aemilius Baro, a grain-dealer, C. Vergilius Gentius, a butcher, C. Hostius Pamphilus, a doctor, A. Granius Stabilio, a herald, P. Marcus Philodamus, a plasterer, C. Quinctilius Pamphilus, a perfume dealer (*ILLRP* 786a, 794, 798, 808, 815, 823) – it is not only the kind of work they did that can be glimpsed, but also, and more fundamentally, the decisions numerous Roman slaves made to conform.

Secondly, the evidence of Roman sculpture. In the last century of the Republic, there was a tendency for prosperous former slaves to have themselves and their family members represented, again usually in funerary contexts, in commemorative sculptural reliefs in which, through details of portraiture and dress, former slaves set out to express their cultural identity as members of the Roman civic community. Examples of full-length portrait reliefs show stereotypically stern-faced husbands and austere-looking wives dressed respectively in toga and palla in poses that are evidently meant to convey to all who saw them the achievement of citizen respectability and concordant marital union. The more plentiful bust-length types of relief vary in style but create the same overall effect: emulation of upper-class representational idioms to indicate the former slaves' achievement of *gravitas* and *dignitas* – a claim, that is, to have arrived on the part of people perfectly willing to accept established society as it was, and to integrate themselves actively within it. Their family relationships are sometimes made crystal clear by inscriptions that accompany the portraits: *Q. Servilius Q. l. Hilarus pater, Sempronia C. l. Eune uxor, P. Servilius Q. f. Globulus*. The relationships are advertised perhaps to proclaim and even to celebrate the opportunities former slaves enjoyed for legitimate marriage, and the stabilisation of their family lives once manumission had removed the threat of familial disruption, by sale or bequest, with which they had always previously had to contend. The reliefs concentrate on the citizen present, not the slave past: there was no appetite for representing scenes of life in slavery, not even the climactic moment of manumission. (A possible illustration of *manumissio vindicta* appears in a relief from Mariemont in Belgium, but its meaning is disputed.) It was better when a boy such as C. Vettius C. f. Secundus, the freeborn son of a freed father,

could be shown in a family group wearing the bulla, an incontestable sign of social advancement. Above all, however, the reliefs confirm the assimilative aspect of the manumission process and suggest how many slaves must have internalised the values of established society – especially the value of defeating death through commemorative expressions of life – and strove during their years in slavery to acquire them. The realisable prospect of freedom encouraged slaves to accommodate themselves to slavery.

Encountering former slaves who became respectable Roman citizens, seeing them and their family members and learning something of how they made their way in life, makes problematic the record of slaves' involvement in the political upheavals of the revolutionary period. Had the grain-dealers, butchers, doctors and heralds of the inscriptions, the sombre- and stern-faced husbands and fathers of the sculptures who sought so earnestly to capture the look of their aristocratic superiors, once been implicated as slaves in the appalling episodes of violence with which the history of the first century is full – prepared to kill in the streets and to parade severed heads on stakes? They seem unlikely members of the murderous bands of slaves and former slaves C. Manilius (tr. pl. 66) and L. Domitius Ahenobarbus (cos. 54) set on each other in the Forum in December 67, or of the paramilitary gangs with which P. Clodius (tr. pl. 58) and T. Annius Milo (tr. pl. 57) fought each other and harassed the city in the fifties. More likely they were of the sort Cicero (*Pro Sestio* 97) could admit belonged to the ranks of the *optimates*. (When Milo murdered Clodius on the Appian Way, near Bovillae on 18 January 52 BC, he is said to have had thirty armed slaves with him, a force of the sort he used to protect his estates in Etruria and to attack his neighbours.) But the disconnect between the upstanding freedmen of the inscriptions and reliefs and the slave members of the violent gangs (often gladiators it was said) points to the great variety of servile statuses in first-century Rome, and to the absence among slaves of anything that can be termed group solidarity. In the multifaceted and paradoxical world of slavery in the Roman Republic, a common slave identity never emerged as a unifying force.

Former slaves who memorialised themselves as Romans asserted their right to a share of the freedom (*libertas*) on which the Republic was based. In the last two centuries BC, liberty became a more pressing issue than ever before as threats of autocracy mounted and the tradition that the Republic had been founded as a reaction against tyranny became more and more meaningful. *Libertas* was the object of cult from at least the time when Ti. Sempronius Gracchus (cos. 238) built a temple to freedom on the Aventine, and from the late second century *Libertas* appeared regularly as a goddess on the Roman coinage as political leaders appealed to liberty to promote their individual ambitions. In essence *libertas* guaranteed citizens the right to participate in political life and the right not to suffer arbitrary

punishment from magistrates. But first-century politicians increasingly invoked freedom to justify a whole range of causes and actions: legislation on voting procedures and rights of appeal, the restoration of tribunes' rights after Sulla's repressive actions as dictator, and most of all manifold charges of despotism and declarations of war. Liberty in the first century was the dominant element of Republican ideology, not a political catchword, championed ironically by the succession of warlords who destroyed it.

One of the emblems of *Libertas* that appeared frequently on Republican coins was the *pileus*, the 'liberty-cap' that slaves wore when they were set free. The goddess appears on denarii from 126 and 125 BC riding in a chariot, holding reins and the liberty cap in her left hand and the *vindicta* in her right hand. (In T. Quinctius Flamininus' triumph in 194, two thousand Roman citizens wore the liberty cap, restored to freedom after enslavement in Greece during the wars against Carthage (Val. Max. 5.2.6).) *Libertas* was in some ways a slave goddess, and coins expressing ideas about liberty by definition reminded everyone of the realities of slavery and its inherent rightlessness. The most famous example is a denarius of 42 BC issued by Caesar's assassins that on the reverse shows the *pileus* between two daggers with the legend *Eid(ibus) Mar(tiis)*. For some the death of Caesar was the death of slavery. The language on which champions of liberty drew also had direct slave associations. It was the language of *manumissio vindicta*. So, for example, when Caesar wrote (*B Civ.* 1.22.5) that he would set the Roman people free from the oppression of an oligarchic faction, and when Augustus affirmed (*RG* 1.1) that he had actually freed Rome from the oppression of a tyrant, both used the precise Latin phrase, *in libertatem vindicare*, which was spoken by the *assertor libertatis*, the third party who claimed the slave's freedom in the manumission ceremony. Yet despite the obvious foundation of the imagery of the *Libertas* coins on the institution of slavery, and despite the widespread political use of the phraseology of manumission in political contexts, the notion of dispensing with slavery never presented itself as a goal of the first-century dynasts, or as far as is known of slaves. Liberty was a selective not a universal right, a privilege available only to a few, and slaves as well as other elements of society knew this. It was possible to give a legal definition of freedom and slavery, and the contrast between the two was clear: 'Certainly, the great divide in the law of persons is this: all men are either free men or slaves. Freedom is one's natural power of doing what one pleases, save insofar as it is ruled out by coercion or by law. Slavery is an institution of the *ius gentium*, whereby someone is against nature made subject to the ownership of another' (*Digest* 1.4.5.3–4.1). But for all the impulse it afforded to the revolutionary process, slavery did not become a contestable condition. In constitutional terms the Roman revolution replaced the Republican system of government with military autocracy, and in social and political terms it transformed the

character of the ruling oligarchy. But it was not a revolution that in any way affected the embeddedness of slavery in Roman culture. Slavery in Republican Rome was neither a moral evil nor an intellectual problem, and the death of slavery was never more than a metaphor.

The explanation for this lies in the heterogeneous character of the Roman slave population, which was made up of men, women and children of many ethnic origins who lived in diverse settings, spoke different languages, performed a multiplicity of jobs, and enjoyed a variety of relationships with their owners. Their condition as slaves apart, there was little to offset the differences and promote unity among them. The incentive of manumission encouraged many to work for their own private interests and discouraged the organisation of widespread dissent. Roman slave-owners cannot have been unmindful of the usefulness of promoting divisiveness among their slaves (cf. Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.5), and even developments in Roman private law worked to a complementary effect. In the law of agency, the exercitorian and institorian formulas allowed third parties to bring actions against slave-owners for arrangements made by their slave agents in trade and commercial enterprises at sea and on land (*Gai. Inst.* 4.71). They were probably in place by the second century and certainly in the first (*Dig.* 14.1.1.9, 14.3.5.1). They make clear how reliant on some slaves in matters of trade and commerce slave-owners became, and suggest that those slaves engaged in shipping and shopkeeping had many opportunities for personal gain, as well as for day-to-day physical mobility and independence of activity and judgement, and reasons therefore not to contest their positions. There was always an undercurrent in Republican society of petty slave resistance; but resistance in the form of major revolts was unknown after Spartacus, and there was never as far as can be told a concerted effort, in any quarter, to abolish slavery. The curious nature of Republican slavery, an institution founded on violence that allowed owners free rein to brutalise and subject their chattels to all manner of degradation, but that simultaneously created for some a pathway to real social advancement, all within a context that prized citizen liberty as the greatest good, cannot be overstated.

One of the most urgent issues in contemporary Roman historical scholarship is the character of Republican political life. How democratic a system was the Roman Republic? In theory the Roman people were a sovereign body. Citizens in their assemblies elected candidates to magisterial office and voted on legislative proposals brought before them. The constitution's democratic foundation is indisputable: 'according to the ancient laws the people are the sole and sovereign authority in cases of peace and war' (*App. B Civ.* 3.55). But how democratic in practice was a system that prevented ordinary citizens from standing for office or initiating legislation, and that relied when votes were taken on popular bodies that on any given occasion varied in size, depending in part on how many Italian citizens came

to the city to vote, and that used a block method of voting which by definition favoured the wealthier members of the community over the poorer? It is a fallacy to believe that the Roman senate exercised mechanistic control over the people's votes: the advice on electioneering in the *Commentariolum petitionis* attributed to Quintus Cicero is proof enough of that (which incidentally even recommends in the pursuit of office the courting of influential former slaves). The people participated in genuine debates over political candidacies and legislative proposals, their outcomes were unpredictable, and the crowd in the Roman Forum was a force with which to be reckoned. The strict balance of power, however, in what was theoretically a mixed constitution holding people, senate and consuls in perfect equilibrium, remains a matter of debate.

Slavery attracts little attention in this discussion. It may be otiose to remark that from a modern perspective democracy is incompatible with slaveholding. But a place needs to be found for Rome's slaves in reconstructions of the political processes of the revolutionary age, if only because there must always have been some slave members of the crowd in the Forum to whom politicians and legislators were constantly appealing for support. They could not participate formally in the business of the people by electing magistrates and passing legislation (any more than could female citizens), but by reacting vocally and physically to the harangues and addresses of politicians in the frequently charged atmosphere of first-century politics, they could influence as much as others the outcome of issues at hand. Slave and free after all were often indistinguishable – they wore the same clothes (App. *B Civ.* 2.122) – and their potential for participating in armed struggle was not in doubt. Moreover, for all their diversity they were by virtue of their subject status perceived as a distinct social category and one that could arouse alarm. This too demands recognition. The social and economic divide between the Roman elite and the mass of society was enormous. But despite their wealth and power, the elite could envisage a shaking of the foundations when, as Cicero put it (*Pro Plancio* 86), the poor would take up arms against the rich, the desperate against the good, and the slaves against their masters. In the event slaves never did take up arms against their masters after Spartacus, but the anxieties encapsulated in the phrase *terror servilis* never disappeared either. Those anxieties were a constituent of Republican politics worth attention.

The Roman revolution did not alter the structure of society or its fundamental cultural premises. Under the Republic slavery advanced as empire grew. The new dispensation created by Augustus brought to an end the grand-scale carnage and corruption that had scarred the last generation of the Republic, but slavery did not become an object of interrogation: the laws regulating it were intended only to make the slavery system more beneficial to slave-owners. Ironically, the familiar image of master and

slave quickly supplied the language by which the new relationship between emperor and subject came to be understood and expressed. Tiberius is said to have frequently declared the senate a body of men fit for servitude (Tacitus, *Annals* 3.65), Domitian was habitually addressed as 'master' (Suetonius, *Domitian* 13.2 (*dominus* was replete with slave-owning associations)), and the senator Pliny used the term politely and with no hint of embarrassment in his letters to Trajan from Bithynia (*Letters* 10). The Romans of the age of Augustus were a much different people from their forebears who had created the Republic. The ineradicable presence of slavery nonetheless continued to define Roman culture.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Four volumes of the second edition of the *Cambridge Ancient History* (CAH) provide the best starting point for the general history of the Roman Republic, though slavery receives only incidental attention in them and much of the reading is tough: CAH VII² pt. 2 (1989); VIII² (1989); IX² (1994); X² (1996). For the early period Cornell (1995) is essential. Sources other than those indicated for particular years can be found in *MRR*. On the development of the Roman constitution, Lintott (1999b) is an accessible modern treatment. The Capuan stele appears in Rostovtzeff (1957: plate XII 2) and Fabre (1981: fig. 12) (accompanying inscription: *CIL* 10.8222). Poma (1981) is a valuable study of Dionysius of Halicarnassus on slavery. For the legends about Servius Tullius, see Wiseman (2004: 45–8). On the slave as outsider Lévy-Bruhl (1934) is fundamental.

For the text of and commentary on the Twelve Tables, see Crawford (1996, II: 555–721), and for discussion Watson (1975) and Drummond (1989). The view set out here is developed from Bradley (1985). The most important theoretical discussion of the formation of slave societies is Finley (1980: 67–92), which gives details of the three conditions posited as necessary; see Higman (1998) for a convenient assessment. On mass enslavements from the fourth century onwards and possible economic motives for enslavement, Harris (1979: 54–104) is stimulating. Welwei (2000) provides comprehensive coverage and detailed analysis, emphasising the unreliability of numbers recorded in the sources but regarding Veii and the Third Samnite War as significant indications of the expansion of Roman slavery (but the traditional date of the *vicesima libertatis* does not have to be changed to 241). Oakley (1993) provides a good analysis of the importance of slavery in the period of the Roman conquest of Italy. On Appius Claudius, see Treggiari (1969b: 38–42), and for the text of and commentary on the *lex Aquilia*, see Crawford (1996, II: 723–6); cf. *Dig.* 9.2 in full for the importance of the initial starting point of damage to slave property.

As an example of a contemporary literary approach to slavery in Plautus, see McCarthy (2000), presupposing a bundle of ‘anxieties’ that the (undefined) audience would have when watching Plautus’ plays and projecting a set of ‘fantasies’ onto it; cf. Sandra R. Joshel’s chapter in this volume. For material on slave revolts in the second century and later, see Bradley (1989); Shaw (2001); Urbainczyk (2008). Slave management is the topic of Bradley (1987b), with some application to the late Republic. Hopkins (1978: 1–98) gives a still inspiring account of second-century developments. Schiavone (2000: 108–64) is confident in assumptions about the slave mode of production. Astin (1978) is the standard work on Cato. On villas, Potter (1987: 94–124) gives a valuable survey. Carlsen (1995: 57–101) examines the evidence on the key figure of the *vilicus*. On developments in Italian agriculture, Spurr (1986) is very important (not least on the agronomists as writers who based their writings on empirical knowledge, and on the rational use of slave labour all through the year in viticulture and cereal farming), as is Morley (1996). White (1970) remains a mine of information. Dyson (1992: 23–55) is sceptical about the conventional development of second-century Italy but perhaps underestimates the use of slaves in Italian agriculture. For senatorial landowners in the age of Cicero, see Wiseman (1971: 191–6).

Roman demography is a complex subject. Modern study begins with Brunt (1971), who refined but essentially reaffirmed the low-count views of K. J. Beloch, *Die Bevölkerung der griechisch-römischen Welt* (Leipzig 1886) and who was followed, with some modifications, by Hopkins (1978). They are broadly supported now by Scheidel (2004b) and (2005a), but with significantly lower estimates of the servile proportion of the population and arguments against population decline in the second century. See relatedly on these points Jongman (2003), Rosenstein (2004), and Walter Scheidel’s chapter in this volume. Lo Cascio (1994) and (2001) advocates a high-count interpretation of the Augustan census figures, supporting the general picture of population growth first argued by T. Frank (1924: 329–41); see Morley (2001) for an outline of alternative possibilities. All modern historical demographers emphasise that their conclusions are speculative and beyond proof: a given case depends on the plausibility of the individual arguments advanced and the demonstration (often ingenious) that counter-proposals are untenable. Debates are sharp. The methodological expertise on display is increasingly sophisticated, but even the most advanced contributions remain in the end as impressionistic as many conventional assessments of Roman slavery and its impact on society and life. Sallares (2002) is important for showing the variability of the impact of malarial diseases and calls into question the value of the model life-tables on which demographic restoration heavily depends.

For the importance of personal entourages in Republican politics, not exclusively made up of domestic servants, see Nicolet (1980: 356–61). On

Appian as a historian, Gowing (1992) is essential. For Tiro and Cicero, see the material collected in Treggiari (1969b: 259–63), which includes post-manumission evidence. The slave capacity of Cicero's Palatine house is suggested by Carandini (1988: 359–87). For decoration as a guide to negotiating social space within the elite house, see Wallace-Hadrill (1994), vitally important. On manumission practices and freedmen at large, Treggiari (1969b) is an incomparable study, complemented but not superseded by Fabre (1981). Sherwin-White (1973: 322–31 on manumission) is definitive on incorporating outsiders by grants of citizenship. Bradley (1987b: 81–112) deals with the acculturative function of the Augustan legislation on slavery and related matters. For the demographic implausibility of high rates of manumission, see Scheidel (1999c). Joshel (1992) is crucial on the connection between work and social identity. For the portrait reliefs of freedmen and their families, see Kleiner (1977) and Fabre (1981: 188–95, 202–7; 205 for C. Vettius Secundus). The Mariemont relief is shown in Rostovtzeff (1957: plate XII 3) and Fabre (1981: fig. 1), but according to Ville (1963) it is not a manumission scene. Lintott (1968) is essential on violence though unforgivably elitist in attitude. The language of class for slaves is favoured by Schiavone (2000), presenting a neo-Marxist viewpoint. The key items on *libertas*, 'a convenient term of political fraud' (Syme 1939: 155) are Wirszubski (1950) and Brunt (1988: 281–350); see importantly also Weinstock (1971: 135–42) and Crawford (1974, II: 916 s.v. 'Libertas') for the coins (508 for the Ides of March coin and 266.1 and 270.1 for *Libertas* with *vindicta*). The thesis of Gruen (1974) that the Republic functioned effectively until 49 is unproven. On the law of agency, see Kirschenbaum (1987: 90–6); Aubert (1994). On petty resistance see Bradley (1989: 18–45) and chapter 17 in this volume. In the modern debate on Roman politics in the first century, Millar (1998) is especially influential in its advocacy of Rome as a democracy; see further Yakobson (1999) and Mouritsen (2001).

CHAPTER 13

SLAVERY UNDER THE PRINCIPATE

NEVILLE MORLEY

INTRODUCTION

The slave society of Roman Italy, characterised by the presence of large numbers of slaves (forming perhaps as much as 35 per cent of the population) in all kinds of activity from personal service to crafts to business to education, and in all regions and all levels of society from the depths of the countryside to the houses of the urban elite, developed over the course of the last two centuries BC. Over this same period, slave labour maintained a central role in agricultural production, in the market-orientated villa system of central Italy described by Cato and Varro; slaves were by no means the only people involved in productive activity, or even the majority, but they played a vital role in accumulating the marketable surpluses that sustained the lifestyles and ambitions of many of the elite. Their role in ensuring the social reproduction of the elite, both through apparently ‘unproductive’ personal services (which in fact were vital for their owners’ participation in the competition for status and the display of an ‘appropriate’ lifestyle) and through their dominant position in the process of educating and socialising the next generation of aristocrats, should also not be underestimated. Indeed, in a family environment that was characterised, as Bradley (1991a: 125–55) has argued, by a high risk of emotional uncertainty and dislocation, slave tutors and nurses offered some degree of continuity in personal relationships for young aristocrats, and so, perhaps, shaped the behaviour of generations of elite Romans.¹

The key question for this chapter is how Roman slavery developed over the next few centuries, if indeed it developed at all. First, there is the question of its diffusion; how far Roman models and practices of slavery spread into the provinces of the empire, whether taken there by Roman officials, soldiers and other migrants, or adopted by the provincials themselves in imitation of their rulers. Secondly, there is the question of development and change, whether in the uses to which slaves were put, their treatment and place in Roman society, or attitudes towards them.

¹ Cf. Vogt 1975c: 105.

Thirdly, there is the related question of whether slavery ‘declined’; the fate of the slave system in Italy itself during this period is often presented in terms of crisis.

THE DIFFUSION OF ROMAN SLAVERY

Despite his provincial origins, Columella, like the other Roman writers on the management of villa estates, focuses almost entirely on Italy; his imagined reader is resident for most of the year in Rome, able to visit his estates in central Italy regularly and to contemplate different management strategies for ‘far distant’ estates that could not be properly supervised (Columella, *On Agriculture* 1.7.6; cf. Pliny, *Letters* 9.37). There is no reason why Columella’s advice on the selection of an estate, the choice of crops or the disciplining of slaves could not be applied in the far north or south of Italy, or in more distant provinces; most of the precepts of the agronomists were readily (indeed, intentionally) transferable (cf. Columella, *Rust.* 3.13.1). It is simply that Columella, like the other agronomists, offers no evidence either way for the diffusion of the classic ‘villa mode of production’ – to be exact, the range of cultivation and management strategies that might be employed on an estate worked and managed by slaves – beyond the central regions of Etruria, Latium and Campania. Even when he discusses agricultural practices outside Italy, for example noting the different systems of training vines in the provinces, he gives no indication of the nature of the workforce that undertakes this work besides a few passing and vague references to *agricolae* and *rustici* (e.g. 4.1.5, 5.4.3). One might conclude that his failure to specify the status of the vine-dressers and other labourers implies that (in his view, at least) provincial estates were worked in the same way as Italian estates, by slaves, but this is no more provable than the idea that he is contrasting the methods of Gallic and Spanish peasants, developed in different conditions, with the longer-established and more ‘scientific’ approaches of Italy. Roman expansion had brought the vine to the western provinces; it remains to be seen whether Italy had also exported its system of agricultural exploitation.

Other literary sources are equally frustrating in their treatment of this topic, offering little more than passing comments; as Hopkins (1978: 99) put it, ‘the ancient evidence on slavery in the Roman empire outside Italy is so thin that it seems compatible with many theories’. It is clear that slaves could be found throughout the empire, sometimes in significant numbers – Galen’s suggestion (5.49K) that they constituted a third of the population of Pergamum may be no more than a guess, or an extrapolation from the elite households with which he was familiar, but it implies a considerable presence. In many regions, different forms of unfree labour long pre-dated Roman occupation; Roman writers noted the differences between native

practices and their own but were not surprised to encounter some form of slavery in other societies (e.g. Tacitus, *Germania* 24–5; Bradley 1994: 22–3). There was a long tradition of slaveholding in the Greek East, with slaves involved in personal service, craft activity, trading and mining; in Pergamum there is evidence of slave managers on large estates, while many of the agricultural labourers in these regions were certainly ‘unfree’, if not necessarily chattel slaves.² There was little, besides the specifics of the central-Italian villa system, that the Romans could teach the Greeks about slavery. In the West, on the other hand, slavery was marginal; war captives might be kept in the household for personal service or might be compelled to practise some craft, but increasingly in the last two centuries BC they were sold to slave-traders or merchants, to fuel the slave system of Italy.³

With the exception of a few special groups like the workers in the Spanish silver mines, many if not most of whom were unfree (Diodorus Siculus 5.38.1; Strabo 3.2.10; Edmondson 1987; Thompson 2003: 56–81), the role and importance of slaves in different sorts of production under the Roman Empire is unclear. It is sometimes assumed that the large numbers of slaves to be found in some elite *familiae* in Africa and Gaul (e.g. Apuleius, *Apology* 17.1) are explicable only if a significant proportion of them worked in agriculture, but that runs the risk of underestimating the ingenuity of Roman aristocrats in developing ever more complex demands for personal service (cf. *ILS* 1514; Bradley 1994: 61–4). Even where we do find indications of the presence of slaves in the countryside, it is important to bear in mind the distinction between a slave employed in the highly organised villa system of the agronomists and a slave employed as an independent farmer, scarcely distinguishable in some respects from a tenant (as Tacitus described the slaves of the Germans: *Germ.* 25). Where rural slaves appear in ancient novels of the period, they generally appear in this latter role (cf. Apul., *Metamorphoses* 7.15–28; Longus, *Daphnis and Chloe* 4.19).

Only in Egypt, where detailed records have survived of management practices on large estates such as that described in the Heroninus archive, and other papyri permit the detailed reconstruction of life in the countryside as well as in the cities, is it possible to offer a certain response to this question. Overall, approximately 11 per cent of those recorded in Egyptian census returns were slaves, a figure that is often used – in the absence of alternative evidence – as the basis for an estimate of the slave population of the empire as a whole.⁴ Slaves were more common in the metropoleis (13 per cent of people returned) than in the villages (8 per cent), and it is assumed that they must have been still more numerous in Alexandria. About one household in six listed slaves on its census return, usually just

² Rostovtzeff 1941/1953: 1258–61; Ste. Croix 1981. ³ Todd 1992: 32; Cunliffe 1997: 220.

⁴ Bagnall and Frier 1994: 48.

one or two; as far as their occupations are concerned, they appear in the papyri as scribes, cooks, barbers, other kinds of personal servants, craftsmen and 'slaves without a trade', men-of-all-work (e.g. *P Oxy.* 3197; 3510). It is striking that, in contrast with Italy, few seem to have been employed as business managers or agents for their owners.⁵ In agriculture, the large estates of the wealthy, who could have afforded to invest in the human and material capital involved in the Roman villa system, preferred to rely on various forms of peasant labour; tied to the land and dependent on the landowner to different degrees, but clearly distinguishable from chattel slaves.⁶

For the rest of the empire, arguments about the prevalence of slavery have developed in three main directions, drawing on different sorts of evidence. The first focuses on the epigraphic material.⁷ Inscriptions commemorating slaves and freedmen are known from every province of the empire; they are almost all found in urban contexts, which of course reflects the general pattern of epigraphic finds. Where the occupation is indicated, it is almost always urban; the majority of slaves whose role is recorded were employed as personal servants, to officials, soldiers or local dignitaries, with a few involved in the imperial administration and a few employed in craft production or business. Even in Spain and southern Gaul, where it is often assumed that slaves were extensively employed in agriculture, there are few inscriptions from rural contexts or relating to rural occupations; the majority of finds from the countryside refer to personal servants, with a few commemorating overseers (*vilici*). 'Everywhere but in Italy and Sicily . . . a decided majority of slaves did nothing productive at all' (MacMullen 1987: 379); free labour, he argues, was the norm in agriculture and craft production.

It is worth noting that the epigraphic record from the provinces, limited though it is, offers little support for the idea of a decline in slave numbers from the second century. Manumission inscriptions from Thessaly go through an apparent trough in the period AD 50–74 but rise again by the mid-second century; their decline in frequency over time, like the decline in other inscriptions commemorating slaves and freedmen, parallels the decline in the total number of inscriptions over the period of the Principate, rather than showing a steeper fall. As MacMullen (1982; cf. Bodel 2001) has argued, this epigraphic record reflects social behaviour, the wish on the part of those who could afford it to advertise their status and social climbing in this particular way. The decline in attestation points to the development of new patterns of display and competition, not to a decline in the numbers of those groups who had previously erected such inscriptions; just as the

⁵ Aubert 2001: 101–2.

⁶ Rathbone 1991: 89–91; Rowlandson 1996: 205.

⁷ MacMullen 1987.

relative absence of inscriptions commemorating the freeborn does not imply racial degeneration or the catastrophic decline of the free poor.

However, precisely this point can be used against MacMullen's argument that the absence of epigraphic evidence for slaves in provincial agriculture indicates the actual absence of slaves.⁸ There are, in the first place, far more inscriptions of all kinds from urban contexts than from rural. The inscriptions that have survived offer a sample of those people who put up inscriptions, not a sample of all slaves and freedmen. It is generally agreed that slaves in the *familia urbana*, and especially those whose occupation brought them close to their owners, stood a better chance of being manumitted or, if they died as slaves, being commemorated; those working in crafts or business had the opportunity to build up their *peculium* in order to purchase their freedom or a tombstone.⁹ The *vilicus* on the rural estate, occupying a role of responsibility and interacting directly, if infrequently, with his master, might entertain some hope of freedom; ordinary rural workers had little chance. In other words, the epigraphic record offers an entirely believable picture of patterns of slave wealth and manumission; the absence of ordinary rural workers is wholly predictable. One might also argue against MacMullen's assumption that domestic service is automatically to be considered 'unproductive', but the key point is that the epigraphic picture from the provinces mirrors that of Italy, where other evidence leaves little doubt that slaves were heavily involved in agriculture in at least some regions of the peninsula. As Samson (1989: 100) suggests, the argument from silence could equally be used to demonstrate that Gaul and Spain contained no *coloni* or peasants either.

The second line of argument in this debate has focused on archaeological material, on the grounds that it is less susceptible to bias against both poor farmers and rural slaves. Excavated sites have been examined for evidence of slave quarters and related artefacts (iron fetters, in particular), while survey evidence offers an overview of changing patterns of settlement and exploitation in the countryside, which might indicate the effects of the intrusion of villa-based slave agriculture on the Italian model. Here too, however, there are significant problems of interpretation, which are familiar from debates on the archaeology of the villa in Republican Italy; archaeological evidence also needs source criticism.¹⁰ Depending on the methods used and the intensity of the sampling, field surveys tend to identify large, wealthy sites more easily than small, poor ones, especially if different sites did not have equal access to the fine-wares which usually provide the basis of dating. Large, distinct concentrations of finds are identified as 'sites', but attempts to establish typologies or hierarchies of such sites, let alone to identify them with particular types of rural settlement

⁸ Samson 1989. ⁹ Bradley 1994: 154–65. ¹⁰ Alcock 1993: 49–53.

known from other (mainly literary) sources, are fraught with difficulty.¹¹ It is important to remember that the 'villa' of archaeology and the 'villa' of the agronomists are not identical; the former is a more or less luxurious residential complex, often identified by the remains of bath complexes or mosaic *tesserae*, representing a particular way of displaying wealth in the countryside. Such a rural residence might indeed be the end-product of several decades of successful exploitation of slave labour in the way described by Cato, Varro and Columella, but it is equally possible that the source of the owner's wealth might have little to do with agriculture or slavery.¹² Some excavated villas contain areas that may be interpreted as the quarters of slave labourers, but by no means all of them do (see below, p. 272).

With these caveats in mind, we can consider the findings of a number of field surveys from Gaul, Britain and Spain, regions of the empire where slaves were apparently not present in large numbers before the Roman conquest, to see if any pattern is discernible that might point to the intrusion of slave agriculture. The most obvious finding is that there was significant regional variation, relating partly to the indigenous pattern of settlement and partly to the circumstances of the Roman arrival. In the south of Gaul, for example, there was widespread redistribution of land for colonies under Caesar, the Triumvirs and Augustus; the patterns of centuriation still discernible show the extent to which traditional landholding patterns were disrupted.¹³ The north of the country escaped any such disruption to the rural economy. During the same period, vine and olive cultivation spread through the southern region, something which may be ascribed in part to the colonists. There is no direct evidence, however, that Italian settlers brought with them new methods of organising cultivation; the typical colonial allotment was much smaller than the estate recommended by the agronomists, and better suited to conventional subsistence farming than to slave-run, market-orientated agriculture.

By the end of the last century BC, the earlier settlement pattern in Gallia Narbonensis of numerous small villages on hilltops had been replaced by a dispersed pattern of numerous small farms, a process which can be interpreted as a response to the increased security provided by Roman rule; the north had been characterised by a dispersed settlement pattern long before the Roman conquest. Over the course of the first century AD, 'villas', identified by their distinctive architectural features, began to dominate the landscape in all areas of Gaul, either constructed *ex novo* or, more commonly (especially in the north), developed from existing farm buildings.¹⁴ These villas tend to cluster around towns, though whether

¹¹ Millett 1991; Vallat 1991. ¹² Millett 1992: 2.

¹³ Wightman 1978; Woolf 1998: 41–3. ¹⁴ Woolf 1998: 148–57.

they were orienting themselves towards their market, as the agronomists recommended, or in accordance with the social and political focus of their owners, or both, it is impossible to say. These new forms of rural site never wholly displaced 'native farms', which has led Woolf (1998: 159) to argue that they cannot have represented a new form of production but rather a specific form of consumption. However, the coexistence of villas and peasant farms in Italy has long been recognised, with peasants providing essential labour for the villas at certain times of year.¹⁵ In the south of Gaul, therefore, where traditional landholding patterns were clearly disrupted and Italian colonies were established, the survey evidence does at least not exclude the possibility of the introduction of the villa mode of production.

Britain resembles the north of Gaul in its development; villas appeared soon after the conquest, for the most part representing the reconstruction of pre-Roman farms rather than new sites. There is no evidence of any widespread redistribution of land or of significant disruption to the traditional rural economy, and British villas seem to represent a new form of displaying wealth and status rather than a new source of profit.¹⁶ In Greece, in contrast, luxurious villas appeared in conjunction with a general decline in the numbers of rural sites.¹⁷ In some respects this pattern resembles that of Italy in the late Republic, but in the case of Greece the literary evidence makes no mention of the displacement of peasants by slaves; both contemporary accounts and the decline in the level of off-site finds (interpreted as evidence for a decline in manuring) suggest instead the effects of post-conquest poverty and debt on the poorer proprietors, leading them to adopt less intensive methods of cultivation and to farm only the best land. Land-ownership seems to have become less stable, offering opportunities for a few well-off families to build up extensive holdings, and the country began to export grain, olive oil, flax and other goods; however, there is little evidence for market-orientated specialisation and none for investment in new, slave-based forms of agriculture.¹⁸

Many parts of Spain follow the same pattern as Britain and northern Gaul, with little sign of change in the countryside. However, the south-eastern coast and the lower reaches of the river valleys of the Ebro and Guadalquivir more closely resemble Gallia Narbonensis, both in the introduction of new crops and in the spread of villas.¹⁹ Some of these larger sites were clearly associated with production for the market, with kilns for amphora production on the estate, and some in the Toledo province are found in conjunction with large-scale irrigation works, both of which imply

¹⁵ Garnsey 1980b. ¹⁶ Millett 1990: 91–9. ¹⁷ Alcock 1993: 64–7.

¹⁸ Alcock 1993: 74–83. ¹⁹ Curchin 1991: 125–9.

a level of investment in agriculture that goes beyond conventional subsistence farming.²⁰ Again, these larger sites never wholly displaced smaller farms, and further inland there are few signs of any major changes in the agrarian economy.²¹ Certainly these regions of Spain became major exporters of olive oil and wine during this period, as seen in the archaeological record at Ostia, and the development of a market-oriented agriculture might have involved changes in the organisation of production as well as in the crops produced. As in other surveys, however, the status of the labourers on such estates cannot be identified.

For a better idea of the nature of the 'villa' sites identified by surveys, we need to consider those that have been fully excavated.²² Here too, however, the problem remains that the legal status of individuals is archaeologically invisible. Plenty of excavated villas contain series of small rooms that might be interpreted as slave quarters, but which might equally be the quarters of tied labourers or hired workmen, or personal servants, or even storerooms.²³ This can be said of villas like Foz de Lumbier in Navarre, rebuilt in the fourth century with a courtyard extension flanked by forty-four more or less identical small rooms, as well as rooms identified as 'slave quarters' in the main building,²⁴ or Chiragan in Narbonensis, with its line of rectangular, timber-framed huts, some of them with verandas.²⁵ As Purcell noted of the villa of Settefinestre in Etruria, 'an alien archaeologist would spot the menial status of the majority of the occupants, but would not be able to deduce the phenomenon of slavery from the remains' (1988: 197). In regions where the presence of large-scale agricultural slavery is not clearly attested by other sources, we cannot be certain that the workforce housed in such quarters was made up of chattel slaves.

In a few cases, the identification is more certain. The villa of Els Munts near Tarragona included a semi-subterranean structure with extra-thick walls, containing iron fetters; surely, its excavators believe, the *ergastulum* in which disobedient slaves were locked up.²⁶ Iron fetters have been found across northern Gaul, especially in the regions of the Seine and the Meuse, and passing comments by archaeologists suggest that they are sometimes found in the context of villas.²⁷ On the other hand, iron fetters are also found along the Rhine frontier in military contexts, and in East Anglia, where few historians believe in extensive use of slavery; the law codes of the later empire – and many of these finds date to the fourth century and later – make it clear that slaves were not the only class of inferiors who might be forcibly restrained.

²⁰ Curchin 2004: 96–107. ²¹ Castro Lopez and Gutierrez Soler 2001.

²² Thompson 2003: 103–30.

²³ Cf. George 1997b: 316–17.

²⁴ Thompson 2003: 105.

²⁵ Thompson 2003: 114–15.

²⁶ Thompson 2003: 106; cf. Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.16.

²⁷ Thompson 2003: 106, 119–20.

Neither epigraphic nor archaeological evidence can rule out the possibility that slave labour was extensively employed in the provinces; some of the survey material suggests disruption in the rural economies of some areas of southern Gaul and Spain that might be associated with the introduction of a new way of organising production. However, the case can scarcely be proved either way. Historians have therefore turned to arguments from probability and plausibility: how reasonable is it to take an optimistic rather than a sceptical view of this evidence? Much depends on prior assumptions about the reasons why villa-based slave agriculture was originally adopted in Roman Italy. Whittaker (1980) follows Finley in assuming that this development was largely a response to a shortage of free labour in the peninsula as a result of almost unceasing war; in the newly conquered western provinces, in contrast to either Republican Italy or the modern colonial experience, there was no shortage of exploitable labour, and so no need to import slaves. Moreover, Roman colonists tended to be few in number, isolated, not especially prosperous and so more likely to follow local farming practices than to import new methods. Columella's remarks about provincial methods of training vines, which were less labour-intensive and required less specialised skills, might suggest reliance on a workforce of peasants and hired labourers rather than highly trained slaves.²⁸

Another sceptical argument could be developed on the basis of demographic factors, drawing on recent work on the Roman slave supply.²⁹ The generally accepted (albeit highly speculative) figure for the slave population of the empire is roughly 6 million (with 2 to 3 million in Italy); approximately 10 per cent of the total population, following the proportions found in the Egyptian census data. If we assume that slaves were a significant force in agriculture in southern Gaul and some regions of Spain, comparable to their role in central Italy, this implies a significantly higher figure for the total slave population. Such numbers might be sustainable, given a high level of slave breeding and a low level of manumission throughout the empire. However, the volume of slave imports and/or rate of natural increase required to support the additional expansion of the servile population from the late Republic into the Principate might strain credibility.

The alternative approach to this question sees the recourse to slavery in Italy as having been motivated by thoughts of profit; villa agriculture enabled the owner to take a much higher proportion of the surplus than if the land was cultivated by tenants or peasants, even if slave labour was not actually more productive.³⁰ The villa represented a significant investment, but one which paid off because of the demand for its products; wine being

²⁸ Cf. Tchernia 1986: 172–84.

²⁹ Scheidel 1997; see Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume.

³⁰ Cf. Morley 1996: 122–9.

exported to Gaul in the late Republic, but all manner of goods being shipped to the city of Rome. The same opportunity presented itself to the western provinces. Roman imperialism fuelled the growth of centres of demand in the capital and at the frontiers; it provided the transport facilities, the security and the framework of law that allowed trade to flourish; it created incentives for producers to increase their surplus and market it, the negative one of taxation in coin and the positive one of introducing new forms of consumption and social display which required cash to participate.³¹ Of course, not all regions were equally well placed to take advantage of the growing demands of the capital and the army; the villas of Italy are largely found within easy reach of the coast or of navigable rivers. But given the relative costs and speed of sea and land transport, the coasts of Gaul, Spain and North Africa were effectively closer to Rome than many parts of the Italian peninsula.³² The archaeological evidence for goods from these regions at Ostia shows that at least some provincial producers responded to the challenge. It is possible, therefore, that these producers might have sought to increase their profits by adopting new methods of organising production, and introducing slaves.

This argument still does no more than identify conditions which might have promoted the adoption of slave-based agriculture; it remains equally possible that provincial landowners were able to make a sufficient profit by exploiting peasants in a more traditional manner, by using less labour-intensive cultivation methods and by investing in equipment (the oil-pressing complexes found in North Africa, for example) rather than slaves.³³ However, it should not be forgotten that, even if the Romans neither introduced slavery into the conquered provinces nor transformed their agricultural systems along the lines of the Italian model, they nevertheless presided over an expansion of the number and roles of slaves and freedmen in most regions. A figure of 10 per cent of the population (if we take Egypt as typical of a province where slaves played a negligible role in agriculture) is by no means insignificant; slavery may not have dominated production outside Italy, but it permeated the society of the empire.

SLAVERY IN IMPERIAL ITALY

Studies of the Roman economy in the western Mediterranean in the first century AD have often set up a contrast between dynamic, developing provinces like Gaul, Spain and Africa and a stagnant, declining Italy. A range of evidence drawn from literary sources is offered to illustrate this picture: Columella complained about the state of Italian agriculture in his day; the younger Pliny complained that he was unable to find suitable

³¹ Hopkins 1980, 1995/6.

³² Morley 1996: 63–8 and Map 1.

³³ Cf. Mattingly 1988.

tenants for his estates; Trajan introduced alimentary schemes to assist the children of poverty-stricken Italians; in 92, Domitian introduced an edict to prohibit the establishment of new vineyards in Italy and to order the destruction of half the vineyards in the provinces.³⁴ In recent years, archaeological evidence has been added to support the notion of a crisis in Italian agriculture, and in particular in the slave-run villas: in some regions – the Ager Cosanus in Etruria, the Ager Falernus in Campania – ‘villa’ sites began to decline in number from the end of the first century, while finds of Italian amphorae in Ostia declined dramatically after the Augustan period, to be replaced by imports from Gaul and Spain.³⁵

Several theories have been offered to account for (and, to some extent, to bolster) this picture of crisis. One assumes that the cessation of significant Roman expansion must have had serious consequences for the supply of slaves, affecting their availability and price;³⁶ another, that the development of Stoic doctrines that questioned the apparently clear distinction between free and slave – arguing, for example, that no man was a slave by nature – must have had some effect on the institution.³⁷ Neither of these needs lengthy consideration. A peacetime slave trade across the frontiers of the empire had long existed and certainly continued to exist through the Principate, and home breeding of slaves played a significant, though unquantifiable, role in the reproduction of the slave population.³⁸ As noted above, the epigraphic record offers no support to the idea of a first- or second-century decline in slave numbers in the provinces or in Italy, and literary evidence (especially legal sources) shows that slavery was widespread in late antiquity. Stoic ideas, like later Christian views, focused on the spiritual wellbeing of the masters, frequently using slavery as a metaphor and having little to say about slavery as an institution; there is no evidence for any ancient abolitionist movement, let alone for its having any effect on social practices.³⁹

Two other theories have focused on the economic aspects of Italian slave agriculture. The first stresses the effects of competition as the provinces started to produce wine: Italian wine-growers lost their market in Gaul and were confronted with cheaper imports even in Italy.⁴⁰ This idea places an undue, and anachronistic, emphasis on the role of exports in determining the health of an economy. Certainly Italian wine was no longer shipped to Gaul in large quantities after the first century BC, but the city of Rome could consume everything the villas produced, and their

³⁴ Morley 1996: 135–42; Columella, *Rust.* 1, preface 1–20; Plin. *Ep.* 9.37; Suet. *Dom.* 7.2; Garnsey and Saller 1987: 59–61.

³⁵ Panella 1970; Hesnard 1980. ³⁶ E.g. Jones 1956. ³⁷ Cf. Finley 1980: 128–30.

³⁸ Scheidel 1997; Scheidel's chapter in this volume. ³⁹ Garnsey 1996: 128–52.

⁴⁰ Rostovtzeff 1957: 192–206; Carandini 1989.

proximity to that market could surely outweigh whatever advantage Gallic and Spanish growers obtained by using different cultivation methods. Provincial growing methods might be cheaper, but they generally produced a much lower quality wine; this represented competition in a particular area of the market, not in the market as a whole, and the appearance of provincial products at Ostia and Rome may simply reflect the insatiable demands of the urban populace.⁴¹ The contemporaneous disappearance of Italian amphorae from the archaeological record might be explained in part by the adoption of barrels, while much Italian wine by-passed Ostia altogether on its journey to the city.⁴²

An equally ideological approach, allegedly Marxist but in fact largely based on Stalin's dubious interpretations of Marxist theories of historical development, attributes the crisis to internal contradictions in the slave mode of production: Italian landowners expanded their holdings in search of ever greater profits, but the increased costs of supervising larger slave workforces proved uneconomical.⁴³ There is some evidence for the development of ever larger landholdings under the Principate (Pliny claimed rhetorically that six men owned the whole of Africa: *Natural History* 18.35), especially with the growth of the imperial estates; however, there is no reason to suppose that the individual farms owned by such magnates were even contiguous, let alone that they were managed as a whole rather than as individual units.⁴⁴ Only if one assumes the existence of a law of historical development that one mode of production must undergo a structural crisis to give birth to its successor – something which, in the case of ancient slavery, would anyway be more plausibly located in the third or even the fifth century – will this argument seem remotely plausible; it does not carry the imprimatur of Marx.⁴⁵

It is clear enough that the picture of crisis in Italy is overdrawn, and that much of the alleged evidence for it is actually quite irrelevant.⁴⁶ Domitian's edict on vines relates to concerns about the over-production of wine in the context of a shortage of cereals, rather than a protectionist measure in support of Italian agriculture;⁴⁷ Trajan's measure to feed children in Italian towns cannot be taken as evidence for crisis in the countryside; the comments of Pliny and Columella are scarcely specific to this period (especially if Columella is simultaneously taken as evidence for the development of slave-based villa agriculture). We are left, then, with the archaeological evidence for an apparent decline in the numbers of 'villa' sites in some, but by no means all, of the regions of Italy in which they had been established

⁴¹ Tchernia 1986: 179–84. ⁴² Tchernia 1986: 285–99.

⁴³ Shtaerman 1964; Shtaerman and Trofimova 1975; Carandini 1988; cf. Rathbone 1983; Yavetz 1988.

⁴⁴ Finley 1980: 133. ⁴⁵ Cf. Wickham 1988; Wood 1995: 108–78. ⁴⁶ Patterson 1987.

⁴⁷ Tchernia 1986: 221–53.

in previous centuries. Such a limited phenomenon may seem to require no further discussion; but, in so far as there were changes in the Italian countryside, they were apparently connected with the slave-run, market-orientated villa. This can be seen clearly in the contrast between the Ager Cosanus, where two-thirds of the villa sites disappeared in the course of the Antonine period, and the interior of the nearby Albegna Valley: further from the sea, and so less integrated into the wider Mediterranean economy, this region enjoyed a notable continuity of settlement, with no sign of a 'crisis' in either the late Republic or the first centuries of the Principate.⁴⁸

Farming is always an uncertain business; in the capricious environment of the Mediterranean there was a significant chance of harvest failure in any given year, and a run of bad luck would bring any estate close to disaster.⁴⁹ It seems possible, however, that villas were more vulnerable than other forms of estate, but not because of their use of slave labour. Specialisation in just a few crops offered the possibility of significant profits in good conditions, but increased the risk of a disastrous harvest, rather than just a poor one, if the weather was unfavourable; peasants typically spread their risks by growing a wide range of crops.⁵⁰ Compared with self-sufficient peasant farming, where the bulk of produce was intended for subsistence and storage, the villa was subject to the vagaries of the market as well as the environment; if prices were lower than expected, the landowner might not make a sufficient return on his investment in slaves and equipment. Some growers sought to insure themselves against such risks by passing the costs onto merchants, by selling the grapes on the vine rather than the finished product; if the harvest failed, the landowner was under no legal obligation to recompense those who had speculated on its success.⁵¹ Others focused on reducing their costs as far as possible and extracting the maximum value from their workforce; the need for close supervision of every aspect of the management of the villa is a central theme in Columella, creating the impression that intensive viticulture at least was a high-risk and rather fragile enterprise, with a slightly dubious reputation.⁵² It is possible, therefore, that the disappearance of many villa sites represents a change in wealthy landowners' strategies for exploiting their lands, from direct management (with the need for a luxurious residence to accommodate the owner when he visited) to some form of tenancy; legal discussions of the management of the estates of widows and minors make it clear that tenancy was regarded as a safe and reliable option requiring minimal effort.⁵³ This change need not imply any decline in the use of slaves in agriculture, since

⁴⁸ Attolini 1991. ⁴⁹ Cf. Horden and Purcell 2000: 178–80.

⁵⁰ Garnsey 1988: 49–53. ⁵¹ Plin. *Ep.* 8.2; Yaron 1959; Morley 1996: 161–3.

⁵² Corbier 1982: 111; Morley 1996: 138–42. ⁵³ Kehoe 1997.

an estate might be leased to someone who would then exploit it using slave labour.⁵⁴ At most, therefore, we might see this as a decline in a particular means of exploiting slave labour, not in slave labour in general; second- and third-century jurists take the presence of slaves in the countryside entirely for granted.⁵⁵

As for the place of slavery in other areas of economic life in Italy, there is no indication of decline under the Principate and little sign of development. Slaves continued to be employed in all areas of production, with the only significant difference between free and slave workers being the more frequent employment of the latter as part of a large group, in gangs (such as the slaves who maintained the aqueducts of Rome) or factories (such as the potteries at Arezzo).⁵⁶ Slaves' main occupation continued to be domestic and personal service, in the broadest sense, from doctors, secretaries and tutors to cooks, dressers and masseurs.⁵⁷ The Principate brought more examples of the ingenuity displayed by the Roman elite in the use of slaves to impress visitors and enhance their own public presence, such as Livia's 'pet child' (*delicium*) and the dwarfs and other curiosities that, according to Quintilian, fascinated Romans in the slave market (*Institutes* 2.5.10.12; cf. Plutarch, *Moralia* 520c on the 'monster market'; Barton 1993: 86). Roman moralists naturally revelled in all such manifestations of *luxuria* – as Pliny (*HN* 29.19) put it, 'we walk on the feet of others, we recognise our acquaintances with the eyes of others, rely on others' memory to make our salutations, and put into the hands of others our very lives' – and it would be risky to conclude that such practices had actually increased since the virtuous days of the Republic, simply on the basis of their comments.⁵⁸

The same could be said of the role of slaves in business and commerce; it does not seem to be a new phenomenon, but a number of sources allow us to see it in much more detail under the Principate than in earlier centuries. Above all we can draw on the writings of the jurists, who were fascinated by the problems of legal liability and responsibility that arose when a slave acted as an agent on behalf of his owner or even conducted business on his own account through the 'legal fiction' of the *peculium*.⁵⁹ As ever with legal sources, the attention devoted to a topic may be a reflection as much of its theoretical interest as of its importance in the real world. However, Roman law customarily developed in response to the situations it was asked to resolve; the presence of slaves in business was clearly taken for granted, and the problems this raised were real.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ Garnsey 1980b: 40; Foxhall 1990. ⁵⁵ Garnsey and Saller 1987: 73.

⁵⁶ E.g. Frontinus, *Aq.* 116–17; Pucci 1973: 288–91. ⁵⁷ Treggiari 1973.

⁵⁸ Cf. Edwards 1993.

⁵⁹ Aubert 1994; Andreau 1999: 64–70. ⁶⁰ Johnston 1999: 24–8.

Slaves might work under direct supervision, but it was routine for them to work as semi-independent agents and managers (*institores*), as ship-owners, salesmen and financiers, with considerable freedom to invest and exploit their owner's resources (*Digest* 14.3; Johnston 1999: 99–104). Such activities might overlap with the slave's use of the funds which were allocated to him as *peculium*; the Murecine tablets from the Bay of Naples show a slave making two loans to a merchant, one on behalf of his then master (an imperial freedman) and one on his own behalf (*Dig.* 33.8 on the *peculium*; *AE* 1972: 86–8; 1973: 138, 143; Andreau 1999: 71–9). The use of such agents allowed the senatorial elite to exploit their wealth (and share in the profits to be had) in financing maritime commerce, without crossing the bounds of social decorum by becoming directly involved. However, the elite were by no means the only free Romans to make use of slave agents, either on a permanent basis or for particular tasks.⁶¹ The institution also operated as a form of limited liability, since the owner could be held liable for no more than the original sum of the *peculium*, regardless of the size of the debt which his slave had run up (the original sum was also lost, of course). The Romans in general showed a preference for running business through their dependants (including family members) rather than through salaried employees (though the *institor*, even if a slave, might indeed receive a salary for his work). The slave, meanwhile, gained the opportunity to save enough money to buy his freedom, or even to buy slaves to work on his behalf (cf. *Dig.* 33.8.25 on the *servus vicarius*). Slave *procuratores* and *institores*, with privileged access to capital compared with the majority of the freeborn, might build up significant wealth and even, by virtue of their economic activities, a kind of status in Roman society. It is striking that when attempts were made to regulate the process of manumission, by stipulating minimum ages for the slave as well as for the owner, they almost immediately called forth exceptions for those slaves who played a significant role in the food supply of the city of Rome, either by owning ships or by managing a bakery (Ulpian, *Rules* III.1; Buckland 1908: 533–51).

SLAVES AND FREEDMEN IN ROMAN SOCIETY

The slave who worked as an agent for a member of the elite, like the slave who worked as a confidential secretary, a doctor or a tutor, was both an insider and an outsider in Roman society; a trusted member of the *familia*, with privileged access to its wealth and connections, but regarded in law and ideology as utterly dependent, inferior and powerless.⁶² We may surmise that such an ambivalent social position may have been a problem

⁶¹ Kirschenbaum 1987: 89–121.

⁶² Bradley 1994: 76–80.

for the slave; it was certainly a source of anxiety for the slave-owning society. One recurring theme in the portrayal of slavery in Roman literature is a concern that slaves are not in fact as cowed, let alone as inferior, as the ideology suggested that they ought to be, and moreover that slave-owners are more dependent on their slaves than vice versa.⁶³ The slave agent or manager, legally dependent and allegedly deficient in reason while at the same time often educated and literate and certainly expected to exercise his independent judgement in his master's service, highlighted the problem; agricultural manuals forlornly repeated the advice that the *vilicus*, the estate manager, should be as near as possible to his master in intelligence, but not think so himself (e.g. Plin. *HN* 18.36).

Roman society was, in theory, founded on clear distinctions of status, which determined political rights and social standing. In practice, the distinctions were not always clear, let alone fixed; demographic factors, for example, undermined any hope of maintaining a closed, hereditary elite.⁶⁴ By the early Principate, slavery seems to have become a focus for anxieties about wider changes in the social structure, involving the replacement of the fundamental distinction between citizen and non-citizen (even if the citizen body was then internally stratified) with a society stratified by wealth (where political rights sometimes but not always determined a hierarchy within a particular group). Thus, Juvenal's character Umbricius complains that the decline of Rome can be seen in the fact that the son of freeborn parents has to give way to the slave of a rich man (*Satires* 3.131). Of course the slave remained inferior in law, but this seemed to matter less than his association with money and power. Equally confusing was the fact that, in the absence of clear physical differences between slaves and slave-owners, it was not necessarily possible to identify one's supposed inferiors in the street. There was no form of dress that was specific to slaves – Seneca suggests (*On Mercy* 1.23.2–24.1; Bradley 1994: 95–9) that the idea was once proposed in the Senate but abandoned for fear that the slaves would realise how many they were. Only citizens could wear the toga, but that was only for formal occasions; slave clothing was generally expected to be drab, practical rather than fashionable – but that was not true of all slaves. Several of the jurists' discussions focus on the likelihood of mistaking a free man for a slave or vice versa: the sale of a free man, like the sale of temple land, may be valid if the purchaser is ignorant of the object's status, 'because it can be difficult to distinguish a free man from a slave' (*Dig.* 18.1.4–5). Runaway slaves were to be treated more harshly if they pretended to be free (*Dig.* 11.4.2); such comments point to the effort invested, with debatable success, in trying to maintain proper, visible, social distinctions.

⁶³ Hopkins 1993; Fitzgerald 2000; see Sandra R. Joshel's chapter in this volume.

⁶⁴ Hopkins and Burton 1983.

Even more problematic for Roman society was the ex-slave, the freedman. As Greek commentators remarked (Dionysius of Halicarnassus 4.22.4–23.7), Roman slavery was remarkable for the (relative) frequency with which slaves were manumitted, and the fact that properly manumitted slaves were accepted into the citizen body with remarkably few restrictions on their rights.⁶⁵ The ubiquity of freedmen in the epigraphic record gives an unrealistic impression of the actual frequency of manumission; consideration of the demography of the slave population suggests that its numbers could realistically have been sustained only if manumission rates were low.⁶⁶ However, it certainly existed as a possibility for a number of slaves, above all those who held responsible positions or were intimate with their owners, and thus offered a clear incentive for loyalty and hard work – even if, at the same time, it reinforced the dependence of the slave on the owner's whims and complicated their relationship still further.⁶⁷ 'Masters could afford to be generous with liberty, because they benefited from giving it' (Hopkins 1978: 132). If the slave bought his freedom with money he had earned from a salary or from the use of the *peculium*, the master profited from his endeavours and then received the cost of replacing him; as *patronus* of a freedman, the former owner enjoyed the social prestige of a reputation for generosity and a following of dependants and could continue to call on the services of his ex-slaves.⁶⁸ Many freedmen then continued to work as agents for their former masters, with access to their wealth and resources; others entered business on their own account, sometimes (as was the case with the fictional Trimalchio) deploying significant capital which they had received as legacies.⁶⁹ Many freedmen became prosperous enough to leave a physical record of their manumission; in many cases they also proudly commemorated their occupation and social successes, such as a position in a *collegium* or membership of the *Augustales*.⁷⁰

Particularly prominent in the first century of the Principate are the emperors' slaves and freedmen, the *familia Caesaris*.⁷¹ As the imperial house expanded its wealth and power, so some of its dependants enjoyed vastly expanded opportunities. Freedmen such as Narcissus and Pallas under Claudius, like emperors' wives and other family members, wielded influence because of their access to the emperor (cf. Plin. *Ep.* 7.29). They could not aspire to the throne themselves, and so (unlike senators) could supposedly be trusted to offer disinterested counsel and to act on his behalf; by managing his correspondence and audiences (both essential tasks), they could control the flow of information to the emperor and influence who

⁶⁵ Fabre 1981. ⁶⁶ Wiedemann 1985; Scheidel 1997: 160–1.

⁶⁷ Cf. Fitzgerald 2000: 47–51. ⁶⁸ Hopkins 1978: 115–31; Bradley 1994: 159–62.

⁶⁹ Garnsey 1981; Aubert 1994. ⁷⁰ Joshel 1992; Duthoy 1978. ⁷¹ Weaver 1972.

would be able to have their petition considered.⁷² By the end of the first century, an ability to keep one's freedmen in their proper place and to listen instead to the counsel of the Senate was, at least in the eyes of senatorial writers, a prerequisite for a successful emperor (Plin., *Panegyric* 88; Tac., *Histories* 1.49).

Roman sources naturally focused on such powerful, controversial figures, and their accounts have fairly been described as 'prejudiced, sensational, repetitive and depressing' (Weaver 1972: 9). The *familia Caesaris* contained a large cohort of less prominent, and certainly less politicised, figures, known above all from epigraphy, whose activities were far more important and influential in the management of the empire. Slaves and freedmen were to be found at all levels of the developing imperial bureaucracy in Rome and in the provinces, from lowly clerical workers to influential administrators. Until the reign of Domitian, freedmen headed all the great Palatine bureaux; even after those posts were reserved instead for equestrians, a few imperial freedmen who had been raised to equestrian status reached the top of the administrative ladder.⁷³ In part, this can be seen as an extension on a far greater scale of the Roman tradition of using dependants as agents, along with the fact that financial posts such as *dispensator* could be held only by someone with no legal personality separate from his master, but there was the additional advantage that the administration was kept out of the hands of potential rivals to the emperor's position. Imperial service offered some slaves, who might be born into the *familia*, acquired from another family or recruited specifically, the possibility of a kind of career structure, progressing through a series of posts of increasing importance and influence; the practice developed, particularly in finance, whereby the official would acquire another slave as a subordinate (the *servus vicarius*), to be trained as his eventual replacement when he was promoted.⁷⁴ Such officials seem to have had a good chance of manumission around the age of thirty, after which they could progress to higher positions. They had opportunities, both legitimate and illegitimate, for amassing wealth, and the most successful moved in high social circles; whereas most freedmen married within their own group, to judge from the epigraphic record, the majority of imperial freedmen married freeborn women, the daughters of earlier generations of imperial freedmen or of municipal families from Italy and the provinces. The career of the father of Claudius Etruscus recorded by Statius, which culminated in the grant of equestrian status by Vespasian, is exceptional, if only because we can follow it in such detail, but

⁷² Millar 1992: 69–83; cf. Hopkins 1978: 172–96 on the similar role played by court eunuchs in the later empire.

⁷³ Weaver 1972: 259–66. ⁷⁴ Weaver 1972: 199–281.

it shows what was possible for an imperial slave with sufficient luck and ability.⁷⁵

The wealth of rich freedmen, whether acquired from commerce or imperial service, presented another challenge to the traditional structures of Roman society. Access to political power and acceptance in elite circles had always been determined by wealth as much as by birth – the later European phenomenon of the ‘poor noble’ would be a contradiction in terms – and under the Principate birth seems to have become less significant than imperial connections. Freedmen were excluded from standing for office (emperors were very sparing in granting the gold ring that marked freeborn status), but their sons suffered no such restriction, and by the end of the first century it could be alleged that many *equites* and even some senators were descended from slaves (Tac., *Annals* 13.27). Some freedmen were richer than any member of the Roman elite and expected to be treated with appropriate deference; Roman sources complained at length about such presumption, including Seneca’s horror-struck account of the master who called on his former slave and was turned away (*Moral Epistles* 47.9; cf. Juv. 1.24–30, 102–11). It became necessary to seek alternative means of social discrimination, through ‘taste’: in Petronius’ novel, the *parvenu* Trimalchio is shown to reveal his vulgar origins in every failed attempt at imitating the elite way of life, while Seneca refers disparagingly to someone having ‘the wealth and spirit of a freedman’ (*Ep.* 27.5; Veyne 1961; Edwards 1993).

Of course, the freedmen remained rich and powerful, regardless of this social judgement, and clearly felt no shame in displaying their status as former slaves on their tombstones. Most, we may imagine, were addressing themselves to their fellow *liberti*, just as they married (and probably socialised) within that group; imperial freedmen, however, moved in wider and higher circles, and it may be that the connection with the imperial house was far more important than the fact that it was a result of enslavement. Certainly this is the approach of Statius in his account (*Silvae* 3.3) of the career of the father of Claudius Etruscus. The unnamed man’s lack of noble lineage is noted but assumed to have been eclipsed by his success; he gains status from the fact that his masters were the rulers of the world – and there is no shame there since even kings have to obey the emperors (43–53). His constant closeness to Caesar is emphasised (63–6); this is clearly the basis of his claim to respect. This may indeed offer a partial explanation for the fact that those educated freedmen who were in a position to give an account of the life of a slave, admittedly an exceptionally privileged slave, chose not to do so; not only was there no ready audience for such a memoir,

⁷⁵ Weaver 1972: 284–94.

but they thought of themselves less as former slaves than as members of the imperial household – even if rivals and jealous aristocrats preferred to emphasise their servile origins.

CONCLUSION

Bradley (1994: 12–14) has identified three approaches to the definition of a ‘slave society’: the demographic test (how many slaves), the location test (where slaves are employed), and a more general emphasis on dependent labour. Either of the first two approaches would clearly restrict the term to Roman Italy alone (and perhaps just to central Italy), and only to the period from the third or second century BC to the third or fourth century AD. In the rest of the empire, slaves constituted perhaps 10 per cent of the population, if we take the Egyptian evidence as typical, a figure well below the 20 per cent of a ‘true’ slave society according to the demographic criterion, and were largely absent from the productive spheres of agriculture, commerce and industry. The third approach would allow the label to be applied to the entire empire under the Principate, but it has been justly criticised for failing entirely to distinguish the special characteristics of Roman slavery, whether as a mode of production or a form of consumption, from the myriad other forms of dependent labour that could be found throughout antiquity.⁷⁶

Without wishing to downplay the special characteristics of Roman Italy during this period, with its high numbers of slaves and the particular ways in which they were employed in villas, it seems strange that a society in which slaves could be encountered in all areas of life and at all levels of social interaction, in which the ownership of slaves was one of the most important markers of social status and in which discussions of the state of society were dominated by the problems created by the presence of successful slaves and freedmen should *not* be described as a ‘slave society’. As Bradley puts it, ‘from a cultural point of view . . . slavery was at no time an incidental feature of Roman social organisation and at no time an inconsequential element of Roman mentality’ (1994: 29). The culture he describes was, by the end of the first century AD if not before, not confined to the capital or even to Italy. The Greek-speaking provinces had owned large numbers of slaves long before the Romans arrived, and the free/slave distinction was one of the fundamental determinants of social identity.⁷⁷ In the West, however, slavery had been marginal before the conquest; the Romans established new rules for social competition, in which the display of one’s dominance over others took on a particular importance. Rome did not export the villa mode of production to any great degree, but it

⁷⁶ Cf. Ste. Croix 1981; Garnsey 1980a. ⁷⁷ Cartledge 1993b: 118–51.

did export its beliefs, habits, practices and anxieties; the provinces were confronted with, and clearly influenced by, a culture that was permeated by slavery.

In the Italian heartland, the Principate is best seen in terms of the consolidation of the institutions of Roman slavery rather than their development – let alone their decline. Some of the slave-run villas underwent changes of management or fortune, and we have the evidence to explore the activities of slave managers and agents in more detail, but there was no qualitative (and little sign of quantitative) change in the ways that slaves were employed. The powerful slave and the wealthy freedman, and the social anxieties they aroused, were not new phenomena either (cf. Plin. *HN* 35.199), although the establishment of the Principate created new opportunities for a few, and consequent overreactions from the self-appointed guardians of traditional social values.

Having abandoned the idea that Roman slavery developed during the Principate under the influence of Stoicism, historians have tended to assume that the literary sources from Republic and Principate alike should be put together to delineate a composite ‘Roman attitude to slavery’ – even if this is characterised as a complex, even self-contradictory attitude (e.g. Fitzgerald 2000). The disadvantage of this approach is that it is difficult to decide if the apparent differences between earlier and later sources mark actual changes in Roman attitudes or are due simply to the accident of survival or the perception of historians. One might detect a certain increase in the fearfulness of Roman slave-owners in the first century AD, in Columella’s obsessive concern with surveillance and discipline, in Seneca’s anxiety about slave numbers and Pliny’s sense, on the basis of a single incident where a master was murdered by a slave, that he and his contemporaries were exposed to ‘indignities, outrages and dangers’, regardless of whether they treated their slaves well (*Ep.* 3.14). One senator, according to Tacitus, claimed that ‘you will never coerce such a medley of humanity except by terror’ (*Ann.* 14.44). Conversely, there are limited signs of interest, in the fictions of Apuleius and Longus, in imagining the experience of being enslaved – something which did, after all, happen occasionally to the freeborn – if not the experience of being a slave, which is not quite the same thing.⁷⁸ For the most part, however, Romans remained fixed in their attitudes, even as their society, and the societies of the territories they had conquered, were transformed by the institution of slavery. Of the slaves themselves, the lucky few who gained their freedom or who enjoyed material prosperity were happy to maintain the institution to their own benefit (cf. *ILS* 1514); the vast majority lacked even the hope of eventual manumission.

⁷⁸ Fitzgerald 2000: 87–114.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Most studies consider Roman slavery as a single institution or focus on its development under the Republic; those that focus on the Principate tend to be exclusively concerned with Roman Italy and obsessed with the notion of decline. Rostovtzeff (1957: 192–206) offers the classic picture of agrarian crisis in the face of provincial competition; Shtaerman (1964) and Shtaerman and Trofimova (1975) present the account of the ‘crisis of the slave mode of production’; Carandini (1989) summarises the archaeological evidence for the disappearance of the villas and a decline in wine production. The idea of a crisis in Italian agriculture in general and in the slave villa in particular is criticised by, among others, Finley (1980) Tchernia (1986: 221–53), Patterson (1987) and Morley (1996: 135–42). The key positions on the extent to which Roman practices were exported to the provinces of the empire are stated by Whittaker (1980), MacMullen (1987) and Samson (1989); Thompson (2003) offers a summary of relevant archaeological evidence.

The Roman slave supply, the demography of the slave population, the roles that slaves occupied in the economy and their treatment in Roman law are all considered in more detail in other chapters of this volume. On manumission, see Hopkins (1978), Wiedemann (1985) and, for scepticism on its frequency, Scheidel (1997). The definitive work on the *familia Caesaris* remains Weaver (1972). Fitzgerald (2000) offers a stimulating account of the images of slaves in Roman literature; on Trimalchio as freedman, see Veyne (1961).

CHAPTER 14

THE ROMAN SLAVE SUPPLY

WALTER SCHEIDEL

PROBLEMS AND METHODS

Any reconstruction of the Roman slave supply depends on two variables: the total number of slaves, and the relative contribution of particular sources of slaves to overall supply. Owing to the nature of the record, these issues are at best only dimly perceptible. A simple comparison with the history of US slavery highlights the severity of this predicament: decadal census counts not only record the number and distribution of slaves but also permit us to calculate rates of natural reproduction and even to assess the patterns of the domestic slave trade. This body of data gives us a good idea of the scale and development of the underlying slave system. In the study of the world history of slavery, by contrast, an evidentiary basis of this kind is the exception, while uncertainty and guesswork are the norm. Roman slavery firmly belongs in the latter category: hardly any genuine statistics are available, and historians face two similarly unpalatable options. Thus, we may decide to eschew speculative quantification altogether and focus on what our sources readily provide – that is, qualitative impressions of the prevalence of slave-ownership and the provenance of slaves. This humanistic approach allows us to draw a rich canvas of slaveholdings large and small, and of a variety of sources of supply from capture in war all the way to voluntary self-enslavement. What it cannot do is to give us even a remotely reliable notion of the representative value of scattered references. Conversely, we may choose to advance broad probabilistic estimates of the demand for slaves and the likely weight of different sources of supply. This approach is likewise fraught with serious problems: it depends on inherently aprioristic notions of plausibility; if these notions are backed up by comparative evidence, they run the risk of circularity; yet in the absence of comparative contextualisation, they invite arbitrary implausibility; it may be hard if not impossible to link broad models to qualitative source references; and models may at best produce a range of competing probabilities instead of a single authoritative reconstruction. What they can do, however, is to enhance our understanding of overall structure and scale in ways that would not otherwise be possible.

Any meaningful discussion of the Roman slave supply must seek to combine both approaches for the fullest possible picture. In the following, I juxtapose evidence and models, and emphasise uncertainties and conjecture. This almost inevitably makes for an account that will appear both overly timid and unaccountably bold: frequent reminders about the shakiness of our readings and interpretations will jar with the far-flung propositions that are required to set up an overarching quantitative framework. I begin by considering the probable size of the slave population in Italy, in Egypt and in the empire as a whole. The core of the chapter consists of a review of the various sources of slaves and the mechanisms of the slave trade, followed by a brief conclusion.

THE SCALE OF ROMAN SLAVERY

Italy

We do not know the number of slaves in any particular community of Roman Italy or in a particular sector of the economy at any given point in time, let alone for the region as a whole. Between the fifth and the first centuries BC, the aggregate slave population must have increased dramatically, yet this process is almost impossible to quantify except in the barest outlines. The only thing we can in fact be sure of is that conventional ‘top-down’ guesses lack any support in the evidence and are consequently without merit. Hence, the common notion that by the end of the Republican period, about one-third of the Italian population consisted of slaves, and that this share translated to a grand total of some 2 to 3 million slaves depending on the underlying population estimates, owes more to unwarranted extrapolation from conditions in the Antebellum South or nineteenth-century Brazil than to any information preserved in ancient sources.¹ It is true that the tenor of the sources implies widespread slave-ownership in elite circles, to the extent that slavery probably made a significant contribution to the demographic make-up of the population of Italy. A handful of references evoke massive slaveholdings: the 4,116 slaves in the bequest of Tarius Rufus (Pliny, *Natural History* 33.135); the 400 household slaves of the city prefect Pedanius Secundus (albeit a purely symbolic number; Tacitus, *Annals* 14.43); and Augustus’ regulations aimed at owners of more than 500 slaves (Gaius, *Institutes* 1.43). While extreme examples such as these may well hint at a much bigger iceberg underneath, they are of little help in generating a usable estimate of the overall importance of slave labour in the heartland of the empire.

¹ Scheidel 2005a: 65, contra Beloch 1886: 415–18; Brunt 1971: 124–5; Hopkins 1978: 68; Finley 1998: 148; cf. Keith Bradley’s chapter (12) in this volume.

Ideally, slave totals would be tallied up from local or sectoral counts. In the absence of such data, I have tried to construct a probabilistic model that seeks to simulate this process by aggregating individual estimates for the likely demand for slaves in different sectors of the Italian economy (Scheidel 2005a). Needless to say, this method necessarily entails huge margins of error and cannot provide more than a rough notion of final outcomes under certain starting assumptions about the scale of domestic service or agricultural inputs. For this reason, my estimate of around 600,000 non-farming slaves in late Republican and early imperial Italy cannot be more than a highly tenuous conjecture. It may be somewhat less hazardous to assess levels of rural slavery, given that slave numbers can be linked to specific labour requirements. Rural slave numbers assume a pivotal role in any reconstruction of servile demography: in an 'organic' economy, for the share of slaves in the overall population to have been very large (e.g. along the lines of New World slave societies), the majority of slaves would need to have been employed in the countryside. However, in view of constraints on the expansion of cash-crop farming and other areas of rural employment, this is very unlikely to have been the case in Roman Italy. Barring some fundamental misconceptions about the nature of Italian farming, it would seem difficult to defend an estimate in excess of three quarters of a million for agricultural slaves, and a significantly lower total is certainly plausible. In my model, the most probable range of outcomes is consonant with a cumulative total of between 1 and 1.5 million slaves in Italy at the peak of this labour regime, equivalent to some 15–25 per cent of the total population.² In the most general terms, there can be little doubt that, despite their potentially vital contribution to agricultural production, slaves were disproportionately concentrated in the cities.³

Egypt

As so often, Roman Egypt is the only part of the empire that has produced some documentary evidence that supports limited statistical analysis of actual conditions in select locales. Pride of place goes to the census returns, papyrus texts that were drawn up every fourteen years and list the members of individual households including lodgers and slaves. Of 1,108 persons recorded in the surviving texts from (mostly) Middle Egypt, 11.6 per cent are slaves, but comparatively slave-rich urban households are over-represented in this sample: slaves were more common in district capitals (14.6 per cent) than in villages (8.4 per cent). A separate census register from one city in Upper Egypt yields a lower urban rate of 7 per cent.⁴ This spread may be a

² Cf. Scheidel 2004b: 2–9 for overall population size. ³ Jongman 2003.

⁴ Bagnall, Frier and Rutherford 1997: 98.

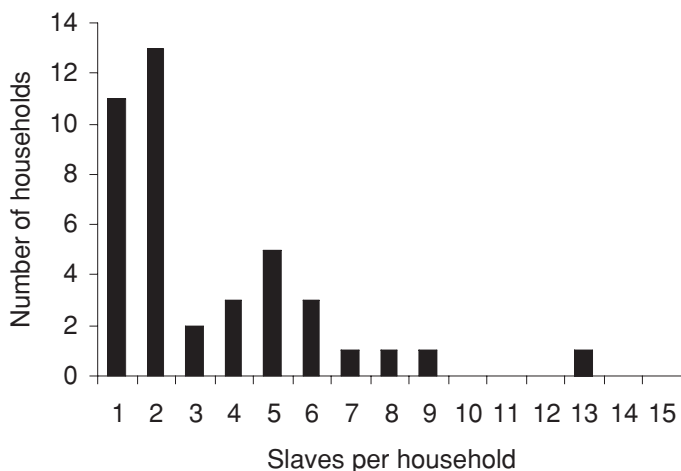


Figure 14.1 The distribution of slave-ownership in the census records of Roman Egypt (first to third centuries AD).

sign of significant but otherwise obscure regional variation, with a stronger presence of slaves in the more ‘hellenised’ and perhaps wealthier centres of Middle Egypt. Levels of slave-ownership may well have been higher in the provincial capital of Alexandria but remain unknown due to the lack of papyrological evidence.⁵

If we use the two urban census tallies to establish a notional urban average of 10.8 per cent; set the share of slaves in the villages of Upper Egypt by extrapolating from the respective urban/rural ratio in Middle Egypt (for an Upper Egyptian rural mean of 4 per cent) and thereby infer an overall rural average of 6.2 per cent; and if we assume that cities contained 15–20 per cent of the population of Egypt outside Alexandria, we may guess that slaves accounted for about 7 per cent – or perhaps more cautiously 5–10 per cent – of the total epichoric population. Scattered lists of men subject to *corvée* or taxation suggest comparable shares, ranging from 0 to 10 per cent.⁶

Moreover, slave-ownership was limited in scope: only 15 per cent of households in well-preserved census texts owned any slaves, and most of those only one or two (Fig. 14.1). This suggests that slaves were mostly employed as domestics. We have no evidence for large slave-staffed estates: tenancy and wage labour appear to have been the norm.⁷

⁵ Biezuńska-Małowist 1976; cf. *P Oxy.* 3197.

⁶ Westermann 1955: 87–8 (seven samples in which slaves account for 0, 0.5, 1, 1, 4, 7 and 10 per cent of all men). Biezuńska-Małowist (1977: 156–8) reckons with a share of slaves of 7–11 per cent outside Alexandria.

⁷ Data from Bagnall and Frier 1994: 181–312; Bagnall, Frier and Rutherford 1997: 57–88. Lack of large slave estates: Biezuńska-Małowist 1977: 73–108; cf. Rathbone 1991.

The empire

In this regard, Egypt differed considerably from Italy. The big question is whether the other provinces were, on average, closer to the 'Italian' or the 'Egyptian' end of the spectrum. On a rough estimate, these other regions accounted for about 80 per cent of the population of the empire: thus, even if we were to agree on notional shares for Italy (say, 15–25 per cent) and Egypt (say, 5–10 per cent), any estimate of overall slave numbers would critically depend on conditions in areas that yield hardly any pertinent information. Existing proposals – of 10 per cent or 17–20 per cent for the entire empire – are necessarily mere guesses.⁸

Qualitative evidence conveys the impression that slavery was common in several parts of the empire, not just in domestic service but in all sectors of the economy.⁹ Once again, the degree of slave-ownership in farming is key: if slaves were to be very numerous overall, they had to maintain a strong presence in the rural labour force. The fact that a parable in the Gospel of Luke casually assumes that someone might own a slave to till the land and tend livestock (Luke 17.7) indicates that the use of slaves in farming was hardly unheard of. The best evidence comes from some census registers from western Asia Minor (around AD 300?) which report levels of slave-ownership on country estates: most holdings did not have any slaves at all, while those that did usually had two or three (who may have been managers or quasi-tenants rather than labourers), and – excepting a couple of unusually slave-rich units – not more than perhaps 10–12 per cent of the registered agricultural population were of unfree status.¹⁰ Whether even a moderate presence of farming slaves was a characteristic of Aegean labour regimes or somehow representative of larger parts of the empire is impossible to ascertain.

It is true that occasional reports from various provinces hint at very substantial levels of slave-ownership. They include the flight of 107 public slaves from the Anatolian city of Kabeira in AD 74 (*IGRom.* 4.914); Josephus' claim that Apollodotus, the strategos of Gaza, commanded 10,000 slaves (or citizens?: *Jewish Antiquities* 13.359); John Chrysostom's clearly hyperbolic assertion that the rich of Antioch in Syria owned 1,000 or 2,000 slaves each (alongside ten or twenty bath-houses!) (*Homiliae in Matthaem* 63.4 [*PG* 58.608]); Apuleius' claim that his wife Pudentilla could give away 400 slaves in Oea in Tripolitania (*Apology* 93); and the report that in AD 280, a wealthy pretender from the Maritime Alps was able to arm 2,000

⁸ Scheidel 1997: 158 (10 per cent); Harris 1980: 118; 1999: 65 (17–20 per cent). Cf. also MacMullen 1987: 375 for what looks like a guess below 10 per cent.

⁹ For detailed surveys, see esp. Shtærman, Smirin, Belova and Kolosovskaia 1987; Marinovic, Golubcova, Sifman and Pavlovskaja 1992; Bussi 2001.

¹⁰ Jones 1974: 242–4.

Table 14.1 *Hypothetical distribution of the free and slave population of the Roman Empire*

	Urban		Rural	
	Free (million)	Slaves	Free (million)	Slaves
Italy	1.3	0.6	3.5	0.6
Egypt	1.25	0.25	4.2	0.3
Others	4–5	0.4–1	42–45	2.5–5.5
Total	6.5–7.5	1.3–1.9	49–52	3.5–6.5

Key: Italy: Scheidel 2004b (free population), 2005a (slave population). Egypt: Scheidel 2001: 246–7 (total population); Alexandria (guess; cf. Scheidel 2004a): 350,000 free + 150,000 slaves; other cities (above): 890,000 free + 110,000 slaves; villages (above): 4,220,000 free + 280,000 slaves. Other provinces: Scheidel 2007a (total imperial population, provincial breakdown, and urbanisation rates); low estimate: slaves are 10 per cent of urban population (~ Egypt) and 6 per cent of rural population (~ Egypt); high estimate: slaves are 20 per cent of urban population (~ Italy/Egypt mean) and 12 per cent of rural population (~ Italy/Egypt mean).

of his own slaves in a bid for the throne (*Historia Augusta, Firmus* 12.2). According to Galen (5.49K), Pergamum was inhabited by 40,000 (male) citizens and 80,000 ‘wives and slaves’ (but no children?), while Strabo (12.2.3, 6) credits two Cappadocian temples with 6,000 and 3,000 slaves, respectively. Unfortunately, with the exception of the first testimony, none of these references can lay claim to precision, or even accuracy: symbolic numbers such as 400, 1,000, 3,000, 6,000 and 10,000 abound, and the context invites exaggeration to varying degrees.¹¹ In some of these cases, we might also wonder about the actual status of these ‘slaves’ – whether they should be seen as freely alienable chattels or rather as dependants bound by local traditions of subservience. What remains is the impression that large concentrations of slaves in the hands of elite groups outside Italy were by no means considered implausible. The Talmudic notion that 100 slaves constitute wealth (*Sabbath* 25b) chimes with the Augustan restrictions on manumission that envisioned similarly large holdings.

The hypothetical breakdown in Table 14.1 is meant to invite further consideration of the limits of the plausible. Constrained in the first instance by often conjectural findings regarding Italy and Egypt, this model yields a share of slaves of between 7 and 13 per cent of the imperial population – i.e. somewhere close to one tenth. Its main advantage is that, unlike earlier guesses, it is not completely free-floating but grounded in explicit assumptions about its constituent elements. Any future revision must start by addressing these underlying variables, not with the final total itself.

¹¹ Cf. Scheidel 1996b on symbolic figures.

THE SOURCES OF SLAVES

The scale of the slave supply

For statistical reasons, the average 'social life expectancy' of slaves (i.e. the amount of time spent in slavery, allowing for episodes of freedom before and/or after enslavement) must have been relatively close to twenty years regardless of the sources of slavery. Therefore, if there were somewhere between 5 and 8 million slaves in the Roman empire, some 250,000 to 400,000 new slaves were required every year to maintain numbers. However, even if we can be reasonably confident that annual demand amounted to several hundred thousand slaves, it is difficult to estimate the relative contribution of different sources of slave supply, and how they changed over time.¹² Even so, although there is no denying that warfare and breeding were 'mutually supportive strategies' rather than stark alternatives (Bradley 1987a: 50), it is safe to say that, in the most general terms, the relative significance of capture in war had to be gradually eclipsed by natural reproduction, if only because 'new' (i.e. freeborn) slaves were required for substantial build-ups such as that experienced in Republican Italy, and growing slave numbers would have boosted natural reproduction. Logic dictates that, the larger a slave population becomes, the more difficult it is for capture to retain a dominant position as a source of supply, whereas the relative contribution of natural reproduction is bound to increase with overall size. The real question is whether the latter was sufficient to maintain overall strength or whether a decline in the former would have undermined slavery as an institution: different outcomes can be simulated with the help of parametric models but depend on untestable starting assumptions.

Likewise, the volume of the slave trade remains obscure: while freeborn slaves would have been sold at least once (unless they were kept by or directly assigned to their original captors, primarily soldiers), individuals born into slavery need not have changed hands at all, although some of them surely did, and an unknowable percentage of all slaves would have been traded multiple times. This concatenation of uncertainties makes it almost impossible even to guess the average number of transactions per year: in theory, it could have been as low as 100,000 (if 80 per cent of 250,000 slaves were slave-born and one-quarter of them were sold once in their lifetime, and each new slave was sold only once), or as high as close to a million (if each of 400,000 slaves was sold twice). It seems very likely that the truth must lie between those extreme assumptions: an annual tally of several hundred thousand transactions may count as a credible guess, equivalent to a few per cent of the total number of slaves in the

¹² Boese 1973: 51–103 (Republic) and 104–42 (Principate) is the main chronological survey.

empire.¹³ Long-distance transfers would account for an unknown fraction of these sales: for what it is worth, I have argued that annual imports into Italy averaged between 10,000 and 20,000 during the last two centuries BC (Scheidel 2005a).

Capture in war

The Roman legal tradition makes it clear that capture in war caused loss of freedom.¹⁴ The sale of freshly seized enemy combatants and civilians was standard practice: the term employed for this process, *sub corona vendere*, was so ancient that its meaning had already become unclear by the second century BC: it may refer to the captives' wearing of wreaths, or perhaps rather to their being surrounded by a circle of guards (Aulus Gellius, *Attic Nights* 6.4.3–5, with Welwei 2000: 12–14).

Owing to the limited time-depth of the Roman historiographical tradition, specific references to wartime enslavement are rare until the beginning of the third century BC: the true extent of the alleged mass enslavement of the inhabitants of Veii in 396 BC remains unknowable.¹⁵ The scale of predations expanded as the catchment area grew. The annalistic sources report the enslavement of between 58,000 and 77,000 individuals in a mere five years of campaigning during the Third Samnite War (297–293 BC). The First Punic War (264–241 BC) netted well over 100,000 new slaves, its sequel (218–202 BC) even more. For a mere thirty-five years from 201 to 167 BC, and despite the neglect of massive operations in northern Italy and Spain, the sources report the capture of some 300,000 people.¹⁶ Almost incessant campaigning ensured a steady inflow of new slaves, punctuated by periodic mass enslavement events: the sack and enslavement in 261 BC of the entire surviving population of Acragas in Sicily, one of the largest Greek cities in the western Mediterranean, set the tone for the future. The largest recorded tally for a single operation that may bear some resemblance to reality is that of 150,000 captives taken in the sack of Epirus in 167 BC.¹⁷ We must bear in mind that, while particular reports may well be exaggerated,¹⁸ they nevertheless cumulatively understate the actual scale

¹³ In the United States in the 1850s, c. 200,000 slaves were traded annually between states (or 0.5 per cent of all slaves), but the scale of exchange within states remains obscure: Tadman 1989: 31. At that point, the system relied entirely on natural reproduction, which may have depressed the volume of sales.

¹⁴ *Dig.* 1.5.4.2, 1.5.5.1; Wieling 1999: 4–9. In war, Romans enslaved only foreigners, never Romans captured in civil wars.

¹⁵ Welwei 2000: 35–42. Veii: Livy 5.22.1, with Welwei 2000: 32–5.

¹⁶ Welwei 2000: 42–8 (Third Samnite War), 65–81 (First Punic War), 88–131 (Second Punic War); Ziolkowski 1986: 74–5 (210–167 BC).

¹⁷ Diod. 23.9.1 (Acragas), with Zon. 8.10; Livy 45.34.5 and Ziolkowski 1986 (Epirus).

¹⁸ Cf. Boese 1973: 40; Welwei 2000: 149.

Table 14.2 *Reported enslavements of war captives, 297–167 BC*

Third Samnite War (297–293 BC)	58,000–77,000
First Punic War (264–241 BC)	107,000–133,000
Gallic War (225–222 BC)	32,000
Second Punic War (218–202 BC)	172,000–186,000
Various wars (201–168 BC)	153,000
Sack of Epirus (167 BC)	150,000
Total	672,000–731,000

of slave-making: tallies are provided in a haphazard fashion, focusing on the most notable events but neglecting minor operations or even entire theatres. Thus, the grand total of approximately 700,000 slaves recorded for the years from 297 to 167 BC fails to capture the full scale of wartime enslavements (Table 14.2). Yet it is hardly coincidental that these sources indicate a clear progression in the annual volume of captures, from an annual mean of *c.* 3,300 for 297–241 BC to *c.* 5,300 for 241–202 BC and *c.* 8,700 for 201–167 BC. Despite the probable deficiencies of the underlying tallies, unreasonably large adjustments would be required to alter the basic ratios of this sequence. The scale of enslavement was primarily a function of the geographical reach of Roman imperialism.

It is unclear to what extent this trend continued beyond the early second century BC: the sources for later periods are far less assiduous in reporting slave counts.¹⁹ Occasional tallies are suspect in various ways, either because they mirror earlier totals – such as the 60,000 Cimbri and 90,000 Teutones supposedly seized by Marius in 102/101 BC (Livy, *Summaries* 68), equivalent to the Epirotic loot in 167 BC – or simply because of their enormous size – most notably Caesar’s alleged enslavement of one million (or more) prisoners in Gaul in 58–51 BC (Plutarch, *Caesar* 15.3; Appian, *Keltika* 1.2; cf. Velleius Paterculus 2.47.1), or Trajan’s putative yield of 500,000 new slaves in Dacia in AD 105/106 (Lydus, *On Magistrates* 2.28). Modern estimates can do little to mitigate the lack of comprehensive coverage in the sources.²⁰ A series of major campaigns threw vast numbers of slaves on the market: 55–60,000 captures are reported for the fall of Carthage in 146 BC; the destruction of the Cimbri and Teutones in 102/101 BC and the Mithridatic Wars in Asia Minor from the 80s to the 60s BC cannot have failed to generate a massive intake of slaves, even if credible figures are scarce; even at far less than the reported tally of 1 million, Caesar’s ravaging of Gaul in

¹⁹ Boese 1973: 71–89 (200–31 BC), 104–42 (31 BC–AD 180).

²⁰ Cf. Boese 1973: 87 (*c.* 1.8 million from 200 to 31 BC, including Caesar’s ‘1 million’), 109 (*c.* 400,000 from 31 BC to AD 180).

the 50s BC – where just two sackings reportedly netted over 90,000 slaves – would surely have resulted in another glut of captives. The potential contribution even of comparatively minor operations is highlighted by the fact that, when Roman forces liquidated the Alpine tribe of the Salassi in 25 BC, the entire surviving population of 44,000 was sold into slavery. Forty years of persistent warfare under Augustus must have helped to keep up the pace.²¹

In the following centuries, mass enslavement came to be limited to less frequent campaigns and the suppression of rare uprisings. The Jewish Wars of AD 66–73 and 132–5 occupy a prominent position in the historiographical tradition: Josephus gives a total of 97,000 enslavements for the former, and the latter permitted Jewish captives to be sold for the price of horses. The sack of the Parthian capital Ctesiphon in AD 198 is said to have yielded 100,000 slaves.²² Again, no proper statistics are available, and cumulative tallies out of reach: even so, there can be little doubt that while the average annual intake must have dropped significantly below late Republican levels, military endeavours continued to make a substantial contribution to the Roman slave supply.

Despite the huge scale and frequent occurrence of wartime enslavements, the sources allude only sketchily to the logistics of these transactions. It appears that merchants often followed Roman armies and bought up newly captured slaves on the spot. In other cases, slaves were moved to locations that were more suitable for conducting their sale, or even shipped to Rome and auctioned off there. Sale to local populations or ransoming by relatives were additional options. Victorious generals might also hand captives directly to their soldiers as a share of the booty.²³

It would be misleading to limit a discussion of capture in war to campaigns conducted by Roman armies. Warfare and the enslavement of captives among third parties sustained most of the major 'slave societies' in world history – the Greek Aegean in antiquity, Islamic societies in the Middle East, and the colonial plantations systems of the Americas and South Africa in the modern period. Roman slave-owners likewise drew on this source of supply: as outlined below, warring among independent Gauls, Germans, Dacians and other neighbours of the Roman Empire may well have been an important source of human merchandise for the Mediterranean slave markets. Nevertheless, from a world historical perspective, Roman slave society stands out for the crucial importance of the

²¹ Carthage: App. *Lib.* 126, 130; Oros. 4.23.3; but cf. Zon. 9.30. Germans: Livy, *Per.* 68. Mithridatic Wars: Boese 1973: 79–80. Gaul: Caes. *B Gall.* 2.33, 7.89; cf. Westermann 1955: 63 (150,000?). Salassi: Strabo 4.6.7. Augustus: e.g. Florus 2.52 (Cantabrians).

²² Joseph *B/J* 6.9.3 (66–70 BC); Westermann 1955: 85, nn. 13–14 (Jews); Dio 75.9.4 (Ctesiphon).

²³ Volkmann 1961/1990: 106–7 (merchants), 108–9 (transfers). Soldiers: e.g. Livy 4.34.4; Caes. *B Gall.* 6.31.1–2, 7.89; Suet. *Iul.* 26. Cf. also Sall. *Iug.* 44.

direct link between Roman campaigning and slaving: to a much greater extent than other slave-rich systems, the Roman elite relied on their own military forces to procure a captive labour force. The Sokoto Caliphate in nineteenth-century Nigeria may be the only major analogous case.

Other modes of enslavement

The closest parallels to enslavement in warfare were capture by pirates and brigands – de facto equivalent to standard military practice but lacking public sanction – and penal slavery, the Roman state's enslavement of its own citizens. The enslavement of abandoned newborns and the sale of children by their parents belong in a separate category of de facto enslavement without formal legal recognition and – while violent – lacked the dimension of organised predation or coercion inherent in the other mechanisms of capture. Self-sale by adults stands apart as a (formally) voluntary and legally binding procedure.

Modern scholarship tends to accord great significance to the provision of slaves by eastern Mediterranean 'pirates' in the second and early first centuries BC. There are indeed many indications that communities based in Rough Cilicia and Pamphylia as well as Crete that had gained autonomy from the erosion of the great Hellenistic powers engaged in increasingly wide-ranging raiding ventures that presumably entailed a considerable amount of slave-making.²⁴ However, their supposed role in the Roman slave supply is supported by a single hyperbolic passage in a later geographical survey that links the establishment of a free market on the Aegean island of Delos in 166 BC, which eventually came to turn over 'a myriad' (literally '10,000', de facto, 'very many') slaves per day, to the activities of the pirates who could now avail themselves of this port to unload their human loot and 'pass themselves off as slavers' (Strabo 14.5.2). Yet there is no good reason to interpret the spasmodic character of Roman countermeasures as a sign of tacit collusion between sellers and buyers: when the pirates stepped up their operations in the context of the Mithridatic Wars – even sacking Delos c. 69 BC and enslaving its people – Rome did not hesitate to suppress their activities.²⁵ While large-scale piracy undoubtedly contributed to the Roman slave supply, it is hard to assess the relative significance of this source. Later episodes of piracy show no clear connection with the slave trade, at least not until maritime raiders were said to carry off the inhabitants of coastal villages in Illyria and North Africa in

²⁴ Pirates and slaving: e.g. Maroti 1969/70; Boese 1973: 61–71. For more critical accounts, see Avidov 1997; de Souza 1999: 97–148.

²⁵ 'Conspiracy theory': Pohl 1993: 186–90; cf. Boese 1973: 69–71; contra: de Souza 1999: 99–100. Suppression in 67 BC: de Souza 1999: 161–78.

the fifth century AD.²⁶ At the local level, terrestrial brigandage accounted for sporadic kidnappings throughout the empire, including Italy itself. Yet even though a contemporary observer could credibly present kidnapping as a source of slavery, it seems inherently unlikely that gangs of bandits could make a noteworthy contribution to the Roman slave markets.²⁷

Servi poenae were persons whose crimes caused them to be reduced to slave status, in a process known as *capitis deminutio maxima*. In the Republican period, this penalty could affect draft-dodgers and those who eluded the census. Later on, *dediticii* – free people of ‘infamous’ status – were to be sold into slavery if they entered a 100-mile radius around the city of Rome. Other targets of this measure included free women who cohabited with a slave against his owner’s will, and egregiously ungrateful freedmen. Defendants were frequently sentenced to work in the mines (*in metallum*). It was only in the sixth century AD that the state abolished enslavement by verdict.²⁸

Ancient sources convey the impression that the enslavement of exposed babies was an unexceptional event. While impossible to quantify, this practice may conceivably have been the leading domestic source of freeborn slaves in the mature empire. Its numerical significance depends in part on the overall incidence of child exposure, a rather intractable issue that cannot be discussed here. Suffice it to say that the latter is consistently portrayed as a widespread custom, and that ethnic groups that raised all their children were considered exceptional.²⁹ The raising of foundlings as slaves is well documented in Roman Egypt, especially in wet-nursing contracts: crude calculations suggest that given known levels of adult slave prices, it made economic sense to rear foundlings despite the considerable risk of premature death.³⁰ In an exceptionally rich papyrus cache of over 700 contracts recorded in the Fayum village of Tebtunis in AD 42–47, twenty-two out of thirty cases that involve slaves are wet-nursing contracts arranging for the raising of slave children, as opposed to a mere five slave sales (*PMich.* 121, 123, 238). While we must allow for villagers’ unknown purchases at urban slave markets, this ratio strongly suggests that the

²⁶ Piracy after 67 BC: de Souza 1999: 179–224. Illyria: *Cod. Theod.* 10.10.25. North Africa: August. *Ep.* 10*; Szidat 1985.

²⁷ Brigandage: Shaw 1984; Grünewald 2004: 14–32. Italy: Suet. *Tib.* 8 (kidnapped travellers in slave prisons). Observer: Dio Chrys. 15.25.

²⁸ Donatuti 1934; Ziletti 1968; Burdon 1988; Wieling 1999: 18–22, 28–9. Definition: *Dig.* 48.19.2 pr. Republic: *Dig.* 49.16.4.10; Gai. *Inst.* 1.160; Ulp. *Epit.* 11.11. *Dediticii*: Gai. *Inst.* 1.27, 159. Wives and freedmen: Wieling 1999: 20–2, 28–9. Mines: *Dig.* 28.1.8.4, 48.19.8.4, 48.19.36; Paul. *Sent.* 3.6.29. Abolition: *Nov. Iust.* 22.8.

²⁹ Boswell 1988: 53–179; Harris 1980: 123; 1994: 9–10, 18–19; also *Dig.* 3.5.10, 21.1.65, 39.4.16.3. Quantification: Scheidel 1997: 164–6; Harris 1999: 74. Exposure common: Harris 1994. Exceptions: Strabo 17.2.5; Tac. *Hist.* 5.5; *Germ.* 19.

³⁰ Biezuńska-Malowist 1977: 21–6; Straus 1988: 854–6; Bagnall 1997. Contracts: Masciadri and Montevecchi 1984: 10–20. Economics: Saller 2003: 203, n. 65.

enslavement of foundlings played a major role in the local slave supply – although it may be inadvisable to generalise too broadly from this one example. In Roman law, neither exposure nor enslavement of foundlings was illegal per se; however, in formal legal terms, these acts did not affect the free status of the child, and surviving children technically remained in *patria potestas*: in principle, such persons could always be reclaimed later, although compensation could be due to their de facto owners. In practice, it may have been difficult to establish the free origin of enslaved foundlings, especially if geographical transfers had occurred: even so, later claims to freedom did occasionally result in legal conflicts.³¹

Outright abandonment was complemented by other forms of cession. In mainland Greece and especially in Asia Minor, *threptoi* raised as slaves need not always have been foundlings but may on occasion have been ceded to other families who incorporated them in a subordinate position.³² The overt sale of one's own children was commonly regarded as exceptional: in ancient sources, it recurs as a topos that symbolises extreme duress, pictured as the last resort of desperate parents squeezed by tax demands, debts or famine. Only stereotypically 'barbarous' peoples were thought to indulge this habit on a more regular basis.³³ The popularity of these tropes makes it impossible to gauge the actual frequency of child sale: more frequent references in late antiquity were brought about by changes in rhetorical style rather than economic or legal developments. It is unlikely that Roman fathers ever had a formal right to sell their children; in classical law, family members could not be sold into slavery or pawned. As in the case of enslaved foundlings, the state favoured a pragmatic compromise position: the sale of minors did not affect their status and was technically void; therefore, redemption remained possible, with or sometimes without compensation. This focus on redemption accounts for prohibitions of the sale of such slaves overseas.³⁴

As a result, there were no clear boundaries between sale, pawning and lease: given the formal inviolability of free status, 'sale' might merely amount to an extended lease of minors in times of hardship. Thus, late Roman sources decree a period of twenty years of labour to achieve release, and set an age limit of twenty-five years for redemption. Only the sale of newborns (*sanguinolenti*), singled out in imperial constitutions, would more likely result in lasting servitude. This was a grey area where the official

³¹ Status: Wieling 1999: 27–8. *Patria potestas*: *Dig.* 40.4.29; *Cod. Iust.* 7.14.2. Compensation: *Cod. Iust.* 5.4.16; but cf. *Cod. Theod.* 5.9.1. Conflicts: esp. *Plin. Ep.* 10.65–6.

³² Nani 1943/44 (slaves); Guinea 1998 (cession).

³³ Topos: Vuolanto 2003: 170–9, 203–4, with rich source references.

³⁴ Law: Fossati Vanzetti 1983; Wieling 1999: 16–17; Vuolanto 2003: 179–88. Redemption: *Cod. Theod.* 5.10.1; *Cod. Iust.* 4.43.1–2. Compensation: *Cod. Theod.* 3.3.1; *Nov. Val.* 33. Prohibition: *Cod. Iust.* 4.43.1; *August. Ep.* 10*.3.6–7; *Nov. Val.* 33.

dichotomy of free and slave broke down, generating de facto alternatives to chattel slavery. Arrangements of this kind may well have been common in certain parts of the empire but largely remain hidden from our view.³⁵

The same is true for self-enslavement. Roman law focuses on fraudulent transactions in which a free person pretending to be a slave colluded with a dealer in arranging a sale but subsequently reclaimed his freedom and received a share of the proceeds: although the sale itself could not legally affect the false slave's free status, adult impostors were to be punished by actually being reduced to slavery. Genuine self-sales may arguably have occurred for the sake of upward mobility, with an eye to a career and later manumission. The quantitative weight of such events was presumably minimal.³⁶ (Self?-)enslavement for debts is a particularly shadowy issue: the complaint lodged in 104 BC by Nicomedes III of Bithynia that many of his subjects had been unlawfully carried off as slaves by Roman tax collectors hints at potentially significant means of (de facto) enslavement that are not otherwise covered in our sources. The presence of putative debt-bondsmen in various parts of the empire also suggests the continuing creation of relationships of dependence that straddled the formal boundary of free and slave.³⁷

The slave trade

Considering the huge scale of the Roman slave trade, substantial amounts of capital must have been committed to the procurement and distribution of slaves, and large numbers of middlemen had to be involved in this business. Nevertheless, the identity and social standing of professional slave-traders remain almost completely unknown. Known as *venalicius/venaliciarius* or *mango* in Latin and *somatemporos* or *andrapodokapelos* in Greek, they may have owed their relative obscurity to the fact that they often dealt in other commodities as well, or perhaps rather to the contempt in which their profession was held by members of the literate elite. Adverse moral judgements focus on the supposed greed and general turpitude of slave dealers, who were accused of tricking out their wares to defraud buyers, and likened to pimps: the fact that these condemnations arose from concerns for the wellbeing of the customers rather than the slaves themselves may surprise modern observers, but is perfectly in line with the unchallenged acceptance of slavery in the Roman tradition. In the face of such prejudice,

³⁵ Vuolanto 2003: 189–97. Limits: *Sent. Syr.* 98; *Cod. Theod.* 4.8.6; August. *Ep.* 10*.2.1–2, with Willvonseder 1983. Newborns: *Fr. Vat.* 34; *Cod. Theod.* 5.10.1; cf. *Sent. Syr.* 65.

³⁶ Buckland 1908: 427–33; Wieling 1999: 25–6. Status: *Dig.* 40.12.37. Fraud and penalty: *Dig.* 40.12.40, 40.13.1 pr., 40.13.3. Mobility: Ramin and Veyne 1981: 488–97.

³⁷ Bithynia: Diod. 36.3.1–2. Debt-bondage: Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.2; Columella, *Rust.* 1.3.12; Lo Cascio 1982.

the famous epitaph of the slave-trader Aulus Capreilius Timotheus from Amphipolis in Thrace (himself a freedman) that depicts a dozen chained slaves remains a unique testimony of professional pride.³⁸ In terms of social standing, the few known slave-traders range from Toranius Flaccus, who moved in the company of Antonius and Augustus and may even have been a tribune of the plebs, all the way to the occasional freedman only known from his tombstone. What meagre evidence we have suggests that in the late Republic and under the Principate, dealers were often Roman citizens. It was only in late antiquity that Galatians came to be seen as proverbial members of this profession. Much as in other sectors of the imperial economy, such as banking or shipping, the degree of elite involvement can only be guessed at. It may be significant that in the AD 40s, the slave-traders of Ephesus honoured the super-wealthy top aristocrat C. Sallustius Crispus Passienus as their patron. Even if the C. Sornatius who built a slave market (*statarion*) in Phrygia in the 70s BC really was the homonymous legate of Lucullus, selling war captives from the Bithynian campaign, this alone would not make him a slave-dealer. It may even be possible to read Suetonius' biography of the emperor Vespasian as insinuating that he briefly traded in eunuchs to restore his finances not long before he reached the throne. The jurists assumed that slave-dealers routinely formed *societates*, allegedly to impede legislation, but perhaps also because of the capital requirements of their ventures.³⁹ At the opposite end of the spectrum, the roaming Galatian slave-dealers who in the early fifth century AD ransacked African villages while enjoying the protection of powerful patrons show that suppliers hailed from a wide variety of backgrounds and might operate under very different circumstances. Soldiers are also known to have had a hand in the trade.⁴⁰

Slaves changed hands in established centres of exchange in metropolitan centres, such as Rome, Ephesus and, perhaps most famously, the island of Delos; at periodic markets, such as the epigraphically attested bi-weekly slave fair in the Syrian city of Baetocaece; at 'opportunistic' markets that would temporarily be set up by itinerant dealers in the wake of military campaigns to dispose of the human booty; and in small-scale transactions at the local level.⁴¹ Occasional snapshots reveal long-distance transfers: we know of a Cretan woman and a Greek boy who were sold in Dacia, and of a

³⁸ Traders: Boese 1973: 158–70; Harris 1980: 129–32; Bodel 2005. Prejudice: Bodel 2005: 193 nn. 52–3. Timotheus: Finley 1977b; Duchêne 1986. Cf. Schumacher 2001: 58–65.

³⁹ Examples: Bodel 2005: 183–6. Citizens: Harris 1980: 131. Vespasian: Suet. *Vesp.* 4.3, with Bosworth 2002. *Societates*: Gai. *Inst.* 3.148; *Dig.* 21.1.44.1.

⁴⁰ Galatians: August. *Ep.* 10*.8.2; Szidat 1985: 362. Soldiers: Biezuńska-Małowist 1977: 32–5; Ammian. 31.4.11.

⁴¹ Harris 1980: 125–8 is still fundamental. For the free port of Delos (166–69 BC), see also Strabo 14.5.2; Rauh 1993: 43–52. Fairs: *OGIS* 262 (Baetocaece); De Ligt 1993: 61, 67, 71, 126.

slave woman in Spain who hailed from northern Italy. A Phrygian girl sold in Side and another one from Osrhoene sold in Tripolis both ended up in Egypt, as did a slave woman from Libya who had been sold in Ravenna in Italy by a man from Miletus in Asia Minor to a soldier of the Egyptian fleet.⁴²

Legal constraints on the slave trade were light. Earlier restrictions, such as the provision in Rome's treaty with Carthage of 348 BC that outlawed the sale of captives from allied polities in Roman ports, disappeared with Rome's takeover of the Mediterranean. Although the castration of slaves was outlawed in the late first century AD, the trade in eunuchs was never suppressed by the state; and later rules against the long-distance transfer of sold children or the separation of slave families may not have had much effect either.⁴³ Fiscal intervention probably only had a moderate impact on the volume of trade: tariff records from Palmyra from AD 137 stipulate customs dues equivalent to not more than 2 or 3 per cent of the value of teenage slaves, while the tariff recorded in an analogous inscription from Zarai in Numidia (AD 202) envisions an even lower rate. In Egypt, Roman authorities upheld the earlier practice of requiring export permissions and export fees (of unknown size) for slaves.⁴⁴

The relative prevalence of private sales versus transactions arranged by professional dealers is unknown. In slave markets, slaves were displayed on platforms and could be undressed for closer inspection; new arrivals were marked with chalked feet. Slaves wore placards (*tituli*) advertising their qualities around their necks (including their origin, state of health and propensity to run away), or special caps (*pillei*) in those cases where the seller would not offer guarantees.⁴⁵ Extant sales contracts, primarily from Egypt with rare additions from Italy and Dacia, testify to the scrupulous observance of formal legal requirements and give us a rough idea of the age distribution of traded slaves, dominated by individuals in their teens and twenties.⁴⁶

Known slave prices are rare and once again mostly available from Egyptian papyrus records. Sporadic records from Italy, Africa, Dacia and Syria help to flesh out the picture.⁴⁷ The only surviving systematic pricing schedule – a section of the Tetrarchic edict setting maximum prices of AD 301 – is late and highly schematic but bears some resemblance to

⁴² Harris 1980: 128; Straus 2004: 279–83 (and cf. 283–7 for trade within Egypt).

⁴³ Treaty: Polyb. 3.24.6. Eunuchs: Guyot 1980: 45–51. Families: *Cod. Theod.* II.48.7 (AD 371).

⁴⁴ Palmyra: *OGIS* 629 = *CISem.* II.3913 (22 denarii for imports and 12 denarii for exports); Zarai: *CIL* 8.4508 (HS 6); Egypt: Gnomon/Idioslogos (*BGU* 5.1210) §§65–9; Straus 2004: 302–5.

⁴⁵ See Bradley 1992. Placards: Gell. *NA* 4.2.1. For physical remains of slave markets, see *JRA* 18, 2005: 196–234. Etymology: Poccetti 1985.

⁴⁶ Contracts: Polay 1962; Straus 2004. Age: Bradley 1978; Straus 2004: 262–70.

⁴⁷ Boese 1973: 152–7; Mrozek 1975: 45–8; Duncan-Jones 1982: 348–50; Straus 2004: 296–8; Scheidel 2005b.

schedules used by nineteenth-century slave-dealers in the United States.⁴⁸ Manumission tariffs reported in Greek sanctuaries, above all Delphi, may be only imperfectly related to actual market prices.⁴⁹ Overall, it is clear that base prices were highly sensitive to age, and that skill premiums could be very considerable, running to high multiples of base rates. Episodic mass enslavement could temporarily depress price levels.⁵⁰ Our evidence suggests real slave prices in the first three centuries AD of the order of about 4 tons (+/-50 per cent) of wheat equivalent for a young adult slave of moderate skills. Thus, in terms of food prices and wages, real slave prices in the imperial period appear to have been considerably higher than in classical Athens. The fact that slave prices for the Republican period are almost completely unknown forestalls direct comparison with earlier periods of Roman history. We are reduced to the mere assumption that slave prices in Republican Italy ought to have been relatively low during the massive expansion of the regional slave complex.⁵¹

Roman law required dealers to disclose the ethnic origin (*natio*) of slaves: that some groups were considered more desirable than others hints at the presence of racist attitudes within an otherwise indiscriminately voracious regime of slaving. Such prejudices, however, were not normally elaborated beyond generic slurs against entire cultures or narrow recommendations of groups thought suitable for specific tasks, such as the notion that slave families from Epirus made superb herders.⁵²

Where did Roman slaves come from? The origins of newly captured slaves shifted with the geographical spread of Roman imperialism: peninsular Italy down to the end of the third century BC; northern Italy, the Iberian peninsula, the southern Balkans, North Africa and western Anatolia in the second century BC; Gaul, the central Balkans, Anatolia and the Levant in the first century BC; Britain, Germany, Dacia and Parthia from the first century AD onwards. In addition, large numbers of slaves were purchased from beyond the Roman frontiers. Prior to conquest, Gaul, the Balkans and Anatolia may have been the leading foreign providers of slave labour. In free Gaul, Roman merchants bartered Italian wine for Celtic chattels: one modern estimate puts the annual turnover at 15,000 slaves. Dacia and the Lower Danube basin's rapid penetration with Roman coins from the mid-first century BC onwards has been interpreted as the result of a massive surge in slave exports from that region, possibly in response to the curbing of piracy and the annexation of parts of the Levant in the 60s BC.⁵³ The Black Sea region and the Caucasus had been well established as

⁴⁸ Scheidel 1996c; Tadman 1989: 287–8. ⁴⁹ Hopkins 1978: 133–71, with Duncan-Jones 1984.

⁵⁰ Volkmann 1961/1990: 118. ⁵¹ These are the central points of Scheidel 2005b and 2008.

⁵² *Dig.* 21.1.31.21 (*natio*); Isaac 2004, e.g. 316–17, 338, 359 (prejudice); Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.5 (Epirotes).

⁵³ Gaul: Tchernia 1983; Crawford 1985: 169–72. Dacia: Crawford 1977. Cf. also Strabo 5.1.8 (Illyrians).

a major source of slaves since the archaic Greek period, and this tradition continued into late antiquity. Together with free Germany, that north-eastern periphery must have accounted for most imports once the Roman empire had reached its maximum extension. Black slaves from as far away as Somalia and the occasional import from India made for comparatively rare but consequently high-prestige retainers.⁵⁴ As outlined above, various mechanisms ensured continued flows of slaves from within the provinces as well. 'Internal' slaves of Anatolian extraction loom large in the literary tradition: Phrygian slaves in particular had long become a stock motif, while Lydia, Caria and Cappadocia likewise garnered attention. The neighbouring Syrians are also frequently mentioned as slaves, and massive Jewish uprisings in the first and second centuries AD made periodic contributions to the slave markets.⁵⁵

Slave names are a poor indicator of actual provenance. Greek names dominate the record not just because many slaves came from the Hellenistic East, but also because they were fashionable. A massive survey of all 5,800-odd slave names in the city of Rome reveals that about two-thirds of all attested metropolitan slaves bore Greek names, and most others Latin names. At 2 or 3 per cent of the total, the extreme scarcity of 'barbarian' (mostly Semitic) names hardly reflected actual ethnic origins. The fact that auspicious or otherwise cheerful names such as Felix, Primus/Prima and Eros topped the popularity rankings indicates that they were customarily assigned without regard for ethnicity.⁵⁶ Reports of actual provenance are rare: under the Principate, slaves from the Hellenistic East and Italy proper feature prominently, arguably because of their higher skill levels and resultant likelihood of commemoration. Of some sixty slaves in Egypt whose origin is known, about one-quarter had been imported from other regions: Asia, Africa and Europe all contributed to the Egyptian slave supply.⁵⁷

Given the very considerable uncertainties surrounding any attempt to gauge the relative weight of the various sources of Roman slaves, a diachronic perspective remains almost completely out of reach. The manumission inscriptions at Delphi, dating from the second century BC to the first century AD, provide a rare exception to our pervasive ignorance. Taken at face value, these records point to an increase in natural reproduction at the expense of purchased slaves (Figs. 14.2–14.3; Westermann 1955: 32–3, 98).

⁵⁴ E.g. Tac. *Ann.* 12.28 (Germany); Strabo 11.2.3 (Sea of Asov); Proc. *Bell. Pers.* 2.15.5 (Caucasus); *Per. Mar. Er.* 8, 13 (Somalia), with Snowden 1970: 184–6; Tibull. 2.3.55–9; Philostr. *VS* 1.8 (India). Cf. David Braund's chapter in this volume, on the Black Sea.

⁵⁵ Harris 1980: 138–9. ⁵⁶ Solin 1996. Cf. also Gordon 1924.

⁵⁷ Bang 1910 (Principate), with Boese 1973: 124–5; Straus 1988: 864–6 (Egypt).

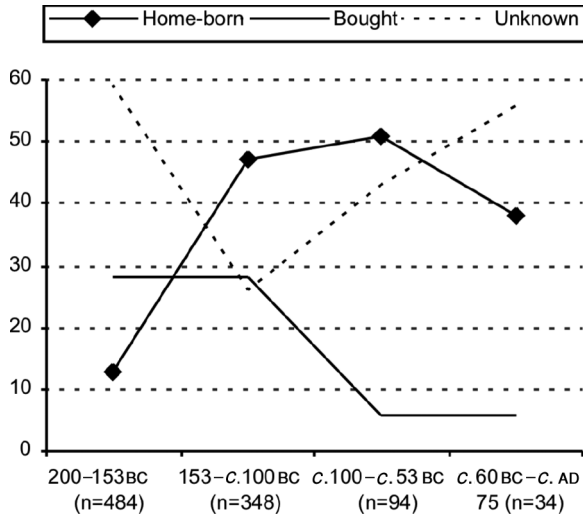


Figure 14.2 Manumitted slaves in Delphi, by provenance (in per cent).

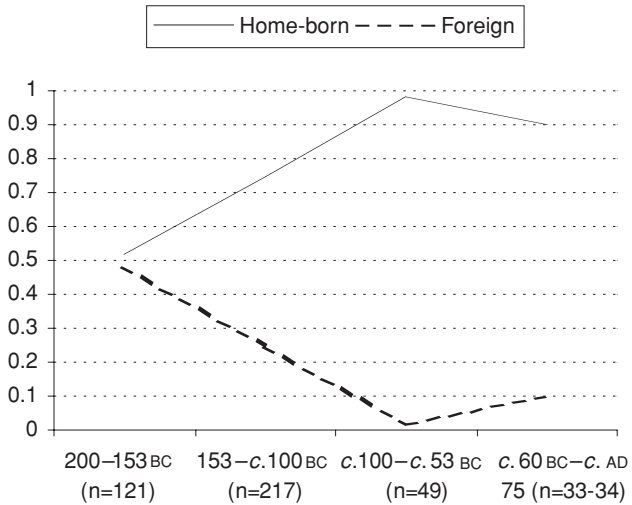


Figure 14.3 Ratio of home-born to imported manumitted slaves in Delphi (total = 1).

Natural reproduction

Under Roman law, the offspring of slave women assumed the status of their mothers, except when the mother had been free and married at the time of conception or, from the second century AD, if she had in fact been free at any moment during pregnancy.⁵⁸ Slaves born in the households of their current owners (known as *oikogenes* or *vernae*) formed a special category within slaves from birth: conventionally imbued with greater prestige – thus serving as the counterpoint to the *palimpratos*, the ‘oft-sold slave’ – they could also be viewed as ‘crafty and deceitful’ for their presumed ability to play the system.⁵⁹ While sometimes the result of de facto unions between slaves who were legally incapable of marrying, home-born slaves could also be fathered by their mothers’ owners, a feature that was common in other slave societies and may well have been significant in Roman households.⁶⁰

In the present context, the relative contribution of natural reproduction to the overall slave supply is of paramount importance. Unfortunately, our sources do not permit any empirical assessment of this issue. Home-born slaves are common among slaves mentioned in Egyptian papyri, an observation that is consistent with high retention rates of fecund slave women and the strong representation of slave children in census returns from that region (see below).⁶¹ For most parts of the empire, no comparable evidence is available. When in the first century AD the Roman agronomist Columella offered rewards to slave mothers of three and four children (or sons?), it is unclear whether we should take this to mean that such cases were rare or common. Appian’s sweeping claim that in late Republican Italy, ‘the ownership of slaves brought the rich great gain from the multitude of their progeny’ (*Civil Wars* 1.7) might be true for that period; or for his own lifetime; or might merely be an artifact of the political polemics of a bygone age. Mere mention of slave children or their labour in other texts is devoid of statistical value.⁶²

Systematic consideration of the critical determinants of slave fertility yields uneven results. The overall contribution of natural reproduction to the Roman slave supply depended on two factors, namely the average rates of slave births and attrition, each of which is made up of two constituent elements – sex ratios and family structure, and the incidence of mortality and manumission.

⁵⁸ Gai. *Inst.* 1.82; *Dig.* 1.5.5.1; Wieling 1999: 9–10.

⁵⁹ Herrmann-Otto 1994 (general); Kudlien 1986: 242–4, 253–4 (image).

⁶⁰ Herrmann-Otto 1994: 254–61; Scheidel 2009.

⁶¹ Straus 1988: 853; Biezuńska-Małowist 1977: 47–8.

⁶² Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.19, with Scheidel 1996a. Child labour: Bradley 1991a: 103–24; Petermandl 1997.

Servile sex ratios are obscure. While some records from Roman Italy and Alexandria indicate high (i.e. male-biased) sex ratios, the surviving census returns from Egypt report fairly balanced sex ratios prior to manumission.⁶³ We are left wondering if genuine regional differences or the properties of different media of recording account for this divergence. Similar uncertainties beset our understanding of the relative scarcity of jobs held by women in urban inscriptions or the emphasis on male labour in agronomical treatises: female slaves may have been comparatively rare, or in fact ubiquitous but less skilled or tacitly taken for granted.⁶⁴ A number of general factors should discourage us from underestimating the quantitative presence of female slaves. Ancient sources consistently convey the impression that women and children were over-represented among war captives (and the victims of kidnapping); freeborn baby girls were perhaps more likely to suffer exposure than boys (though not necessarily as likely to be rescued to be raised as slaves); and half of all born slaves must have been female (and there is no evidence for the sex-selective exposure of newborn slaves). Thus, there is no good reason to assume that male slaves greatly outnumbered unfree women. Over time, with growing numbers of slaves in the core areas of the Roman slave society, natural reproduction must have become relatively more important, and sex ratios were liable to even out.⁶⁵ Under those circumstances, substantial fertility rates were at least theoretically feasible. In practice, as comparative evidence suggests, the frequency and stability of quasi-marital unions among slaves would have been instrumental in determining actual outcomes.⁶⁶ While such arrangements were sufficiently common to surface repeatedly in the literary and legal traditions, and to achieve some prominence in inscriptions of putatively privileged slaves and ex-slaves, representative quantifiable data that could shed some light on the likely impact of slave family patterns on their reproductive success are sorely lacking.⁶⁷

Owing to heavy disease loads, life was short even in the top echelons of Roman society. For that reason alone, slaves need not have lived significantly shorter lives simply because of the hazards inherent in their legal status. However, the use of slaves in particularly unhealthy rural locales and especially their disproportionate concentration in large and therefore infection-rich cities may well have lowered their overall mean life expectancy even further, thereby impeding natural reproduction at or near replacement level.⁶⁸ Manumission was probably a more important determinant of attrition and thus slave fertility. The age-specific incidence of

⁶³ Treggiari 1975a: 400–1; 1975b: 58 (Italy); *P Oxy.* 3197 (Alexandria); Bagnall and Frier 1994: 342–3 (Egypt).

⁶⁴ Treggiari 1976, 1979b; cf. Scheidel 1996d. ⁶⁵ Scheidel 2005a.

⁶⁶ E.g. Fogel 1989: 150. ⁶⁷ Polay 1967; Bradley 1987b: 43–80.

⁶⁸ Scheidel 1999a (elite); Sallares 2002: 247–55 (unhealthy); Jongman 2003; Scheidel 2005a (cities).

manumission of female slaves is of pivotal importance. According to the Egyptian census returns, women were not normally manumitted prior to menopause, a custom that ensured that all their offspring remained the property of their owners. The price edict of AD 301 also indicates that a premium was placed on the reproductive capabilities of female slaves. By contrast, inscriptions from Italy and the western provinces frequently commemorate young and fecund freedwomen.⁶⁹ Once again, we lack the means to decide whether we are dealing with genuine geographical variation, or merely distorting recording practices that (in the latter case) gave undue prominence to the experience of privileged and otherwise unrepresentative slave women.

Several factors militated against slave reproduction at or near replacement level: imbalanced sex ratios if and when they persisted; higher mortality in cities and mines and on malarial estates; family break-ups through sale or inheritance; and the manumission of slave women of childbearing age. Comparative evidence shows that the high rates of natural growth in the slave population of the Antebellum South were truly exceptional; but so were catastrophic levels of attrition in parts of the Caribbean. General conditions in the Roman period permitted natural reproduction on a large scale: for mathematical reasons alone, it is hard to imagine that it was not at least as important as all other sources of slaves combined. My earlier guesstimate of an overall biological replacement rate of 80 per cent in the mature empire has met with criticism but no plausible alternative. In more recent work, I allow for a reproductive shortfall of up to 50 per cent in late Republican Italy, at a time when the slave population was greatly expanding and dynamically unstable.⁷⁰ For what they are worth, these tentative reconstructions seek to trace the boundaries of what one might consider plausible. The nature of the evidence rules out more precise estimates.

CONCLUSIONS

Any assessment of the Roman slave supply must distinguish between different stages and spheres of development. In the eastern half of the Mediterranean, slavery was already a common and firmly established institution when Rome first embarked on overseas expansion. That process must have affected patterns of supply and demand, and may well have resulted in significant changes that nevertheless remain invisible to the modern observer. For instance, it is possible that increases in the cost of obtaining unconditional manumission recorded in first-century BC Delphi were ultimately caused by the pull of the Italian slave markets that drove up demand and

⁶⁹ Scheidel 1997: 160–3 (census returns); Scheidel 1996c (edict); Alföldy 1986: 286–331 (inscriptions).

⁷⁰ Scheidel 1997: 166; Harris 1999: 64–72; Scheidel 2005a.

hence the value of slaves; but it is equally possible that other factors, such as a change in social composition of the sample, account for this phenomenon.⁷¹ In Egypt, the only part of the Mediterranean world where crude time-series of slave prices can sometimes be pieced together, changes in the currency system impede direct comparisons between the late Hellenistic and Roman imperial periods.⁷² What is more, empirical evidence for the relationship between slave supply and demand in the Italian heartland of the Roman empire is almost completely missing. Logic dictates that genuine 'slave societies' are most likely to emerge in the context of relatively high real wages (i.e. demand for labour) and relatively low slave prices. It is plausible yet impossible to prove that Republican Italy conformed to this model.⁷³ For the period of the Principate, persistently high real slave prices are consistent with a high-equilibrium scenario of significant supply constraints and continuing strong demand for slave labour that encouraged natural reproduction, the enslavement of helpless insiders, foreign imports and moderate restraint in manumission. It is unclear if or to what extent the Roman slave system eroded as the imperial period progressed:⁷⁴ if decline did indeed occur, it was more likely to be propelled by changes in demand than in supply.⁷⁵

During the millennium from the emergence of the Roman empire to its eventual decline, at least 100 million people – and possibly many more – were seized or sold as slaves throughout the Mediterranean and its hinterlands. In terms of duration and sheer numbers, this process dwarfs both the transatlantic slave trade of the European powers and the Arabic slave trade in the Indian Ocean. For all we can tell, enslavement and the slave trade constituted the principal means of geographical and (both upward and downward) social mobility in the ancient world.⁷⁶ The modern observer must wonder how to do justice to the colossal scale of human suffering behind these bland observations: the story of the Roman slave supply must count as one of the darkest chapters of human history.⁷⁷

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Boese (1973), the only book-length study of the Roman slave supply, is useful mainly as a collection of pertinent source material. More sophisticated syntheses can be found in Bradley (1987a) and (1994: 31–56). The best information on actual patterns of slave-ownership is recorded in the Roman Egyptian census returns analysed by Bagnall and Frier (1994) and

⁷¹ Hopkins 1978: 162; Duncan-Jones 1984. ⁷² Cf. Straus 2004: 295–9.

⁷³ Scheidel 2007b, 2008. ⁷⁴ See Neville Morley's and Cam Grey's chapters in this volume.

⁷⁵ Scheidel 2005a: 79. ⁷⁶ Cf. Scheidel 2004b, 2005a.

⁷⁷ For evocative reconstructions, see Bradley 1986c; 1992; 1994: 43–56.

Bagnall, Frier and Rutherford (1997). Straus (2004) offers an exhaustive account of the unique evidence for slavery and the slave trade in Roman Egypt. Harris (1980) is a pioneering study of slave markets and traders, now supplemented by a series of articles in *JRA* 18 (2005). Scheidel (2005b) provides the most recent survey of slave prices. Volkmann (1961/1990) and Welwei (2000) discuss the rich evidence for Roman mass enslavements in wartime. For comparative conjectures about the size and reproduction of the Roman slave population, see Scheidel (1997 – on the empire as a whole), with the critique by Harris (1999), and most recently Scheidel (2005a), focusing on conditions in Roman Italy.

CHAPTER 15

SLAVE LABOUR AND ROMAN SOCIETY

JOHN BODEL

INTRODUCTION

Domestic slavery was imagined as existing at Rome from the beginning – it could hardly have been otherwise with a cultural institution so deeply embedded in daily life during the historical period – and its established presence by the middle of the fifth century BC can be presumed from references to manumission and the liability of slave-owners in the Twelve Tables. However, slave labour did not become a significant phenomenon in Roman culture before the fourth century BC, when its rise in importance coincided with a decline in the institution of debt-bondage (*nexum*), as foreign conquests brought captive manpower to Roman territory and sent citizen colonists abroad, while displaced peasants migrated to the city in search of new means of support. From then on, if not before, agricultural slavery in Italy and, eventually, throughout most of the western empire predominated over all other categories of slave labour in importance for as long as landholding remained the cornerstone of the socio-economic system and the ideal of self-sufficiency was aspired to by the elite. Anecdotal reports in our literary sources of domestic servants in the houses of the kings, like the legendarily servile origins of the sixth king of Rome, Servius Tullius, reflect the conventions of foundation myth-making more surely than they do any historical reality, about which the most that can be said is that the houses of the wealthy of the regal period might seem to require staffing. We simply do not know how and when slave labour (no doubt of war captives) was first exploited at Rome, nor can we reasonably infer its original character from the developed system of the late Republic and early Empire. If we restrict our focus to the periods of classical Roman history when contemporary written sources of suitable quantity and quality survive (roughly 200 BC to 300 AD), we can see that the labour of slaves was integral not only to the economic but to the cultural ideology of the Roman slave-owning classes, and that the two aspects were inextricably intertwined.¹

¹ Twelve Tables 7.12, 12.2a, with Watson 1975: 81–97. *Nexum*: Finley 1980: 83; Cornell 1995: 280–3, 333, 393–4. Agriculture: App. *B Civ.* 1.1.7. Servius Tullius: Cic. *Rep.* 2.37; Val. Max. 1.6.1, 3.43.

SLAVE LABOUR

'Slave labour' as a concept would have seemed both redundant and paradoxical to Romans of the upper classes, who owned most of the slaves – redundant because labour (in the sense that we understand the term, which is different from what Romans in many contexts meant by *labor*) was by nature servile, and paradoxical because there were few types of work from which slaves were excluded and none which only they performed: there was no peculiarly slave labour. Certain jobs undertaken predominantly by slaves naturally came to be associated with them, but the Romans did not think of work as 'free' or 'servile' in the sense that they regarded certain tasks as 'man's work' or 'woman's work', nor did they consider any type of employment – with the important exceptions of politics, the law and military service – as inappropriate for slaves.²

Slaves of both genders worked from childhood to old age in jobs more or less suited to their physical condition and capabilities, and were on call, at least potentially, at all hours of the night and day. In principle there was no task that a slave might not be called upon to perform, although with time a convention developed that slaves specially trained for particular roles should not be assigned to labours for which their training ill-suited them. The idea of a slave performing a service beyond the call of duty might engage a philosopher for the sake of argument, but even philosophers acknowledged that such an idea was perverse. 'There is no leisure for slaves,' remarked Aristotle, quoting a proverb (*Politics* 1334a). By this he did not mean that a slave's work was never done (although idleness in slaves was considered wasteful, since they required maintenance whether or not at work), but that for a slave, who in daily life enjoyed neither freedom nor the exercise of free will, work was whatever the master wanted done whenever he or she wanted it done; there was no protected leisure time. That is the sense also in which Chrysippus called a slave a 'hired man for life' (Seneca, *On Benefits* 3.22.1). Everything a slave did, except what was done at the master's sufferance, was done for the master and thus constituted work.³

For the slave-owner, on the other hand, a slave was much more than labour. A slave was property, a commodity of independent, if not unrelated, value. Nothing in the institution of slavery, it has been rightly noted,

² *Labor*: Lana 1984: 31–3; cf. Porzio Gernia 1984. Women's work: Treggiari 1976, 1979a, 1979b; men's work: Straus 1977: 75–6; cf. Vegetius 1.7. In agriculture women and men often lived together in quasi-marital relationships (Roth 2002, 2004, 2005; cf. *Dig.* 33.7.12.7) and worked at the same jobs: Scheidel 1995: 213; 1996d: 1, 3–5, 8.

³ Lifelong: Bradley 1994: 68. Child labour was common (Bradley 1991a: 107–16) and could be profitable: *Dig.* 6.1.31. Suitability of training: below, n. 30. Philosophers: Sen. *Ben.* 3.18–21; cf. Ath. 267b. Idle slaves wasteful: e.g. Cato, *Agr.* 39.2, 2.3–4; Varro, *Rust.* 1.36; Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.8, 1.8.10–11, 11.1.26–27; cf. Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 21. Whatever the master wants: see the fictitious *Life of Aesop*, with Hopkins 1993: 18–21.

requires that a slave be a worker, and for many Roman slave-owners, work was not the most important function a slave performed. As well as representing a source of labour, slaves were caretakers, companions, partners and advisers – persons whose roles were not defined merely by the work they performed and whose value to the owner could scarcely be quantified. Cicero's amanuensis Tiro is perhaps the best-known example, but the complexity of interpersonal relations that governed Cicero's attitudes towards his human property, which ran the gamut from the avuncular affection evinced towards Tiro to the callous pragmatism of his response to a runaway slave, is unusual only in being so clearly articulated through his private correspondence.

Often, for men and women of Cicero's class, slaves were status symbols. When Mark Antony discovered from their differing accents that two comely slave-boys purchased as identical twins at a high price (HS 200,000) from the slave-dealer Toranius Flaccus were not in fact brothers, he complained of the fraud but was persuaded that the boys were the more valuable because of their similarity, despite their differing origins, and wound up considering no other possession more indicative of his wealth and position (Pliny, *Natural History* 7.56). What their job in Antony's household may have been we are not told – attractive servants seem to have been particularly desirable in the dining room, especially in the Ganymede role, as cupbearers – but it is clear that their main service to Antony was simply to be seen together and to be admired. For slaves of this sort, known as *capillati*, because of the long hair on their heads, or *glabri*, because of their smoothness elsewhere, the principal 'work' was simply to be on hand and to look sexually attractive. Not all jobs for slaves involved much labour. Indeed, when it came to associating labour with status, it was the hired workman in ancient Rome, rather than the slave, who was stigmatised with the title that reduced identity to work – *opera*, which came to mean metonymically both 'a day's work' and, more reductively, 'workman'. A runaway slave, by contrast, was guilty of the crime not of dereliction but of 'theft of self', on the principle that he or she had stolen property.⁴

The viability of the system has been endlessly debated – without resolution, or possibility of resolution, since we, like the Romans, lack the information needed to calculate and compare loss and gain. Because slavery in antiquity was grounded in ideological rather than economic considerations, slave labour was endemic in Roman culture – and was bound to be

⁴ Slaves as commodities: Finley 1980: 74–5; Watson 1987: 46–8. Not labourers: Patterson 1982: 98–9. Companions: cf. Xen. *Mem.* 2.3.3. Tiro: Treggiari 1969a: 259–63; Shackleton Bailey 1971: 131–3. Status symbols: cf. e.g. Sen. *Ep.* 110.17; Mart. 3.62, 11.70; Ath. 272e, 273b–c. *Capillati*: Petron. *Sat.* 27.1, 34.4, 57.9; Mart. 2.57.5, 3.58.30, 10.62.2; *glabri*: Catull. 61.135; Varro, *Rust.* 1.2.26; Sen. *Ep.* 47.7; *Brev.* 12.5; Mart. 12.38.4, *CIL* 6.33426; D'Arms 1991: 173–4. *Opera*: see *TLL* s.v. 11.665.27–67; cf. 664.17–27. Crime: *Dig.* 47.2.61; *Cod. Iust.* 6.1.1; Buckland 1908: 31.

so, regardless of its profitability – during all the periods when the ideology prevailed (from at least the third century BC through the third century AD).⁵ Put differently, Roman slave-owners were naturally interested in profiting from slave labour, but profitability was not their main interest in owning slaves.

THE IDEOLOGY OF WORK: THE VIEW FROM THE TOP

In order to understand the place of slave labour in Roman society, then, we must approach the question as primarily a cultural rather than an economic issue, and we must begin by recognising at the crux of it an intersection of two conceptual polarities – slave/free and work/leisure – that together informed much of the ideology and behaviour of the ruling class. Where the two axes met is well illustrated by a famous passage of Cicero's treatise *On Duties* (150–1), in which the New Man surveys the illiberal arts – the types of work considered sordid and thus unbecoming a free man – in a sweeping catalogue that embraces almost all the jobs we would think of as constituting labour and ultimately leaves as 'liberal' only the non-occupation of land-ownership. The blacklist begins with occupations that incur ill-will (customs dues-collecting and usury are mentioned), and goes on to retail-merchandising, which involves misrepresentation, shop work ('for no workshop can have anything freeborn about it') and, most sweepingly, all work done for hire, on the grounds that 'wages are pay for slavery'. Lowest of all are trades that cater to sensual pleasures – those of 'fishmongers, butchers, cooks, poulterers, fishermen' (Terence, *Eunuchus* 257), perfumers, dancers, cabaret players and the like. Professions requiring a higher degree of learning or especially benefiting society, such as architecture, medicine and teaching, are suitable for those whose station they befit. Trade is vulgar if petty, but, when conducted on a grand scale, not wholly to be despised and, if ultimately abandoned for land-ownership, rightly praiseworthy. Of all the profitable occupations, however, none is 'better, richer, sweeter, and more worthy of a free man' than farming.⁶

Two points only need be noted here. First, Cicero's hierarchy of occupations associates the type of work performed with rank (*ordo*) and arranges the scale according to social rather than functional criteria, grouping a wide range of more or less servile employments in ill-defined groups beneath a single category comprising the one activity befitting a free man – agriculture. Secondly, as Cicero knew perfectly well, a large portion of the land

⁵ Profitability: e.g. Finley 1985: 83–4; Morley 1996: 123–9. Acquisitive ideology and behaviour: D'Arms 1981: 48–71, 149–71.

⁶ See Brunt 1973: 26–34; Treggiari 1980: 52; Finley 1973: 41–3, 51–3; cf. Sen. *Ep.* 88.18–23.

in Italy under cultivation in his day was worked by slaves, and more slaves worked in agriculture than in any other activity. (These two conditions obtained in Italy for more than three hundred years, from before Cicero's day through at least the early third century, a fact of fundamental importance for understanding the place of slave labour not only in the economy but in the ideology of the upper classes, who sustained the cult of the peasant farmer on the backs of their agricultural slaves.) No contradiction existed for Cicero for two reasons: first, because, for Cicero, the reputation of any particular type of work did not depend upon the status of those who performed it but was determined by the nature of the work itself, and, secondly, because slaves, as labourers, were socially invisible – the work they performed was performed vicariously, not only for but as if by the owner. It will be useful to consider this second perception first.

When Cicero praised agriculture, what he had in mind was not actual farming but the management of mid-sized rural estates, and when Cicero thought of the slave staff associated with properties of that sort, he thought of it as equipment rather than labour. Jurists debating testamentary law quibbled over the parameters of the servile *instrumentum* of a villa but agreed on the principle that the slave workers needed to run a farm went with the property; they were considered integral elements of the land, like the buildings built on it or the trees planted in it. According to Varro (*On Agriculture* 1.17.1), one authoritative classification of the things needed to cultivate fields grouped slave labourers with oxen and carts as types of tools: articulate, inarticulate and mute. On this understanding, an absentee landowner overseeing the operation of his rural estate by a slave staff was 'farming' as surely as the peasant who put hoe to earth: each was employing a tool of the trade appropriate to his position. Separation from the physical toil of sowing and reaping, often at several removes from the actual labour via a hierarchy of slave intermediaries culminating in the farm bailiff (*vilicus*), did not distance a landowner from farming any more than dictating to a slave stenographer removed him from writing. The mechanics were performed by human instruments, but authorship by the master was presumed in both cases. By the same logic, the slave of a slave (a legal fiction recognised and condoned by the jurists), although he or she might have a specific job or function, was not normally labelled with an occupational designation alone (if at all), but rather as a 'substitute' (*vicarius*) performer of the same task, the credit for agency being deferred onto the fictitious 'owner' and thence up the line, ultimately, to the master, the one with a juridical persona and thus the property rights necessary to claim the work.⁷

⁷ Jongman (2003: 116–19) cautions against overestimating the primacy of villa agriculture in the work regime of Roman slavery, but it is clear that many slaves always worked on farms; see the chapters

It was the transparency of the slave as a surrogate that made slave labour essential to the ideology of self-sufficiency, since it allowed the slave-owner to reap the material and social benefits of labour (revenue, prestige, autonomy) without incurring the physical and social costs (fatigue, toil, dishonour). The advantages of this personal transparency can be seen throughout the system. At the opposite end of the scale from field workers in prestige and circumstances were the business agents and managers (*actores* or *institores*) who conducted much of the daily business of commerce and whose lack of juridical *personae* enabled them to represent their owners in contracts vicariously in a way that free persons, even freedmen, employed in the same capacities could not. Within a legal system that did not recognise a concept of direct representation, free persons, having their own juridical identities, were personally responsible for contracts they entered into and for work they performed. This handicap severely limited their usefulness as business agents: if an *actor* were not the principal's slave, the principal to a contract had no action against a third party but could be sued by one. Dealing with free persons at the level at which most *institores* and *actores* operated meant engaging directly in commerce, whereas conducting business through slaves or freedmen enabled a slave-owner to maintain a respectable distance from the sordid business of trade while yet retaining full control over profits.⁸

The transparency of the slave as a tool, however, applied only to the world of business (*negotium*); in the activities of leisure (*otium*), servile representatives were decidedly out of place. Recognition by slave-owning Romans of the inconsistency inherent in such an ambivalent conception of the slave's surrogacy explains the hostility that ex-slaves invariably provoked when they failed to comprehend the parameters of their own newly recognised identity. The wealthy Calvisius Sabinus, whom Seneca characterised as having both the patrimony and the mentality of a freedman, and whose social ambition led him to affect an education by training his slaves to memorise Greek poetry, on the theory that what his slaves knew, he knew, offended upper-class sensibilities by confusing labour with learning; but the underlying principle of vicarious capability on which he based his claim was not so much misconceived as misapplied: Sabinus erred merely

by Keith Bradley (12), Neville Morley and Walter Scheidel in this volume. Cicero on agriculture: *Sen.* 51–8, with Powell 1988: 205–7; *Or.* 1.249; *Fam.* 16.21.7; *Rep.* 5.5, with Carlsen 1995: 60–1; cf. De Robertis 1963: 87–93. Jurists: *Dig.* 33.7.19.1, 33.7.8; *Cod. Theod.* 6.35.1, 12.1.6, 10.8.4. Stenographers (*notarii*): *Cic. Fam.* 16.10 (Tiro); *Mart.* 5.51.2; *Plin. Ep.* 3.5.15, 9.36.2; *CIL* 6.9130, 6.10229.43 (*testamentum 'Dasumii'*); *P Oxy.* 4.724. *Vicarii*: Weaver 1972: 200–6. Legally the master's property: cf. *Dig.* 33.7.12.44.

⁸ Indirect agency: Aubert 1994: 40–116; see also Jane F. Gardner's chapter in this volume. *Actores*: Aubert 1994: 186–96; Carlsen 1995: 121–42; Schäfter 2001. Handicap: *Dig.* 5.1.19.3, 14.3.1.1, 14.19.3; cf. 14.5.8. For slaves in commerce and banking, see Kirschenbaum 1987: 89–121; Andreau 1999: 64–70.

in treating the products of a gentleman's leisure like the products of his labour. For the Romans, less sensitive than the Greeks to conceptual impurities, it was this ambiguity alone that elicited the ambivalence identified by Nietzsche in the Greeks, who regarded both slavery and labour as 'a necessary disgrace, of which one feels ashamed, as a disgrace and a necessity at the same time'.⁹

More broadly, Cicero saw no contradiction between slave labour and the 'liberal' occupation of farming because for Cicero (and for upper-class Romans generally) work was not characterised by the status of the persons who performed it but was inherently more or less 'servile' according to criteria derived from the purpose of the task (occupations catering to sensual pleasures were more disfavoured than others), and from a system of values that disparaged any work for pay as a failure to attain the aristocratic ideal of self-sufficiency (*autarkeia*), which alone afforded the leisure and autonomy needed to pursue politics. Commerce and wage-earning compromised independence because they entailed reliance on others for sustenance and thus limited personal liberty; as such they were an impediment to political life. Farming, on the other hand, contributed to self-sufficiency and was therefore a suitable pursuit for a free man. But just as the dignity of the enterprise did nothing to ennoble the gangs of slaves who toiled in the fields, so the lustre of the work they performed was little tarnished by their own debased status. The dirty business of digging and ploughing, when not on one's own land, Cicero classified among the illiberal pursuits not because of the nature of the work, but because of the lack of independence it implied. Cultivating one's own homestead was another thing. The inspiring image of the sturdy farmer-soldier-statesman called from his fields to protect them by serving the state evoked emulation in spirit, if not in practice, long after the time when Italian soil was imminently threatened or Roman senators worked their own land. Recognising that the focus of aristocratic prejudice against hired labour was centred on the relationship of dependency it signified, rather than on the status of those who performed it, helps to explain why there is so little evidence of slave and free labour being distinguished from one another when the two were employed together, as they frequently were, not only in small crafts and shops, where it is generally believed that slave and free worked side by side at the same tasks, but in large-scale agriculture, where the two were virtually interdependent.¹⁰

⁹ Nietzsche 1911: 6. Calvisius Sabinus: Sen. *Ep.* 27.5–8; cf. *Tranq.* 9.5; Gal. *In Hippocratis pro-rheticum i, commentaria iii.* 6.

¹⁰ Illiberal pursuits: Cic. *Inv. Rhet.* 1.3; cf. *Fin.* 3.14; De Robertis 1963: 92, n. 136. Sturdy farmer: Livy 3.26.8–10; Cic. *Sen.* 56. Interdependency: Garnsey 1980b: 45; Finley 1980: 77–8; 1985: 185–6; Rathbone 1991.

Cicero did not speak for most Romans, but his views on labour, calibrated with all the precision of the successful *arriviste*, reflect well the ethos of the ruling class during the late Republic and early Empire. Very different was the attitude towards crafts and labour expressed by slaves and ex-slaves in inscriptions and art, where repeatedly throughout the early imperial period we find the life of the honest workman held up as a source of pride and occupation emerging as an important, in some cases primary, marker of identity. The signature of a slave craftsman ('Diogenes builder') carved into a tufa block high in an exterior wall at Pompeii beneath a sculpted representation of a set of building tools may be less telling as a general self-evaluation than the declaration of an inscribed tombstone, but it shows that expressions of pride in a craft were more than a trope of funerary art. Epitaphs set up by slaves for each other, such as that dedicated to 'Hilarus, goldsmith' and depicting the tools of his craft (balance, compass, engraving tool) commissioned by a burial society (*collegium*) of fellow-slaves from the house of a senator's daughter, show that occupational designations were not merely a convention of slave-owners, but that slaves themselves associated individual identity with work roles.¹¹

These few examples may suffice to illustrate the complexity of Roman attitudes towards labour and status, which depended to a large extent upon the social perspective from which they were viewed. Juridical status affected the legal capacities and social 'transparency' of persons of different condition in certain types of work (slaves predominated in managerial functions and domestic service, for example), but work was not characterised in relation to status associatively, by the condition of the workers who performed it, but conceptually, as either (for those who subscribed to the aristocratic ethos) detracting from autonomy and independence, or (for the great majority who did not) as contributing to a sense of identity and place in the social order and a source of pride.¹²

THE FILTER OF EVIDENCE

Five main categories of evidence provide most of the information we have for Roman practice, but each enables us to view it only selectively and through a particular lens. 'Occupational' representations from across the empire, mostly funerary and virtually all commissioned by persons (of free-born, freed and servile status) from the great mass of Romans whose social and economic circumstances freed them from elite ideological constraints,

¹¹ Inscriptions: Joshel 1992. Funerary art: Zimmer 1982; Bisconti 2000. Diogenes: *CIL* 10.868; Zimmer 1982: 172–3 no. 99. Hilarus: *CIL* 6.9149; Zimmer 1982: 196 no. 139. Senator's daughter: Sergia Paullina, Raepsaet-Charlier 1987: 662–4 no. 703.

¹² See Scheidel 2001 on aristocratic disdain for labour, modifying Patterson 1982: 34.

illustrate a wide range of craft and mercantile activities practised by slaves but tell us virtually nothing about agricultural labour or domestic service. Inscriptions, mainly from Rome, attest a wide variety of crafts and shop work and provide a strikingly detailed picture of the domestic service jobs to which slaves might be more or less permanently assigned; but it is unclear to what extent the micro-specialisation of work roles attested in the epitaphs of slaves from the largest senatorial households in Rome reflects the patterns of domestic service elsewhere, and agricultural jobs are conspicuously absent. Papyri, a far from negligible source of information on slaves' work roles in Egypt, exhibit the biases of the documents they preserve, mostly tax records and receipts, even if the social and economic conditions they reveal are more typical of those elsewhere than once thought.¹³

Literary sources, including legal texts, provide prescriptive guidelines for labour management and reveal much incidental information about slaves at work in various capacities. Together with the physical remains of rural properties in Italy and the provinces, they supply virtually all the direct information we have about agricultural slavery. Almost without exception, however, these sources represent the circumstances of the upper classes, and each has its own peculiar limitations. Some of the larger rural properties in central Italy perhaps preserve evidence of the sorts of large-scale barracks one might expect to find housing the squadrons (*decuriae*) of agricultural slaves described by the Roman agronomists, but slave-prisons (*ergastula*) for chained gangs of slaves of the sort deprecated by early imperial writers are nowhere recognisable, and the simple functional rooms (*cellae*) often identified as slave quarters because of their lack of distinctive appointments could for the same reason equally well have served a variety of different purposes. Most mid-sized and smaller rural homesteads reveal no traces whatsoever of special arrangements for housing slaves. In the end, the most that can be said is that certain large villa properties in Italy of the first two centuries exhibit features consistent with the intensive exploitation of slave labour for agricultural production – a conclusion about which our literary sources in any case leave us in little doubt.¹⁴

The literary sources, in turn, provide evidence for only a small part of slave agriculture. The four surviving Roman farming manuals (our most

¹³ Zimmer (1982) registers representations of various craftsmen and artisans. Joshel (1992: 71) notes that domestic servants and administrators attested at Rome are better represented than builders, artisans and distributors. Papyri: Biezuńska-Małowist 1977: 73–108, esp. 91; Straus 1977: 75; Aubert 2001: 101–6; Egypt: Bagnall 2005.

¹⁴ Rural properties: Carandini 1985; Samson 1989, contesting MacMullen 1987. *Ergastula* and chain-gangs: below, n. 31. The archaeology of Roman slavery remains stolidly inconclusive: Thompson 2003, with Bradley 2003: 573; Scheidel 2003a; see recently Webster 2005; Fentress 2005; Braconi 2005; Coarelli 2005; see further Michele George's chapter on this volume.

important sources by far) tell us only about the operation for profit of mid-sized properties in the heartland of peninsular Italy. About how slaves were used in agricultural work on other types of rural properties and outside Italy we are much less reliably informed, but there is reason to think that conditions varied considerably from region to region. In North Africa, for example, the Roman conquest seems to have resulted in a decline in the local use of slaves for agriculture, with large-scale slave labour largely replaced during the Roman period by tenant farming, even as the slave mode of production became the dominant mode of agriculture in southern Italy. A similar replacement of slave labour by free tenancy as the principal mode of farming in the western European provinces in late antiquity has been explained as a result of a shift in the relative balance between slave prices and wages for free labour, but the factors that determined whether rural estates were farmed by tenants or directly by a slave workforce were complex and varied not only regionally but over time. Nor did the rise of tenancy mean that slaves were not still employed in farming; tenants exploited slaves in the same way as absentee landowners, and certain slaves farmed more or less independently, as if tenants (*servi quasi coloni*), but slave labour no longer occupied the central position in agriculture it once held.¹⁵

A perceptible shift of focus in the four farming manuals, a reflection in part of their uneven distribution over time, reveals a progressive growth in the elaboration of both the managerial functions and the servile staff on rural estates in Italy between the middle of the second century BC and the middle of the first century AD; but four centuries later Palladius addressed his instructions primarily to those managing a workforce of free tenants (*coloni*) rather than slaves quartered at the farm. Jurists writing at the beginning of the third century imply that the villa system of slave agriculture continued to thrive, but at what point subsequently and before the time of Theodosius II (emperor AD 408–50) the decisive change occurred, and why, are much debated. It is in any case clear that by the middle of the fifth century the dominant place of slave labour in Italian agriculture and the most economically significant use of slave labour in classical antiquity had come to an end, even as the ideology of Roman slaveholding continued

¹⁵ Cato's *Agriculture* (c. 160 BC) focuses on slave-staffed villas in Campania and Latium practising mixed farming in olives and vines for the market. Varro's *On Agriculture* (37 BC) includes arable cultivation, livestock, arboriculture, market gardening, luxury foodstuffs, slave management and villa construction. Columella, a native of Gades (Cadiz), writes in his *On Agriculture* (c. AD 60–65) about his estates in Latium and southern Etruria. Palladius (c. AD 450) mentions properties in Sardinia and Naples but focuses also on the central western part of the peninsula. North Africa: Westermann 1955: 95. Wage/price ratios: Scheidel 2008. Tenancy and slaves: Aubert 1994: 131–2; *servus quasi colonus*: Dig. 33.7.20.1.

to flourish and exploitation of the land continued to provide the greatest source of wealth.¹⁶

CATEGORIES OF WORK AND OCCUPATIONAL DESIGNATIONS

The historian Tacitus (*Germania* 25.1) characterised the Roman system as one in which specific duties were distributed throughout the household. Modern historians have been similarly impressed by the variety and specificity of the jobs held by Roman slaves. The range of occupations recorded in ancient texts is indeed striking – one recent survey culled more than 160 specific titles from the law codes, agricultural handbooks and epitaphs – but lists of the named occupations convey only a partial and in some respects misleading impression of the work that slaves did. If one considers slave labour to be anything that slaves were regularly expected to do, then the range of slave-jobs cannot be confined simply to those to which we can attach specific Latin (or Greek) names – often merely because they happen to be attested in one or two inscriptions from the city of Rome. At the same time, so closely was the practice of occupational labelling in certain contexts associated with the identification of slaves that one may reasonably question whether studies of the phenomenon are not more revealing of the Roman mania for classifying property than of the varieties of tasks that Roman slaves actually performed.¹⁷

On the other hand, linking an occupational title with a name labelled a person with a specific work function and thus marked out both the job and its practitioner: a single inscription attesting a particular title may suggest an entire category of designations, even if it says nothing about the typicality of the position it attests, and any slave labelled with an occupational designation acquired a distinctive identity related to the world of work that distinguished him from his undifferentiated peers. That even one ex-slave from a private house is identified in an epitaph from Rome as a *silentiarius*, for example, a slave charged with keeping the household staff quiet, tells us something about not only the mentality of Roman slave-owners and the working conditions of domestic servants, but also the types of servile assignments considered worthy of specific designations. Any occupational title might seem to mark a slave as being in a superior position, in respect to placement within a household if not in actual training, to the vast majority

¹⁶ Palladius mentions slaves only three times, in one instance (1.6.18) making it clear that, although the workforce was now predominantly free, the managerial function of the *vilicus* was still normally assigned to slaves (cf. 1.6.3, 1.36.1); cf. Martin 1976: xxix–xxxi, 112. Jurists: Rosafio 1994. Late Roman ideology of slavery: Finley 1980: 123–49; see further Cam Grey's chapter in this volume.

¹⁷ Slave jobs: Bradley 1994: 59–63; cf. Joshel 1992: 176–82.

of slaves who undoubtedly had none, but even so simple an inference may need to be qualified by consideration of the context from which the information derives. Slave-owners, for example, may have been less inclined than slaves to dignify the mundane work assignments of domestic staff with formal titles; slaves and ex-slaves of socially prominent masters were manifestly more prone to boast of their positions than those of humbler households; slaves living in or near towns tended to be identified with occupational role-names far more frequently than those from less densely populated regions; and so on. Furthermore, the written sources that provide our evidence harbour a host of individual biases: legal texts revel in specificity and categorisation for their own sake; tax documents conform to the requirements of fiscal reporting; epitaphs further self-promotion as well as commemoration. Geography, chronology and gender, too, play a role in the fragmentation of our evidence, to the point that our quest to characterise generally the phenomenon of naming the jobs for slaves runs the risk of mirroring that of the three blind men attempting to describe the elephant: we may form distinctly misleading impressions by latching on to different parts of the animal, while the overall shape of the beast remains obscure.¹⁸

A pair of inscriptions from Rome and a papyrus from Egypt may serve to illustrate the variety of our information, as well as the range of interpretative difficulties we face. When a high-ranking imperial slave, a financial official of the emperor Tiberius in charge of the Gallic Treasury in Lyon, died while visiting Rome, sixteen under-slaves (*vicarii*) travelling with him erected an epitaph to him in a monument for members of the imperial household beside the Via Appia in which they inscribed their own names and titles along with his own: the entourage of Musicus Scurranus comprised two cooks, two chamberlains, two slaves in charge of silver, two attendants, three secretaries, a buying agent, a treasurer, a doctor, a slave in charge of wardrobe, and a woman (the only one in the group), Secunda, who is listed last and without any job title. Do we assume, from her lack of a formal job-designation, that Secunda enjoyed a more personal and privileged relationship with her owner, or that her services to him were more discreetly left unspecified? It is in any case she, rather than her male colleagues, who represents the normal situation, since the great majority of slaves commemorated in epitaphs have no occupation indicated, and only 10 per cent of all epitaphs from Rome include such information.¹⁹

¹⁸ *Silentiarius*: *CIL* 6.6217. Women are less commonly identified by occupational designations than men in trades and domestic service (Treggiari 1979a: 78–9; 1979b), but certain jobs (e.g. personal attendants for women) were normally filled by women, and female slaves are found in virtually all types of named occupation (Treggiari 1976). Joshel (1992: 49–56) assumes from their frequency that the occupational designations in the epitaphs of Roman slaves reflect their own perspectives.

¹⁹ Musicus Scurranus: *CIL* 6.5197 = *ILS* 1514. Occupations rarely specified in epitaphs – of slaves: Treggiari 1975b: 57; at Rome: Joshel 1992: 53.

A more or less contemporary inscription of Augustan or Julio-Claudian date found beside the Via Praenestina outside Rome records the names of members of a funerary *collegium* of freedmen and slaves of an unknown private person, perhaps one of the Statilii Tauri, whose extensive household had a *columbarium* outside the Porta Maggiore. It lists some eighty persons, of whom only twelve are identified by occupational designations: four carpenters, two bailiffs, two workmen, a builder, a bath attendant, a marble worker, and one man identified as a painter and temple attendant. The first two (of four) columns of names seem to record the names of those already deceased, whereas the last two include some who had died and some who were apparently still alive at the time the inscription was carved, but there is no clear pattern to the distribution of job titles among them. As in the case of the *vicarii* of Scurranus, the inscription seems to have been set up by and for slaves (or ex-slaves), but mere pride in an occupation seems unlikely to have inspired the identifications, since those without designations, even if they could claim no specific craft or office, might well have been identified as *mediastini*, like the two who were.²⁰

From Rome to Alexandria. A private contract drawn up in Egypt in AD III and listing the slaveholdings of a wealthy Alexandrian, Ti. Julius Theon, identifies individually at least fifty-nine male slaves (no females are recorded) and specifies job titles for only eleven of them. Do we conclude from their number that the five stenographers named (along with two secretaries, a scribe, a cook, a barber, and a repairer) served a different function in Theon's household from the others, perhaps as part of a commercial venture, or that the position was particularly prestigious and thus worthy always of being named? That other slaves listed in the catalogue are identified simply by physical features ('snub-nosed', 'the tall one'), origin ('from Cussae', 'from the lower toparchy'), circumstances ('at Berky', 'formerly the property of X'), or kinship ('brother/son of X'), suggests that the occupational labels here may be mere descriptors rather than formal titles. That interpretation is consistent with the view of the second-century jurist Gaius, for whom an occupational designation was merely one of several ways by which a slave destined for manumission by testament could be distinctively identified.²¹

What stands out among the named jobs for slaves is a tendency towards particularism and specialisation, especially (and naturally) at the top of the social ladder, in the imperial household, where the scale of the emperor's

²⁰ Inscription: *CIL* 6.9102; cf. Solin 2001. For the *monumentum Statiliorum*, see Caldelli and Ricci 1999.

²¹ Ti. Julius Theon: *P Oxy.* 44.3197; the number of individual slaves named in the contract may be as high as seventy. Gaius: *Dig.* 40.4.24, 'slaves ordered to be free seem to be expressly designated if they have been unambiguously identified by their craft or their assigned duty or in any other way, for example, "my steward", "my butler", "my cook", "the son of my slave Pamphilus".'

dominions and the administrative responsibilities of his staff necessitated hierarchies of managerial function not required in private homes; but these features are characteristic of all sectors of employment, from domestic service to crafts and trades to agricultural work. As it happens, our most informative statement of the rationale behind this propensity to compartmentalise comes from the farming manual of Columella. According to Columella, slaves should be assigned to particular tasks in order to reduce the risk of shirkers evading responsibility and to ensure that productive workers feel that their industry is recognised. One might infer from the latter prescription an encouragement to owners to stimulate in slaves a sense of pride in their work, but the tenor of Columella's advice is cautionary rather than hortatory, and his view of the motivations of slave labourers is decidedly negative. He goes on to recommend that field labour be performed by squads of no more than ten, since greater numbers could not easily be guarded and might prove intimidating to an overseer, nor in groups of fewer than three, since workers widely scattered were not easily watched. Such an arrangement not only stirred up rivalry but exposed sloth, 'for when work is stimulated by competition, punishment inflicted on the lazy seems blameless and justified'. Elsewhere Columella advocates rewarding industrious workers with honours and other preferential treatment, and in general shows himself to be far more attentive to the efficacy not only of material rewards but of positive psychological reinforcements in motivating a servile workforce than Varro, who acknowledges the idea but gives it little emphasis, or Cato, who says not a word about incentives.²²

Columella's advice was designed to enable slave-owners to extract the greatest possible productivity from a workforce with no inherent incentive to perform, and to that extent may be thought to have applied to other uses of slave labour as well; but practicality cannot be the only explanation for the pervasiveness of particularism throughout the system. In fact, the most extreme levels of specificity seem not to be concentrated in areas where the need for specialised skills or close oversight of performance was greatest. Instead hyper-specialisation is most apparent in the work assignments that served the interests of show and self-representation. From the end of the first century BC, for example, the emperor's domestic staff included separate slaves in charge of gold, dinner plate, gold plate embossed with gems, gold drinking vessels, silver drinking vessels, serving bowls, wines, beverages and napkins, but only a single freedman procurator oversaw the entire budget of the emperor's private affairs. That position, the most prestigious in the emperor's household, ranking higher, it seems, even than

²² Columella, *Rust.* 1.9.8, II.1.19; Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.7; cf. 1.18.2, on Saserna's allowances for *inertia* and *indiligentia* in a servile workforce; Martin 1974: 290–4.

the procuratorships of certain imperial provinces, might seem to belong to a different world from that of the dining room, but we should not be too quick to segregate the work regime of table service from that of high financial administration. The first ex-slave known to have held the post, a certain Bucolas, under Domitian, began his career as taster and dining-room supervisor for the emperor Tiberius. We may remember also in this regard Tiberius' procurator of the Gallic treasury, Musicus Scurranus, whose name suggests a background in entertainment.²³

In some cases, terminological ambiguities cloud the picture. Not only did the titles assigned to particular functions in domestic service change over time, but certain titles described different functions at different periods. The position of *atriensis*, for example, fell in a markedly downward spiral during the late Republic and early Empire. In the time of Plautus, the *atriensis* was the most important slave in the household, assigning work to other slaves and overseeing the master's business with outsiders. By Cicero's day, the managerial functions of the *atriensis* had devolved onto a *dispensator*, and the position had become associated with that of cooks, bakers and house-cleaners. By the middle of the first century, the *atriensis* is found guarding the *atrium*, and a hundred years later the position is grouped together with that of doorkeeper, among the most menial of the domestic assignments. The position of doorkeeper, in turn, was variously identified by the terms *ianitor* and *ostiarius*. Both designations seem to have described the same job and, once the latter term had been introduced toward the end of the Republic, could be used interchangeably. *Ostiarius* became standard in inscriptions and the legal codes during the Principate and eventually passed, via Christian writings, into the Romance languages, whereas *ianitor* remained the preferred term in classical literary texts, especially of the more elevated genres. The variable usage therefore seems less to reflect a purely chronological development than to be a stylistic choice, with the older term perhaps conveying a pejorative tone alien to the professed neutrality of juristic opinion and understandably eschewed by those for whom the job was a source of pride. To judge from the literary sources, even a comparatively modest household might boast a doorkeeper, since the job was not onerous and could be entrusted to an old man or woman, but Varro imagined a villa as potentially not having one, and the working conditions of those we happen to hear of suggest that the position was not one held by the more privileged or trusted household servants. The rhetorician M'. Otacilius Pitholaus, for example, who rose to become the teacher of Pompey the Great and was the first ex-slave to

²³ Specialisation more pronounced in domestic service: Morabito 1981: 84. Emperor's dining staff: Boulvert 1970: 237–8; 1974: 127–9; for empresses, cf. Chantraine 1980: 396–8. Earliest known: Ti. Claudius Aug. lib. Bucolas, *CIL* 11.3612 = *ILS* 1567; cf. Weaver 1972: 274. Scurranus: above p. 322.

undertake the aristocratic activity of historiography, began his servile career as a doorkeeper chained to his post.²⁴

The trajectory of Pitholaus' servile career was noteworthy, but advancement from menial household duties to prestigious positions requiring education, though exceptional, was not unparalleled. Nor should we imagine that slaves with job titles always performed only the work associated with those titles, or indeed that any occupational designation fully defined the range of a slave's work: Trimalchio's imperious *ostiarius* shelling peas onto a silver platter may have been intended to illustrate a crass combination of stinginess and extravagance, but the productive exploitation of the idle hours of slaves assigned to simple tasks was undoubtedly common. A papyrus from Egypt happens to reveal to us a weaver by day who baked bread at night, and literary sources confirm the impression that domestic slaves in humbler households were often factotums, performing any and every task a master required. Common labourers (*mediastini*) are found both in urban and in rural contexts, and the prescriptions of the Roman farming manuals confirm that there was no time off for slaves: if slaves were prevented from performing their regular work assignments, other tasks should be found.²⁵

Roman jurists were much concerned to distinguish occupational designations from the work actually performed by slaves and to determine, in the case of slaves who filled two different roles, which took precedence over the other. The most important general principle they maintained drew a distinction between crafts that required training (and which usually carried specific names) and unskilled work assignments, which might or might not be identified by titles. The first were invariably given precedence, on the grounds that slaves with a skill were more valuable than those without. Already in the first century BC, the jurist Alfenus expressed the view that a trained weaver who had been made into a doorkeeper should be included in a legacy that bequeathed all a testator's weavers, since he had not been transferred to another craft but merely to another use. So too,

²⁴ For sources see *TLL* II.1, 1099.76–1100–12; Carlsen 1995: 143–7 (*atriensis*); *TLL* VII.1, 131.74–132.44 (*ianitor*); IX.2, 1150.39–71 (*ostiarius*); K. Schneider, *RE* IX (1914) 693.9–47. M'. Otacilius Pitholaus: Suet. *Gram.* 27.1, with Kaster 1995: 299.

²⁵ Not unparalleled: the grammarian Q. Remmius Palaemon, a home-born slave, was first trained as a weaver and then learned letters while serving as *paedagogus* to his mistress's son before going on to a lucrative teaching career as a freedman at Rome: Suet. *Gram.* 23.1, with Kaster 1995: 233–5. The rhetorician and historian Timagenes of Alexandria, educated already when brought to Rome as a captive in 55 BC, served first as a cook and then litter-bearer before returning to his intellectual pursuits: Sen. *Controv.* 10.5.22; cf. Sen. *Ira* 3.23.4–8. Trimalchio's *ostiarius*: Petron. *Sat.* 28.8. Weaver/baker: *P. Wisc.* 1.16.5, with Straus 1977: 87–8. Literary sources: e.g. Aelius Aristides, *To Rome* 71; Apul. *Met.* 1.22–24, 1.26, 2.7, 2.11, 3.13, with Bradley 1994: 57–8; Epictetus 1.2.8–11. *Mediastini*: e.g. Columella, *Rust.* 1.9.3, 2.12.7; Hor. *Ep.* 1.14.14; *Dig.* 4.9.1.5, 7.7.6 pr., 47.10.15.44. Farming manuals: Cato, *Agr.* 2.3–4, 39.1–2; Columella, *Rust.* 12.3.6–8.

conversely, Marcianus at the beginning of the third century AD confirmed that a litter-bearer who became a cook would not be included in a legacy of litter-bearers, because he had replaced an office with a craft, whereas if the situation were reversed (that is, if a slave with a skill were transferred to an unskilled office, the situation imagined by Alfenus), he would go along with the skilled workers. For Paul, on the other hand, if a legacy bequeathed litter-bearers and a slave were serving simultaneously as both litter-bearer and cook, the slave should pass with a legacy of litter-bearers, evidently because no separate disposition specifically concerned cooks. In listing the details that a slave-owner was required to specify for a census declaration, Ulpian accordingly distinguished separate categories of slaves with duties, that is, general work assignments, and those with trades, which required special training. The distinction is borne out in practice by tax documents from Egypt that identify explicitly not only slaves with training in particular trades but those 'without skills' (*atechnoi*). Elsewhere in describing the staff of a rural estate, Ulpian mentions a (male?) slave with the title of 'baker' but refers generically in the same sentence to 'the women who bake bread for the slaves'. In this instance, it is unclear whether the distinction depends upon a difference of gender in the workers or of status in the consumers; perhaps the slave who baked for the master earned a title, whereas those who supplied other members of the slave staff did not. A slave's perspective might countenance no distinction between the slave of a slave and fellow-slave, but Roman jurists and the property-owners they served recognised not only the status of the individual under-slave (*vicarius*) but the collective concept of 'the equipment of the equipment' (*instrumentum instrumenti*), the slave staff needed to support the slave labourers on a rural estate: these too, like the field labourers, were inseparable from the property, since their services were necessary to maintain the workforce.²⁶

A second, overarching principle in the legal categorisation of slaves was to distinguish in their descriptive characteristics between a particular type (*species*) and a general class (*genus*), and always to give precedence, in matters of controversy, to the former. On this principle, a slave left in a legacy who was both a messenger and a home-born slave would go with the messengers, even if the latter designation marked a more privileged status, because

²⁶ See respectively *Dig.* 19.1.13.4 and 13.7.25, 6.1.29, 18.1.43 pr., 17.1.26.8, 19.1.43, 32.61, 32.65.1, 32.99.4; cf. Timagenes of Alexandria, above, n. 25. Note also *Dig.* 32.61: weaver to doorkeeper; 33.7.25.1: skilled potters not to be considered part of the agricultural workforce even if used for most of the year for basic farm labour. Census requirements: *Dig.* 50.15.4.5; tax records: e.g. *P Oxy.* 49.3510 with Hübner 1978: 198–200; *P Oxy.* 2.262, 7.1030; cf. Mertens 1958: 70 and n. 89. Baker / women who bake bread: *Dig.* 33.7.12.5. Slave's perspective: *Hor. Sat.* 2.7.79–80. *Instrumentum* of the *instrumentum*: *Dig.* 33.7.12.6, 33.7.18 (Paul); cf. Morabito 1981: 82–3; above, n. 7.

the former was more specific. If one considers the penchant among Roman property-owners for distributing legacies among multiple beneficiaries, one may surmise from examples of this sort a plausible practical explanation for the proliferation of job titles within slave households of the wealthy, independent of any other potential psychological motivations. More difficult to decide were cases in which slaves carried double job-designations of the same class (skilled or unskilled), such as 'cook and weaver', 'book-carrier and chamberlain', 'cooper and baggage-handler', or, in the fictitious case of the clever slave, Massa, of Trimalchio's friend Habinnas, 'cobbler, cook, and baker – a jack of all trades'. If the slave had two trained skills and there were conflicting legacies, Marcianus' view was that the slave should go with the craftsmen with whose trade he was most familiar. Unskilled slaves evidently fell under the general rules for the division of inanimate property. Sometimes the two titles attached to a slave's name did not mark two occupations, but an occupation and a role, such as 'stenographer and business agent' or 'scene painter and contractor', in which case the general principle of preferring the specific to the general no doubt applied. Similarly, an ex-slave styled 'mamma and nurse' did not perform two functions but one, the former being an affective term, the latter an occupational designation.²⁷

In theory a slave-owner could assign to a slave any job he or she wished, but the law allowed a seller to impose a restrictive covenant prohibiting a new owner from employing a purchased slave for prostitution, and a general principle evolved during the early Empire that slaves should not be assigned to tasks for which their training ill suited them. Ulpian articulates the concept at the beginning of the third century in discussing possible abuses of property inherited in usufruct. The examples he chooses to illustrate the idea are instructive in indicating the parameters of certain types of employment, but more importantly in suggesting what sorts of change in servile assignment were viewed as demotions and would therefore be seen as diminishing the value of the commodity. A usufructuary would be regarded as abusing the property put at his disposal, 'if, for example, he sends a record clerk into the country and makes him carry a basket of lime, or if he makes an actor do the work of a bath attendant or a musician perform the duties of a butler, or if he takes a man from the wrestling arena and sets him to clean out latrines'. We note a decided preference for jobs in entertainment, which as a class were evidently regarded as more prestigious than those of personal attendance, cleaning or physical labour, but no clear

²⁷ General and specific: *Dig.* 32.99.5. Multiple legacies: Champlin 1991: 146–50. Slaves with two titles: *Dig.* 32.65.2; *CIL* 6.7368; *ILS* 7659a; Massa: Petron. *Sat.* 68.7. Unskilled slaves: *Dig.* 32.99.5. *Notarius* / actor: *ILS* 7402; *pictor scaenarius* / *redemptor*: *ILS* 7672; *mamma idem nutrix*: *CIL* 6.18032; Bradley 1991a: 88–9.

pattern emerges with regard to jobs with specific titles as opposed to those defined by periphrasis.²⁸

In accordance with the fundamental Roman division of work into two categories, farming and other, Romans classified slaves as belonging to either a *familia rustica* or a *familia urbana* according to the nature of the tasks they performed, with the former comprising slaves involved in all manner of agricultural operations and the latter embracing all the rest – domestic servants principally but also craftsmen, business agents and clerks. The adjectives allude to the custom among wealthy Romans of maintaining both a townhouse (*domus*) and villa properties, each with a slave staff appropriate to its functions, but in practice the labels designated types of work rather than the places where work was performed, so that an *atriensis*, for example, belonged to the *familia urbana* whether he served in a country house or a town house, whereas an ornamental gardener (*topiarius*) was part of the *familia rustica* even if he lived and worked in the city.²⁹

Ultimately, the distinction depended upon the intentions of the owner, as indicated principally by a roster of the urban household staff, but the jurists were much exercised by particulars, because slaves were regularly transferred temporarily from the city to the country, or vice versa, for periods of variable but sometimes considerable duration. A slave might be sent from the city to the country, for example, for training as domestic staff, for upbringing, or for punishment, or from the country to the city for education or an ad hoc assignment. Whether physical removal from an urban residence or a country property marked a step up or down or sideways depended upon the circumstances: relegation ‘to rustication’ marked a demotion in status, but an apprenticeship in the country could raise the skill, and thus the potential value, of an ‘urban’ slave on the way up. A rustic slave might be formally promoted to the *familia urbana* or temporarily hired out or assigned to non-agricultural work with no change of status. A distinction was further drawn in inheritance law between the household staff of a rural property, which normally went with the estate, and the *familia urbana* of a town house, which, in Papinian’s opinion, did not. Sabinus defined the servile *instrumentum* of a farm as comprising those slaves ‘who were accustomed to being quartered there to stay’, but in order to make it clear that slaves of both categories went with a particular property, a testator might need to specify ‘the slaves who will be assigned there, both rustic and urban’. In other words, though formally distinct, the *familiae urbana* and *rustica* were permeable categories, and whether a

²⁸ Prostitution: Sicari 1991; McGinn 1998: 288–319. Abuse: *Dig.* 7.1.15.1.

²⁹ *Familiae rustica* and *urbana*: *Dig.* 31.65 pr., 32.41.2, 33.7.18.13, 32.99.pr.-5, 33.9.4.5, 33.10.12, 50.16.166 pr.; Morabito 1981: 79–85; Bradley 1994: 58–60. *Atriensis*: Cic., *Paradoxa Stoicorum* 5.2.38; Carlsen 1995: 143–7. *Topiarii*: *Dig.* 32.60.3, 33.7.8.1, 33.7.12.42, 33.7.17.2.

slave belonged to one or the other depended entirely upon the master, who might transfer his human property from one to the other either temporarily or permanently, with positive or negative intent.³⁰

Although the *familia rustica* provided some slaves with significant managerial responsibilities and relative independence, there is no doubt that agricultural labour was normally more onerous and unpleasant than most duties of the *familia urbana* and was regularly performed by slaves held in the worst conditions. The deplorable use of chain gangs for farm labour and the housing of agricultural slaves in underground prisons (*ergastula*) are lamented so frequently by writers of the first century AD that one is tempted to suspect the exaggerations of a rhetorical *topos*; but the consistently expressed view that urban slaves were too soft for farm work supports the idea, which further accords with the widespread ancient disparagement of country ways, that consignment to the *familia rustica* was regarded as an inferior assignment. On the other hand, jobs in the *familia urbana* brought slaves into direct contact with those whose ownership rights imposed no restraints on capricious behaviour and thus exposed them more readily to beatings and other physical humiliations, whereas rural slaves might live and work with relative independence. There is no simple answer to the question of which form of service was preferable.³¹

TRAINING AND CAREER PATTERNS

Within the imperial household we can discern a hierarchy of servile functions and can sometimes trace the course of an individual career, but we can speak of career patterns only in the most general terms and not of anything approaching a regular *cursus officiorum*. Even in the sub-clerical grades, where the inscriptional record is most full, most of the evidence concerns the post-servile careers of the emperor's freedmen. Within a private *familia*, Ulpian could speak high-mindedly of 'rank and station' (*ordo et dignitas*) in discussing the quality of clothing and nourishment a usufructuary was obliged to provide to slaves in his care, but outside the imperial service the

³⁰ Urban roster: *Dig.* 32.99 pr., 33.7.27 pr. Urban slaves sent to the country: for raising: 32.99.3, 50.16.210; for training as waiters: 33.7.12.32; as punishment: *Hor. Sat.* 2.7.117–8; *Petron. Sat.* 69.3; for temporary assignment: *Dig.* 33.7.12.37, 20.1.32, 33.7.27.1; *Plin. Ep.* 9.20.2; *P. Sarap.* 83, with Biežuńska-Małowist 1977: 79–80. Rustic slaves sent away: to the city, for education: *Dig.* 32.78 pr., 33.7.20.6; to a province, on assignment: *Dig.* 33.7.12.38. Agricultural slaves transferred to domestic service: *Dig.* 34.1.15.1; hired out for part of the year: *Dig.* 33.7.12.8. Urban slaves transferred to the farm: *Hor. Epist.* 1.14; *Columella, Rust.* 1.pr.12. *Papinianus Dig.* 33.7.12.42. *Sabinus Dig.* 33.7.18.12; slaves of both categories: *Dig.* 33.7.18.13.

³¹ Chain gangs and *ergastula*: *Sen. Controv.* 2.1.26, 10.4.18; *Plin. HN* 18.4.21, 18.7.36; *Plin. Ep.* 3.19.7; *Columella, Rust.* 1.7.1, 1.8.16–18; *CIL* 10.8173 (Naples); *Martin* 1974: 282–4. Other slaves in chains: *Dig.* 4.3.7.7, 47.10.15.44. City slaves too soft: *Columella, Rust.* 1.pr.12. Disparagement: *MacMullen* 1974: 30–2. *Familia rustica* inferior to *familia urbana*: *Carlsen* 1995: 168–70. Beatings: *D'Arms* 1991: 75–81.

evidence for the categorisation of labour reveals more clearly the simultaneous influence of two conflicting principles in determining the careers of slaves in private households: specialisation and job-specification on the one hand, and regular, at times capricious, reassignment to different duties on the other. Within the realm of *officia*, a slave might move from one job to another over the course of a lifetime for a variety of reasons – for instance as a consequence of age: Seneca's childhood *delicium* wound up a superannuated doorkeeper at one of his rural villas. More generally, certain light farm tasks, such as tending fowl or picking clover, were regarded as especially appropriate for old women and children; and in domestic service, the comely dining-room attendants known as *glabri* were less desirable once their youthful bloom had begun to fade.³²

It is reasonable to suppose that the fluidity of transference from one job to another may have been linked to the level of training and education a slave received; but the miscellaneous and anecdotal information we gather from literary and documentary sources suggests that job mobility was possible throughout the system. In the case of litter-bearers and cooks, for example, although the former position was classified as a function and the latter as a craft, there seems to be no clear pattern of progression from one to the other: cooks could become litter-bearers and litter-bearers cooks without apparent system – despite the fact that slaves with trained skills were generally categorised separately, as being more valuable than those without. Training, however acquired, raised the value of a slave and was thus an economic as well as a practical investment. Indeed, the issue was of sufficient importance to educated slave-owners that in the time of Hadrian, one ex-slave, Hermippus of Berytus, wrote a treatise on the subject.³³

The methods of training slaves ranged from simple apprenticeships, both formal and informal, to elaborate schooling in the higher arts, as well as in practical trades and crafts. Some slaves, such as the grammarian Remmius Palaemon, acquired marketable skills incidentally on the job, but most were systematically taught to perform the duties to which they were (or would be) assigned. Despite the prescriptions of agricultural writers such as Columella, however, who had much to say about the particular physical and mental qualities best suited for different types of farm work, the quality and level of training slaves received may have had less to do with their perceived abilities and native characteristics than with the investment strategies and educational horizons of their owners. Within the fictitious freedman's world of Trimalchio's banquet, the versatile slave Massa – the

³² Hierarchy of functions: Boulvert 1970: 239–48; 1974: 119–80; Weaver 1972: 224–40. *Ordo et dignitas*: *Dig.* 7.1.15.2; cf. *Sen. Ben.* 3.21.2. Seneca's *delicium*: *Ep.* 12.3. Farm work for old women and children: Columella, *Rust.* 8.2.7; Plin. *HN* 13.132. *Glabri* past their prime were branded *exoleti*, 'obsolescent': *Sen. Ep.* 47.7; *TLL* s.v. 'exolesco' 1543.2–34; cf. above, n. 4.

³³ Cook to litter-bearer: *Sen. Controv.* 10.5.22; litter-bearer to cook: *Dig.* 32.65.1. Hermippus: Suda, s.v. *histros*.

jack of all trades – had learned his skills from itinerant street-vendors, to whom Habinnas had sent him for schooling; another freedman, Echion, vacillates indifferently between educating his son in law or in a trade – barbering or hawking, or pleading – careers he views as equally rewarding. At the other extreme, the elder Cato, who advocated the sale of old and sick slaves, adopted a characteristically entrepreneurial approach by lending money to his own slaves to buy others, whom they would train for a year and then resell at a profit; Cicero's friend Atticus maintained a squadron of copyists, each of whom was born and educated in his own household; and M. Licinius Crassus, reputedly the wealthiest man of late Republican Rome, is said to have derived his greatest profits from his household, personally supervised the training of his slaves and even taught them directly himself.³⁴

Apart from simple on-the-job training, and often differing only nominally from it, the most common form of educating slaves, both male and female, was by apprenticeship, which might be undertaken on the initiative of the owner, a buyer, a usufructuary or a creditor. The training itself, which normally had a fixed duration but which sometimes lasted until the skill was mastered, could be contracted either for pay or for work in kind or for a combination of both. Legal sources imply that the hiring out of such contracts was common and attest apprenticeships for artists and secretaries, charioteers and pantomimes, but the training most frequently mentioned as being contracted outside the *familia* was for artisans and merchants: within that group the most frequently cited craftsmen are weavers (*textores*), but the jurists also mention slave brickmakers, potters, blacksmiths, millers, bakers, pastry-chefs, innkeepers, tavern masters, clothiers, purple-dyers, wool-spinners, linen-weavers, seamstresses, tailors, textile workers, fullers, launderers, carpenters, construction workers, shipbuilders, plasterers, painters, erectors of statues, cobblers, cup-makers, barbers, morticians, money-changers, and all manner of merchants, including those who sold bread, olive oil, clothing, cloaks and slaves. Not all of the passages specify apprenticeship arrangements, but most imply it; documentary papyri from Egypt confirm the regularity of the practice for weavers and attest individual contracts for a flute-player, a tachygraphist and two hairdressers, and inscriptions from Rome reveal students learning the trades of mirror-maker and goldsmith.³⁵

³⁴ Remmius Palaemon: above, n. 25. Petron. *Sat.* 68.6–7 (Massa), 46.6–7 (Echion's boy). Cato: *Agr.* 2.7. Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 21.7. Atticus: Nepos, *Atticus* 13.3. Crassus: Plut. *Crass.* 2.5. Cicero described himself as Tiro's teacher (*magister*): *Fam.* 16.3.1.

³⁵ Apprenticeship: Bergamasco 1995, 1997; Forbes 1955: 328–34. Initiative: owner: *Dig.* 6.1.27.5; buyer: 19.1.43; usufructuary: 7.1.27.2; creditor: 13.7.25. Hiring normal: *Dig.* 19.2.13.3; painters and secretaries: *Dig.* 6.1.28; charioteers and pantomimes: *Dig.* 19.1.43. Artisans and merchants: see Morabito 1981: 86–8; for slave-traders, see Bodel 2005. Weavers: *P. Grenf.* 2.59; *PSI* 3.241; *PMich.* 5.346a; *SB* 18.13305; *Stud. Pal.* 22.40; *P Oxy.* 14.1647; *PSI* 241; Bergamasco 1997. Flute player: *BGU* 4.1125; tachygraphist: *P Oxy.* 4.724; hairdressers: *BGU* 4.1021; *P Oxy.* 41.2977; cf. *Dig.* 32.1.65.3. Mirror-maker: *CIL* 6.8659 = *ILS* 1779; goldsmith: *CIL* 6.9437 = *ILS* 7710.

Slaves born into wealthier households sometimes received special training in home-schools, *paedagogia*, that provided formal instruction in reading, writing and arithmetic, and some of which evidently specialised in the arts of seasoning and serving food. In the imperial household of the first two centuries AD, the *paedagogia* were large, elaborately organised institutions, with instructors and administrative staffs that might include, in addition to teachers, *paedagogi*, some of whom picked up basic literacy skills from accompanying their freeborn charges to schools, *subpaedagogi*, master masseurs, slaves in charge of furniture, anointers and hairdressers. In the year 198, one *paedagogium* on the Caelian hill at Rome known as ‘The Head of Africa’ (*Caput Africae*) included twenty-four freedmen instructors and hundreds of pupils. In smaller households slaves might be sent out of the household to acquire *litterae serviles* – the basic clerical skills needed to conduct business – at informal street schools, and, for more advanced training, to specialist institutions for tachygraphy, accounting and medicine. Physically imposing or athletic slaves might be sent for special training in schools for gladiators or charioteers, or, occasionally, in the more refined activities of the gymnasium. Despite the ecumenical practices of many schools, a rescript of the emperor Domitian (if the text is correctly restored) inscribed near a gymnasium at Pergamum in late AD 93 or 94 shows that medicine and teaching were professions thought by some to be more appropriately reserved for free persons: those who taught them to slaves for pay forfeited their tax-exempt privileges.³⁶

In theory, training, experience and natural disposition combined to prepare the ideal slave for a particular job. The most informative illustration of the principle is found in the Roman farming manuals of Cato, Varro and Columella, each of which addresses the issue of appointing an appropriate bailiff (*vilicus*). The expansion and elaboration of the criteria for selection over time perhaps reflect a growing sense of the importance of matching the right slave to the right job, a tendency that culminates in the early third century in Ulpian’s prescriptions concerning the proper use of slaves held in usufruct. All three emphasise the need to appoint men who are not only good farmers and natural leaders, but persons of sound moral character, physical vigour and conscientious discipline. Cato emphasises duties (*officia*), and the positive qualities needed to perform them effectively emerge indirectly from his prescriptions; vices to avoid are likewise

³⁶ *Paedagogia*: Mohler 1940; Forbes 1955: 334–43. Culinary arts: Columella, *Rust.* 1.pr.5 (cf. Carlsen 1995: 63–4); Sen. *Ep.* 47.6; Juv. 5.121. Imperial *paedagogia*: *CIL* 5.1039; 6.8981, 8973, 8977; *Caput Africae*: *CIL* 6.1052, 8982–6. Street schools: Hor. *Ep.* 1.20.17–21; Mart. 10.62.1–5; Petron. *Sat.* 46.3–5, 58.7–13; Sen. *Tranq.* 9.5, with Booth 1979; Bonner 1972. Tachygraphy and accounting: Mart. 10.62.4–5; *Cod. Iust.* 10.53.4; *CIL* 14.472 = *ILS* 7755. Medicine: Gal., *Methodus medendi* 1.1 (x.4 Kühn); cf. *AE* 1929: 215 (Carnuntum). Gladiatorial schools (*ludi*): Ville 1981: 295–306. Gymnasium: Plin. *Ep.* 2.17.2; Petron. *Sat.* 29.7; *CIL* 5.1039, 9.1880, with Forbes 1955: 357–8. Domitian’s rescript: *AE* 1936: 128; Herzog 1935; Forbes 1955: 348–50; cf. Oliver 1989: 119–23, no. 38 for the complementary edict of Vespasian granting exemptions to teachers of medicine.

indicated only generally by negative behaviour: the bailiff should be sober, not a gadabout, nor go out to dinner. Varro stresses the need for bailiffs to control their staff and advises owners on how to ensure the co-operation of their foremen. Columella expatiates: the bailiff should not be chosen from the sort of slaves who please by their beauty, and least of all from those accustomed to the pampered life of the city; he should not be addicted to drink, or sex, or sleep, or superstition, or sporting activities like hunting; he should be hardened to agricultural work from infancy and experienced in all manner of farming tasks; he should be loyal to the master – in short, the perfect surrogate, better even, in some respects, than the master himself.³⁷

In the end, however, what mattered more than training or talent or industry in determining a slave's advancement was winning the master's favour. Despite the warnings of Columella about appointing city slaves as bailiffs, favoured slaves from the master's domestic staff seem often to have filled the position. When, in Columella's words, 'bailiffs have succeeded to the position of owners', it was only natural that masters chose those whom they most likened to themselves, and those persons would normally be drawn from those with whom the master had the most regular contact. Trimalchio's autobiographical mural depicts him learning accounts and then rising to the position of steward (*dispensator*) in his master's household, but when he candidly narrates to his guests the trajectory of his meteoric career, he hints that he owed his preferment primarily to his sexual services. One of his guests learned practical mathematical skills at school but attributes his manumission to pleasing his master, despite opposition in the household from jealous rivals. Even bailiffs had to remember their place: Cato advised that the prospective *vilicus* must never think he knows more than the master and must obey anyone he is told to obey. The response of a late antique oracle to a question (unknown, but easily presumed from the context) put to it by a slave was 'If you become a bailiff, you will be removed.' From beginning to end, slave-owners controlled the working lives of slaves, and it was their collective ideology and individual idiosyncrasies, rather than economic rationalism or humanitarian concerns, that determined the characteristic contours of slave labour in the Roman world.³⁸

³⁷ See, in general, Carlsen 1995: 57–101. Cato, *Agr.* 5.2–5, 142; Varro, *Rust.* 1.17.4–5 and *passim*; Columella, *Rust.* 1.7.5, 1.8.1–14, 11.1.2–32, esp. 11.1.7–8 on assigning the right man to the right job. Better than the master: Martin 1974: 275.

³⁸ City slaves as bailiffs: Plaut. *Cas.* 460–2; Hor. *Ep.* 1.14; *CIL* 6.9005 = *ILS* 1795; Carlsen 1995: 58–60. Bailiffs as owners: Columella, *Rust.* 12.pr.10. Trimalchio: Petron. *Sat.* 29.3–6 (mural), 75.10–76.1 (verbal autobiography), cf. 69.3; friend (Hermeros): 58.7–13 (schooling), 57.10 (struggles; cf. Dio Chrys. 34.51). Cato, *Agr.* 5.2–3. Oracle: *Sortes Sangallenses* 41.12 (3rd–6th c.), with Kudlien 1991: 125–6.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The standard book on workers and the concept of work in the Roman world is De Robertis (1963), but Finley (1973) provides a more helpful orientation to the topic, particularly with regard to slavery. Lana (1984) explores the idea of labour in Rome, whereas Roman attitudes towards specific occupations, and towards labour generally, are investigated by Joshel (1992 – crafts and services), D'Arms (1981 – trade), Kirschenbaum (1987 – commerce), Brunt (1973), Scheidel (2001) and Thomas (2002 – aristocratic ideology). The influence of modern ideologies on the interpretation of Roman slavery is explored (and exemplified) by Finley (1998). Zimmer (1982) furnishes a useful catalogue of representations of Roman crafts with many images; Kampen (1981) illustrates the lives of working women.

Nowhere did slave labour play a larger role in the Roman economy than in the production of food, and about no aspect of Roman slave labour has more been written than about its place in agriculture. Much of the earlier literature on the villa economies of Campania has been superseded by our ever-increasing knowledge of Roman rural landscapes as a result of field-survey, emerging techniques of comparative interpretation (Webster 2005), and the influential, if controversial, arguments of Carandini (1985) for intensive slave agriculture in central Italy during the Principate. Important perspectives on particular aspects of agricultural slavery are provided by Martin (1974), (1976) and Morley (1996 – agronomists); Rathbone (1991 – estate management); Roth (2002), (2004), (2005 – women and food); Samson (1989) with MacMullen (1987 – provinces, especially later); Rosafio (1994 – tenant farming); and Finley (1998 – late antiquity).

Joshel (1992) and Bradley (1994) survey the range of jobs for slaves, drawing partly on lists compiled by Treggiari (1975b), (1980). Domestic service is the focus of studies by Boulvert (1974), Treggiari (1975b), (1979b) and D'Arms (1991). Crafts and trades in Rome are investigated by Treggiari (1980) and Joshel (1992). Business management is subjected to monographic treatment by Aubert (1994), whereas specialised studies of slaves in banking are provided by Andreau (1999) and Schäfter (2001). Jobs for women and the role of female slaves in labour are treated specially by Treggiari (1975b), (1976), (1979a), (1979b), Kampen (1981), Scheidel (1995), (1996d) and Roth (2004); note also McGinn (1998), (2004), on prostitution, and Bradley (1991a), on nurses (male and female) and children.

The peculiar circumstances of service in the emperor's household have been thoroughly investigated by Chantraine (1967), (1980); Boulvert (1970), (1974); and Weaver (1972). If the typicality of the servile work regime attested in Egypt is debatable, the distinctive quality of the evidence for it is not: the papyrological sources for slavery are surveyed by Biezuńska-Małowist (1977) and Straus (1977); Bergamasco (1995), (1997)

focuses on apprenticeship contracts; note also Mertens (1958) and Bagnall (2005).

Buckland (1908) remains fundamental for the entire body of Roman law concerning slaves, labour included; Watson (1987) selectively studies key aspects of the subject. Morabito (1981) marshals and analyses the myriad references to slavery in the *Digest*. Aubert (1994), (2001) and Carlsen (1995) investigate the legal positions of slave agents and managers in agriculture and business. The Roman law on prostitution as it relates to slaves has been mined for both its legal (Sicari 1991 and McGinn 1998) and its social and economic (McGinn 2004) implications.

The training and education of slaves, an essential if ambivalent index to the uses of slave labour, are surveyed for Rome by Mohler (1940), Forbes (1955) and Booth (1979); note also Bonner (1972) and Bergamasco (1995), (1997), on apprenticeship contracts in Egypt.

CHAPTER 16

SLAVERY AND THE ROMAN FAMILY

JONATHAN EDMONDSON

FAMILIES AND *FAMILIAE* IN ROME

In the early first century AD as one left the centre of Rome along the via Labicana heading south-east in the general direction of Praeneste (modern Palestrina), one would pass by the vast suburban estate of the Statilii Tauri, a distinguished senatorial family. These *Horti Tauriani* ('Taurian Gardens') had been developed by one of Augustus' most trusted generals, T. Statilius Taurus, consul in 37 BC and again in 26 BC. They eventually attracted the avaricious attention of the younger Agrippina, wife (and niece) of the emperor Claudius, and when in AD 53 T. Statilius Taurus (consul in AD 44) committed suicide after being charged with treason, the property passed into imperial hands. The marriage of Statilia Messallina, niece of the consul of 44, to Nero in 66 rehabilitated the family, who regained control of their luxury gardens, but this was to be short-lived; for once Messallina's marriage came to an end with Nero's suicide in 68, the estate reverted irrevocably to the imperial fisc. In the far south-east corner of these *horti*, near to where the Porta Maggiore now stands, the family constructed under Augustus or Tiberius a large funerary monument to house the remains of the many slaves and freed slaves who had been owned by the various members of the *gens Statilia*. During the family's political renaissance under Nero, further chambers were added. Archaeological excavations, which began in 1875, uncovered not just the burial chambers but many of the epitaphs of the slaves and freedmen buried there: 381 came to light in the largest chamber, though it was designed with no fewer than 700 burial-spaces, another 46 in the adjoining smaller rooms. The monument and its epitaphs allow us a vivid sense of the size and complexity of an aristocratic slave household in Julio-Claudian Rome.

We can glimpse part at least of the range of occupations entrusted to the slaves of the Statilii: we find personal attendants and footmen, Germanic bodyguards and litter-bearers; wardrobe attendants, hairdressers and barbers; wet nurses, childminders and tutors; doctors, masseurs and a midwife; spinners, weavers and wool-workers, dyers and fullers, clothes-menders and shoemakers; financial managers, stewards, accountants and

secretaries, as well as the staff responsible for the upkeep of the amphitheatre of Taurus in the centre of Rome until its destruction in the great fire of AD 64. We can also trace something of family relations among the slaves and freedmen, some of whom had been allowed to marry or, more accurately, to set up quasi-marital unions (*contubernia*) within the slave household or occasionally with slaves from other households. But most of all the fact that the Statilii Tauri, like other Roman elite families, saw the need to provide burial facilities for its slaves and former slaves illustrates the close bond that existed between Roman aristocrats and their dependants. Slaves and freedmen – both conceptually and in lived reality – formed an integral part of the Roman family.¹

The Latin term *familia*, from which the English word ‘family’ and related terms in other Indo-European languages derive, further underlines the centrality of slaves to the ways in which the Romans conceptualised the family. For while it could be used, like the English term ‘family’, to denote the freeborn members of a nuclear conjugal unit (comprising mother, father and child or children), it was much more frequently employed in a broader sense to refer to this nuclear unit together with the slaves of the household.² The importance of slaves to the Roman family was emphasised at the festival of the Compitalia, revived by Augustus in 12 BC and celebrated each year in either December or January. At the main crossroad (*compita*) of each urban neighbourhood in Rome, families decorated the shrines of the Lares Augusti (the ‘Augustan household gods’) with a puppet (male or female, as appropriate) for each freeborn member of the household and a ball for every slave. Although the manner in which they were represented made them visibly distinct from the freeborn and stripped them of any human or gendered identity, slaves were still deemed important enough to be included in a family’s offerings in a public cult intimately linked to the household. At the rural equivalent, where the Lares Compitales who guarded the boundaries of rural estates were propitiated, wine rations for slaves were increased for the duration of the festival.³ However, the term *familia* could also refer just to the slaves of the household, as it frequently does, for instance, in Petronius’ satirical novel the *Satyricon*, written in

¹ Agrippina’s alleged desire for the *horti*: Tac. *Ann.* 12.59. For the monument and its epitaphs, see Caldelli and Ricci 1999; for the monument and the estate, 15–21; for a new edition of the epitaphs from the tomb (*CIL* 6.6213–6640), 83–126 (Appendix 1); see also Hasegawa 2005: 4–17 (monument), 30–91 (analysis of epitaphs). For the *columbaria* of other aristocratic families from the suburbs of Rome, note especially the tombs of the staff of the Volusii Saturnini and of Livia on the Appian Way: Buonocore 1984; Treggiari 1975a, 1975b. For other examples, see Hasegawa 2005: 5, Table 2.1. On slave occupations, see John Bodel’s chapter in this volume.

² For this, see Saller 1984; 1994: 74–101. For the legal definition of *familia*, see *Dig.* 50.16.195.

³ For the festival, see Bömer 1981, 1: 33–6; Augustan revival: Scheid 2001 (esp. 101–3); puppets and balls: Festus pp. 108, 272–3 Lindsay; rural Compitalia: Cato, *Agr.* 57.

the mid-first century AD. So at the excessively luxurious banquet of the rich freedman Trimalchio, we encounter his entire slave staff (*tota familia*) singing in chorus to accompany a performance by the actor Syrus, and not long afterwards we hear the slave *familia* cry out in alarm when a slave-boy slips and falls heavily on Trimalchio's arm.⁴

How many families in Roman society owned slaves is extremely difficult to estimate with any precision. In the Roman empire as a whole, only the city of Rome and peninsular Italy from the second century BC onwards can legitimately be characterised as slave societies, that is, where the ownership of slaves was widespread at a number of social levels and crucial to the organisation of economic production.⁵ Even here it is not easy to generalise about how many slaves individual families at each social level might have owned. Senatorial families frequently had slaveholdings, it would appear, in excess of 500 slaves. This is certainly what the burial-chambers of the Statilii Tauri would suggest, and anecdotal evidence such as the case of the urban prefect L. Pedanius Secundus, whose urban *familia* comprised 400 slaves in AD 61 when he was murdered by one of his slaves, or the fact that the younger Pliny in the early second century AD bequeathed funds to manumit and support 100 slaves would point in the same general direction.⁶ Lower down the social scale, slave-ownership is likely to have varied quite substantially depending on individual family needs and local cultural practices, not to mention fluctuating levels of surplus wealth.⁷ It is even more difficult to assess the significance of slavery to families in the Roman provinces. There were significant slave populations in Roman colonies, whose legal, political, social and religious institutions were modelled on those of the city of Rome, and in regions that contained considerable numbers of Roman and Italian immigrant settlers, especially in urban centres on, or with easy access to, the Mediterranean coast: in Baetica, coastal Tarraconensis, southern Gaul, north Africa in the west, mainland Greece and Asia Minor, Syria and Egypt in the eastern empire.⁸ Slavery would appear to have been less prevalent in remoter rural areas, where pre-Roman forms of labour often persisted

⁴ Petron. *Sat.* 52, 54; cf. 31 (*tota familia*), 36, 37, 50, 59, 64, 67, 69 (*familia rustica*), 70, 71 (his *familia* moan and groan in lamentation as Trimalchio reads out his will), 72 (*tota familia*), 74.

⁵ Hopkins 1978: 99–115; Jongman 2003; Scheidel 2005a; cf. Keith Bradley's chapter (12) in this volume.

⁶ L. Pedanius Secundus: Tac. *Ann.* 14.43; Pliny: *ILS* 2927, Mediolanum, with Bradley 1994: 11. I see no means of confirming or refuting Scheidel (2005a: 67) on equestrian families owning 'dozens' (rather than hundreds) of slaves; after all, some equestrian families were just as rich as their senatorial peers; but see Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume.

⁷ So Scheidel 2005a: 66, based on comparative data from the Antebellum southern USA and colonial Jamaica; see also Saller 2003 (esp. 189).

⁸ For slavery in the western provinces, see Shtermerman *et al.* 1987. For slavery in Egypt, see Biezuńska-Małowist 1984; Straus 1988, 2004. For slavery among Jews in the Roman world, see Hezser 2003, 2005 and her chapter in this volume.

under Roman rule.⁹ But it is impossible to generalise for all social levels throughout the Roman Empire over the central four centuries, from 200 BC to AD 200, of Roman history. While slaves were crucial to the functioning of the elite Roman household, it is much less easy to judge for families lower down the social scale.

FAMILIA URBANA – FAMILIA RUSTICA

Within the slave households of the elite, a distinction was evidently drawn between those slaves who made up the urban (or domestic) staff and those who worked on the family's country estates; the former constituted the *familia urbana*, the latter the *familia rustica*. In their checklists of slaves and account books of slave rations, owners seem to have designated formally whether each slave was 'urban' or 'rural'. It was plainly an important difference when it came to bequeathing slaves as part of one's estate in one's final will and testament. While the distinction was grounded in the place where slaves normally resided and worked, it was always possible to have some 'urban' slaves on a rural estate, so long as they did not carry out agricultural labour.¹⁰

From a slave's point of view, life in a *familia urbana* might often have had advantages over that in a *familia rustica*. In his agricultural handbook, written in the mid-first century AD, Columella advises landowners not to select a member of the urban household to manage a rural estate. 'This kind of slave,' Columella claims (*On Agriculture* 1.8.2), 'is dedicated to sleep and idleness, and because he has been used to leisure, gymnastics, race-courses, theatres, dicing, wineshops and brothels, he dreams of this nonsense all the time.' While not all urban slaves enjoyed such diversions on a regular basis, if at all, Columella's main point seems to be that urban slaves had a relatively easier time than their rural counterparts.¹¹ The younger Seneca, a contemporary of Columella, had a similar impression, as is clear from his comments on the relatively easy life of an urban slave, 'with all its holidays', in contrast to the hard labour a rural slave was forced to put in.¹² Being sent to the *familia rustica* could be a punishment meted out to a disobedient or errant urban slave, as we hear happened to Trimalchio in Petronius' novel, when as an adolescent he was banished by his master to the *familia rustica*

⁹ See Whittaker 1980.

¹⁰ For the distinction, see *Dig.* 32.99, also discussing some of the problems of classification. For funerary commemorations set up collectively by a *familia urbana* to their master, note *CIL* 6.1747 (Rome), 9.825 (Luceria); by a *familia rustica*, note *CIL* 9.3028 = *ILS* 7367 (Teate Marrucinorum).

¹¹ For a fictional slave allegedly devoted to the Greens, betting on a Green victory in some upcoming *ludi circenses*, see Petron. *Sat.* 70.

¹² Sen. *Ira* 3.29. However, even rural slaves appear to have been granted some holidays: see Bradley 1979: 112–13; 1987b: 40–4.

on suspicion of helping to satisfy the sexual needs of his master's wife (Petron. *Sat.* 69). Urban slaves could expect to be provided with the basic necessities of life (food, clothing and adequate shelter), while conditions in rural households could be more basic. Although the farm's bailiff and slave-supervisor (*vilicus*) and his wife (*vilica*) had a responsibility to ensure that rural slaves were sufficiently well fed to have the energy to perform their work, slaves often had to use their own ingenuity to supplement their basic supplies.¹³

Greater proximity to their owners meant that urban slaves had more opportunity to build up personal relationships with them than did their rural counterparts. They could more easily get noticed and be rewarded for meritorious service. Within the elite household, some slaves became trusted confidants and personal assistants to the master and mistress. Slaves and freedmen were essential in managing family property, and slave or freedmen financial managers (*procuratores*) and stewards (*dispensatores*) held positions of great responsibility and hence trust within the household. Their work was supported by a cadre of record-keepers (*tabularii*), accountants (*sumptuarii*), secretaries (*librarii* and *a manu*), shorthand note-takers (*actuarii*) and treasurers (*arcarii*). Owners of such trusted slaves (or former owners, in the case of freedmen) treated them with much greater respect than the less skilled slaves lower down the slave hierarchy.¹⁴

Not surprisingly, it was urban rather than rural slaves who sometimes undertook acts of conspicuous self-sacrifice to save their masters. Valerius Maximus in his collection of *Memorable Deeds and Sayings*, compiled under Tiberius, devotes a whole section to salutary examples of slave fidelity (6.8, 'On the fidelity of slaves'). A slave of M. Antonius, the distinguished orator who held the consulship in 99 BC, we are told, insisted on being tortured to attest to his master's innocence when his master was forced to stand trial on a charge of unchastity (*incestum*), while another slave nobly volunteered to assume his master's identity during the violent proscriptions of 43 BC and die in his place, to save his life.¹⁵

On the other hand, more frequent interaction with their masters in the domestic setting could prove problematic for urban slaves. At moments of

¹³ See Sen. *Ben.* 3.21.2; Bradley 1994: ch. 5. See also Roth 2005, arguing that some agricultural slaves were given an allowance (*peculium*) by their owners that consisted in animals for supplementing their diet.

¹⁴ Not surprisingly, Cicero, as lawyer, orator, politician and man of letters, had a high proportion of secretaries and clerical staff among his *familia urbana*, which was relatively small in size: see Garland 1992; cf. Treggiari 1969a. For hierarchies within a slave *familia*, note *Dig.* 7.1.15.2: a usufructuary should provide food and clothes for the slaves 'according to their rank and dignity' (*secundum ordinem et dignitatem*).

¹⁵ Val. Max. 6.8.1, 6.8.6. For a subtle analysis of anecdotes about loyal slaves, see Parker 1998 (esp. 156–63).

irritation, certain owners (possibly many) lashed out at their slaves, sometimes inflicting severe beatings on them. In the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio constantly threatens his domestic slaves with violent corporal punishment.¹⁶ Exaggerated perhaps, but the satire only retains its force if Petronius' audience could associate with the verisimilitude of the practice; and Petronius' general picture is confirmed by the mid-second-century medical writer Galen, who commented on the frequency with which slaves were physically disfigured following sudden outbursts of their master's rage: they suffered kicks and punches, and even had their eyes poked out by irate masters wielding styluses.¹⁷ Another of Valerius Maximus' exemplary stories of slave fidelity involves the slave of Antius Restio, a further victim of the Triumviral proscriptions. Even though this particular slave had suffered many punishments on his master's orders – he had been chained up and even had his face branded with indelible letters – he volunteered to help Restio escape the soldiers despatched to kill him, while his much more favourably treated fellow domestic slaves were busy plundering their master's goods.¹⁸ Some of these punishments could be carried out by professionals. As the law of the early first century AD from Puteoli regulating the local funerary trade reveals, in some cities at least slave-owners could hire expert floggers (*verberatores*) or even executioners (*carnifices*) from the firm that ran the town's funeral services to punish their own slaves.¹⁹

SLAVES WITHIN THE HOUSEHOLD

Slaves' duties within individual households were carefully defined and differentiated, especially in elite families. We have noted the often specialised occupations carried out by slaves of the Statilii Tauri, and this is echoed in the more scattered and patchier evidence for slave occupations in other elite households.²⁰ Ethnographic accounts of non-Roman peoples help to

¹⁶ Petron. *Sat.* 30 (slave stripped for flogging, but reprimanded), 34 (slave has his ears boxed), 45 (report of a gladiatorial slave flogged for poor performance), 49 (slave stripped for torture), 52 (Trimalchio threatens to execute a slave-boy), 53 (report of a slave crucified for damning the soul of his master), 54 (slave fears punishment for falling on Trimalchio's arm), 69 (Scintilla threatens to brand a slave for acting as a pimp).

¹⁷ Gal. *Anim. Pass.* 1.4, 1.8, cited by Bradley 1994: 28–9. For the regularity of slave punishments, see more fully Bradley 1987b: 113–37; Saller 1991; Hopkins 1993: 7–10.

¹⁸ Val. Max. 6.8.7; cf. App. *B Civ.* 4.43. For discussion of branding and tattooing, see Jones 1987 (esp. 153–5).

¹⁹ *AE* 1971: 88, esp. col. II, lines 8ff.: *qui supplic(ium) de ser(vo) servave privatim sumer(e) volet* etc.; for new critical editions with helpful commentary, see AA. VV. 2004, esp. pp. 35–172; Hinard and Dumont 2003.

²⁰ See in particular Treggiari 1973, 1975b, 1976; cf. Joshel 1992: 71–85, esp. Table 3.2; and John Bodel's chapter in this volume. For specific rural slave occupations, see Bradley 1994: 58–61, with Tables 1–2 (based on *Dig.* 33.7 and Columella respectively).

confirm what the Romans considered normal in this regard. Tacitus, for instance, makes a number of illuminating observations on slavery in his discussion of the Germans, completed in AD 98. Among the Germans, he remarks, slaves were not assigned to particular tasks within household 'as they are with us' (Tac., *Germania* 25.1). Roman practices clearly differed.

In the same passage Tacitus also comments that slaves in Germania lived separately from their owners: 'each one controls his own house, his own Penates (i.e. household gods)'.²¹ While a Roman family's slaves lived together under the same roof (or under a series of roofs, since elite families usually owned a conglomeration of urban, suburban and rural properties), a single slave household might in fact contain several groups of slaves (*familiae*) that were each legally distinct. By the early imperial period, only a small percentage of Roman women passed on marriage under the legal control of their husbands (i.e. in what Roman legal authorities termed a marriage *cum manu*). Most remained under the power of their father or, if their father were deceased, as was likely the case for about half the women aged twenty, they were legally independent (*sui iuris*) but under the supervision of a male guardian, usually selected from among their father's agnatic kin; as a result, their property remained legally distinct from that of their husbands.²² So in most marriages both husband and wife would each own a separate slave *familia*. In the comedies of Plautus, written in the early second century BC, the mistress of the house (the *domina*) often owns her own slaves, who promote her interests frequently at the expense of her husband in the domestic politics that form a focal point of much of the drama.²³ In addition, manumitted slaves (i.e. freedmen and freedwomen) quite frequently remained part of the household even after manumission, as in the household of the Statilii Tauri; they too could own their own slave *familia*. Even slaves had their own slaves (known as *vicarii*) to assist them in their work.²⁴ For instance, two imperial slaves Sabbio and Sporus, both managers (*vilici*) of the Aqua Claudia, jointly owned a tomb plot in the suburbs of Rome and divided it, so that each could use half of it to house their own remains, those of their respective wives, freedmen and freedwomen, their *vicarii* and their descendants (*CIL* 6.8495 = *ILS* 1612). Such *vicarii* were often gifts from the slave's master as a reward for hard work and good behaviour or as a means towards greater productivity,

²¹ Tac. *Germ.* 25.1: *suam quisque sedem, suos penates regit.*

²² Treggiari 1991: 16–36, for the effects of marriage *sine manu*; Crook 1986; Gardner 1986b: 71–7. For the demographic likelihood of a woman having a living father at puberty and at twenty-five, see Saller 1994: 189.

²³ See further Fitzgerald 2000: 80–6; McCarthy 2000.

²⁴ For freedmen continuing to live in their former owner's house, note Tac. *Ann.* 13.32.1; for a detailed discussion, see Fabre 1981: 131–40. For slaves of slaves, Baba 1990.

or both; but slaves could also save up their daily allowance (*peculium*) and use it to purchase a slave-assistant, so long as their master or mistress consented to such an arrangement.²⁵ Some slaves were jointly owned – by a pair of brothers, for instance, who had inherited a group of slaves between them; this had the potential to complicate domestic slave households still further.²⁶ So many elite households contained complex mixtures of several groups of slaves, each group legally separate, but in actual social practice often coalescing into a single interrelated slave-unit.

In fact, it is clear that a ‘community’ of slaves developed ‘below stairs’ in many Roman households, even though the slaves who made up this community regularly came from a range of different backgrounds: some were bred within the house, the children of slave women (*vernae*);²⁷ others were purchased on the slave market and so often came from very diverse ethnic origins, speaking different languages and blessed with varying types and levels of skill. The solidarity that developed among household slaves provided them with much needed spiritual support in what was commonly a hazardous and precarious position, where their quality of life very much depended on the whim of their owners. A freed slave from Rome, A(ulus) Memmius Urbanus, fondly recalled the strong emotional bonds that existed within the slave household to which he had formerly belonged in the epitaph he set up for A. Memmius Clarus, his ‘most beloved’ former colleague and companion in slavery (*conlibertus, idem consors carissimus*):

I cannot remember, my most respected fellow-freedman, that there was ever any quarrel between you and me. By this epitaph I invoke the gods of heaven and of the underworld as witnesses that we first met on the slave-dealer’s platform, that we were granted our freedom together in the same household, and that nothing ever parted us from one another except the day of your death.²⁸

Domestic religion helped to consolidate this sense of community. A number of houses at Pompeii had shrines of the household gods (*lararia*) located in their kitchens. Often with paintings of the protective spirit (*genius*) of the head of the household (*paterfamilias*) sacrificing to the household gods (the *lares*), these are of much sketchier quality than the

²⁵ The elder Cato allegedly loaned money to his urban slaves to allow them to purchase slaves of their own, train them up for a year and then sell them at a profit: Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 21. For the slave’s *peculium*, see Watson 1987: 90–101.

²⁶ For jointly owned slaves within the imperial slave household (the *familia Caesaris*), see Chantraine 1967: 216–24.

²⁷ On house-bred slaves (*vernae*), see Hermann-Otto 1994.

²⁸ CIL 6.22355a = ILS 8432: *A(ulo) Memmio Claro / A(ulus) Memmius Urbanus / conliberto idem consorti / carissimo sibi / inter me et te sanctissime mi / conliberte nullum unquam / disiurgium fuisse conscius / sum mihi hoc quoque titulo / superos et inferos testor deos / una me tecum congressum / in venalicio una domo liberos / esse factos neque ullus unquam / nos diunxisset nisi hic tuus / fatalis dies.*



Figure 16.1 Painting from a *lararium* from House 1 13.2 in Pompeii, showing the Genius of the *paterfamilias* and Juno of the *materfamilias* sacrificing at the altar, with two rows of slaves in attendance (*in situ*).

more monumental *lararia* found in the main reception rooms of the same houses. These kitchen *lararia*, it would appear, were for the use of the household's slaves, while those in the more public areas of the house were reserved for the *paterfamilias* and freeborn members of his family. In the kitchen of one particular house, a *lararium* has a particularly striking painting of the male Genius of the *paterfamilias* and the female Juno of the *materfamilias* sacrificing at an altar, with two rows of slaves in white tunics participating in the ritual (Fig. 16.1). A painting from another kitchen *lararium* shows what has been interpreted as the slave *familia* joining together in a modest banquet, perhaps as part of some domestic religious event. So while domestic religious rituals provided slaves with occasions for communal celebration, at the same time they also reminded them of the centrality of the master and mistress to the welfare of the household and of the slave *familia* within it.²⁹

But where physically did slaves live within the family home?³⁰ Literary sources allude to groups of slaves occupying small cells (*cellae* or *cellulae*) in

²⁹ For this see George 2007. For the *lararia*, see Fröhlich 1991. For the kitchen *lararium* in House 1 13.2 with the Genius and Juno, Fröhlich 1991: 178–9, 261, cat. no. L29 & Taf. 28.1–2; Clarke 2003: 76–8, with figs. 39–40; for that with the banqueting slaves in the House of Obellius Firmus (IX 14.2/4), Fröhlich 1991: 179–81, 299, cat. no. L111 & Taf. 48.1; Dunbabin 2003: 56–8, with Fig. 27.

³⁰ For this topic, see further Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 38–44, 47–50, 53; George 1997a; Basso 2003; Michele George's chapter in this volume.

both urban houses and rural villas.³¹ Structures resembling such cells have been identified in some of the very few houses known from the centre of Rome; the house excavated on the north slopes of the Palatine in the area between the Arch of Titus, the Via Sacra and the House of the Vestals, for instance, had thirty such cells in its basement level, each measuring 1.2 by 1.5 metres, with ceilings about 2 metres high.³² The town of Pompeii provides further examples, especially in some of its larger homes. But the whole subject raises methodological problems, since unless some item has been discovered that links these rooms directly to slaves (such as a post and chains used for punishing them), their identification as slave quarters will always remain possible or plausible rather than proven.³³ The idea that slaves were often quartered in the upper floors of Pompeian houses is also difficult to verify, since these upper storeys no longer survive. But did all Roman houses necessarily have specific slave quarters? There are enough references in our literary (and even legal) sources to suggest that slaves often slept scattered throughout the house, wherever there happened to be space. In Apuleius' novel *Metamorphoses* (otherwise known as *The Golden Ass*), Milo's slaves sleep outside a guest's room (*cubiculum*), while slave maids (*ancillae*) sometimes slept inside their mistress's bedroom.³⁴ At night, as during the day, the Roman house appears to have been filled with slaves. The result of this was that freeborn Romans of a certain rank had to get used to living with slaves all around them. There was little privacy in the Roman house, especially one such as that in the city of Rome owned by the urban prefect, Pedanius Secundus, which as noted earlier had to accommodate no fewer than 400 domestic slaves in AD 61. The freeborn, from an early age, had to become accustomed to conducting their domestic lives with slaves privy to even their most intimate of moments.³⁵ Slaves were so omnipresent as to be almost invisible. However, their very omnipresence meant that they were often the 'eyes and ears' of the household. As such, they were indispensable as witnesses to crimes committed within the house, although their evidence was admitted in court only if it had been extracted under torture.³⁶

³¹ Sen. *Tranq.* 8.6; Elder Sen. *Controv.* 7.6.8; Plin. *Ep.* 7.27.13; for rural *villae*, note Columella, *Rust.* 1.6.8 (all cited by George 1997a: 22, nn. 39, 41).

³² George 1997a: 16–17, with Fig. 1; Basso 2003: 448–50, with Figs. 158–60; Carandini 1988: 359–87.

³³ For slave-chains found in a *cella* of a suburban villa near Pompeii (the *Ville delle Colonne* a Mosaico), see Basso 2003: 455 and Fig. 167.

³⁴ Apul. *Met.* 2.15; for *ancillae*, note Tac. *Ann.* 14.8 (Agrippina's *ancilla* was sleeping in her mistress' *cubiculum* on the night Agrippina was put to death); cf. *Dig.* 29.5.1.28.

³⁵ Hence slaves are often on hand in depictions of Roman lovemaking in a variety of media: see Clarke 1998.

³⁶ For eavesdropping slaves (*oricularii servi*) causing problems for their master, see Petron. *Sat.* 43. For slave evidence only admissible if extracted by torture, see *Dig.* 48.18; Brunt 1980; Bradley 1994: 165–70.

FAMILY LIFE AMONG SLAVES

One specific way in which a slave-owner promoted a sense of community among his or her slave household was to allow certain slaves to set up quasi-marital unions. These were known as *contubernia*, a term borrowed from Roman military slang to describe the situation where individuals ‘shared the same tent’ (or, to put it more bluntly, ‘shacked up together’). It was clearly a reward that owners could offer their slaves as an incentive for good behaviour and hard work, but it also helped to enhance a sense of community and sociability among the slaves of a household, permitting them to form some social ties in the socially deracinated universe that was a hallmark of the slave condition. Such unions could be established between two slave partners (*contubernales*) or between a slave and a manumitted slave, usually but not exclusively from the same slave *familia*. Although these unions were never legally recognised, they seem in some ways to have resembled formal marriages (*iusta conubia*). They were governed by the same customs regarding incest, and partners in such unions used exactly the same terminology to refer to their kin as individuals linked in a *ius-tum conubium*: their spousal partners were *coniuges*, *mariti* or *uxores*, their children *fili* and *filiae*. For offspring frequently resulted from such unions. These children, however, always remained the legal property of the slave mother’s owner.³⁷ So at the Roman colony of Augusta Emerita (modern Mérida) in Lusitania, a modest and rather inelegant tombstone was set up in the later second or early third century AD by a slave couple, Euhodus and Callityche, to commemorate Euhodia, their ‘most devoted daughter’ (Fig. 16.2). Although it is clear from this epitaph that Euhodia’s slave parents had formed a lasting affective bond with their fifteen-year-old daughter and felt the desire to commemorate her with an epitaph after her untimely death, they formally designated her as the ‘house-bred slave of Mellinus,’ from which we may deduce that Mellinus was Callityche’s (and probably also Euhodus’) master. Although Euhodia formed part of a slave family, her formal legal relationship to her mother’s owner was more important than her kinship relation with her parents. In the eyes of posterity, she was to be remembered as Mellinus’ slave, her official status.³⁸

The larger the slave household, the greater the number of such unions there might have been at any one time, and the greater the possibility for each slave family to develop more complex bonds of kinship. In such situations, house-bred slaves (*vernae*) might well have had a number of aunts, uncles and cousins, especially on the maternal side. In the funerary

³⁷ On such unions see Rawson 1974; Flory 1978; Biezuńska-Małowist 1979; Treggiari 1981; 1991: 52–4; for incest rules applying to *contubernia*, see *Dig.* 23.2.14.2–3.

³⁸ *AE* 1982: 485, with my revisions: *D(is) M(anibus) s(acrum) Euhodia Mellini verna an(norum) XV h(ic) s(ita) e(st). S(it) t(ibi) t(erra) l(evis). Euhodus et Callityche filiae pientisumae (sic).*



Figure 16.2 Tombstone from Emerita in Lusitania (Mérida, Spain) of Euhodia, houseborn slave (*verna*) of Mellinus, daughter of Euhodus and Callityche.

monument of the Statilii Tauri, Hermione, slave of C. Minucius Gallus, looked after the burial of her maternal uncle (*avunculus*), Philadelphus, whose name would suggest he too was a slave (*CIL* 6. 6469), while a paternal uncle (*patruus*), the freedman Statilius Hesychus, commemorated his nephew Primus the caterer (*opsonator*), house-bred slave (*verna*) of Messallina wife of Nero (*CIL* 6. 6619). At the Roman colony of Emerita in the mid- to later second century AD, a freedwoman Argentaria Verana owned a number of slaves, some at least of whom were also related to her by blood. She looked after the burial of her ‘cousin and freedman’ (*sobrinus et lib(ertus)*), M. Argentarius Achaicus, and in due course was herself commemorated by another of her freedmen, Argentarius Vegetinus, who described her on her epitaph as his ‘maternal aunt and patroness’ (*matertera et patrona*).³⁹

³⁹ *AE* 1993: 904 (funerary altar of M. Argentarius Achaicus); *AE* 1993: 903 = Edmondson, Nogales Basarrate and Trillmich 2001: 126–9, no. 5, with photo (funerary monument with portrait of Argentaria Verana).

Such slave *contubernia* sometimes allowed links to be established between a husband's slave *familia* and his wife's, legally separate but often socially bonded, as we have seen. A quasi-marital union between two ex-slaves attested at Emerita from the early first century AD may well reflect this: C(aius) Iulius C(ai) I(ibertus) Felix had, we must presume, been allowed to form a union with Quinta Caecilia (*mulieris*) I(iberta) Mauriola, probably when one or both were still slaves, since they were buried together along with their son, C. Iulius Modestus, in a small mausoleum in one of the colony's suburban cemeteries. Either Mauriola and Felix had been allowed by their respective owners to marry outside their slave *familia*, or they were the former slaves of a married couple: Mauriola, the slave of a certain Caecilia, and Felix, the slave of Caecilia's husband, one C(aius) Iulius.⁴⁰ Similarly in the tomb of the Statilii at Rome, Claudia Caenis was commemorated by her spouse (*coniunx*), T. Statilius Pharnaces. Although neither of their names contains an explicit reference to their status as freed slaves, this is highly likely given their Greek *cognomina* and the fact that Claudia Caenis was commemorated in this tomb. Their *nomina* reveal that Caenis was once the slave of a Claudius or Claudia, and Pharnaces a slave of a T. Statilius. They evidently originated from different slave *familiae*.⁴¹

In sum, certain slaves were permitted to lead some sort of family life as a nuclear unit within the household, but most were unlikely to be granted much privacy within the crowded slave quarters that, as we have seen, marked most Roman houses. Only those slaves at the top of the domestic slave hierarchy – accountants, financial managers, secretaries – could have realistically hoped for a room of their own.⁴² Nonetheless, many of these slave unions were evidently long-lasting and continued after one or both partners had been given their freedom.

TENSIONS WITHIN THE SLAVE *FAMILIA*

Even though some sense of community developed within many slave *familiae*, and although some slaves were allowed to form lasting emotional relationships and even, as a result, to enjoy some sort of family life, we need to bear in mind that all this could be shattered in an instant by the unilateral decisions of slave-owners. They might legitimately see the need to rotate their slaves around their properties. They might also decide to sell off some of their slaves or present others as gifts to their friends. Divorce would lead to a former wife taking her slave *familia* away with her from the conjugal

⁴⁰ *AE* 2000: 692: C(aius) Iulius C(ai) I(ibertus) Felix Quinta Caecilia (*mulieris*) I(iberta) Mauriola. S(it) i(ibi) t(erra) l(evis). C(aius) Iulius Modestus ann(or)um XXVII. For their tomb and further discussion, see Edmondson 2000: 299–301, with plates 1–2.

⁴¹ *CIL* 6.6422: D(is) M(anibus) Claudiae Caenidi T. Statilii Pharnaces coniugi b(ene) m(erenti) p(osuit).

⁴² So George 1997a: 24.

home, including any she had brought into the marriage as part of her dowry. The death of a slave-owner was a moment of particular unease for his or her slaves; for although it was the occasion when a limited number of the deceased's slaves might be manumitted, it could also often lead to the dispersal of the slaves as the owner's property was divided among several heirs.

Quasi-marital unions were particularly vulnerable to the whims of slave-owners. Temporary periods of segregation might occur, as, for instance, when slave-owners decided to send newly born slaves away from their parents and the *familia urbana* to be nursed and raised on a rural estate, although how often this occurred is difficult to assess.⁴³ As regards the sale of slaves, papyri from Roman Egypt demonstrate that a variety of different practices obtained. In some situations slave-owners sold off female slaves together with any offspring they had produced; occasionally a slave mother, father and their child (or children) were sold as a unit; but slave children could easily be removed from their mothers and sold off separately.⁴⁴ The divorce of a master and mistress would cause particularly serious problems for slave partners in a quasi-marital union where one *contubernalis* came from the husband's slave *familia* and the other from the wife's.

But tension could also arise within the household when a master or mistress showed favouritism towards certain slaves over others. Although all slaves were in legal and theoretical terms equal (they were all equally unfree), a status hierarchy existed within virtually every slave *familia*. The more literate and skilled slaves were held in higher esteem than personal attendants, hairdressers and waiters, who in turn were more valued than humble agricultural labourers, muleteers or, lowest in the hierarchy, mining slaves. Problems occurred particularly when favouritism was displayed towards just some of those of the same status level. The bumptious freedman Trimalchio makes no secret of the fact that he was favoured by his master, and this allowed him to gain the latter's trust, move up the hierarchy within his slave *familia* and win his freedom much more quickly than other fellow-slaves. Trimalchio is quite frank about what lay behind his master's attitude: as a young boy he was attractive and sexually desirable to his master. He fell into the category of *deliciae* (also known as *delicia* or *pueri delicati*), the slaves whom a slave-owner 'took delight in', his pet-slaves. Another of the ex-slaves at Trimalchio's banquet admits that when he was young, he too was a *puer capillatus* (a 'long-haired slave-boy'); and he revealingly remarks that people in the *domus* were always trying 'to trip

⁴³ For the practice, note *Dig.* 32.99.3.

⁴⁴ For offspring being separated, note *PMich.* 326 (Tebtunis, AD 48); *SB* 5.7573 (Elephantine, AD 116); *BGU* 3.859 (the Fayum, AD 162 or 163); see Bradley 1987b: 63–70; Straus 2004: 271–5. In late antiquity, the emperor Constantine attempted to prevent the separation of slave families at least on imperial estates: *Cod. Theod.* 2.25.1, with Evans Grubbs 1995: 25–6, 307–8.

him up', both literally and metaphorically, we must imagine.⁴⁵ This is just the sort of reaction that pampered slaves might arouse in their fellows, who became jealous of the attention and favours that their masters bestowed on them.

SLAVES AND TENSIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Slaves could also cause tension among the freeborn members of the family. It is theoretically possible that the close relationship that often developed between a young child and his or her slave playmate might have had an effect on how that freeborn child related to other siblings. While Tacitus does refer to the 'traditional hatreds between brothers' (*Annals* 4.60; cf. 13.17), in practice, prevailing demographic patterns probably meant that few Roman children had a sibling close enough in age to become jealous of any relationship his brother or sister might have had with a slave.⁴⁶ The sexual attraction and availability of slaves proved a much more divisive issue in many Roman families.

We have already noted how Trimalchio's alleged sexual encounters with his master's wife led to his being banished to a rural estate (Petron. *Sat.* 69). In the pastiche-style biography of the slave and author of fables Aesop, which was put into written form in the early imperial period, the wife of Aesop's master fantasises about having sex with a handsome young slave and later ends up in bed with the ugly, pot-bellied, hunchback Aesop. Though patently fictional, these episodes nevertheless attest to the very real anxieties that male slave-owners felt about the sexual fidelity of their wives and about being cuckolded by their own male slaves.⁴⁷ Roman social attitudes considered affairs between freeborn women and slaves deeply shameful, and a series of laws introduced heavy penalties for women who indulged in such inappropriate behaviour. By the time of Hadrian, if a freeborn woman cohabited with a male slave without the consent of the slave's owner, she and any children that had resulted from this union became slaves of the slave's owner; even if the slave's master had given his consent, the freeborn woman was still reduced to the status of a freedwoman.⁴⁸ The fact that in many households the wife was regularly attended by male slaves clearly raised in Roman husbands feelings of sexual jealousy and mistrust.

⁴⁵ Petron. *Sat.* 63 (Trimalchio as a *servus capillatus*, living a 'Chian life', a life of luxury), 75 (his master's *delicia* by the age of fourteen), 57 (the *puer capillatus* tripped up by his peers: *habebam in domo qui mihi pedem opponerent hac illac*). On *deliciae*, see Laes 2003; cf. Sigismund Nielsen 1990.

⁴⁶ On siblings, see Bannon 1997; Rawson 2003: 243–50.

⁴⁷ See Hopkins 1993 (esp. 14–18, 24–5).

⁴⁸ For the complex historical development of the legal attempts to regulate such unions, see Evans Grubbs 1993.



Figure 16.3 Gold bracelet with inscription (“The master to his very own slave-girl”) found on the arm of a female victim of Vesuvius, AD 79, from Moregine, near Pompeii.

Attitudes towards a freeborn male’s sexual relationship with his own slaves – whether casual affairs with slaves of either sex or a more permanent liaison with a female slave known as concubinage (*concupinatus*) – were much more tolerant. It was simply taken for granted that part of the degradation of being a slave involved gratifying the sexual urges of one’s master.⁴⁹ Some masters paid high prices for extremely beautiful male or female slaves, in part to impress guests at banquets, but sometimes with an eye on more selfish carnal pleasures. In some households, these relationships might be justified in terms of the offspring that often resulted, which enhanced the property of the household with fresh supplies of house-bred slaves (*vernae*).⁵⁰

On occasion, ongoing emotional bonds developed between a master and his slave. A fine gold bracelet discovered just outside Pompeii on the arm of a female victim (aged about thirty) of the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 (Fig. 16.3) provides perhaps an inkling of such affection, with

⁴⁹ See Kolendo 1981; cf. Bradley 1994: 28–9. For sex with male slaves, see Williams 1999: 30–8.

⁵⁰ High prices for attractive slaves: Mart. *Epig.* 1.58. For the idea that slave women who gave birth to more than three sons should be granted exemption from work, see Columella, *Rust.* 1.8.19. On the relative importance of house-bred slaves in the overall slave supply, see Bradley 1987a; cf. Scheidel 1997; Harris 1999.

its inscribed message, 'The master to his very own slave-girl' (*dom(i)nus ancillae suae*). Although some have argued that it provides evidence of a master decorating a slave to make her a more attractive prostitute, the presence of the touching dedicatory inscription strongly hints that this was a lover's gift.⁵¹ But if the master was married, these casual or more long-lasting sexual encounters had the potential to strain relations between husband and wife. In the *Satyricon*, Trimalchio's wife Fortunata turns on her husband with a torrent of verbal and physical abuse the moment he kisses an attractive slave-boy rather too longingly (Petron. *Sat.* 74). Tertia Aemilia, wife of Scipio Africanus, the conqueror of Hannibal, was used by Valerius Maximus as one of his examples of wives' fidelity towards their husbands (6.7.1). She was so faithful that she turned a blind eye towards her husband's liaison with a slave-girl, showing herself to be a model of companionship (*comitas*) and endurance (*patientia*). Her very exceptionality suggests that in many more cases Roman wives were emotionally scarred by their husbands' philandering.⁵² Hence Plutarch, in his essay *Conjugal Advice*, takes special care to reassure the newly wed bride that she should not be jealous of her husband's affairs with slaves (*Moralia* 140b). Slaves, especially sexually attractive ones, had the power to drive an emotional wedge between husband and wife.

Competition for the body of the same slave could also lead to tension between a father and his son, and not just in the plots of Roman comedies such as Plautus' *Casina*.⁵³ Slaves could sometimes become embroiled in jealous rivalry with their master for the affections of a lover. The murder of Pedanius Secundus in AD 61 by one of his slaves might have been triggered, so Tacitus believed, by the slave's 'being inflamed with love for an older male prostitute (*exoletus*) and not being able to stand having his master as a rival'.⁵⁴ Slaves, despite their theoretical powerlessness, often had the potential to complicate relations among the freeborn members of the household.⁵⁵

SLAVES AND KIN RELATIONS WITHIN THE FAMILY

Slaves also played a significant role in establishing the social identity of the family within the community and in structuring kin relations within the family. A family's slaves were often to be seen on the city streets,

⁵¹ For the bracelet as a love-gift, see Costabile 2001, 2003; Licandro 2004–5. For the slave-girl as prostitute, see Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2001; Scarano Ussani 2003. For the lamentations of his slave-concubines at the murder of one slave-owner, see Plin. *Ep.* 3.14.

⁵² Compare Seneca's comment (*Ep.* 123.10) that once dead 'you will have no slave-boy to stir your girlfriend's envy'.

⁵³ For this aspect of Plautus' *Casina*, see Fitzgerald 2000: 81–6.

⁵⁴ Tac. *Ann.* 14.42.1: *amore exoleti incensus et dominum aemulum non tolerans*. For *exoleti*, see Williams 1999: 83–6.

⁵⁵ For further discussion, see Saller 1987 (esp. 76–9).

running errands for their owner, conducting business operations on his (or her) behalf or operating a market-stall or shop selling the produce of the family's estates.⁵⁶ In this way they served as representatives of the family in the public sphere. But they enhanced the image of the family still more when they escorted their master or mistress in public. Whenever the *paterfamilias* left the home to attend to public business, attend the law-courts or take part in public religious activities, he would be accompanied by a group of his own slaves as well as freeborn friends and connections as he processed down into the Forum. So too the mistress of the house, as we see vividly in Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* when the wealthy Byrrhaena, a member of the local elite of Roman Greece, makes a sortie from her home to the marketplace; her status is immediately clear by her dress and her impressive retinue of slaves.⁵⁷ When freeborn members of the family went out to the public baths, they were similarly escorted by a group of household slaves, who carried fresh clothes, bathing oils and ointments and other paraphernalia, and then pampered their master or mistress during the bathing session.⁵⁸ Roman children were accompanied to school by a family slave, the *paedagogus*, who remained to attend his young charge during his or her lessons.⁵⁹ When an elite slave-owner died, a group of his slaves, especially those grateful for their manumission on their master's death, took part, conspicuous in their freedmen's caps (*pillei*), in mourning rituals that took place during the lying-in-state of the corpse in the atrium of the *domus* before the funeral proper, while some of them may often have joined male relatives and friends of the deceased in carrying the bier or otherwise participating in the funeral procession (*pompa*).⁶⁰

Whenever visitors arrived at the family home, they formed an immediate impression of the family as they were greeted by the slave doormen and attendants, who were often kitted out in special livery that marked them emphatically as the slaves of that particular house.⁶¹ Banquets and dinner parties, and not just imaginary ones like that conjured up so vividly in Petronius' *Satyricon*, were occasions where the wealth and prestige of the household were displayed in part by the sheer quantity, beauty and

⁵⁶ For slaves as business-managers, see Aubert 1994; Bradley 1994: 75–80; for slaves running market-stalls or shops, Joshel 1992: 106–12; for slave-owners using their slaves to stone the house of a troublesome neighbour in Herculaneum, see *Tab. Herc.* 2, discussed by Wallace-Hadrill 1994: 178–9.

⁵⁷ On the importance of escorts in public for male elites, cf. [Cic.] *Comm. Pet.* 36; Nicolet 1980: 357–8. Byrrhaena: Apul. *Met.* 2.2; she also has a glittering array of liveried footmen (*diribitores*) and elegantly coiffured and beautifully dressed slave-boys as part of a luxurious dinner party she hosts: *Met.* 2.19.

⁵⁸ Petron. *Sat.* 27–8; Fagan 1999: 199–206. ⁵⁹ Rawson 2003: 165–7 (boys), 198–9 (girls).

⁶⁰ Lying-in-state: Flower 1996: 94. Funeral procession: Toynbee 1971: 46; Bodel 1999: 261–3, 266–7. There are, however, no references to slaves or freedmen in the classic account, dating to mid-second century BC, of a Roman aristocratic funeral: Polyb. 6.53–4; it is possible that Polybius simply took their participation for granted.

⁶¹ On slave clothing, including livery, see Bradley 1994: 87–9.

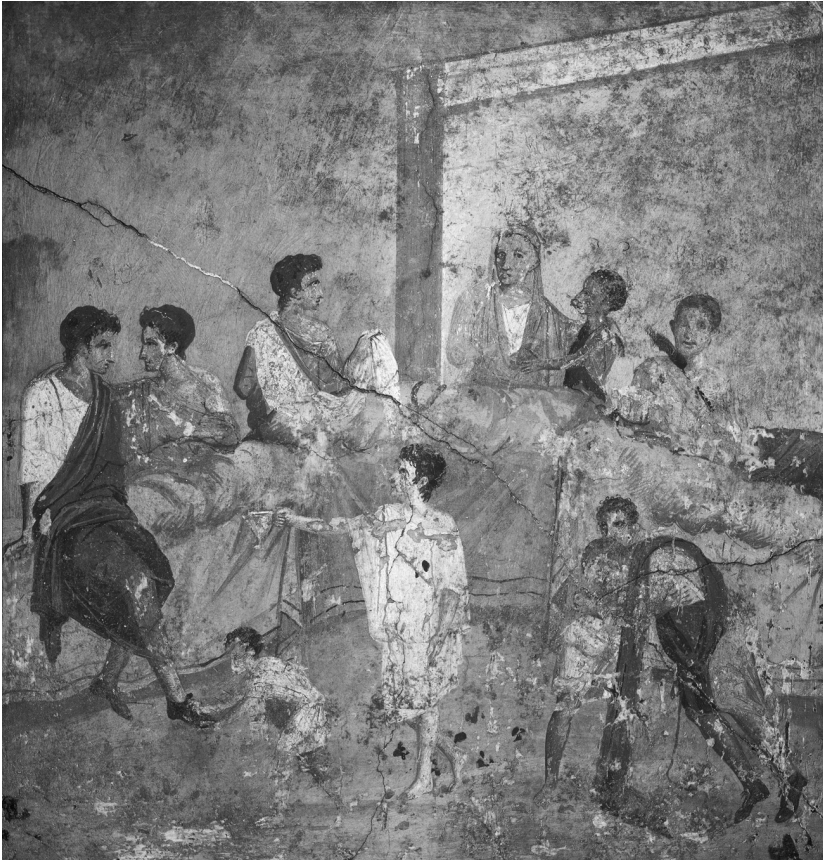


Figure 16.4 Painting of a banquet with six diners and four slaves, from the dining-room of the House of the Triclinium (v 2.4), Pompeii.

decorative quality of the household slaves who waited on the guests. As a result, slaves feature prominently in a painting of a banquet that graced the dining-room (*triclinium*) of a relatively modest house in Pompeii (Fig. 16.4). It shows four slaves and just six diners. One slave takes off a late-arriving guest's shoes, while another offers him a drink; a third props up a diner who is bent over vomiting; a fourth, a black slave, gazes up at his master, who has his arm around him in a gesture hinting that he might be one of the master's special pet slaves (*deliciae*). Even though the slaves are depicted at a smaller scale than the freeborn diners, they were patently important to the image of his hospitality that the person who commissioned this painting to decorate his own dining-room wished to convey. The number and attentiveness of these slaves underlined his wealth and

generosity.⁶² Male and female slaves who were particularly good-looking took on a special value, enhancing by their physical attractiveness the pleasures (*voluptates*) of the occasion.⁶³ Slaves made a key contribution to the manner in which one's fellow-citizens viewed one's family both inside and outside the home; they very much boosted its public visibility and its social prestige.

But slaves also helped to articulate kinship relationships between free-born members of the family. Let us begin with wives. As we have already noted, by the time of the late Republic most Roman wives did not fall under the legal power (*patria potestas*) of their husbands and so were able to own property that was legally separate from that of their spouses. Such property would often include slaves. The younger Pliny, in expressing his readiness to contribute towards the dowry of an old friend's daughter, comments that she will need a goodly number of slave attendants given the social rank of her fiancé (*Letters* 6.32). Indeed an emblematic image of the Roman *matrona* showed her assisted at her toilette by a group of her own slave women, such as on a sculpted relief, dated to the later second or third century AD, now in the Landesmuseum in Trier (Germany) (Fig. 16.5).⁶⁴ The presence of the mistress's slaves in the conjugal home helped to underline her legal independence from her husband, which was further emphasised by the legal prohibition of gifts between husband and wife during marriage. In the eyes of the law, the property of each spouse should not be mingled or confounded. But in actual social practice the assets of both husband and wife were often merged and jointly managed.⁶⁵ In the touching eulogy of his deceased wife known as the 'Eulogy of Turia' (the *Laudatio Turiae*), composed at the end of the first century BC, the husband, whose identity is not preserved, represented their marriage as one in which their respective property was shared and administered mutually:⁶⁶

We preserved all your patrimony received from your parents with shared diligence; for you had no concern for acquiring that which you handed over completely to me. We divided our duties so that I bore the guardianship (*tutela*) of your fortune, while you sustained the care of mine.

⁶² From the House of the Triclinium (v 2.4): see Dunbabin 2003: 58–9, and fig. 28; Clarke 2003: 242–3, with colour plate 21; Roller 2006: 74–5 and colour plate V. For the practice that had developed by the mid-first century AD whereby masters dined surrounded by a 'crowd of standing slaves', see Sen. *Ep.* 47.2.

⁶³ See further Pollini 2003.

⁶⁴ Espérandieu 1915: 321–3, no. 5143 (with photos) from Noviomagus (modern Neumagen); Dixon 2001: 125–6 and pl. 16. This emblematic image of matron and slave-girls is savagely critiqued by the satirist Juvenal at *Sat.* 6.487–507.

⁶⁵ See *Dig.* 24.1. Pre-nuptial gifts were permitted (*Dig.* 24.1.27) and gifts that came into effect after the donor's death (*Dig.* 24.1.9–11). For separation and mixing of property within marriage, see Treggiari 1991: 365–96.

⁶⁶ *FIRA* III.69 = *ILS* 8393, col. I, lines 37–9 quoted. There is no secure basis to identify the wife as 'Turia'. In general on this fascinating document, see Wistrand 1976.



Figure 16.5 Relief from the side of a funerary monument from Noviomagus in Gallia Belgica (Neumagen, Germany), showing a matron having her hair dressed by a slave-girl, with three other female slaves in attendance.

Slaves, therefore, played a double role in articulating relations between husband and wife. On the one hand, the legal fact that the mistress owned slaves of her own marked her independence (both economic and social) from her husband, but the common practice whereby the husband might often subsume them into his own slaveholdings and administer them jointly with his own slaves illustrates the *de facto* control that a husband often exerted even over a wife who was not legally in his power.

Slaves also played a key part in defining how Roman fathers related to their children, since children were often assimilated to slaves in the social dynamics of the household. Children and slaves both fell under the legal power (the *patria potestas*) of the *paterfamilias*, a term that was flexible enough to convey that the head of a household was at the same time the biological father of his freeborn children and paternalistic master of his slave *familia*.⁶⁷ On a similar conceptual trajectory, slaves – no matter what their age – were known as ‘boys’ (*pueri*) and thus generically assimilated to children. This may explain why slaves were usually represented in Roman art as much smaller figures than freeborn individuals, even those much

⁶⁷ On the paternalistic attitude of a master towards his slaves, note Sen. *Ep.* 47; Plin. *Ep.* 5.19, 8.16.

younger in age and smaller in stature than themselves. Roman children, just like slaves, could not own property; the best they could hope for was an allowance (*peculium*), which the *paterfamilias* also provided for some of his slaves. Both children and slaves were also subject to the power of the *paterfamilias* to inflict corporal punishment, even if in actual practice a father was expected to show restraint in disciplining his son or daughter, which was never an expectation in his handling of his slaves.⁶⁸ On a more positive note, both sons and slaves could serve as business agents (*institores*) of the *paterfamilias*.⁶⁹

Children and slaves, however, were not just associated in legal theory. Sons and daughters spent considerable amounts of time in their early years in the company of the household's slaves, who constituted a kind of surrogate kin for them as they were growing up. They were often breastfed by the same wet nurse as the slave children of the household. (Wet nurses were normally slaves or freedwomen from within the household, but occasionally a freeborn woman was hired for the purpose from outside on a contract.) The fact that Cato's wife Licinia in the second century BC breastfed not just their own children, but their slaves' offspring as well would appear to be eccentric, eliciting Plutarch's attention, which it is unlikely to have done if it were a common practice.⁷⁰ Such nurses provided more than just their milk, since they often continued to look after young infants well after they had been weaned. Freeborn children also often had slave playmates as they were growing up, while some Romans decided to take in foundling infants, who became foster-brothers and foster-sisters (*alumni*) for the natural offspring of the family.⁷¹ It is difficult to reconstruct the precise nature of their play, but it is quite likely that it was through play that children began to learn how to give orders to their slave playmates.

Slaves (usually more elderly male slaves) served as childminders (*nutritores*, *educatores* or *paedagogi*) and then as their first teachers (*praeceptores*) as children developed physically and intellectually.⁷² Again the elder Cato seems to have been unusual in insisting on teaching his own son 'as soon as the boy had reached the age of understanding', even though he had skilled

⁶⁸ On this, see further Saller 1994: 133–53. ⁶⁹ Kirschenbaum 1987; Aubert 1994.

⁷⁰ Plut. *Cat. Mai.* 20. Writing in approximately the same period as Plutarch, Tacitus comments that among the Germans, mothers breastfed their own children (*Germ.* 20.1). The epitaph of Gratia Alexandria, the wife of an imperial freedman, also comments that she 'brought up her children with the milk of her own breasts' (*CIL* 6.19128 = *ILS* 8451, Rome). Such evidence seems to confirm that it was unusual for Roman mothers to do this. On wet nurses within the family, see Bradley 1986b; 1991c: 13–36 (focusing on Italy and the provinces); cf. 149–55 for *collocatanei* (children, sometimes of very different social status, breastfed by the same woman).

⁷¹ On slave playmates, note Sen. *Ep.* 12, where during a visit to one of his suburban estates Seneca fails to recognise an elderly slave who had been his playmate when young. For foster-children, see Rawson 1986a; Bellemore and Rawson 1990; Rawson 2003: 250–9.

⁷² For these male slave child-carers, see Bradley 1991b.

literate slave teachers capable of doing this job among his domestic slaves (Plut. *Cato the Elder* 20). It was only once children had emerged from childhood and were ready to take their place as adolescents (*adulescentes*) that their regular association and identification with members of the slave *familia* came to an end. This is not to say that they did not recall with evident fondness their slave-companions and slave-carers from these early years. Pliny provided his former nurse with an estate worth 100,000 sesterces and poignantly recalled in a letter how Minicia Marcella, who had died just before her thirteenth birthday, 'used to love her nurses (*nutrices*), child-minders (*paedagogi*) and teachers (*praeceptores*) as was appropriate to the status of each of them'. A number of surviving epitaphs confirm the strength of the emotional bonds that the freeborn developed with their slave playmates, wet nurses and childminders, and such feelings were often mutual, to judge from the memorials that childminders set up to their former charges.⁷³ But the key point is that Roman children were very much associated, both conceptually and in routine daily life, with the slaves of the household in their early years. Slaves played an important role in their emotional development, but there came a time when freeborn Romans were expected to have outgrown their dependence on the slave household. They were then ready to take their place in the world of freeborn Roman citizens. This was when a father started to play a greater role in his son's education, especially his moral training, and to supervise his son's entry into public life.⁷⁴

CONCLUSION

Each year in December slave-owners joined together with their freeborn kin and their slaves to celebrate the festival of the Saturnalia in the family home. Masters exchanged gifts with their slaves, reclined at the same table to eat and drink with them and obediently submitted to their slaves' commands, especially those issued by the slave appointed 'prince of the Saturnalia' (*Saturnalicus princeps*). Slaves were even allowed to indulge in some verbal abuse of their masters. For these few days of convivial merriment, the habitual order of things within the household was inverted. Festive licence ruled, symbolised by the wearing of 'liberty caps' (*pillei*). These were customarily worn by slaves at the moment of their manumission, but their use by slaves and their masters too at the Saturnalia emphasised the temporary liberation from normality that the festival engendered. At another festival,

⁷³ Minicia Marcella: Plin. *Ep.* 5.16; cf. *CIL* 6.16631 = *ILS* 1030 for her precise age at death. For memorials set up for and by childminders and nurses, see the articles of Bradley cited in nn. 70 and 72; for representations of nurses and *paedagogi* in funerary art, George 2000.

⁷⁴ On the various phases in a child's education, see Rawson 2003: 146–209, 225 (father's role).

held each year on 1 March, slave mistresses served their slaves special meals at the Matronalia and, as we have already seen, slaves were also included in family offerings at the Compitalia in December or January.⁷⁵ All these festivals underlined the centrality of slaves to the wellbeing of the family and the importance of integrating them ritually within the households to which they belonged. By temporarily releasing slaves from their position of subservience, these festivals may also have helped to reduce the sort of tensions that built up, as we have seen, within a Roman household: in particular, the tension between slave-owners and their slaves, but also the stress that arose between individual slaves living in close physical proximity to one another and the strains that slaves on occasion caused for the freeborn members of the family. However, these relatively brief moments when the normal rules of the slave condition were relaxed may often have served only to emphasise to the slaves the bitter and enduring reality of their subordination.

Some slaves – as a result of their skills, their hard work or simply their good looks – could rise up the slave hierarchy of the *familia*, eventually coming to control slaves of their own and even obtaining their freedom. Some could win the genuine affection of their masters or mistresses. But countless thousands laboured on rural estates far beyond the gaze of their masters, with little chance of improving their lot unless they impressed the estate-manager (*vilicus*) sufficiently for him to put in a good report with the master. So in seeking to assess the influence of slaves on the Roman family, we need to bear in mind the vast divergences in their working conditions and individual situations within the slave hierarchy. What does seem clear is that slaves did make the lives of the families to which they belonged very much more complicated, and in many cases, especially within the urban household, they had the power to affect intra-family relationships in a manner that far belied their lowly legal status.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Many of the best recent works on the Roman family include some discussion of slavery (note especially Dixon 1992 and Bradley 1991a; more briefly Hanson 1999), as do a number of contributions in the many volumes of essays now available on the Roman family: Rawson (1986b); Andreau and Bruhns (1990); Rawson (1991); Kertzer and Saller (1991); Rawson and Weaver (1997); Dixon (2001); Balch and Osiek (2003), with much discussion of non-Christian families despite its title; George (2005). More specific treatments of aspects of Roman family life, such as Rawson (2003)

⁷⁵ Saturnalia: see Versnel 1993: 136–227 (esp. 150–63). Matronalia: *RE* 14.2 (1930), col. 2306–9 (S. Weinstock). See further Bradley 1979: 113; 1987b: 42–3. Compitalia: see above, p. 338.

on childhood, Treggiari (1991) on marriage or Parkin (2003) on old age, also include important discussions of slavery, as do studies focusing on Roman women: for example, Fantham *et al.* (1994), Gardner (1986b) and D'Ambra (2007).

Conversely, two of the most important recent studies of Roman slavery (Bradley 1984 and 1994) contain much illuminating material on the place of urban and rural slaves within the family. Treggiari (1969b) and Fabre (1981) remain the best treatments available on freedmen and freedwomen. More specific analysis of the relationship between slaves and freeborn members of the family may be found in Saller (1987), (2003) and Martin (2003).

Crook (1967b) and Gardner (1986b) and (1998) provide useful discussions of Roman family law (and note Evans Grubbs (1995) on the later Roman Empire), while Watson (1987) analyses the main features of Roman slave law in a clear and digestible manner. Frier and McGinn (2003) and Evans Grubbs (2002) are useful sourcebooks on Roman family law, with helpful commentary. For stimulating discussion of the literary representation of slavery within the household, it is well worth consulting Fitzgerald (2000) and, for more specific studies, McCarthy (2000), focusing on the plays of Plautus, Hopkins (1993) on Aesop, Veyne (1961) on Petronius' Trimalchio, and Bradley (2000a) and (2000b), both on Apuleius.

As for more particular topics covered in this chapter, the best discussion of the complexities of the Latin term *familia* remains Saller (1984, lightly revised at Saller 1994: 74–101). On large aristocratic domestic slave households in Rome, see Treggiari (1973), (1975a), (1975b) and Hasegawa (2005). For slaves born within the household (*vernae*), consult Hermann-Otto (1994); for concubinage, Rawson (1974) and Friedl (1996). Flory (1978) and Treggiari (1981) provide detailed studies, based largely on epigraphic evidence, of the quasi-marital unions (*contubernia*) that slave-owners sometimes permitted among their slaves. For slaves as wet nurses and child minders, Bradley (1986b) and many of the essays in Bradley (1991a) remain central; note also Joshel (1986). Domestic religion, and the participation of household slaves in it, is a topic badly in need of further research to supersede Orr (1978) and Harmon (1978). Warrior (2006, esp. ch. 3) provides no more than a brief introduction. For slaves and domestic space, the contributions of Wallace-Hadrill (1988, 1994 and 2003) and George (1997a, 1997b, 2007) are required reading. A number of recent studies throw light on the place of slaves in the sexual politics of the household: Kolendo (1981), Evans Grubbs (1993), Hopkins (1993), Williams (1999, esp. 30–8) and Laes (2003). For the role of slaves in the economic activities of the household, see Joshel (1992), Saller (2003), Kirschenbaum (1987), Aubert (1994) and John Bodel's chapter in this volume.

CHAPTER 17

RESISTING SLAVERY AT ROME

KEITH BRADLEY

The orator Pupius Piso, wishing to avoid being unnecessarily disturbed, ordered his slaves to answer his questions but not add anything to their answers. He then wanted to give a welcome to Clodius, who was holding office, and gave instructions that he should be invited to dinner. He set up a splendid feast. The time came, the other guests arrived, Clodius was expected. Piso kept sending the slave who was responsible for invitations to see if he was coming. Evening came; Clodius was despaired of. 'Did you invite him?' Piso asked his slave. 'Yes.' 'Then why didn't he come?' 'Because he declined.' 'Then why didn't you tell me?' 'Because you didn't ask.' Such is the way of the Roman slave!

This anecdote is recorded by Plutarch (*Moralia* 511d–e) of M. Pupius Piso, the consul of 61 BC. It may not be literally true. But if it has any plausibility at all, which it must, it suggests that slave-owners in the Roman world of Plutarch's era were well aware that their slaves could present challenges to their authority at any time and even place them, if only for a frustrating moment, in a position of powerlessness they normally expected their slaves alone to occupy. To express and circulate the idea that a slave could crushingly embarrass his master by obeying his instructions to the letter was to acknowledge that slaves were capable of resisting slavery.

Like chattel slaves in other periods of history, Roman slaves were deracinated, disempowered beings who enjoyed no personal or social identity other than that which derived from association with their owners. They were permitted no formal ties of kinship and, lacking all legal personality and rights, were forcibly held at their owners' discretion in shameful, infantilising subjection. Varro (*On the Latin Language* 9.55, 59) said that their lack of a *gentilicium* rendered slaves virtually devoid of gender, Valerius Maximus (6.2.8) that they could never remove slavery's smell, Augustine (*City of God* 19.18) that theirs was a condition of unimaginable ill. The relationship between master and slave was by definition asymmetrical, comparable to that between a tyrant and his subjects (Philostratus, *Life of Apollonius* 7.42). But as Plutarch's story suggests, it was not altogether

one-sided. Slaves were human chattels, and human agency could manifest itself in the relationship from moment to moment. Unlike the animals to which they were often compared, slaves were not easily manipulable, but had to be managed with thought and discretion to make sure that they did what was required of them, through rewards (*munera*) and punishments (*poenae*) in the vocabulary of the moralist Seneca (*To Marcia* 10.6). The relationship between master and slave was one therefore that on both sides involved constant adjustment, refinement and negotiation. It was a contest of wills, a psychological struggle for power in which the energies of both sides were constantly implicated.

Resistance is a category of analysis that historians of slavery commonly employ to refer to acts of defiance and protest by which slaves, not only at Rome but in all slave societies, contested the presumptive right of slave-owners to demand services from and impose claims upon them, the claim of labour included. It is often set against a contrasting category of accommodation, a term commonly used to refer to forms of behaviour showing how slaves accepted or acquiesced in their enslavement. Sometimes accommodation is understood to have incorporated subtle modes of subversive behaviour and to have constituted a form of resistance in its own right, clandestine, purposefully concealed activities that while less potentially threatening to the slaves who undertook them were motivated by the same spirit of opposition to enslavement visible in more open and dangerous acts of defiance and protest. In either case resistance is a concept that usefully structures answers to the question of how slaves responded to slavery.

Regrettably there is little evidence from Roman slaves themselves that allows direct views of their responses to slavery to be seen. Rome produced no Frederick Douglass or Harriet Jacobs to give detailed accounts of slaves' experiences of life in slavery – or if it did, the accounts have not survived. The history of Roman slavery depends instead on sources of information that overwhelmingly represent the views of the slave-owning classes, and this means that any attempt to penetrate the mind of the slave – a necessary condition for explaining slave behaviour – has to be largely a matter of inference. In late antiquity Augustine (*Confessions* 9.8) recorded that his mother had once suffered an insulting reproach from a female slave. The incident occurred in the family wine cellar where a quarrel had broken out between the two women. Monica, who was young at the time, was a secret drinker and the slave chastised her for her misbehaviour, with words all the more bitter, Augustine said, because they came from someone who as a slave was more or less an enemy (the conjunction of ideas is notable). Monica was stung into abandoning her bad habit. But precisely why the slave taunted her to begin with was a mystery: either she was angry and

wanted to hurt Monica, or else she was afraid of being punished if it were later revealed that she had not disclosed Monica's guilty secret. The story as Augustine tells it must work to his mother's credit, and he tells it carefully. But the fact that he offered two explanations of the slave's behaviour shows plainly enough that he did not know, and never could have known, what was in the woman's mind when the interchange took place; his explanations only project what he thought likely and must have depended on what his mother told him long after the event itself. The slave woman could have had an altogether different view of things, but there is no way of seeing it. The story serves as a paradigmatic illustration therefore that the intentions behind Roman slaves' actions can only be inferred from the record of events, which means that a certain degree of speculation must always surround any reconstruction of slave activity. When a slave kept for the sole purpose of amusing an owner and his guests with smart verbal cracks was at his most impudent, and, it seemed to Seneca (*On Constancy* 11.3), most entertaining, who knows what was happening in the slave's mind? Was the slave simply doing the job expected of him, or was he covertly expressing through his work opposition to the man who owned him? Who was exploiting whom? Or again, when the slaves who carried Fronto (*Letters to M. Caesar* 5.44) to the baths in his sedan chair and caused a painful injury to his knee, was it just a matter of chance, or had the slaves wilfully conspired to inflict harm on their master under the guise of an accident?

The main period of concern in this chapter is the roughly four and a half centuries of Roman history from the age of the elder Cato to the age of the Severans, when chattel slaves comprised perhaps a quarter to a third of the population of Rome and Italy, with vast but strictly indeterminate numbers engaged principally in agriculture, mining and domestic service. (There is no indication at any time in this period that slaves were in short supply.) Elsewhere in the Roman Mediterranean the proportion of slaves in the overall population was smaller, and numbers varied from region to region. Slaves were more visible in some quarters than others. The ideology and practice of slave-owning prevailed everywhere, however, and no area was immune to its influence or completely free from it. The passage of slaves through their cities, towns and countryside for disposal in the Roman heartland must always have been a common sight for many of Rome's provincial subjects.

The most obvious way in which slave resistance presents itself in this period is in the record of slave revolts, the most famous, or infamous, of which was the revolt led by the gladiator Spartacus in 73 BC. Spartacus and a group of followers broke out of a gladiatorial training-school at Capua, attracted massive support from rural slaves in central Italy, and quickly converted a small act of rebellion into a major war against Rome that came

to involve thousands of rebels. Or so the course of events was seen by the authors of the narratives of the uprising that still survive. Organising themselves along paramilitary lines, for two years the slaves held on to a tenuous freedom won by their initial acts of insurgence and defeated both the local and the metropolitan forces despatched against them. Their successes in battle were so great that at one point they threatened Rome directly. The appointment, however, of M. Licinius Crassus (cos. 70 BC) in 72 to lead the Roman war effort proved a turning point. With a major legionary force at his disposal, Crassus systematically wore down and finally defeated the slaves in southern Italy. Spartacus himself died in battle, and Crassus, notoriously, crucified 6,000 of his supporters along the Appian Way between Capua and Rome.

Spartacus' aims can be perceived now only dimly. Notions made popular by Howard Fast's romantic novel of 1951 and the Stanley Kubrick film that followed, that Spartacus wished to abolish slavery and create a utopian classless society in which equality, including equality between men and women, was the watchword, have little foundation in fact. Freedom from the brutality of enslavement was the initial motivation for revolt, and in all likelihood Spartacus' intent was to maintain freedom for as many as possible as long as possible. (The powerfulness of the desire to be free should never be underestimated.) This objective, however, was rendered difficult by the great dimensions of the uprising, which as far as can be told were completely fortuitous and never foreseen or planned by the original insurgents at Capua. The volatile political and military conditions of first-century Italy probably facilitated escalation of the movement, but in the event Spartacus was unable to exercise full control over the astonishingly high numbers of slaves who joined him, and unanimity of purpose proved impossible to achieve.

Spartacus' revolt was not the first large-scale uprising of slaves with which Rome had to contend. Two similar slave wars occurred in Sicily in the later second century BC, both of which involved huge numbers of slaves and both of which required a substantial Roman military response. Again, however, there is little sign that either revolt was well co-ordinated or planned from the outset as a general insurrection of all Sicilian slaves: each began as a localised uprising that developed almost spontaneously into a larger action according to the extant accounts. On both occasions the rebels were able to turn themselves into an efficient fighting force, and, adopting methods and strategies comparable to those of slave maroons in later history, held out for several years against the armies Rome sent to quash them. They concentrated their energies in such mountain fastnesses as Enna and Tauromenium, ideal features of the Sicilian landscape for maroon-styled tactics (as in another context were the Pyrenees [Caesar, *Civil War* 3.19]), but in both cases Roman military might

ultimately and inevitably prevailed. The variegated character of the slave population, the prevalence of large numbers of first-generation slaves, and the harsh conditions resulting from intense exploitation of the local agrarian economy were factors that contributed to the scale of the insurrections. But again as far as can be told, the rebels' intentions were only to extricate themselves from slavery, not to alter in any fundamental way existing social and economic structures; as in the case of Spartacus' revolt, there were no calls for ending slavery.

Other episodes of revolt occurred through the course of Roman history, but on a much smaller scale. The murder of L. Minucius Basilus (praet. 45 BC), one of Caesar's assassins, reported by Appian (*Civil Wars* 3.98), is one example, the murder of the praetorian senator Larcus Macedo in AD 108 described by the younger Pliny (*Letters* 3.14) is another. Both were assaults on slave-owners who were believed to have been excessively cruel, a motive commonly understood to produce a violent reaction in slaves even if assailants faced the risk of subsequent execution (on the cross, for instance [cf. Sen. *On Clemency* 1.26.1]). There were probably many other similar attacks to judge from the passage under Augustus of the *senatus consultum Silanianum*, a senatorial decree later modified under Nero and several other emperors that established rules for legal cases in which slaves were alleged to have killed their owners. In the event of a slave-owner's death, all the slaves in a given household were with few exceptions liable to torture until the offenders were discovered, and in the meantime the owner's will remained unopened so that no slave could or would benefit from it. If the will provided for the manumission of certain slaves, they could be subjected to torture anyway and be punished as necessary. Even those slaves owned separately by a victim's wife were liable to examination. The extreme severity of the legal provisions is notable and perhaps points to a certain deterrent value in the senatorial decree. But developed and extended as its harsh provisions were, the law points above all to what can only be taken as genuine and reasonably frequent assaults by slaves on slave-owners, and to the practical steps that had to be taken once assaults proved murderous. To slave-owners, it appears, slaves were always a threat to life and limb, and owners were always alert to the possibility of revolt. Seneca (*Clem.* 1.24.1) tells of a proposal that was once made in the senate to make slaves easily recognisable by having them wear distinctive clothing – at Rome slavery was not associated with skin colour of course – but the idea was abandoned once the senators realised that, if implemented, the proposal would make slaves conscious of their numbers and induce them to make common cause against their owners. The anecdote hints at the permanent state of hostility that some thought existed between slave-owner and slave (cf. Sen. *Moral Epistles* 4.8.), at the equation that was often made between slaves and enemies (cf. Dionysius of Halicarnassus 10.59.6; Sen.

Ep. 18.14, 47.5; August. *Conf.* 9.8.), and at a constant awareness of the potential in slaves for violent resistance to slavery.

The anxiety detectable in Seneca's story must sometimes have become almost palpable. Livy (4.44.13–4.45.2) and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (12.6.(6); cf. 5.51.3, 5.53.3–4) wrote, more or less simultaneously, of a plot slaves were thought to have once formed in Rome's early history to secure the Capitol and other key points of the city, first setting fires at night to divert attention, then appealing to slaves throughout the city to seize their freedom, kill their owners, and assume possession of their owners' wives and property. The historicity of the event is dubious. But the report might well be taken as evidence of a chronic suspicion of revolt – and of how revolt was thought likely to unfold – that was deeply embedded in Roman society of the central historical age. From an establishment point of view, the report had a reassuring and even comforting end: the plot was betrayed from within and the chief culprits were crucified. But this was hardly enough to dispel the fear that trouble might erupt at any moment. Livy elsewhere (21.41.10) makes clear that it was insulting for a free man to be attacked by a slave, and that he should respond indignantly and angrily. Assault was predictable. The slave-owner as much as the slave could pose the question: 'Should slaves be obedient to their masters or refuse the wishes of those that possess their bodies?' (Philostr. *VA* 7.42).

For present purposes the most significant point about the record of revolt is that it provides unambiguous evidence that slavery was resisted. Some slaves at Rome under some circumstances found the means to contest the authority of slave-owners directly, no matter what the threats to personal safety. But whereas no one could forecast when a distressed slave might attack a slave-owner in the heat of the moment, slaves could calculate as well as anyone else that to plan revolt was to enter dangerous territory: the risks of betrayal and the prospects of adverse effects, in the event of failure, on family relations for instance were high. In the slave regimes of the New World, except for the single case of the rebellion led by Toussaint L'Ouverture in St Domingue at the end of the eighteenth century, insurrection of a revolutionary kind was unknown and revolt at large was sporadic rather than constant, a desperate strategy likely to result in punishment or death. So too at Rome. As the New World record also makes clear, however, there were less dangerous methods of expressing discontent, by running away, by sabotaging property and by finding ways to deceive slave-owners. These methods are equally noticeable in the Roman record.

One illustration of the high profile in everyday Roman life of running away appears in a title of the *Digest* (11.4) headed 'De fugitivis' – *fugitivi* being the usual, and pejorative, Latin word for runaway slaves. The title is only a fragment of the full body of Roman law that dealt with

fugitive slaves, but as a sample it is enough to point to the sorts of circumstance that running away involved, and to show the limits of what can be understood.

The law considered a thief, and thus criminally liable, any person who harboured a runaway slave. Under penalty of a fine, farm bailiffs and private estate agents (*procuratores*) were forbidden to protect runaways and to allow them to enter wooded areas; the fugitives were to be surrendered to owners or civic officials within a period of twenty days. A person who refused to allow his property to be searched or who found fugitives on his land and did not expose them was also subject to a fine; and a person who apprehended a runaway had to hand the slave over in public to civic authorities. Searches for runaways could be conducted by military or civilian personnel, and civic magistrates were obliged to co-operate with those investigating. A provincial governor was likewise required to assist a slave-owner pursuing runaways on a third party's property by giving him a letter authorising entry and use of an assistant if necessary. The governor could penalise any landowner who refused to give permission to enter, and the property of all social classes was subject to search, including that of the emperor and members of the senate. A slave-owner wishing to return apprehended runaways and to punish those who had harboured them was entitled to assistance from provincial governors, civic officials and troops, who together with harbour-masters had powers of arrest and were obliged to guard recaptured runaways carefully in order to prevent further escape, with chains if needed. Runaways who had been recaptured were to be brought before the *praefectus vigilum* or a provincial governor, returned to their owners and, if they had pretended to be free while at large, punished severely. To help magistrates apprehend them, the law said that physical descriptions and owners' names were to be posted in public places and temples, with special attention to identifying features such as scars.

Evidence such as this does not allow the incidence of flight by Roman slaves to be measured statistically; but the mere existence of law establishing procedures for dealing with runaways is enough to indicate the seriousness of flight as a social issue. The various provisions suggest that runaway slaves were expected to appear in any and all regions of the Roman world, and that sympathetic third parties could be expected to render aid and assistance at any time – which is interesting as a reflection perhaps of how widely attitudes towards slavery may have differed in society as a whole. Equally, however, the law created the firm expectation, if not obligation, that all respectable members of society were to co-operate in capturing fugitives and restoring them to their owners, asserting thereby the primacy of conventional property rights no matter what a nuisance it was, as Columella noted (*On Agriculture* 1.5.7), to have someone travelling across a private estate.

Viewed from the perspective of the slave, the law also communicates a sense of how fraught the enterprise of running away was. Advantageous collusion with harbourers was possible, it seems, and difficulties in implementing the law might sometimes have worked in slaves' favour: institutional resources for ensuring that the law was carried out effectively were always relatively limited at Rome. Also, the law recognised that runaways might claim to be free, a claim presumably based on real experience, and evidently enough skin colour was not an automatic impediment to successful escape for Roman runaways, as it was for slaves in the New World. Overall, however, the chance of betrayal must have been high in view of the penalties stipulated for concealing them, while the prospects of help from third parties, and of success in general, cannot often have seemed great in view of the constraints on the free to collaborate in finding and capturing fugitives. Also, because of the powers of search the law allowed, runaway slaves cannot have failed to know that pursuit was inevitable and that discovery would mean re-enslavement if not more extreme consequences. Flight may have been less dangerous than revolt, but it was dangerous nonetheless.

Whether Roman law accurately reflects historical norms or simply refers to bizarre oddities or possibilities is always a question to be considered. One provision on flight (*Dig.* 11.4.1.5) stipulates that a child born to a fugitive slave woman was not to be considered a runaway slave, while a second (*Dig.* 11.4.5) states that runaways remained under the authority (*potestas*) of their owners even if they volunteered to fight in the arena, and that they had to be returned to their owners – presumably on detection – because they might have embezzled money from or committed some other crime against them that needed redress. Both provisions exemplify the sort of close attention to detail that Roman jurists relished. One real case of a runaway slave woman giving birth to a child might have been enough to produce the first provision, and one real case of a runaway volunteering to fight in the amphitheatre might have been enough to produce the second. But both items could equally well have presented themselves to jurists as matters of speculation alone. It is impossible to tell. On balance, the law's assumption that flight was a common problem that from time to time could involve very complicated circumstances seems more important than any particular circumstances described, but there is surely also an inherent plausibility to the two sets of circumstances underlying the provisions even if specific cases were rare.

What cannot be recovered at all, from the law or any other evidence, is the inner debate about the decision to flee that many Roman slaves who ran away must have had with themselves, or the debates that might be imagined they had with one another or with sympathisers. Hints emerge in the sources of the immediate causes of a decision to run away – perhaps a

flogging that was the proverbial last straw – but it is a different matter with the calculations and preparations for flight that must often have been necessary. Did slaves for instance think of the slave-catchers who would be sent to pursue them? How would they make contact with potential harbourers, or plan to evade detection by city magistrates, troops and provincial officials? How would they decide on a destination to which to flee? Did they consider what it would be like to wear one of the iron collars that were placed around the necks of recaptured runaways if they were caught, advertising the fact that they had once tried to escape? Questions like this are raised in Apuleius' novel, the *Metamorphoses* (6.26), when an opportunity for running away from his owners presents itself to Apuleius' comically deliberating slave-like ass (the transformed hero, Lucius): 'But where in the world will your flight be directed? And who will provide sanctuary for you?' They have enormous point. In the absence of direct testimony from slaves, Lucius' fictional dilemma is helpful for understanding the dilemma of the slave who was on the verge of running away, no matter what its comic character.

It is here, also, if only for imaginative purposes, that comparative material from New World slave societies proves useful, particularly accounts of flight produced by men and women who had once themselves been slaves. The autobiographical *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* is a case in point. Henry Brown was born of slave parents in Virginia in the early nineteenth century. As a child and youth, he lived with his family in comfortable circumstances in the ownership of a relatively caring and generous master. But on the owner's death, the estate of which he was a part was divided among the owner's several sons, and Brown found himself separated from his parents and siblings, experiencing for the first time, as he wrote in his work, the intense emotional pain and suffering that slavery was always likely to cause. A second incident some years later when he had grown up and had a family of his own proved a turning point in his life. Brown returned to his house in Richmond one day from the tobacco factory where he worked to find that his wife and their children had been sold and were about to be taken away to North Carolina – despite his owner's promise that he and his wife would never be parted. Taken away his wife and children were, and Brown witnessed their agonising departure. Shortly afterwards he determined to avenge their loss by running away. He knew that he could secure freedom if he escaped to the North or to Canada. The question was how to do it without being caught. He hit on the ingenious idea of mailing himself in a crate to Philadelphia, and with the help of sympathisers carried out his plan on 29 March, 1849, travelling the 350 miles from Richmond in a wooden box and miraculously surviving the journey of twenty-seven hours with just a little water to sustain him. Thereafter Brown made a living in the abolitionist cause by capitalising on his adventure, giving lectures

and composing the memoir of his life in slavery and his daring flight to freedom. A first edition was published in 1849 and a second in 1851. But Brown apparently never saw his wife and children again.

Like all slave narratives, the *Narrative of the Life of Henry Box Brown* is a highly tendentious work, designed to dramatise the horrors of slavery and to promote the cause of emancipation. Yet it allows resistance, and especially the human factors of familial disruption and forced separation that provoked resistance, to be understood in a way that sources produced by slave-owners cannot. Flight was a common activity in all New World slave regimes, well known, for example, from advertisements offering rewards for the return of runaways in newspapers from eighteenth-century Virginia and nineteenth-century Brazil, and consistently regarded by slave-owners as evidence of miscreant and irresponsible character on the part of those who fled. A slave narrative such as Brown's, however, reverses the negative images constructed by slave-owners and exposes a positive view of what flight involved from the slave's vantage point: the arrival of a moment when submission and its destructive consequences could no longer be tolerated; the power of the desire to live in freedom and security of person; the courage required to defy authority; the audacity needed to act. Despite its tendentiousness, Brown's writing humanises and justifies what might otherwise at best be regarded, superficially, as a slave's mere disobedience.

The Roman evidence on running away is copious, extending beyond references in law codes to a multiplicity of allusions in literature and notices of individual runaways preserved on papyrus that resemble the newspaper advertisements of more modern times. But there is nothing resembling the modern slave narrative, which means that a dimension of knowledge about slave behaviour is automatically lost to Roman historians. The motives prompting flight, however, can scarcely have been different from those of runaways in modern slave regimes, and the acts of flight themselves hardly less courageous. Roman slaves were physically and psychologically coerced like their modern counterparts, and as in New World societies their families lacked security and were broken by sale or the division of estates. Fronto (*Ad M. Caes.* 2.1) knew of the saying attributed to a fugitive messenger that, although he might have to run sixty miles for his master, he would run a hundred in order to free himself from slavery and the punishing conditions it imposed: the Roman slave's will to escape slavery that the saying implies can readily be granted. A richly detailed modern narrative such as that of Henry Brown can therefore serve a valuable purpose for understanding antiquity. The actions of Roman slaves that the sources portray no more than obliquely become more comprehensible as human actions when read against the narratives of later slaves who underwent comparable experiences and left a record of the emotional states and practical decisions surrounding

them. Brown's method of escape was unorthodox. But the moment of conscious resolution that instigated it, which in Brown's case was, as he tells it, almost like an act of religious conversion, was a moment that must surely have been commonly known in the Roman slave experience.

To draw on cross-cultural analogies in this way admittedly runs the risk of eliding important differences between ancient and modern societies – differences of time, place, scale and social values, not to mention the difference between racially and non-racially based slave-owning. There is also a danger of foisting onto the classical past an anachronistic and colonialist image of slavery. A distinction should be drawn, however, between superficial phenomena such as varying rates of manumission from one slave regime to another, and structural constants in the history of slavery at large such as the commodification of chattel slaves, their denial of kin ties, personhood and legal status. It is also important to recognise that comparison is valuable not only for highlighting similarities between historical societies, but also for detecting contrasts that can reveal the specific variations on a general historical theme. The historically unique and culturally specific features of individual slave societies obviously have to be kept in mind, but the advantage of a wider outlook can scarcely be gainsaid. A reductionist essentialism can be avoided even as the universal features of chattel slavery are recognised.

As noted already, slaves like Henry Brown who decided to run away knew that there was somewhere to run to where freedom could be gained and enjoyed. In Brown's case refuge in the North was, as it happened, jeopardised by the Fugitive Slave Act of 1850, and Brown found himself forced to move elsewhere. Canada could have been an option, but like the Jamaican fugitive Catherine Brown in Cyrus Francis Perkins' novel, *Busha's Mistress or Catherine the Fugitive* (evidently based on first-hand knowledge of slavery in the nineteenth-century Caribbean), Henry Brown judged England a more attractive destination and eventually took up residence there. In contrast, Roman slaves who ran away could never have known the assurance that there was a specific destination that would guarantee them freedom if they reached it. There was no region of the Mediterranean in which slave-owning was outlawed, and nothing is heard of a Roman underground railroad. Roman slaves' chances of passing as free may have been better than those of New World slaves, and runaways might well have formed communities like those of New World maroons: the career of the Greek slave Drimacus, known from Athenaeus (6.265c–266e), who founded a community of runaways on the island of Chios, suggests so, as does the elder Pliny's intriguing notice (*Natural History* 6.172–3) on the Ethiopian city of Adulis, on the western shore of the Red Sea, which, he says, was formed and populated by runaway slaves from Egypt. But in the

absence of any extensive intellectual or moral debate about the propriety of slavery, and in the absence of any physical area in which slavery was legally banned, in a very real sense there could be no escape for runaway slaves, no hope of permanent release. The freedom that flight conferred on the slave was always precarious, not legitimately acquired (cf. August. *Conf.* 3.3). To the extent, therefore, that running away was one of the most prevalent but hazardous forms of slave resistance in the Roman world, the actions of those who undertook it stand as an eloquent statement on the harshness of the institution they wished to flee, and on the motivating force of the will to reject slavery.

Next, theft. Some lines sung by slaves in Brazil capture very well the notion of how in the sharply asymmetrical relationship between master and slave the act of stealing was a matter of relative moral significance and depended on who was stealing from whom and why: 'The white man says: the black man steals. / The black man steals with good reason. / Mister white man also steals / When he makes us slave.' To the slave, as an act of revenge for the loss of freedom, theft could have no morally negative connotations and was perfectly justifiable as the result of 'good reason'.

Stealing from the master was one of the many activities that make up what historians of New World slavery commonly refer to as everyday resistance to slavery. They include wilful sabotage of property, deliberate dilatoriness at work, truancy, pretending to be ill, and other forms of deceit and dissimulation. They could be carried out with far less danger and risk to the wellbeing of slaves than revolt or escape, and they allowed slaves effectively to assert their independence. Success depended on slave-owners learning that their interests, especially their material interests, had been damaged in some way, but not necessarily knowing who among their slaves had caused the damage concerned; success depended, that is to say, on slaves outwitting masters in contests of ingenuity. Slaves were well aware of what was at issue. In a section of his autobiography, Frederick Douglass wrote that it was the slaves' habit when he was a field hand in Maryland to see who could take in the largest crop each day, the winner enjoying a certain claim to masculine distinction. But ultimately the realisation set in that male competitiveness, 'racing' as Douglass termed it, was counterproductive to the slaves' interests, because if through personal rivalry they increased the amounts of the crop collected, the amounts assigned them would be increased and they would all have to work harder; it was obviously best therefore to abandon racing altogether, and to work at a much slower pace if the workload were to be kept down. Such tactics of evasion that countless slaves adopted in the New World slave regimes were met with incessant complaints from their owners of slaves' congenital laziness, general unreliability and moral reprehensibility.

In the Roman slave system, there was a similar undercurrent of petty, everyday resistance to slavery. The evidence comes once more from sources that represent the attitudes of the slave-owning establishment, and it is highly prejudicial. It takes the form of constant complaints that slaves, of every type and description, were lazy and troublesome, that they were thieves, pilferers, arsonists, embezzlers, dissemblers and truants. Recall, for instance, the reference to slave gladiators as suspect embezzlers in the law on fugitives described earlier (*Dig.* 11.4.5); or notice Columella's dyspeptic remarks (*Rust.* 1.1.7, 1.1.20, 3.10.7, 7.4.2) on the examples of pillage, sabotage, unreliability and evasiveness to be found among farm slaves. The negligence of the *vilicus* on the farm was indeed proverbial (Val. Max. 4.1 ext. 1). There is Seneca's complaint (*On Anger* 3.34.1) that idle slaves were a stock cause of anger in slave-owners, the elder Pliny's characterisation (*HN* 33.26) of slaves' pilfering of food and wine as rapine, Plutarch's story (*Mor.* 759f–760a) of the slave who tried to steal his master's wine, or Martial's condemnation (11.54) of his poetic slave Zoilus as *fur* and *fugitivus*. Galen even complained (4IK) that domestics stole the books he had written. Every slave was a thief, it seemed, the perpetrator of *furta parva atque servilia* in Apuleius' pregnant phrase (*Met.* 4.8).

Evidently enough the representation of servile behaviour in statements like these is stigmatic, and not at all likely, to judge from Frederick Douglass' example, to match slaves' own views of their actions. The complaints were grounded on a real base of slave activity: many slaves over time did deceive and steal from their owners and cause all kinds of damage to their property. But it was not because of irresponsibility. The similarities between the actions of Roman slaves that underlie the querulous way their owners wrote about them and the actions taken by slaves in other slave regimes is so striking that there can be no doubt that they added up to small-scale resistance to Roman slavery on a major scale. Everyday resistance was an endemic feature of Roman slavery that exposed slaves to minimal danger while opening up ways to express frustration, anger, revenge and other emotions that could not be expressed openly.

Two items are of special note. First, the elder Pliny's record (*HN* 14.78) of the Coan custom of adding seawater to a Greek wine called 'Bios' that was used for medicinal purposes, a practice whose origin Pliny attributed to a deceitful slave who had once put seawater into the wine he was making as a ruse to yield the quota of wine he had been ordered to produce. This is a precise parallel to the kinds of deceptive practices abundantly documented in the slave societies of the New World. It does not matter whether Pliny's explanation is true (and presumably it was a Greek slave who was the culprit here): its assumed plausibility is the significant point. The explanation could stand for Pliny and his Roman audience because Roman slave-owners expected trickery from their slaves and habitually

characterised what they saw, moralistically, as poor work performance. The 'failing', however, is better understood not in terms of an absolute morality, but of a standard of comportment slaves created as a response to slavery. It was the result not of weakness, but of decisions consciously taken to vex, annoy and defy slave-owners, to lighten workloads, to protest against servitude. It happened all the time.

Secondly, Columella's diatribe (*Rust.* 3.10.6–7), when giving instructions on how to take cuttings from a vine, against what he saw as the contemporary practice of giving the task to a useless slave who scarcely had the knowledge or was strong enough to do the job properly. Even if he had a modicum of knowledge, Columella said, the slave pretended otherwise because he was too physically weak to do the work; his sole concern was to finish the task, to meet the allocation assigned by the *vilicus*, which meant he was neither careful nor conscientious in doing what he had to do. Columella was writing, in the age of Nero, from personal experience of farm management, and his remarks have real credibility. Again, however, the question is not whether what he says was literally true, so much as how he construed the behaviour he had observed. The one-sided, moralistic stereotype of the conniving, irresponsible slave made sense to the slave-owning author and his audience. But the action, or inaction, underlying the stereotype is again better and preferably understood as the result of a deliberate choice by slaves not to perform as instructed, in order to save themselves unnecessary labour and to withstand their owners (or their owners' surrogates) at the same time. Slaves, after all, must often have had little or no personal stake or interest in the work they did. Seneca said (*Ira* 3.29.1) that newly enslaved prisoners of war, mindful of the freedom they had recently lost and hardly able to adjust to their sudden reversal of fortune, refused to work at all.

Frustratingly little can be seen of slaves making decisions about their work performance or indeed of their general comportment towards those they served. But there are indications that suggest something of what was involved. Seneca (again) once rhetorically asked (*Ira* 3.24.2), 'What right have I to make my slave atone with beatings and manacles for too loud a reply, too rebellious a look, a muttering of something I do not quite hear?' Implying that slaves should not be punished unjustifiably, from pique or irritation, the question is superficially laudable, the mark of a man devoted to self-improvement through the management of temper. But imagine the quandary of the philosopher's slave (and Seneca was a slave-owner): how, when performing a service about which he normally had no choice, did the slave calculate whether the pitch of his voice or a facial expression would please the owner or drive him into a rage? In every aspect of comportment, the slave had to anticipate the owner's reaction, and an error of judgement could bring severe and horrible retribution. Seneca himself came close

to seeing the dilemma. But exploring the psychology of the relationship between slave and master, as the slave understood it, had no appeal to him, or anyone else. If Roman slavery is to be fully understood, however, the balance has to be redressed and the acknowledgement made that slaves always had to contend with the pressure of anticipating their owners' reactions to the most ordinary forms of human intercourse. It cannot have helped when they heard the lament, as it appears in a deliciously cynical poem from Martial (9.92), that the obligations which flowed from the possession of wealth and social standing made slave-owners' lives many times more burdensome than the lives of slaves. Slaves were simply expected to know their place, and that meant among other things imposing self-restrictions on their speech. Anything that smacked of insulting frankness towards a slave-owner was out of the question. But if, against expectation, a slave were suddenly set free, a dramatic contrast could occur, because language previously impossible to use immediately burst forth as restraint disappeared (Livy 39.26.8). Meantime it was politic certainly for slaves to avoid gossip: in the household of Augustine's mother, his father had some slaves flogged because they had caused a dispute between mother and mother-in-law through loose talk, and he promised more of the same if the gossip continued (*Conf.* 9.9). And yet, incongruously, some slaves were encouraged to be impertinent to their owners and their owners' guests, as a source of amusement (Sen. *Constant.* 11.3).

A story from Apuleius' *Metamorphoses* (8.31) suggests how the slave in real life might have experienced pressure. A desperate cook prepares to hang himself and mournfully bids farewell to his little son when a dog makes off with a choice piece of meat the cook is supposed to prepare for his master's dinner. Dejection and terror arise from the prospect of the master's angry response to his loss of a special meal, but happily the cook is saved from an untimely death by his wife's quick thinking: a substitute piece of meat can be found if a conveniently available ass (the ass of course who tells Apuleius' story) is slaughtered. A fiction, quite clearly, and no compelling reason therefore to believe that a slave cook was ever really driven to the panicky verge of self-destruction like this. Except that Apuleius' story has much in common with a medical case-history recorded by Galen (*De praecognitione* 6.11–13), in which a wealthy man's steward has fallen into a state of agonised distress because his owner was due to review with him the financial accounts for which the steward was responsible. Preparing for his owner's arrival, the slave, an older man with an evidently strong sense of responsibility, had discovered that a sum of money was missing. He fell into a state of debilitating anxiety as a result, and grew worse as he anticipated the coming day of reckoning. Recourse to suicide is not mentioned, but the state of anxiety into which Apuleius' cook and Galen's steward fell is essentially the same, and there is every reason to think that

the steward's experience was common among the Roman slave population at large, especially among those whose occupations brought them into direct personal contact with their owners. (Galen was able of course to cure the steward, which is the only reason why the incident is known.) This is once more the world of Plutarch's anecdote about the slave of Pupius Piso, though a world where humour has given way to stern realism. Galen's slave had to face what Apuleius calls *erilis . . . comminatio* (*Met.* 9.19), the threat of both psychological and physical force that the slave-owner embodied and that was part of every slave's life. Coping with this threat was a prime cause of slave resistance.

Suicide was the ultimate means of resisting slavery, the one incontestable way to deprive slave-owners of their power and property. It is well documented in the wider, global history of slavery. In the early eighteenth century, an Italian Jesuit advising sugar planters on slave management in Brazil admitted that suicide was a foolproof way for recaptured runaways to avoid punishment, and an American traveller of the mid-nineteenth century observed that in Rio de Janeiro reports of slave suicides were regularly issued by the police, but in disproportionate numbers:

Those who plunge into the Bay and float ashore come under the cognizance of the authorities. Of such as sink and never rise, and all that pass out to sea, or are devoured by sharks before they reach it, no account is or can be kept, nor yet of those who destroy themselves in the secret places of the city or dark recesses of the neighboring forests. Many are advertised as runaways who have reached the spirit land. Suicides, it is said, have greatly increased during the last three years.

Conversely, and against expectation, an Austrian merchant travelling to the Sudan in the mid-nineteenth century on a Turkish slave-raiding expedition commented on the unusual absence of suicide among the captives taken: 'They saw the impossibility of offering resistance, and became reconciled to their hard lot.' In this context Seneca's outburst (*Ira* 3.4.4), 'How many slaves a master's anger has driven to flight, how many to death!', should not be dismissed as rhetoric but taken as an accurate reflection – and again almost a depressingly sympathetic recognition on Seneca's part – of the extremes to which Roman slaves were sometimes driven by slavery. (Glimpses of what could physically happen are occasionally allowed by Roman jurists when they speak of situations in which slaves threw themselves down from a height.) Seneca (*Ep.* 4.4; cf. 70.19–26; *Marc.* 20.2) imagines suicide as a final means to escape a slave-owner's distemper or to avoid recapture after running away: a self-inflicted death lightened the captive's chains and set the slave free whether the master liked it or not.

Prisoners of war in the Roman world seem regularly, and grimly, to have preferred death to enslavement. In Augustine's view (*De civ. D.* 18.12),

the will to survive was a fundamental feature of human nature, so in defeat submission to the enemy was the choice to recommend over death. But Cassius Dio (72.14.2) reports that under Caracalla a group of captive German women informed the emperor that they would rather be executed than sold as slaves, and when Caracalla did in fact sell them the women committed suicide en masse, some killing their children as well. (Compare the striking remark of a nineteenth-century Sitka captive woman: 'It is just as well to die as to be enslaved', and note Plut. *Mor.* 242d of a Spartan woman.) The report has parallels in other war accounts and indicates at the very least the plausibility of suicide by prisoners of war who were suddenly thrust into slavery. Scenes of Dacian prisoners on the Column of Trajan killing themselves point in the same direction: sculptors, or their patrons, knew what a Roman audience would find credible.

Roman slavery was a complex institution. The slave population was heterogeneous and its members provided labour and services of many different kinds. The range of slave statuses was enormous. At one extreme there were those, under the Principate, belonging to the emperor who were rich, influential and far better situated materially than much of the free population. Galen (50K) noted the paradoxical circumstance, which he ascribed to the operations of Fortune, that even a slave could be much wealthier than the respectably freeborn. At the opposite extreme there were those who provided heavy labour for agriculture and mining, whose living conditions were by any standards miserable and whose prospects of longevity were minimal. In between, status was controlled by many factors: the slave's location in an urban or rural environment, the relative standing in the household hierarchy, the education or skill level required for the work done or service provided, the degree of proximity to the owner, sex, age and reputation. The results could be bizarre. Drusillanus Rotundus, a slave who held an imperial administrative position in Spain under Claudius, was remembered long after his death for his magnificent silver plate, as the elder Pliny records (*HN* 33.145; cf. 34.160). In a burial *collegium* such as that of Diana and Antinous at Lanuvium (*ILS* 7212), slave members reclined at dinner in the company of the free (and freed), as if there were no distinction between them – and provision was made for a special celebration to mark a slave's manumission: the slave was required to provide an amphora of good wine. Over time many Roman slaves who were set free prospered, having apparently suffered no ill consequences from their experiences as slaves, and as their epitaphs and funerary monuments above all show (in the thousands), they integrated themselves into Roman society with ease and often in turn became slave-owners themselves. The freedman C. Furius Chresimus, known also from Pliny (*HN* 18.41–3), stood out for his exceptional success as an independent farmer and the good care he showed the slaves he himself possessed. The phenomenon of the ex-slave

who himself became a slave-owner is the ultimate symbol of the structural centrality of slavery in Roman society, which as far as can be told never aroused opposition even among those who were its victims.

To concentrate on slave resistance in isolation, therefore, is to risk minimising or blurring Roman slavery's complexity and presenting an overly schematic impression of historical reality. Rome's slaves cannot all be lumped together, regarded as a cohesive, homogeneous class, imagined as always occupied in acts of resistance. Such notions are far too simplistic. At any moment there must have been thousands of slaves who unquestioningly obeyed their owners as they were expected to, or in whom consent, no matter how grudging, was elicited by the generous application of *munera* and the forceful infliction of *poenae*. Consent and coercion went hand in hand. The evidence leaves no doubt, however, that there was a deeply textured pattern of resistance in the fabric of relations between Roman slaves and slave-owners, that consent, coercion and resistance were threads woven inextricably together all of a piece, and that the modes of resistance can now be arranged in a typology that runs from grand-scale revolt of the Spartan kind to the simple time-wasting and shirking of which owners complained so much. Whether there developed as a result a slave subculture of the sort characteristic of New World slave societies it is difficult to tell, but among the members of large domestic households in the city of Rome, or among the members of contiguous rural *familiae*, it may not have been impossible. Race will not have bound people together as it did in later history. But there remains the tantalising hint in Phaedrus (3 *Prol.* 33–7), writing on the origin of the fable, of a secretive means of communication among slaves that assumes a special, and timeless, bond and understanding among them, no matter what the differences and distinctions.

Did modes of resistance change over time? After Spartacus there were no major slave revolts at Rome, which implies that the three major wars of the late Republican period were aberrant episodes, and that the idea of premeditated large-scale revolt was recognised as the least hopeful means of improving slaves' lives. Spontaneous violent actions arising from immediate acts of provocation could never of course be ruled out, and particular incidents captured the fearful imagination of historians and social commentators. Whether verbally or physically, the slave might lash out at a slave-owner at any time (cf. August. *De civ. D.* 21.11). Slave suicide was also to be anticipated at any moment and was perhaps frequent, but for obvious reasons the rate of self-destruction among slaves cannot be known. Flight, however, was seemingly common at all times if the distribution of surviving evidence is any guide at all to slave behaviour. It could be the case on a conventional view of Roman slave recruitment that running away was more prevalent under the middle and late Republic, when wars of conquest brought masses of first-generation slaves to Rome, than under the

Principate, when natural reproduction was an important supplier of new slaves, the reason being that first-generation foreign slaves were likely to try to return to the regions of the Mediterranean from which they had been torn, and, it could be argued, the political upheavals of the revolutionary age created special opportunities to do so. It is doubtful, however, that the pattern of slave recruitment over time can be reduced to a simple formula of importation on the one hand and natural reproduction on the other, and unquestionably there is an overwhelming amount of material on running away from the imperial age. Flight should be regarded accordingly as a persistent, largely unvarying form of slave resistance, though perhaps greater in volume at moments of political crisis or uncertainty, as suggested, for example, by Dionysius of Halicarnassus (5.26, 6.50.3, 7.1.2). The same is true of the activities that make up the category of everyday resistance. The guise of truculence under which petty resistance is coded in the sources is evident as early as the comedies of Plautus and never disappears from the literary and legal record: Plautus' *servus callidus* is Martial's *fallax ancilla* (11.49) and Ulpian's *servus onerosus* (*Dig.* 17.1.8.4). Once more, everyday resistance occurred every day.

Did resistance have an economic impact? In eighteenth-century Africa violent resistance to enslavement at the points where slaves were recruited reduced the numbers of Africans enslaved by as many as half a million and substantially increased the costs of the enslavement process. The impact of Roman slave resistance cannot be measured in a comparable way, but even on a rudimentary estimate there can be little doubt that its effects were felt. Roman slave-owners were sensitive to the costs of maintaining their slaves, who as property always represented an investment. Their views emerge as another set of highly charged complaints, this time complaints about the burdens of having to feed and clothe slaves (Sen., *On Tranquillity* 8.8; *Ep.* 17.3, 96.2), about the time that had to be spent in managing them (with punishments, for instance [Sen., *On the Shortness of Life* 3.2]), and about their inefficiency as a labour force (Plin. *HN* 18.21). Because slavery was maintained for such an enormously long time at Rome, it is unlikely that slave labour in the prime areas of agriculture and mining really was inefficient, in the sense that slave-owners repeatedly failed to draw enough profits from their operations for their own purposes; and the social capital that accrued to elite owners from maintaining large entourages of domestic slaves was in any case incalculable. The complaints nonetheless reflect the real expenses that slave-owning involved, the most serious of which was the loss caused by the death of a slave, which, as even Martial recognised (6.33), was a true catastrophe.

Another medical history from Galen (632–4K) offers a simple illustration of the practical issues concerned. A slave was injured in a wrestling-school as a result of a blow to his chest. There was damage to his sternum.

After four months the slave had not recovered. A surgeon performed an operation but infection set in. The slave's owner brought in other doctors, one of whom was Galen. He successfully removed the infected part of the sternum, though before operating he made it clear that he could not guarantee success, and at one point the slave's life seemed to hang in the balance. Eventually, however, the man made a full recovery and the owner's investment was saved. But during the period of injury and treatment, the outlay for maintenance and medical personnel was not matched by any obvious return. So there was a burden on the owner, and financial loss in a situation like this was inevitable.

Given the structural character of petty resistance within the Roman slavery system, slave-owners must always have had to reckon with a steady trickle of financial loss, no matter whether individual slaves consciously set out to inflict damage on their owners – whether from anger, hatred, desire for revenge, or simple mean-spiritedness – or to make their own material lives easier by supplementing their rations of food and clothing. Slaves themselves must often presumably have been unable to separate one strand from another in an intertwined bundle of motives. Those costs, moreover, would necessarily be raised when slaves ran away: arranging to recover fugitives with slave-catchers took a toll, and the services of runaways were obviously lost, at least temporarily, while they were at large. If not recovered, the slave property was lost altogether, and this was emphatically true when slaves committed suicide. The costs of damage to other forms of property have also to be factored in. Widespread negligence and shirking or malingering must have increased the costs of agricultural production; and when slaves burned down a suburban villa, as they did with a property belonging to M. Aemilius Scaurus, the praetor of 56 BC (Plin. *HN* 36.15), the impact had to be felt even by a rich senator. The provocative activities that hostile sources attribute to slaves – stealing grain from the threshing-floor, falsifying account books, feigning illness – had the permanent effect of eating away their masters' wealth.

From a modern perspective, every act that defied the authority of a slave-owner could be construed as an implicit rejection of slavery. But as far as can be told, the challenges to enslavement that Roman slaves mounted were not challenges to an institution so much as protests against the enslavement of individuals or groups. Resistance was directed towards mitigating the hardships of slavery, concerned with gaining respite and release and with damaging the interests of slave-owners, but not with changing the structure of society. Again, the willingness of former slaves to become slave-owners themselves is both noteworthy and remarkable, and it cannot be emphasised too strongly that the idea of abolishing slavery was a development unique to a much later age. It was not impossible at Rome of course to imagine a world without slavery. At the annual celebration of

the Saturnalia in December, everyone was reminded of that long ago and far away mythical Golden Age when all men had been equal and slavery did not exist. When slaves enjoyed the holiday feasts their masters provided, and sometimes even served, they had to be aware, perhaps disturbingly aware – how could they not be? – of the social inversion suddenly there in their midst, and of the possibility of a different life it revealed. Yet the briefly shining moment of the Saturnalia never seems to have inspired a true ideological challenge to slavery, an intellectual imperative on which to build a movement implicating a sizeable proportion of the slave population with militant leaders and coherent organisation; for most slaves most of the time, the demands of work and survival made the luxury of thinking in such terms impossible.

The record of resistance to slavery at Rome does not lend itself to fine calibration. Resistance did not characterise the life of every Roman slave. Many must be understood to have accepted the reality of their enslavement without demur, to have suppressed notions of challenge, to have internalised the values of those who dominated them, and to have worked within the contours of established society to become candidates for manumission and the prospects of enhanced material well-being manumission brought. Further, among those who did defy their owners or protest against their enslavement, resistance is likely to have been sporadic or intermittent, its various forms manifesting themselves according to the contingencies of the moment. There is qualitative advantage for history nonetheless in bringing the subject to the fore: a sector of Rome's population seen in the sources for the most part anonymously, impersonally and disdainfully is restored to life and shown capable of active, human participation in social relations. The relationship between slaves and masters emerges as a vibrant contest that was always being fought in the arena of the mind, and as Plutarch's story about Pupius Piso demonstrates, it was not always the masters who won.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Material corroborating many of the views expressed here appears in Bradley (1989), (1990), and (1994: 107–31); see also Bradley (1998). The characteristics of chattel slavery are splendidly summarised in Lovejoy (2000: 1–15), which owes much to M. I. Finley. On the assimilation of slaves to animals in antiquity, see Bradley (2000a; cf. Isaac 2004: 211–13). On the topic of slave management, see Bradley (1987b), and on the importance of negotiation in the relationship between master and slave, Hopkins (1993), a brilliant study not superseded in my view by Hägg (1997). Scott (1990) provides an important and highly regarded theoretical discussion of resistance among dominated groups, which derives from earlier

work on peasant resistance in a Malaysian village (Scott 1985). It includes discussion of resistance in the slave society of the American South, but not in other slave societies, and does not replace such crucial studies as Herskovits (1941), Stampp (1956) and Genovese (1972; cf. Fogel 1989: 154–62); see Fogel (2003) for the historiography of resistance to American slavery. For Brazil and Jamaica especially, see Queirós Mattoso (1986) and Craton (1982). On Frederick Douglass and Harriet Jacobs, see respectively McFeely (1991) and Yellin (2004); for the context of their narratives, Petesch (1998).

The demography of Roman slavery is controversial. For details and stimulating discussion, see Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume, with particular reference to Harris (1999) and Jongman (2003). On the common sight of prisoners of war in transit, see Bradley (2004). On Spartacus and the Republican slave wars, see Bradley (1989) and the collection of sources and excellent commentary of Shaw (2001). Urbainczyk (2004) is a conveniently concise introduction; see further Urbainczyk (2008). Davis (2000: 17–40) is an excellent discussion of Spartacus on film. The basic work on slave maroons is Price (1979). The mass movements of the high imperial period associated with the Bacaudae were not slave revolts, as is sometimes thought (Blackburn 1997: 36). Buckland (1908: 94–7) gives full details on the *sc. Silanianum* (cf. Watson 1987: 134–8; and Jane F. Gardner's chapter in this volume). On the revolution in St Domingue, see James (1963), a classic account, and among more recent studies, Gaspar and Geggus (1997).

Bellen (1971) provides the best collection of the extensive Roman legal evidence on flight; cf. also Buckland (1908: 267–74). There is a good survey of material on slave collars in Thurmond (1994; cf. Thompson 2003: 238–40), though I find it hard to see the collars as evidence of a greater humanity in the treatment of fugitives. Henry Brown's moving autobiography is most recently published in an edition with introduction by Richard Newman and foreword by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (Brown 2002). On flight in New World slave societies, from a vast literature the following are recommended (beyond the works on resistance already mentioned): Mullin (1972), Rose (1976), Conrad (1983), Karasch (1987). The location of Adulis is discussed in Casson (1989: 102–6).

The value of cross-cultural comparison for the history of Roman slavery is a contentious subject. A highly sceptical attitude is taken by Dumont (1988); but see in contrast Biežuńska-Małowist and Małowist (1989). My position, obviously much influenced by the work of M. I. Finley and Keith Hopkins (see especially Finley 1980 and Hopkins 1978), is made clear in the text. A particularly interesting case is that of aboriginal slavery in the Pacific coastal regions of the North American northwest, known to Europeans from the time of first contact; see Donald (1997), a first-rate study (especially 83–6 on the characterisation of slaves, material which has much in common with Greek and Roman sources, and 98–9 on flight). The novel of Cyrus

Francis Perkins (1813–1867) has been recently edited by Paul Lovejoy and others (Perkins 2003). The Brazilian song is quoted from Queirós Mattoso (1986: 137). Frederick Douglass' autobiography, *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass, An American Slave*, is conveniently accessible in Gates (1987).

The corpus of Seneca's writings constitutes a prime source of knowledge about Roman slavery. See Sandra R. Joshel's chapter in this volume, with references; cf. Bradley (1986a). The modern references to slave suicides are from Conrad (1983: 59, 124), and Hunwick and Powell (2002: 54), a very useful collection of documents on Islamic slavery. Bradley (2004) gives access to material and bibliography on Roman slave captives (see especially Coarelli 2000 for Trajan's Column). Suicide, incidentally, draws in the famous statuary group in the National Museum of Rome (Palazzo Altemps) of the Gallic chieftain killing himself to avoid captivity as he supports his already slain wife, a significantly Roman copy in marble of an original Pergamene bronze (described in Pollitt 1986: 86–9). For the quotation from the Sitka woman, see Donald (1997: 82).

On slaves in the service of the Roman emperor, Weaver (1972) is fundamental. The range of domestic jobs performed by slaves is best appreciated in a series of articles by Susan Treggiari (1973, 1975a, 1975b, 1976, 1979a, 1979b, 1980), together with Joshel (1992). Treggiari (1969b) is the standard and classic work on freedmen in the Late Republic and deals among other topics with manumission; Fabre (1981) has important material on some topics. Duff (1928) was long the main resource for freedmen in the early Principate but is now very dated. There are important and cogent contributions in D'Arms (1981). The full social and cultural significance of the extent to which ex-slaves at Rome became slave-owners seems to me not yet to have been fully explored. Garnsey (1996) is the essential starting point for any consideration of the absence of abolition in antiquity. The suggestiveness of the Phaedrus text was spotted by Ste. Croix (1981: 444). The impact of slave resistance in eighteenth-century Africa is discussed in Eltis (2000: 164–92). On the efficiency of slave labour, note the comments of Schiavone (2000: 131–2).

CHAPTER 18

SLAVERY AND ROMAN MATERIAL CULTURE

MICHELE GEORGE

INTRODUCTION

At its best, Roman material culture brings a dimension to historical inquiry that written sources cannot by recapturing the texture of daily life and by providing a unique angle from which to interpret cultural attitudes and behaviour. This is especially important for Roman slavery since there are no slave narratives or plantation account books as there are from the antebellum American South, nor the vivid descriptions by contemporary commentators of slave systems in Brazil or the Caribbean. In Roman archaeology, where the framework provided by historical texts has always prevailed over theory, the absence of written documentation makes the task of seeing slaves in the archaeological record particularly challenging. Furthermore, the value of material culture is defined by both the quality of its preservation and the nature of the analysis that is brought to bear by scholars. Both factors have had critical consequences for the contribution material culture has made to the study of Roman slavery. At first glance, when compared to other aspects of Roman society and to the ubiquity and economic importance of slaves, Roman material culture offers relatively scant direct evidence. Much of this is due to the poor quality of housing, clothing and other goods used by slaves that reduces their chances of survival in the archaeological record and makes it impossible to reconstruct, for example, slave religion, diet, or other aspects of a slave subculture. Moreover, previous generations of archaeologists have destroyed or failed to recognise much valuable evidence as it was being excavated, creating questions of context and provenance that remain unresolved and that hinder our ability to interpret the evidence that has survived the corrosive effects of time. For their part, scholars of art history have tended to put issues of greatest importance to the Roman elite, such as style, chronology, imperial influence or political motivation, ahead of those germane to lower-status groups. As a result, the ramifications of the slave presence at large have tended to be overlooked.¹

¹ Other slave systems: for Brazil, Karasch 1987; American South: Singleton 1996, with further bibliography; Caribbean: e.g. Farnsworth 2001. Roman art: Kampen 1981; D'Ambra 1998; Clarke 2003.

Regardless of its limitations, the study of material culture can illuminate Roman attitudes toward slavery as an institution and towards slaves themselves in ways that significantly augment the textual accounts. It can also offer ways to recapture aspects of the slave experience that are still more ephemeral and intangible, such as slaves' perspective on their own condition. In this chapter I will outline the evidence from slavery in Roman material culture by dividing it into two major categories: (i) archaeological evidence, such as the physical context in which slaves lived and worked and traces of the slave trade; and (ii) images of slaves in Roman art.

SURVEY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE

Slave quarters

In ancient Rome, slaves' identity was principally defined by two elements: the master who owned them and the work they performed, and work and its context dominate the evidence for slaves in Roman material culture. Most of that evidence is indirect, manifested in the multitudes of cooking pots and tools which were probably used by slaves, and in locales for work, which are prime contexts in which to find physical evidence of their presence. Villas, quarries and mines were among the rural locations in which large numbers of slaves worked at the most gruelling forms of labour, while in urban areas slaves were used in mills, potteries, fulleries and shops, as well as for domestic work in the master's house. Architectural remains and artefacts from these sites, such as the tools slaves used, the goods they produced and the physical space in which they passed their days, evoke the arduous circumstances which slaves were forced to endure.

The large rural holdings that the elder Cato, Varro and Columella presumed could be worked in part by complements of slaves loom larger in the historical record than in the archaeological. Continuous settlement in the countryside has disturbed and destroyed many ancient estates, and survey archaeology often delineates only the perimeter of villa sites through pottery scatters, rather than uncovering substantial structural remains. Slave quarters, which were probably constructed of wood, are less likely to survive than the more sturdy stone structures of the villas themselves, and in excavation they have generally been subordinated to other characteristic elements of villa life that can be found with greater frequency and are more easily recognisable, such as large-scale industrial features like wine- and olive-presses or luxurious decoration in the owner's quarters. Columella's recommendation (*De re rustica* 1.6.3) that chained slaves be kept in *ergastula*, subterranean prisons lit by high, narrow windows that prevented

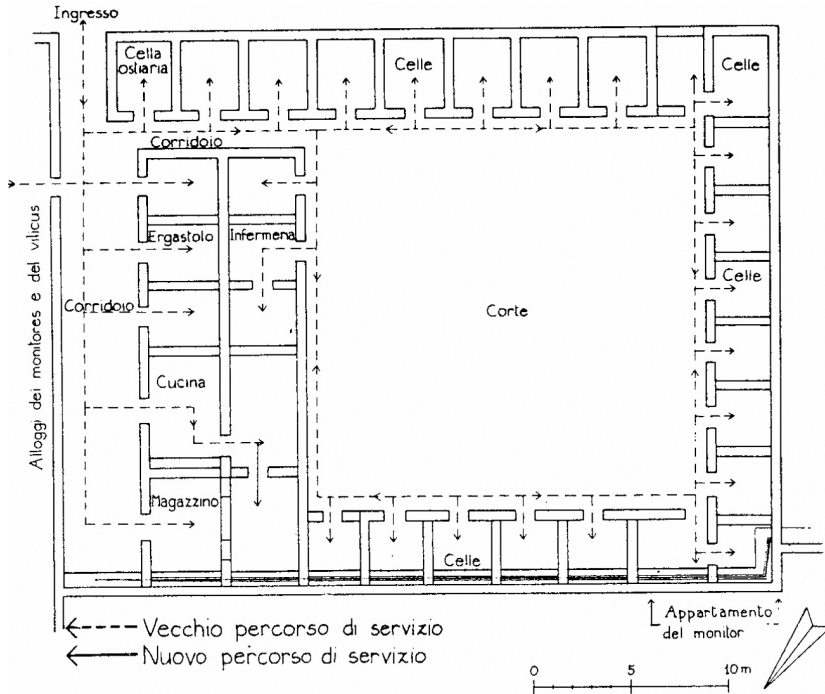


Figure 18.1 Slave quarters, villa at Settefinestre.

escape, has yet to find correspondence in the archaeological remains, but in several cases rows of small rooms (*cellae*) usually grouped around a central court constitute likely remains of slave quarters. Among these, the most famous is the extensive villa at Settefinestre near the ancient city of Cosa north of Rome, which is one of the few Roman villas with a reasonably well-preserved slave quarter (Fig. 18.1). Its excavator Andrea Carandini identified slave quarters dating to the first to second centuries AD in several locations on the site. Attached to the main villa block was a courtyard with stables, a kitchen and storage for wine, as well as several two-room suites large enough for roughly forty-four slaves, which he suggests served as living quarters for the domestic *familia*; a separate courtyard with a series of small rooms (3×3.5 m) around its perimeter provided sleeping space for slaves who took care of animals. The rooms were unplastered and each was equipped with a small hearth, a small window high in the wall, and wooden floors; a refectory fitted with benches and a latrine were also identified as part of the complex. Estimating four to six slaves per small cell, Carandini calculated that this block of rooms could have accommodated sixty-eight slaves, and

that more probably slept in the other major work areas, such as the granary and pigsty, and possibly in an upper storey for which the only evidence is now the remains of a staircase. Rows of similar rooms with earthen floors, hearths and small windows have been found at other villa sites in Campania, such as at Boscotrecase, where eighteen rooms, each with a small wall niche for a lamp, located off a small peristyle and arranged in two storeys, were found as part of the productive area of the main villa; a set of iron stocks for chaining slaves was found in a nearby room.²

The absence thus far of *ergastula* in the archaeological record suggests that other less permanent forms of slave quarters were more prevalent but have perished or been overlooked by excavators. Domestic slaves in villas, like those in townhouses, probably slept in work areas such as kitchens, which Columella advises should be tall and spacious to allow slaves to loiter throughout the year, which might imply that they also slept there. In place of the *cellae* described above, slaves who laboured in the fields might have been housed en masse in poorly constructed barracks, sleeping on floor pallets or on wooden cots, which are unlikely to survive or are indistinguishable from generic rural outbuildings such as pigsties. Slaves who were used for hard labour in mines and quarries of the empire were probably housed in communal quarters similar to those imagined for agricultural slaves. In the quarry of Chemtou in Tunisia, where the famous yellow marble known as *giallo antico* was excavated for export throughout the empire, a substantial structure dating to the Antonine period has been identified as providing slave quarters. The structure comprises six long contiguous galleries, four with small masonry benches that possibly served as beds for up to one thousand slaves; a small communal latrine and washing area were located at one end of each gallery, while at the other was a door that opened inward and that could be locked only from the inside. Although the arrangement is suitable for military barracks (and the army is known to have been active in the region), it does not follow the highly standardised model used by the Roman army.³

Slaves who worked in the household lived with their masters in urban houses (*domus*), often in substantial numbers, but extant domestic architecture furnishes few traces of their presence. At Rome itself six small rooms in the Forum Romanum near the temple of Antoninus Pius and Faustina are conventionally identified as slave *cellae*, while thirty similar rooms at

² Villas: Samson 1989; Métraux 1998; Webster 2005. Settefinestre: Carandini 1985, II: 152–81 with additional bibliography; comparison with archaeological evidence from antebellum South: I: 188–206; other villas, e.g. Boscotrecase: *Not. Scav.* 1922: 459–67 (stocks: fig. 3); villa of Diomedes at Pompeii: Maiuri 1947; Francolise: Cotton and Métraux 1985; Rossiter 1978: 40–8; Smith 1997: 295–300; Thompson 2003: 83–130.

³ Chemtou: Rakob 1993, II: 66–106; contra Mackensen 2005. Mines and quarries: Thompson 2003: 131–86.

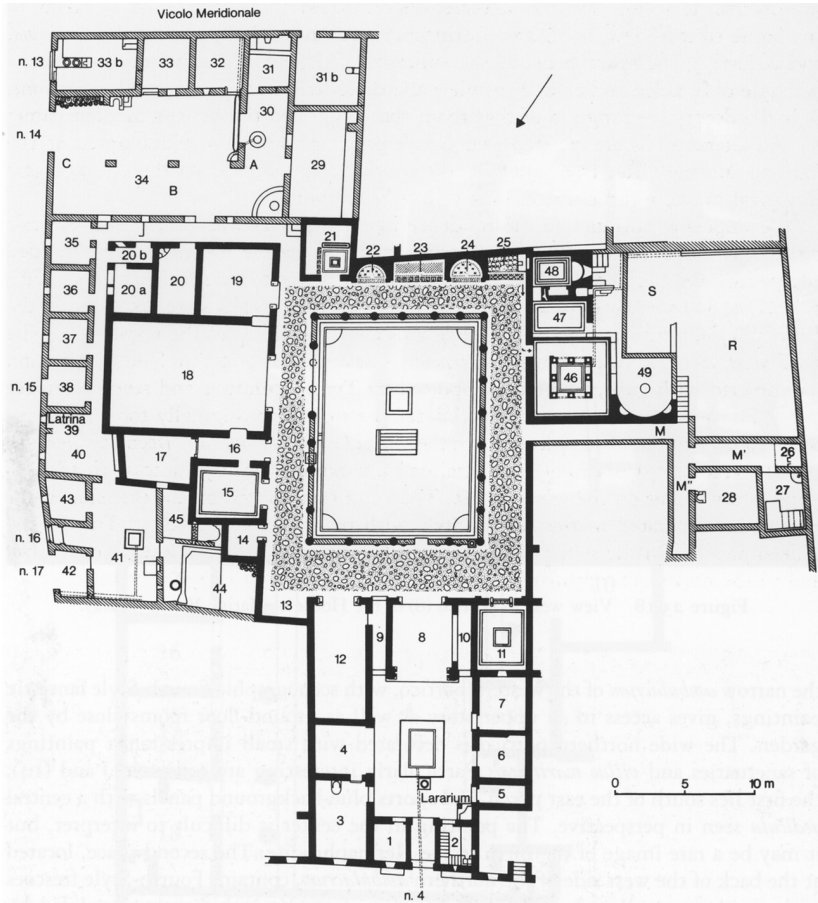


Figure 18.2 House of Menander, Pompeii.

the foot of the Palatine near the east end of the Forum have been associated with the slave household of M. Aemilius Scaurus, whose infamously vast and lavishly decorated atrium was targeted for its excess. Each cell measures 1.80×1.50 m and had a masonry support which served as a bed. Despite their spartan character, these rooms have been identified as belonging to a brothel (*lupanar*) or a hotel, rather than to slaves, illustrating the way in which scholars fail to include the presence of slaves when interpreting ambiguous evidence. At Pompeii, where households were smaller, there are relatively few potential slave quarters, given the number of extant houses. In several cases, such as in the House of Menander (Fig. 18.2), a number of small, undecorated rooms with small, high windows located near a stable,

work area and a latrine, have been identified as probable slave quarters. Their generic, undecorated appearance recommends that such rooms were equally suitable for a variety of other domestic uses, including storage; in fact, utilitarian rooms of this description are often identified simply as storage areas in excavation reports, with no allowance that they might have also housed slaves. The evidence from extant Roman houses, in Italy as well as across the Roman empire, indicates that permanent, dedicated slave quarters were not a typical component except in the largest of urban dwellings, and that in all probability most slaves slept in their work areas, in the corners of kitchens or stables, or in the shelter of a portico.⁴

The lack of easily recognised slave quarters is perhaps a predictable measure of slaves' marginal status, but it raises serious questions about their integration into the house, their interaction with members of the master's family, and their own perception of domestic space. It also indicates that Romans chose to sacrifice personal privacy for the convenience of having a slave near to hand, rather than preferring to create distinct spatial boundaries within the house that might impede the slave's availability when needed. Images of slaves attending to their owners' needs in sexual contexts, such as the erotic wall painting from the House of Caecilius Iucundus at Pompeii, give graphic illustration to the ability of a free family to ignore slaves even in the most intimate circumstances. The woman is shown in this image emerging from a bed where her lover remains, suggesting a post-coital moment, while a bedroom slave (*cubicularius*) hovers in the shadows ready to assist, apparently disregarded by the participants. In erotic scenes of this kind, which are more suggestive than explicit, slaves are symbols of wealth and leisure that heighten the impression of lassitude and carefree abandon that underpins the erotic effect. Such images also prove, however, that standards of modesty that operated between social peers did not hold for slaves, who were regarded as animate objects, and who as body slaves performed tasks of personal hygiene for their owners of the most intimate nature. The knowledge that slave families were formed and thrived within the household, despite the absence of distinct slave quarters, points to the reciprocal adjustments between the master's family and his slaves that shaped the behaviour and interaction of both status groups within the close confines of the Roman house.⁵

Other forms of evidence are suggestive of the way in which slave identity was shaped within the domestic household. Studies of household shrines (*lararia*) at Pompeii have drawn a distinction between shrines found in

⁴ Rooms near Temple of Antoninus and Faustina: Nash 1961: 209–30. *Cellae* of M. Aemilius Scaurus: Carandini 1988: 359–87; as a *lupanar*: Lugli 1947: 139–63; as hotel: Tomei 1995. Slave quarters: Clarke 1991; Wallace-Hadrill 1994; George 1997a. House of the Menander: Maiuri 1933; Ling 1997: 105–31 ('staff quarters').

⁵ Erotic scenes: Michel 1982; Clarke 1991. Families: see Jonathan Edmondson's chapter in this volume.

representational and those found in service areas of the house, which might reflect differences in domestic cult practice between the free family and the slave *familia*. *Lararia* in the atrium and peristyle were mostly dedicated to the worship of the Penates and were probably intended for the master and free family; shrines found in kitchens and work areas, spaces used primarily by domestic slaves, were largely devoted to the Lares and to the guiding spirit (*genius*) of the *paterfamilias*, the male head of the household and the slave-owner. The difference in shrine types raises the possibility that there was a dichotomy in domestic religion that followed the lines of legal status. The kitchen shrine in the House of Obellius Firmus at Pompeii renders faint traces of the slave presence in the small graffito sketched beside the shrine's statue niche, showing six figures in white tunics seated around a table raising drinking cups. The scene possibly illustrates the celebration of the Saturnalia, the festival at year's end in which slaves were granted a degree of role reversal, as masters served their slaves and the latter were entitled to use more familiar forms of address. It is also possibly the only extant self-portrait of slaves, serving no greater artistic purpose than as visual record of a rare moment of leisure in the part of the house where they were most likely to have experienced a sense of belonging and community. In house 1.13.2 at Pompeii, the shrine painted on the wall of the kitchen suggests that the free family and household slaves also participated together on some occasions in venerating the household gods. The scene depicts a togate man and woman, both veiled, in the act of sacrifice before an altar, while to their left stand thirteen individuals in two rows who all wear white tunics and who make the same gesture of right arm held diagonally across the chest. The scene is unique and probably represents a sacrifice of the entire household – the master, his wife and their gathered household slaves – who together uttered prayers and poured libations to the Lares and the *genius* of the *paterfamilias*. Rituals of this kind within the house reinforced the internal domestic hierarchy, as the slave *familia* carried out a rite which invested its master's *genius* with a form of supernatural power.⁶

The slave trade and slave captives

It might be expected that the large-scale transport of human beings over several centuries has left obvious and unambiguous remnants in the archaeological record. Unfortunately this proves not to be the case. Historians speculate about the likely paths of the slave trade, based on

⁶ Slaves and the cult of the Lares: Bömer 1981: 32–56. Household shrines: Fröhlich 1991; Foss 1997. Note the inclusion of the servile *familia* in the prayer given by Cato for the purification of land (*Agr.* 141). House 1.13.2: Fröhlich 1991: 178–9, 261, pl. 28; Obellius Firmus: Fröhlich 1991: 33; 299, pl. 48.1. Kitchens in Pompeian houses: Salza Prina Ricotti 1980.

the expansion of the empire and location of major ports, but its precise mechanics remain imperfectly understood and archaeology supplies little additional information. Scenes of capture on several extant monuments illustrate the moment of enslavement itself, since under Roman law all captives of war automatically became slaves. Most of these are found on officially sponsored monuments in the capital that glorify Rome's victory, such as the dramatic scenes of capture on the columns of Trajan and Marcus Aurelius or the bound barbarians on the arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum.⁷ Imagery of captives also appears on the well-known but poorly published funerary monument of Aulus Capreilius Timotheus, a slave-dealer at Amphipolis in north-eastern Greece. The stele, which is divided into three registers, portrays the deceased at the top, reclining in the standard motif of the funerary banquet, while two scenes beneath him convey a syncopated version of the capture and transport of slaves from distant lands. In the middle register, men are shown bearing cauldrons and amphorae, probably representing the kinds of goods a slave-trader might exchange for captives, either the vessels themselves or the wine they transported. In the lowest band of relief, a train of eight captives chained at the neck are led by a cloaked man, who is possibly Capreilius himself; two women and two children follow behind unfettered, suggesting that they represented no threat of flight. The accompanying inscription below the deceased's image gives his name, indicates that he himself was a *libertus*, a former slave, and identifies him as a *somateporos*, a slave-dealer. Dated to the end of the first or beginning of the second century AD, the monument reveals an open and unabashed pride in profiteering from slavery that defies the conventional negative view of such commerce. A funerary monument from Nickenich near Koblenz (Fig. 18.3), dated to the middle of the first century, might also commemorate a slave-dealer. On the front, three niches contain statues of two men who flank a woman holding a boy by the hand; on one narrow side, separated into two vertical registers, a man wearing a tunic and cloak and bearing a club holds a chain which is attached to the necks of two male captives, who are placed in the lower register and who wear cloaks. The civilian attire of the figure holding the chain suggests that it is not the moment of capture in war that is depicted, but the subsequent trade in slaves by private individuals who chose to display the source of their wealth on their tomb.⁸

⁷ On scenes of barbarians, see below.

⁸ Stele of Aulus Capreilius Timotheus: Finley 1977b; Kolendo 1978; Duchêne 1986; Donderer and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 1993: 256–64. The stele, originally 2.17 m high and 0.50 m wide, was damaged in the Second World War and is now in fragmentary condition. Nickenich monument: Neuffer 1932; Andrikopolou-Strack 1986: no. 2, Taf. 3b, 4, 5, 60; Donderer and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 1993: 264–5. Slave trade and slave-dealers: Harris 1980, 1999; Donderer and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 1993; Bodel 2005; see also Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume.



Figure 18.3 Relief from Nickenich with chained captives.

A scene of slave sale seems to be depicted on a late Republican funerary stele now in Capua. The inscription atop the monument commemorates two freedmen who are presumably the two togate individuals represented in the central register. In a lower register is a scene depicting a naked male figure who stands on a pedestal while two flanking figures gesture towards him. The man on the right, wearing a toga, is probably a customer, while the one on the left, in *chlamys* and tunic, is most likely a slave-dealer, given his less formal attire and the greater intensity of his gesture. In its few details the scene encapsulates known aspects of the slave auction: the pedestal is possibly a visual shorthand for the raised stone or platform (*catasta*) on which slaves stood in order to be seen; a slave's nakedness at

auction was the norm and allowed close inspection by potential buyers. The memorial was set up on behalf of the freedman M. Publius Satur for himself and his fellow freedman Stepanus by the two other freedmen with similar nomenclature who followed the instructions in Satur's will. One of these is listed as a *praeco* (auctioneer), suggesting that all four freedmen named in the inscription were involved in slave-dealing, with Satur the principal in the business. Like Aulus Capreilius Timotheus, M. Publius Satur deliberately extolled his status as a freedman and the business that made his profits, whatever negative associations it might have aroused in others.⁹ Other possible commemorations referring explicitly to the occupation of slave-dealers occur on the funerary relief now in Cologne of C. Aiadius, whose inscription contains the word *mango*, but who, unlike the previous individuals, was freeborn, and not a former slave; and the votive tablet giving thanks to Jupiter for safe passage through the Gran S. Bernardo pass across the Alps by one C. Domitius Carassounus, who is identified as *Helvetius mango*. The prayer of thanks might have applied to Domitius himself as well as to the human property in his caravan.¹⁰

Memorials with motifs of the slave trade are found in greater numbers in the provinces than in Italy itself, suggesting that the prejudice against the traffic in human beings was weaker in those regions of the empire which profited from the slave trade than in the capital. They also indicate a familiarity with the reality of these circumstances in provincial towns, where the transport of slaves en masse was probably common and more easily cast in a positive light. Moreover, despite the pejorative attitude toward *mangones* expressed in some sources and the dissonance it arouses in modern sensibilities, the appearance of these images of brutality in funerary self-representation reveals the substantial pride of slave-traders, and a fundamental acceptance of the reality of slavery in Roman society.

Slave markets (Greek *statarion*, Latin *venalicium*) are attested by epigraphic evidence at several sites, but the identification of discrete, purpose-built structures remains controversial. The best studied example is the so-called 'Agora of the Italians', a vast porticoed complex on the Greek island of Delos dated to the second century BC. Comprising a two-storeyed

⁹ Inscription above two togate men: *[Marcius] Publius M(arci) l(ibertus) Satur de suo sibi et liberto M(arco) Publilio Stepano* inscription between two registers: *arbitratu M(arci) Publii M(arci) l(iberti) Cadiae / praeconis et M(arci) Publii M(arci) l(iberti) Timotis* (CIL 10.8222); see also Eckert 1988: no. 12; also Harris 1980: 126, 130. *Catasta*: Tib. 2.3.60; raised stone: Cic. *Pis.* 15; nakedness: Suet. *Aug.* 69. For a similar scene from Arlon in Belgium, see Espérandieu 1915, v no. 4034, reprinted in Donderer and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 1993: Taf. 2.

¹⁰ *Mango* in Roman law: Dig. 50.16.207; see also Harris 1980: 129–32, esp. n. 123. Cologne relief: Walsler 1988: 162 no. 69; full inscription: *C(aius) Aiadius P(ublii) [f]ilius) Stel(latina tribu) mango hic situs est vale Aiaci* (CIL 13.8348). Votive tablet: Walsler 1984: 78 no. 11: *I(ovi) O(ptimo) M(aximo) Poenino C(aius) Domitius Carassounus Hel(vetius) mango v(otum) s(oluit) l(ibens) m(erito)*.

colonnaded court with well-appointed rooms, statue niches, a bath, two latrines and rows of shops, the building occupies 6,000 square metres, making it the largest structure on the entire island. Its original excavators identified it as a commercial and social centre for Italian merchants who took advantage of the island's status as a free port, which was conferred by Rome in 167 BC. Other scholars, however, most notably Coarelli, have argued for its identification as a slave market, citing its proximity to the harbour, its size and limited entrances, the lack of drainage or of a shrine, and the famous comment of Strabo (14.5.2) that Delos was inundated with tens of thousands of slaves every day. Coarelli's position has recently been contested by Trümper, who sees it as a park-like centre for leisure, and by Rauh, who keeps the recreational function, much like a Greek palaestra, but adds the possibility of gladiatorial combat. Other structures that might have been used as slave markets have been identified from epigraphic evidence at Pompeii and Puteoli in Italy, at Ephesus and Magnesia in Asia Minor, and at Lepcis Magna in North Africa. In some cases (e.g. Magnesia) there is a structural resemblance to the Agora of the Italians on Delos, while in others (e.g. Pompeii) the resemblance is less obvious. The presence of inscriptions without a single recognisable building type suggests that slave markets were not always purpose-built structures, but, much like slave quarters, used other buildings on a temporary basis, perhaps on certain days of the week, for slave sale.¹¹

The restraints pictured in scenes of enslavement – fetters, manacles and shackles – have been found in uneven representation across the Roman empire, predominantly in the northern provinces, where they constitute traces of the substantial system of capture, management and transport that must have existed for the slave trade to function. Leg-irons, chains to bind at the neck and ankle, and manacles for the wrists furnish concrete examples of the imagery, although relatively few have been found in the excavation of Italian villas, despite the presence of large slave work-gangs that tilled the fields. In Campania was found a form of stocks, circular or horizontal metal frames that were fixed into the ground, to which slaves were attached at the ankle while squatting or prone.¹²

A corpus of slave collars constitutes an unusual form of evidence for the attempted control of slaves. Made mostly of bronze, copper and lead, the thirty-seven collars still extant consist of thin bands inscribed with information urging the return to the master of the fugitive slaves who

¹¹ Agora of the Italians: excavation: Lapalus 1939; as slave market: Cocco 1970; Coarelli 1982, 2005; as social/leisure centre: Bruneau 1975; Le Roy 1993; Trümper 2008; as palaestra: Rauh 1992. Puteoli: Musti 1980. See also Braconi 2005; Fentress 2005.

¹² A skeleton chained at the ankles found outside the city wall of Pompeii was possibly a slave (Etani *et al.* 2003: 312–14, Fig. 2); for stocks in the so-called *erygastulum* in the villa at Boscotrecase (possibly belonging to Agrippa Postumus), see above n. 2. Restraints: Thompson 1994, 2003: 217–40.

wore them; in one case a metal disc carries the inscription. A regional provenance is generally all that has been recorded, and the majority came from Rome and its environs, although examples are known from Naples, Sardinia and North Africa. Their preservation, however, is due in most cases to a heightened antiquarianism that was particularly strong in Italy, and it is possible that they were originally common throughout the empire but are no longer extant. In two cases, the collars were found *in situ* still attached to the neck of the unfortunate deceased. Most are simple exhortations written in the first person, as if in the slave's own voice, to keep the slave if found and to return him to his master, with the master's name or other identifiers such as the name of his neighbourhood, property or a personalised motif which would have been recognised locally. Many motifs, such as a cross, the chi-rho or alpha and omega, indicate that the slave-owner was Christian, or even, as in one example from Sardinia, a member of the local church hierarchy.¹³ Most collars can be dated to the fourth century AD, and many of the individuals named on the inscriptions include honorific titles that display their senatorial status or prominent position in the imperial bureaucracy, which by the middle of the fourth century required conversion to Christianity. Their fourth-century date and the absence of pre-Christian examples make it probable that they replaced the facial tattooing of slaves when the practice was outlawed by the emperor Constantine (*Theodosian Code* 9.40.2), and that many slaves in the pagan era were indeed marked by tattoos. Furthermore, the predominance of Christian owners undermines the conventional notion that Christians were more critical of slavery than pagans.¹⁴

Other direct, artefactual evidence for slaves in the archaeological record is scarce. The statuettes and masks of the *servus callidus*, the clever slave of Roman comedy, which outnumber the masks of other stock comic figures by a significant margin, reflect the enormous popularity of this character among Roman audiences, but are more relevant to a cultural analysis of slavery in Roman comedy than as archaeological evidence. It is also possible to see slaves in the numerous statuettes of genre figures prized as decoration or amusement that include dancers, gymnasts and dwarves, but who in reality might well have been free or freedmen; legal status is therefore not critical to the statuettes' function, which was as minor objets d'art. A unique find is the finely made gold armband excavated at the site of an inn at Moregine in the suburbs south of Pompeii bearing the inscription

¹³ Slave collars: Thurmond 1994 (with additional bibliography); see e.g. Thurmond 1994: no. 32 *tene me quia fugio et revoca me in Septis* (CIL 15.7195). Reward promised: Thurmond 1994: no. 1 (CIL 15.7194). Church hierarchy: *Felicis arc diacon tene me ne fugiam* ('seize me, who belongs to Felix the archdeacon, lest I flee') (Sotgiu 1973/4).

¹⁴ Branding and tattooing: Jones 1987. Christian attitudes to slavery: Garnsey 1996: 173–235; see further Jennifer Glancy's chapter in this volume.

dom(i)nus ancillae suae, 'the master to his very own slave-girl' (see Fig. 16.3). Shaped like a snake, the armband was found in a small jewellery hoard in a bag beside the skeleton of a woman approximately thirty years old who died at the inn during the eruption of Vesuvius in AD 79 along with another mature woman and three children. Initially, this exceptional object presents an aspect of Roman slavery, especially in the domestic context, that differs considerably from the violence represented by slave collars. Its message of amorous possession, however, framed as it is within an explicit and unambiguous reiteration of status difference, epitomises the fundamentally asymmetrical and unbalanced power relationship between master and slave. As an artefact of Roman slavery, it evidences the complex interplay of emotional attachment and coercion that occurred in a slave society in which slaves lived in close physical proximity to their masters.¹⁵

IMAGES OF SLAVES IN ROMAN ART

Given the central connection between status and self-representation in Roman culture, it is not surprising that slaves occur in visual imagery more than they do in other forms of material evidence, although it is the very inferiority of their status that more often than not justifies their appearance. To a great extent, the role of slaves in Roman society is mirrored in Roman art, where slaves are subjugated to the artistic agenda of slave-owners, serving either as subsidiary figures who act as foils to their masters, or as symbols of Roman military conquest. Yet a close interrogation of the evidence can go beyond this elementary premise to consider the nature of standard scenes in which slaves appear and the intended effect of the slave presence, as well as what it reveals about attitudes toward real slaves, slaves as symbols of powerlessness and, more broadly, the role of images in Roman culture.

A fundamental methodological problem that must first be addressed is how to identify slaves in Roman art at all. Their legal status was the defining element in their life experience, yet it did not necessarily eventuate in obvious physical markers that lent themselves to artistic representation. The effects of poor nutrition and hard labour on the bodies of slaves as well as the shaved heads, facial tattoos and collars they might have borne were telling signs of servile status to the casual viewer, but do not appear in Roman art.¹⁶ Moreover, slaves who escaped these stigmata could not always be distinguished from the free poor by other external elements, such as their

¹⁵ Armband: Guzzo and Scarano Ussani 2001; Guzzo 2003: 169, 178. Statuettes and masks of *servus callidus*: Webster 1995. Slaves in Roman comedy: Fitzgerald 2000; McCarthy 2000.

¹⁶ An exceptional example is the comic statuette of a slave with a collar now in the Princeton University Museum of Art (Thurmond 1994: 460–1).

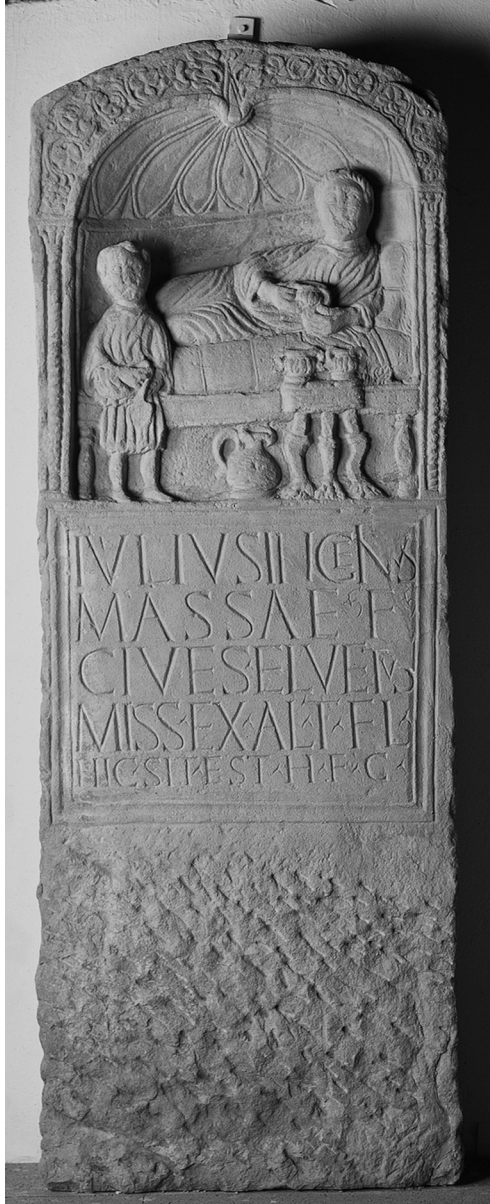


Figure 18.4 Funerary stela of Iulius Ingenius, AD 50–100, from Mainz.

clothes, for there was no codified slave dress that pertained throughout the slave population. According to Seneca (*On Clemency* 1.24.1), a universally recognisable slave costume was debated but rejected by the Roman senate as too dangerous, since it would reveal at a glance the magnitude of the slave population, thereby risking the development of a collective slave identity and subsequent rebellion. In the case of slaves, social control took precedence over visible distinctions in status, despite the existence at Rome of an elaborate system of status-based attire. Hierarchically ordered clothing, however, was of greatest interest to the elite, who benefited most from its display, while the rest of the population adopted a more practical approach and wore the tunic and cloak, creating a degree of homogeneity in external appearance. A brief notation in the *Digest* (47.10.15.15) indicates that a man might not always successfully distinguish a slave girl from her mistress by clothing alone, or, by logical extension, any other aspect of their appearance. Unlike the citizen, who is known by his toga, or the married woman, who is known by her stola, the slave cannot be immediately recognised in Roman art by his or her attire.¹⁷

Alternatively, slaves must be identified by their actions and context, and by the probability that figures in certain kinds of scenes or circumstances were intended to be seen as slaves by Roman viewers. In a minority of examples, a hierarchy of scale is used to reflect the inferior status of slaves, in particular in scenes of the funerary banquet, where there are sometimes slave wine-servers who are unnaturally small, such as on the funerary stele of Iulius Ingenius (Fig. 18.4). Their diminutive size allows the focus to be unambiguously on the central figures, whose greater size and central position signal their dominance. The small stature and indiscriminate attire of slaves in such scenes, however, sometimes make it difficult to distinguish them from children, and since cupbearers at banquets were frequently adolescents, it is not always possible to be sure that the difference in scale is attributable to status and not to youth. Young slaves also figure prominently in official state art as attendants and musicians in sacrifice scenes.¹⁸

Images of slaves can be divided into three broad categories: captive slaves, slaves at work in the domestic context and slaves at work outside the household.

Captives

Images of captives, whether as isolated figures or as part of more elaborate narratives, furnish a multitude of scenes in which slave status is a certainty,

¹⁷ Slaves in Roman art: Kolendo 1978. Slave appearance: George 2002. Roman costume: Bonfante and Sebesta 1994. Slave girl: George 2002: 49–50.

¹⁸ Altar: Zimmer 1982: no. 40. Slaves in sacrifice scenes: Fless 1995.

since all captives were slaves under Roman law. The figure of the captive barbarian is a commonplace in Roman imperial art from its inception in the Augustan era, and among the most potent elements in the iconography of Roman imperialism. As an artistic motif, the repertoire of barbarians in Roman art is relatively narrow and therefore highly generic, making them easily recognisable as symbols of subjugation, whether they represent Parthians, Dacians or one of the other peoples that posed a threat to Rome's security throughout its history. Both male and female captives are depicted, arms bound behind their backs, their hair unfastened, the men clad in eastern-style leggings, often semi-nude, and the women in loose tunics, their faces showing sorrow or the grimace of pain. The imagery appears in public art, such as on the Arch of Septimius Severus in the Forum at Rome, where the pedestals are carved with chained Parthians led away by Roman soldiers, as well as in the private sphere, such as the dejected captives, male and female, bound and led by the hair, in the lower register of the Gemma Augustea. The ease with which such imagery was recognised is demonstrated by both its ubiquity in Roman art across the empire and by the frequency with which it occurs in isolation from an explanatory narrative. A column base from a monument near the legionary camp in the city of Mainz (Fig. 18.5) depicts two captives, naked except for cloaks around their shoulders, hands bound behind their backs and chained together at the neck, while another base from the same monument has a soldier holding in his hands a chain that extends beyond the frame. Despite their dislocation, the viewer was expected to recognise the connection between the scenes and to make the narrative link. Captives are also present in scenes of imperial clemency, where they appear prostrate before the emperor, hands extended in an attitude of despair; by his mercy the emperor saves the slave from death, and conquest is transformed into compassion. The display of real captives of war as exemplified by the frieze from the Temple of Apollo Sosianus at Rome was a highlight of the triumphal parade awarded to victorious generals after important military victories that culminated in the public execution of the defeated barbarian chief, if he had been successfully captured. Key to the motif's meaning is the barbarian origin of the captives, which communicated the fundamental ethnic difference and inferiority that helped to define and reinforce Roman identity and Rome's divine right to impose its rule over the world.¹⁹

The most elaborate and complex images of enslavement are shown on the two imperial columns built by Trajan (AD 113) and Marcus Aurelius (c. AD 180–96), which are decorated with scroll-like narratives depicting

¹⁹ Captives and suppliants in Roman art: Ferris 2000; Bradley 2004. Mainz: Büsing 1982: 30; Selzer 1988: 102–7, no. 263 (chained captives), no. 259 (soldier with chains). Apollo Sosianus: La Rocca 1995: 94–6.



Figure 18.5 Pillar base with two captives chained at neck, AD 50–100, from Mainz.

military campaigns against the Dacians and Marcomanni respectively. The scenes encompass the range of events that make up a campaign, including sieges and hand-to-hand combat, along with more mundane activities such as soldiers on the march and the construction of encampments, as well as events specific to the particular historical circumstances. In careful detail, barbarian villages are shown burned and looted, with men beheaded, and women and children captured and loaded onto ships (Fig. 18.6). The nature of the barbarians' fate lends a drama and vividness to the narrative that must have elicited feelings of triumph and exultation in the Roman audience. Contemporary battle sarcophagi featuring generic barbarians in similar attitudes of suffering reflect the same triumphant optimism and indicate that, however horrific they appear to the modern viewer, to the Roman citizen the imagery of captives was a buoyant affirmation of Roman hegemony. Grounded as it was in real experience, the iconography of captives was a readily identifiable and familiar shorthand by which an artist could restate in visual terms the supremacy of Rome and its right to rule. Its essential



Figure 18.6 Column of Marcus Aurelius, Rome (detail) – woman and child, AD 180–192.

elements were repeated in lengthy exposition or encapsulated in pithy shorthand, and the narratives of enslavement justified and authenticated slavery through the relentless visual quotation of capture and subjugation. For Roman citizens, the presence of real slaves, whose powerlessness mirrored the message of the reduplicated images, provided parallel proof of

the triumph of Rome, while slaves themselves were perpetually surrounded by celebratory commemorations of their subjection.²⁰

Bound captives also occur in scenes relating to the arena, where they are shown being led to their deaths at the hands of animals or gladiators. Slaves and recent prisoners of war, along with criminals and Christian martyrs, were subject to this form of execution. A relief from Izmir, now in the Ashmolean Museum, depicts captives wearing only loincloths and bound at the neck by a rope who are led by a soldier; the bottom register illustrates animals attacking each other, an indicator of their fate. More telling is the fragmentary mosaic now in the museum at El Djem (ancient Thysdrus) in Tunisia, which shows two captives, hands behind their backs and held up by attendants for easy access by the wild animals that leap at them. The full arena scene was arranged around a central podium that had four trophies, pieces of armour and weaponry, symbols of military victory in Roman art which indicate that the victims were in all probability captives rather than criminals. Gladiators, who were mostly slaves purchased for their natural strength and physique, and trained and rented out in groups for public performance, were a highly specialised subset among the slave population, and the gladiatorial imagery on statuettes, lamps and domestic decoration constitutes a corpus of evidence that is to some extent separate from other representations of slaves. This form of institutionalised brutality, however, belongs to the same mentality that accepted and relied upon slavery and its systemic dehumanisation of human victims as natural and normative.²¹

Scenes of domestic work

In Roman thought the concept of manual labour, which Cicero (*On Duties*, 1.150–51) calls base (*sordidus*) and ‘a pledge of servitude’ (*auctoramentum servitutis*), had highly pejorative associations that pertained to low status and specifically to slavery. This attitude informs the interpretation of images of slaves wherever they work, inside or outside the domestic context. Compared to their tasks in real life, the range of activities slaves are shown fulfilling in Roman art is small; rather than images of reality, then, this evidence represents highly selective aspects of domestic life that are tailored to reflect elite identity and values in particular contexts. Slaves are visual foils to their masters who underscore their status by their own subordination, and who serve as extensions of their identity to embody carefully shaped

²⁰ Column of Trajan: Lepper and Frere 1988; Settis 1988. Column of Marcus Aurelius: Pirson 1996; Scheid and Huet 2000. Battle sarcophagi: Andreae 1956.

²¹ *Damnatio ad bestias*: Apul. *Met.* 4.13. Izmir relief: Robert 1971: no. 235; see also nos. 27 (pl. 24) and 219 (pl. 25); Donderer and Spiliopoulou-Donderer 1993: n. 31. El Djem mosaic: Dunbabin 1978: 66–7, pls. 50, 51; Blanchard-Lemée, Ennaïfer, Slim and Slim 1996: 215, 217, figs. 163a, b. Gladiators: Barton 1993; Köhne and Ewigleben 2000.

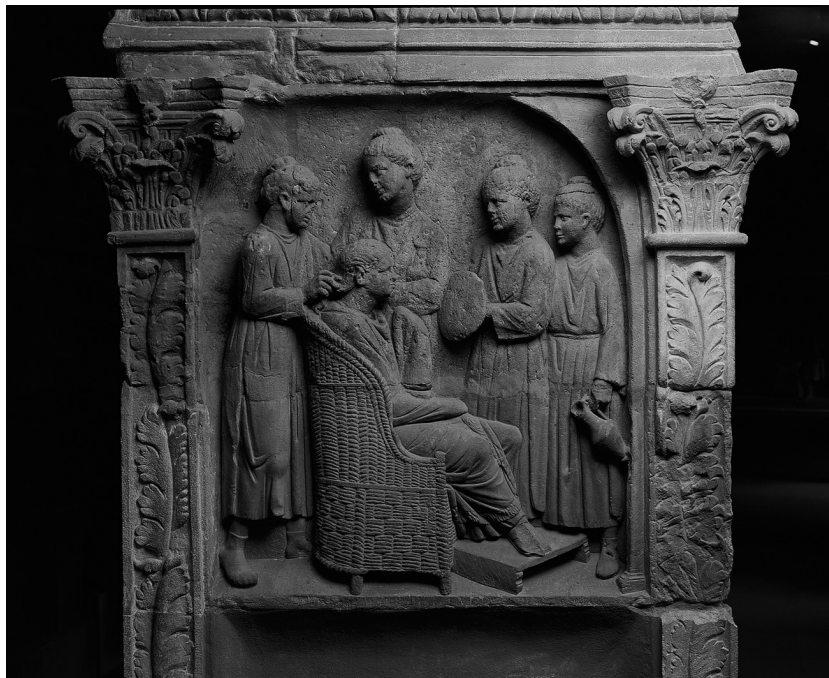


Figure 18.7 Toilette scene, from Neumagen, c. AD 235, now in Trier.

self-representation. The nature of scenes that include slaves illustrates their role in the construction and maintenance of elite social identity. For example, scenes of elaborately dressed slaves accompanying the master to the baths, such as the two from the baths in the fourth-century AD villa at Piazza Armerina in Sicily, one each for *dominus* and *domina*, give artistic form to the practice of displaying an extensive entourage as the master moved through the city. The public event is reproduced in a private context, giving emphasis to the fact that this villa owner was wealthy enough to have his own set of baths. Conversely, funerary commemorations that depict the domestic ritual of the female toilette featuring a corps of specially trained female slaves (Fig. 18.7) make public a private domestic moment to relate social power and feminine identity. Scenes of villa life on numerous North African mosaics portray slaves assisting in the hunt, tending to animals or working in the fields, furnishing an illustration in context of the economic interests of a land-owning master, the affluence associated with the *topos* of the villa in Roman thought, or social aspirations to higher social status.²²

²² Attitudes to work: Garnsey 1980b; D'Arms 1981; George 2006. Piazza Armerina: Carandini, Ricci and de Vos 1982. Toilette scenes: Amedick 1991: 108–9; Shumka 2000: ch. 3. Villa scenes: Dunbabin 1978: 109–23. Hunting scenes: Dunbabin 1978: ch. 4.

Slaves are integral to the landscape of Roman social life and to the communication of an idealised mode of living in which the freedom for repose was made possible by the possession of slaves. Schools (*paedagogia*) that prepared imperial slaves for their domestic tasks in the emperor's household are evidenced by graffiti from the Palatine and Caelian hills at Rome, while elite households had their own version to ensure that slaves were equipped with the necessary skills (Pliny, *Letters* 7.27.13). A unique representation of the servile trainees at a *paedagogium* appears on the remains of a mosaic of the Flavian era from Capua, in which a group of fifteen young boys in blue tunics are shown with their teacher (*paedagogus*), an older man who stands at the rear. Especially important was instruction in the niceties of serving banquets hosted by the emperor, a set of specialised functions reserved for the most attractive pre-pubescent and adolescent boys. Recognisable by their long and carefully curled hair, these youthful servers, referred to as *delicati*, were also the object of sexual attention. Slaves who dutifully wait at table while scantily clad couples recline are key elements in the creation of a luxurious and indolent ambience (see Fig. 16.4), but disguise the social tensions that were also part of such occasions. The crowd of real banquet slaves referred to so frequently in written sources is sacrificed to artistic representation and syncopated into two or three figures in order to maintain the focus on the slave-owner. As property, slaves were yet another luxury commodity, exhibited at the dinner party, along with expensive imported silverware, exotic foods and lavish entertainments, to demonstrate the host's social status and to create the atmosphere of opulence and ease that the banquet represented in Roman culture. The impression of sumptuous indulgence, however, belies the abusive treatment of real slaves that was integral to the banquet, where the self-conscious enactment of social relations was as much a part of the display of power as the ostentatious exhibition of material goods. The cruelties of the banquet as detailed by written sources reveal that the ambience of pleasure on such occasions relied directly on, and was enhanced by, the reiteration of power and its abuse.²³

In other scenes the way in which slaves shape elite status in self-representation is more subtle and enhanced by deeper consideration of the social context. For example, standardised scenes of juvenile biography on sarcophagi commemorating elite childhood include slave childminders, the pedagogue (*paedagogus*) and nurse (*nutrix*), who demonstrate their devotion to their charges through highly affectionate contact and attitudes of uncontrolled grief (Fig. 18.8). As visual complements, slave child caregivers represent the cultural values of their masters, the parents, whose

²³ *Paedagogia*: Balty 1982: 308; on Palatine: Solin and Itkonen-Kaila 1966: 57–73. Capua mosaic: Napoli 1960: 94, pl. 61; Fless 1995: 59–60. Slaves at the banquet: Balty 1982; D'Arms 1991; Dunbabin 2003; Clarke 2003: ch. 8. *Delicati*: Fless 1995: 56–69; Pollini 2001, 2003. Altar: Zimmer 1982: no. 40.



Figure 18.8 Child's sarcophagus, Agrigento, with slave childminders.

passivity in the same repertoire of scenes reflects their superior status over slaves who do the actual work of child care, and whose restraint in mourning stands in opposition to the slaves' emotional excess. The idealised nature of the imagery is rendered clearly by setting the representations against our knowledge of reality, which furnishes a darker and less edifying account of master–slave relations. This is especially pertinent to the *domus*, where a fragile balance had to be maintained between the slave-owner's authority and the more subtle forms of power that lay open to the domestic slave workforce in the course of their duties. Paralleling the idealised nurse and pedagogue of the commemorations were the negative stereotypes of the drunken nurse and the paedophilic pedagogue whom watchful parents must shun. Presenting a sanitised version of household relations, the imagery reduces the complex network of power and status among slave-owning parents, slave childminders and elite children to romanticised tableaux that use sentimentality to display status.²⁴

Special categories of slaves, such as blacks, whose skin colour and features were exotic to Roman eyes, were especially valued as curiosities and credited with apotropaic power. In the imagery they appear in domestic contexts, such as the banquet and toilette scenes, or as specialised workers on rural estates. Two figure types emerge in the imagery of black slaves: the *cursor*, or runner, who precedes his master's litter to announce his arrival, and the banquet slave, in particular the cupbearer and the hand-washer. In both cases the acquisition of slaves with striking somatic features that made them stand out from the crowd reflected the sophistication and wealth of the slave-owner. Utilitarian objects such as counterweights, pepper shakers, and nail-heads with black physiognomy present an interesting parallel to the artistic evidence. Most were domestic in function and therefore possibly represent the aspiration to ownership of black slaves themselves, here adapted and reduced to the possession of household objects in place of a real slave. The use of black facial features on these objects enabled a direct association with real black slaves whose possession was beyond reach, while also maintaining a safe distance from the fact that most real slaves were Caucasian, not black, and therefore often resembled their masters more than blacks did. The creation and preservation of barriers between slave and slave-owner were critical elements in the rationale for institutionalised slavery, which was founded on innate difference and the idea that slavery was part of the natural order. The use of slaves as vehicles to convey these ideas indicates their profound integration into household life and,

²⁴ Slave childminders: Amedick 1991: 60–81; Huskinson 1991; Schulze 1998; Dimas 1998; George 2000.

somewhat ironically, the crucial symbolic value of those with no status to the delineation and expression of Roman social hierarchies.²⁵

The importance of the domestic context to slave identity can also be seen in the funerary commemorations of freed slaves, whose earliest extant form of self-representation features family groups. A unique genre that emerges in the archaeological record of Rome in the early first century BC, the first memorials of freedmen consist of stelae originally on the facades of tombs with relief portraits that represented freedman families. The groups include married couples, nuclear families and larger collections of individuals of the same or mixed generations, raising the possibility that they were *colliberti*, freedmen once owned by the same master, some possibly related to each other by blood. The self-conscious use of family groups in the construction of a new public persona reveals the value of family life for former slaves whose informal families were perpetually vulnerable to disruption by sale at the master's whim. Iconographic elements such as the toga, the garment exclusive to Roman citizens, and the *bullae*, the protective amulet restricted by law to freeborn boys, display their attainment of legal and, equally important, moral legitimacy. In portraying themselves as a family collective, former slaves in the late Republic laid claim to respectability and moral rectitude, qualities that belonged exclusively to the Roman citizen and not the slave, who was viewed as innately depraved and dishonest. The cultivation of an image that stressed notions of propriety and morality by manumitted slaves reveals the lasting effect of negative attitudes towards slaves and the slave's own internalisation of that social labelling.²⁶

Scenes of work beyond the domus

Figures that can be identified as probable slaves also appear in images of work in industrial and manufacturing settings in urban centres. Given the lack of visible distinctions in legal status and the knowledge that slaves often worked alongside the free poor, a greater degree of ambiguity is attached to the figures in work scenes outside the house. Images of work fulfilled two functions, serving either didactically as advertising or as decoration in retail and industrial settings, or as funerary commemoration for the businessmen or craftsmen who owned these establishments. A high degree of detail marks many scenes, such as those that decorated the interior of a *fullonica* at Pompeii with illustrations of cloth production, or the black and white mosaic pavements from the shop floors of the Piazza della Corporazione at Ostia, where merchants from across the empire displayed their trade with images of wine and grain amphorae. There is no internal hierarchy among the workers in this imagery, however, and legal status distinctions

²⁵ Black slaves: Snowden 1970, 1976; Desanges 1976; Thompson 1989; George 2003.

²⁶ Zanker 1975; Kleiner 1977; Kockel 1993; George 2005.

seem irrelevant to its didactic purpose. For example, on a grave stele from Aquileia in northern Italy, a scene of metalworking includes two workers: in the middle a man in an *exomis* finishes off a pair of forceps on an anvil, while on the left margin a smaller tunicate figure maintains the oven with a bellows. While it is possible that both are slaves, the distinction in dress and the greater focus given to the central figure recommends that the latter is the shop owner and the main subject of the commemoration, while the less prominent figure is a slave. Scenes such as this, which memorialise ownership of a business, use slaves as ancillary figures in much the same way as representations that feature elite slave-owners, as foils whose subordinate status delineates, and makes more visible, distinctions between workers in the same context.²⁷

There is, however, a critical distinction in representations of slaves at work inside and outside the house, for while the former rely on the derogatory associations of work to define status, the latter frame work in favourable terms, asserting the dignity of work in defiance of elite disdain. Monuments such as the Aquileia relief that present work in positive terms reflect a perspective that was central to the slave experience above all other social groups at Rome. The value of slaves was determined by their work, and its contribution to the master's coffers was the most direct path to manumission, making work a critical element in the slave identity on a collective and individual basis. The importance of work in the formation of slaves' identities emerges from studies of their own epitaphs which favour occupational title both before and after manumission. In contrast to the negative connotations of work held by the elite, the frequency with which the theme of work appears in funerary commemoration demonstrates a powerful and highly positive identification with work by those engaged in it. As might be expected, funerary monuments that use work as an honorific motif commemorate the middle and lower economic strata of Roman society, who exploit detailed images of manufacture and vending as affirmative expressions of success in apparent disregard of elite prejudices. The commemoration of work in funerary art appears first as marginal decoration on freedman relief portraits, but by the first century AD quickly develops into a genre of its own. The funerary relief of the Licinii, for example, commemorates two freedmen, Philonicus and Demetrius, whose portraits are framed by the tools of their trade, respectively metalwork and carpentry, providing material proof of the bonds formed in slavery and defined by work and status that lasted after manumission.²⁸ The best preserved example of work as funerary commemoration is the famous tomb

²⁷ Images of work: Zimmer 1982; Clarke 2003; George 2006. Relief from Aquileia: Zimmer 1982: no. 122, dated to the Trajanic period. Partial inscription extant: *et l(ibertis) l(ibertabus)que*.

²⁸ See Zimmer 1982: no. 128. Inscription: *P. Licinius P.L. / Philonicu[s] // P. Licinius P.L. / Demetrius patrono / fecit / [...]*. Slaves and occupational title: Joshel 1992.



Figure 18.9 Frieze of breadmaking, Tomb of Eurysaces.

of the baker M. Vergilius Eurysaces at Rome, which includes a frieze with detailed scenes of breadmaking (Fig. 18.9). Eurysaces, who was either a freedman or of slave descent, identifies himself in two inscriptions as a *redemptor* (contractor) as well as a *pistor* (baker), indicating that his was no corner shop, but a large-scale operation that provided bread to the state for public distribution. The distinction is significant, for the greater magnitude of a business the greater the honour that accrued to the owner. The many men shown grinding flour, kneading, baking, and weighing loaves on the frieze are Eurysaces' slaves, rather than the patron himself, and their number and industry reflect his success, not their own. The monument thus commemorates work while presenting it on a grand scale, in a way least likely to attract elite censure.²⁹

Although they commemorated former slaves, rather than slaves themselves, funerary monuments that use work to demonstrate achievement articulated the ideals and values of a status group that lacked the means and the autonomy to fashion its own public image. As the direct expression of an ethos that lay at the core of slave identity, they are valuable markers of the ideas of self that developed among slaves and that endured when liberty was obtained.

Resonating beyond slaves and freedmen, the commemoration of work was taken up by the freeborn of middle economic status, who adopted and transformed this emblem of servitude into cogent and effective memorials to their own success. The continued popularity of work as a commemorative theme by these sectors of the Roman populace, into the second and third centuries AD, especially in the northern provinces, can be seen as the legacy of a value system bred in slavery which, through this incarnation, had a lasting influence on Roman culture.

CONCLUSION

The random nature of archaeological preservation and slaves' lack of wealth obscure physical traces of Roman slavery. But with careful scrutiny evidence of slaves and slavery can be delineated in Roman material culture even when apparently subsumed beneath the remnants of more powerful status groups. In Roman visual culture, where they are more easily discerned than in the archaeological record, slaves were used to express the ideals of a dominant culture that embraced a system of institutionalised oppression, appropriating and refashioning their servitude into proof of Rome's authority and the social superiority of the slave-owner. As symbols of powerlessness, slaves defined and strengthened the empowered, confirming their dominance

²⁹ Ciancio Rossetto 1973; Zimmer 1982: no. 18; Petersen 2003; George 2006.

and easing the exercise of social control through the constant reiteration of embodied vulnerability.

Much depends on the demands that are made of this evidence. When slaves, rather than slave-owners, are given precedence, a more comprehensive blueprint for examining Roman material culture emerges, one that enables the recasting of conventional wisdom and the discovery of new methods of approach. More diligence in current excavation and more thoughtful re-examination of existing evidence yield valuable knowledge, as does the material culture of freedmen, former slaves whose identities and ideals were formed in servitude and whose monuments provide targets for discussion. An appropriate framework for seeing slaves in material culture requires the judicious integration of texts and their scholarly traditions with physical evidence that is often disparate, discrepant and fragmentary. The careful negotiation of diverse methodologies and material can, however, allow Roman slaves to emerge from the past in new and valuable ways.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

As should be apparent from this chapter, Roman slaves have only rarely been identified as worthy subjects for study using archaeological or visual evidence. Thompson (2003) is the only general work on archaeology and Roman slavery, although Schumacher (2001) includes material culture in his study of both Greek and Roman slave systems. With the exception of Carandini (1985), slaves receive surprisingly little attention in most publications of villa excavations, although Rossiter (1978), Cotton and Métraux (1985) and Samson (1989) provide more substantial consideration of slaves than most. Kolendo (1978) is the only article that focuses specifically on the depiction of slaves in Roman art, while Kampen (1981) and D'Ambra (1998) give slaves more attention than is customary in the scholarship of Roman art.

Scholarship on slaves fares better in smaller-scale studies focused on particular monuments or groups of evidence, such as the stele of Aulus Capreilius Timotheus (Finley 1977b: 162–76; Duchêne 1986), slave shackles (Thompson 1994), slave collars (Thurmond 1994), or the continuing debate on the Agora of the Italians on Delos (most relevant: Cocco 1970; Bruneau 1975; Coarelli 1982; Trümper 2008). The study of slaves in the visual culture of Rome remains disparate. While slave childminders (Dimas 1998; Schulze 1998; George 2000) and black slaves (Snowden 1970, 1976; Desanges 1976; Thompson 1989; George 2003) have received consideration, images of slave captives, for example, will repay greater scholarly attention than they have as yet been given (Zanker 1998; Bradley 2004). In the same vein, visual references to slaves in triumphal parades appear frequently and can be found on imperial reliefs (Koeppel 1986; Smith 1987), on coinage (Levi

1952), on the cuirasses of imperial statues (Stemmer 1978), and in the private context on terracotta reliefs (Gabelmann 1981); for discussion of captives in triumphs, see Edwards (2003) and Beard (2003). Representations of work in Roman art (Zimmer 1982; Kampen 1981) deserve to be re-evaluated as possible expressions of values relevant to slaves in particular. The self-representation of freedmen offers a diverse body of evidence of potentially great value for the study of slavery, as preliminary work suggests (Zanker 1975; Kleiner 1977; Joshel 1992; Clarke 2003; George 2005, 2006; Petersen 2006).

CHAPTER 19

SLAVERY AND ROMAN LAW

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SOURCES

This chapter will consider mainly Roman law of the classical period, between about 200 BC and AD 200. Occasional reference will be made to earlier and later law, such as the Twelve Tables (fifth century BC), and collections made in the late empire, of imperial legislation in the Theodosian Code (*Codex Theodosianus*), and of imperial responses to individual enquiries in Justinian's Code (*Codex Iustinianus*). From the mass of surviving Roman law concerning slaves, there will be room to consider only a few salient aspects.

The *Digest* was commissioned by Justinian in AD 527. It was compiled from the works of the major jurists, especially the five great jurists of the late second and early third century, Papinian, Paul, Modestinus, Ulpian and Gaius, declared authoritative a century earlier by Valentinian and Theodosius (AD 426). They refer to, or even directly quote, many earlier laws, imperial enactments or responses, and senatorial decrees, and cite legal interpretations by earlier jurists, going as far back as the late Republic. The *Digest* is also our major source for the content of the Praetor's Edict (see Robinson 1997: 39–42), which was the formal source of most Roman private law, detailing the legal remedies available, and the appropriate formulae, or procedure, for obtaining them. The Edict is particularly important as providing a means by which legal contracts made via slaves could be enforced against their owners – in other words, they made much of Roman business life possible. Also important is Gaius' *Institutes*, a handbook for lawyers, written in the latter part of the second century AD. Justinian's *Institutes* was published in AD 533 as an elementary textbook for law students.

Some Roman laws are attested epigraphically or through literary sources (see especially Crawford 1996). Private documents – inscriptions, papyri and waxed tablets – also provide useful evidence for law in action. The tablets are private witnessed records of the performance of various legal transactions, made for later use as evidence if needed; the three major collections provide details of business life in Pompeii, Puteoli and Herculaneum, in the middle of the first century AD.

THE IMPORTANCE OF SLAVES IN ROMAN LAW

‘There is scarcely a problem which can present itself, in any branch of the law, the solution of which may not be affected by the fact that one of the parties to the transaction is a slave’ (Buckland 1908: vi). This observation has become a commonplace, although the rest of the sentence is seldom quoted: ‘and outside the region of procedure, there are few branches of the law in which the slave does not prominently appear’. Roman law was conventionally divided into the law of persons, of things (*res*) and of ‘actions’ (legal procedures for litigation). Slaves were not ‘persons’ in the eyes of the law and appear in the law of persons mainly in relation to matters of status, either in the power (*potestas*) of an owner, or upon release from it (manumission). Slaves were ‘things’ (*res*), i.e., property. As for procedure, they could carry out legally binding transactions, on behalf of their owners, although since they were not ‘persons’ in the legal sense they could not represent their owners in any consequent litigation. However, the Praetor’s Edict established ways of determining the extent of the owner’s liability for deals done by slaves. Hence the ubiquity of slaves in Roman law.

PROPERTY – SLAVES AS THINGS (*RES*)

Slaves, and freed slaves, appear already to be an established feature of Roman society in the earliest attested Roman law-code, the Twelve Tables (c. 450 BC). The main legal causes of slavery were capture in war, birth to a slave mother, or purchase from a non-Roman.¹

Only in exceptional circumstances could a Roman citizen be enslaved (Buckland 1908: 401–18). In early Rome only, condemned debtors could, if they still failed to repay the debt after a period of grace, be sold by their creditors ‘across the Tiber’, i.e. into what was then non-Roman territory. Debtors could also give personal security and so bind themselves into the control of their creditors (*nexum*) until the debt was repaid. *Nexum* was abolished by a plebiscite, c. 326 BC.² Enslavement of citizens by the state as a penalty for certain crimes appears under the Principate; those convicted were *servi poenae*, ‘slaves of the penalty’, and the sentence was for life (*Dig.* 48.19.8.8, 11; 17 pr.).

In the Twelve Tables, slaves are already treated as property. There was a penalty for breaking the bone of someone’s slave, half that for a similar injury to a free man (1.14). No mention of damage to animals survives, but damage to a productive tree also incurred a penalty (1.16). The *lex Aquilia* (Crawford 1996, 11: 722–6), probably passed in the early third century BC,

¹ For the text of the Twelve Tables, see Crawford 1996, 11: 555–722. For discussion, Watson 1975: 81–98. See Herrmann-Otto 1994 on ‘home-born’ slaves, *vernae*; cf. Weaver 1972.

² Livy 8.28; Watson 1975: 111–24.

does not appear to have been concerned with damage to free persons, but only to slaves, animals or other types of property. It stated: 'If anyone shall have unlawfully killed a male or female slave belonging to another or a four-footed animal, whatever may be the highest value of that in that year, so much money is he to be condemned to give to the owner.' Crawford suggests (1996, II: 607, 723–6) that the slave under the Twelve Tables had a higher status than under the *lex Aquilia*, 'where damage to a slave is treated like damage to any other object'. However, our knowledge of the contents of the Twelve Tables is only fragmentary and indirect (Robinson 1997: 55), constructed from references in later legal and literary sources.

Slaves belonged to a category of property known as *res mancipi* (Gai. *Inst.* 2.14a). This included also land and houses in Italy and animals used as beasts of draught or burden, such as oxen, horses, mules or asses (i.e. working animals, as distinct from livestock) – in other words, the basic means of production in a peasant economy. Sellers of goods were in general not liable to disclose defects in goods sold, although they were liable for any guarantees they did give by *stipulatio* (formal contract by verbal promise).³

However, a special liability was introduced by the Edict of the Curule Aediles (magistrates with responsibility for markets).⁴ This applied to sales both of slaves and of beasts of burden; sellers were required to guarantee their freedom from various defects and were liable even if they had not known about them. Understandably, some dealers were reluctant to give a warranty on those terms and were not held liable for any defects agreed to be specifically excluded. Aulus Gellius tells us (*Attic Nights* 7.4), citing a first-century AD jurist, Caelius Sabinus, that it was customary to put felt caps on the heads of slaves for sale, to indicate that they were being sold 'without warranty'.

Sellers were expected to disclose any disease or defect (*morbis vitiumve*) in the slave, and whether the slave was a runaway, a loiterer (*erro*) or under noxal liability. Since slaves could not be sued, owners were liable for wrongdoing by their slaves and had the option either of paying damages if appropriate, or of surrendering the slave to the plaintiff (Watson 1987: 67–76). What constituted disease or defect provoked a great deal of juristic discussion, which takes up almost all of *Digest* 21.1 (cf. Watson 1987: 49–52). In general, although mental and moral defects were a grey area (*Dig.* 21.1.1–4), it was agreed that anything, especially any physical defect, reducing the usefulness of the slave justified the buyer in cancelling the sale. Lawyers agreed, according to Ulpian, that women slaves could be sold as healthy when pregnant, since that was their natural function, and also barren women, unless the infertility was due to some physical defect (*Dig.*

³ See Gai. *Inst.* 3.92–4; Buckland 1963: 434–9; Johnston 1999: 77–9.

⁴ *Dig.* 21.1.1.1. 38; Buckland 1908: 52–7; Crook 1967b: 181–7; Watson 1971: 134–7.

21.1.14.1–3). Slave women, he remarks elsewhere (*Dig.* 5.3.27 pr.), are not acquired ‘solely as breeding stock’. Nevertheless, their fecundity could be a selling point, as with sheep and cattle. Paul (*Dig.* 19.1.21 pr.) describes a typical fraud – selling the prospective offspring (*partus*) of a female slave, but not disclosing to the buyer that she was barren, or over fifty years old.

As an additional incentive to honest trading, the Edict also required, unless the parties agreed otherwise, that the seller give a guarantee to repay twice the price (*Dig.* 21.2), in case of eviction – that is, if the sale was invalid because someone else had a better legal claim to the property. For slaves, this guarantee was also expected if defects had not been declared (*Dig.* 21.2.32; 37, pr.-1). The buyer was protected against the appearance of additional defects for six months, or for two if the slave was sold without warranty, by the *actio redhibitoria* (action for cancellation of sale), and for a year, or six months if bought ‘as seen’, by the *actio quanti minoris* (action for reduction in value).

The special skills of slaves were obviously important as selling points. The wide range of jobs for which slaves were used, especially in large households, is incidentally attested not only in inscriptions, but also in legal discussions of a wide range of topics.⁵ Sellers were under no obligation to declare positive merits in slaves for sale, although they were likely to do so. They were liable under the Edict for the truth of any specific claims, negative or positive, made (*Dig.* 21.1.17.20). ‘If a vendor says that a slave is an excellent cook, he must supply one outstanding in this skill, but if he merely says that he is a cook, he fulfils the contract even if he supplies a mediocre cook’ (*Dig.* 21.1.18.1).

These rules were routinely followed in day-to-day trading among Romans and between Romans and *peregrini*, as shown by references to them in wooden tablets recording sales of slaves, from various places and times in the first and second centuries AD (cf. Crook 1967b: 183–6).⁶ In the Roman province of Dacia, between AD 139 and 160, we even find the local people using the Roman forms (*FIRA* III.281–8, nos. 87–9) in deals among themselves. For instance, at Ravenna, sometime in the second century AD, a Greek slave-trader, with rather shaky knowledge of Latin, issued a receipt (subsequently found in Egypt), written in Greek script, to a sailor with the imperial fleet (*FIRA* III.134). How routine such guarantees were is indicated by a formulaic phrase in the document meaning that all the requirements of the Edict are satisfied. Harbour tax was payable on slaves in transit for sale or use by someone else (*Dig.* 39.4.16.3), but slaves for one’s own use, such as masseurs, valets, cooks, and so on, were exempt, according to the

⁵ Treggiari 1975b; Joshel 1992.

⁶ *TPSulp.* 42–4 (Camodeca 1992: 141–64); *Tab. Herc.* LX and LXI (Arangio-Ruiz & Pugliese Carratelli 1954: 55–7); *FIRA* III.425–32, nos. 132–4.

harbour law of Sicily (*Dig.* 50.16.203). Undeclared slaves were confiscated, unless they were new slaves (*novicia*), not veterans (defined as those who had been slaves for at least a year).

In the Aedile's Edict a distinction is drawn between *novicia* and *veteratores*. This is for the protection of buyers against 'the wiles of vendors'. Many dealers, according to Ulpian (*Dig.* 21.1.37), sell as new slaves those who are not new in order to get a better price. The reason is that a new slave is more readily trained for the owner's purpose than one who may need retraining. Training of slaves, both in the household and by outside instructors, appears incidentally several times in the *Digest*, in connection with such matters as determining the contents of a legacy, various issues of liability, and the services due from a freed slave. A wide range of occupations is mentioned – painter, shoemaker, weaver, lady's maid. Child slaves under the age of puberty might be already quite skilled clerks, accountants or actors.⁷

A severely mutilated inscription from Pergamum preserves a decree in Greek of the emperor Vespasian (AD 74) awarding privileges to doctors, teachers and rhetoricians, with a rescript in Latin by Domitian (AD 93–4) withdrawing such privileges from those who augmented their income by accepting slave pupils (*AE* 1936: 128). The reason suggested by Rawson (2003: 185, 188) was distaste for giving slaves a liberal education, although it is doubtful how widespread this attitude was in Roman society, or how effectively the ruling was policed. The majority of the teachers in Suetonius' *De grammaticis* are freedmen, though only one, Quintus Remmius Palaemon, is specifically said to have learned while a slave. This, however, was incidental. He had been trained as a weaver but picked up an education when he was assigned to taking the master's son to school (Suet. *Gram.* 23).

A tablet found in London, from the late first century AD, contains the first documented sale of a slave from Britain (Tomlin 2003):

Vegetus, slave of Montanus, slave of the August Emperor and former slave of Lucundus, has bought and received by *mancipium* the girl Fortunata, or by whatever other name she is known, by nationality Diablintian, from Albicianus [...] for six hundred denarii. And that the girl in question is handed over in good health, and is guaranteed not liable to wander or run away, and if anyone lays claim to the girl in question or any share in her [...] in the wax tablet which he has written and sworn by the *genius* of the Emperor Caesar [...].

The sale is by mancipation, and the guarantees of fitness for sale, and against eviction, required by the Edict are duly given. Since slaves can legally stand in for their owners, Vegetus, the *vicarius*, slave of a slave of

⁷ *Dig.* 6.1.28, 9.2.5.3, 19.2.13.4, 24.1.28.1, 30.34.36, 32.65.3, 33.7.12.32, 38.1.7.5; Rawson 2003: 185–94.

Montanus, who had himself at one time been *vicarius* of another imperial slave, Iucundus or Secundus, can legally acquire Fortunata as property of the emperor.

Slaves in very large establishments, and especially in the administrative service of the emperor (cf. Weaver 1972), often 'owned' slaves in this way, of whom some performed purely personal services. The best-known example is Musicus Scurranus, slave of the emperor Tiberius, superintendent (*dispensator*) of the Gallic Treasury for the province of Lyon, commemorated at Rome (*ILS* 1514) by his sixteen *vicarii* who were with him when he died – a buying agent, a treasurer, three secretaries, a physician, two slaves in charge of silverware, two attendants, two bedroom attendants, a valet, two cooks and a woman whose duties are not specified. The majority of these slaves had been trained in special skills. Musicus, though himself a piece of property, as a high-ranking official appears to have lived and died more comfortably than most free Romans. The complexity of the imperial service is well illustrated here.

Fortunata may also have been intended for Vegetus' own private use. She probably formed part of Vegetus' *peculium*, as he of Montanus', but all ultimately were the property of the emperor (possibly Domitian or Trajan).

THE SLAVE AS MAN: BUSINESS DEALINGS

The Roman head of household, *paterfamilias*, had the sole right to engage in legal transactions involving those subject to his *potestas*, his children and his slaves. Since children and slaves had no separately recognised legal identity, they could carry out transactions that were legally binding upon the father or owner; women, having no *potestas*, could use only slaves in this way (Gai. *Inst.* 2.87).

The usefulness of slaves in Roman commerce is directly related, though whether as cause or effect is unclear, to the absence from Roman law of a developed concept of direct agency. For the Romans, binding contracts could be made only between the two principals, not through a third party. Through various legal devices developed by the Praetor's Edict, use of extraneous free persons, or their slaves, or of one's own freedmen, was possible but cumbrous, and much less convenient than using one's own slaves or, better still, their *vicarii* (Johnston 1997: 61–2).⁸ For example, ownership of property could be acquired through slaves, but not through extraneous free representatives (Gai. *Inst.* 2.95).⁹ Owners could both sue and be sued on contracts made by their slaves but had no direct right of

⁸ Kirschenbaum 1987; see also Buckland 1908: 131–58; Watson 1987: 102–14. For social and economic aspects, Aubert 1994.

⁹ Kirschenbaum 1987: 7–27; Watson 1987: 105–6.

action on contracts made by an outsider on their behalf; the best they could do would be to sue the manager himself on grounds of mandate or authorised administration.

‘The praetor thought it fair’, explains Ulpian (*Dig.* 14.3.1), ‘that, since we benefit from the acts of our managers, we should be liable and suable on the contracts they make. But he gave no comparable right of action to those who appoint a manager (*institor*). If the manager a person appoints is his own slave, he will be safe enough because he will have the right of action; but if he appoints someone else’s slave or a free person, he has no right of action.’

Epigraphic evidence indicates that such use of slaves was commonplace in Roman society at all levels, and not merely among the elite. Slaves are found buying and selling, as above, and also engaged in a wide range of other activities, such as acknowledging receipt of monies due to their owners, making loans and receiving loans.¹⁰ They are also found acting as managers (*institores*) of businesses belonging to their owners, sometimes even receiving funerary commemoration by free people in the local community (*ILS* 7546, 7607, 7608), but the unreality of such seeming independence is nicely illustrated by the comment of the jurist Paul (*Dig.* 33.7.13):

Where there is a legacy of the equipment of a wineshop (*tabernae cauponiae*), Neratius thinks *institores* are included; but let us see whether there is a distinction between the equipment of the shop (*tabernae cauponiae*), and of the inn (*cauponae*). The equipment of the shop is only that of the premises, such as casks, jars, etc., usually used at table, as well as urns, flagons and the like, while the equipment of the inn, since the term refers to the business, includes the *institores*.

A funerary inscription from Macedonia (*ILS* 7479) commemorates a slave installed by his owner, who was his natural father, as manager of an inn: ‘Here lies Vitalis, who lived 16 years, Gaius Lavius Faustus’ homeborn slave and also his son, manager of the Apriana tavern, popular with the public, carried off by the gods. I ask you, wayfarers, if ever I gave short measure to profit my father, forgive.’ This perhaps illustrates the greater convenience of using a slave, rather than a free person, to manage a business. However, it is also likely that Lavius would not have found it easy to manumit his son, had he wished to (nor, if he wanted to have him recognised legally as his son, to adopt him), since this would involve a journey to the provincial magistrate’s seat of government. As his natural son, Vitalis was, even though under thirty years old, eligible for manumission and citizenship under the terms of the *lex Aelia Sentia* (see below). However,

¹⁰ Examples may be found in the three main collections of waxed tablets from Pompeii, Herculaneum and Puteoli; see the references in the bibliographic essay.

this required appearance before a special tribunal sitting on the last day of the provincial magistrate's assizes. Vitalis may simply have died before he could be freed. Adoption similarly required the presence of a magistrate and other citizen participants.

The convenience of using a slave was greatly enhanced by allocating to him a *peculium*, that is, a fund of property or money made available to the slave for the conduct of business (*Dig.* 15.1).¹¹ The *peculium* had to be specifically allocated by the master to a separate account, and remained his property. On his death, the *peculium*, like the slave who held it, was transferred as part of the estate, though not necessarily both to the same person. If the slave were set free by will, the *peculium* did not accompany him unless it was expressly given as a legacy in the will. This was sometimes made conditional on the slave's rendering accounts, as in the well-known will of 'Dasumius' (*FIRA* III.48), probably the younger Pliny's friend L. Licinius Sura, in which among others two accountants and a treasurer are freed on this condition. It was customarily accepted, on the other hand, that a slave manumitted in his owner's lifetime retained his *peculium*, unless his owner expressly withheld it, although a rule to that effect is not stated until a rescript issued by Severus and Caracalla (Justinian, *Institutes* 2.20.20).

The *peculium* could contain property of any kind, including land and movables, as well as *vicarii* and their *peculium*. It could also include debts, owed both by the master and to him (*Dig.* 15.1.7.4–7).

It was important for creditors to be able to sue the principal in a contract directly, rather than his 'agent' or representative. If the latter were a free person, the creditor had a right of action against him, too, but a slave could not be sued at all. During the Republic, a number of actions were introduced into the Praetor's Edict. One of these, the *actio exercitoria* (*Dig.* 14.1), was specific to shipping and allowed a claim against the ship's owner, in regard to acts by its captain. The other, the *actio institoria*, 'action for business manager's conduct' (*Dig.* 14.3), applied to anyone who had put someone in charge of a business to run it on his behalf.¹²

These actions could be brought in respect of dealings both by free representatives and by slaves, and in each case the principal had unlimited liability for obligations undertaken on his behalf. However, it was obviously more convenient for masters to leave their slaves to conduct business without their constant supervision, and accordingly other actions were introduced under which the extent of the master's liability for his slave's dealings was defined (*Dig.* 15.1.1).¹³

These were applicable only to the dealings of persons in the *potestas* of the principal (his slaves or his sons *in potestate*). Two of them protected

¹¹ Buckland 1908: 187–206. ¹² Kirschenbaum 1987: 90–121; Johnston 1997: 59–61.

¹³ Buckland 1908: 166–9, 176–86, 206–18, 233–8; Watson 1984: 90–101; Kirschenbaum 1987: 47–88.

the slave's owner against the possibly disastrous consequences of a slave's unsupervised dealings. The action on the *peculium*, *actio de peculio* (*Dig.* 15.1), could be used where the transaction was carried out without the authorisation or knowledge of the master. It made him liable only up to the value of the *peculium*. Under the action for benefit taken (*actio de in rem verso*), found only in connection with the action on the *peculium*, the master was liable not only for the amount currently in the *peculium*, but for any sums that had been spent from it for his benefit. What constituted a benefit made a fruitful topic for lawyers to discuss (*Dig.* 15.3.3).

Two other actions were of special benefit to the creditors, since they could be used where the slave had acted with the master's knowledge. The action for authorised transactions (*actio quod iussu*) made the master liable in full for any dealings authorised by him. Where the slave had traded with the *peculium* or any part of it with the master's knowledge, though not necessarily with his authorisation, any creditor could demand that the *peculium* be divided among the creditors. If the master tried to defraud them, he was liable to the *actio tributoria* (*Dig.* 14.4).

A CASE HISTORY

One of the most detailed examples of the usefulness of slaves in commerce is a dossier of five tablets from a surviving archive, found at Murecine, near Pompeii, of the Sulpicii, a finance firm operating in Puteoli.¹⁴ They document part of the process of the making and subsequent recovery of a loan to C. Novius Eunus, a dealer in grains and pulses. In the earliest tablet (51), dated 28 June, AD 37, it is recorded that he borrowed 10,000 sesterces from Evenus Primianus ('who was absent'), a freedman of the emperor Tiberius, through his slave Hesychus. A few days later (52), on 2 July, Hesychus himself made Eunus a loan of another 3,000 sesterces. The right of Hesychus' owner to sue for repayment was duly secured on both occasions by making a verbal contract by *stipulatio* (*Gai. Inst.* 3.92–6), which Hesychus could do on behalf of his master. On the same day (45) Hesychus is recorded as taking over the lease of the warehouse space in which the stock pledged as security was stored, so ensuring that the goods could not be removed without his knowledge:

I, Diognetus, the slave of Gaius Novius Cypaerus, have written on the order of my master that in his presence I have rented to Hesychus, the slave of Primianus Evenus, freedman of Tiberius Julius Augustus, warehouse 12, of the central Bassian warehouses, community property of the people of Puteoli, in which is stored wheat imported from Alexandria which he has received as a pledge today from Gaius Novius Eunus . . . Done at Puteoli.

¹⁴ Texts in Camodeca 1999; discussion in Serrao 1984.

Hesychus is not the only slave involved. The record of the lease is written by the slave of the man, probably a freedman, who had a contract from the Puteoli town council for letting warehouse space. In a similar tablet (46) dated 15 March, AD 40, the lessor is C. Sulpicius Faustus, and the owner of the warehouse this time is a woman, Domitia Lepida, Nero's aunt. Once again, an independent contractor does the letting, and once again his slave records the lease because, he tells us, his owner, who may be an ex-slave himself, is illiterate.

By 29 August, AD 38, Hesychus has passed along with the debt, probably as part of Evenus' estate, into the ownership of the emperor Gaius. He is still handling the debt, which suggests that he had been operating with a *peculium*. Eunus' debt, including interest, now stands at 1,130 sesterces, but Hesychus stipulates (67) that this is due to be paid either to himself or to C. Sulpicius Faustus. In the last tablet (68) dated over a year later, on 15 September, AD 39, 1250 sesterces are due, and a time limit for payment is imposed (3 October), after which there will be a penalty of 20 sesterces a day.

Clearly, the time had come to get tough with the creditor, but the legal limitations of a slave become evident. Hesychus had duly bound the debtor by *stipulatio* but could not himself sue for repayment, so Sulpicius is engaged and named as alternative creditor. There will have been a separate *stipulatio* between Hesychus and Sulpicius, that the latter repay to Hesychus (less a fee, no doubt) any sums paid to him (or raised by the sale of pledged stock).

This little group of documents nicely illustrates the habitual use, at all levels of society, of agents, both freed and slave, and something of the advantages and limitations of the latter.

THE SLAVE AS MAN: PERSONAL RELATIONS

As *res*, slaves, like other forms of property, could be bought, sold, given, pledged, jointly owned and hired out. However, as they were human beings, they did not always fit tidily within the category of 'things'. Slaves were livestock of a kind, but lawyers betray a good deal of uneasiness in treating slaves' produce (*fructus*) or offspring (*partus*) like those of animals.¹⁵ From at least as early as the second century BC, Roman law on usufruct, entitlements to the yield from property leased, was clear that children of slaves were not to be treated like the products of other livestock, but lawyers struggled to explain why this should be so. Humanitarian reasons do not seem to have been foremost. By the operation of the rules of leasehold, just as by other

¹⁵ Buckland 1908: 21–9; Watson 1987: 79–80, 102–5; Gardner 1986b: 209–13.

legal transactions such as sale or bequest, mother and child could be and frequently were separated.

Biological and conjugal relationships between slaves, although frequently attested in funerary inscriptions and literary sources, were not recognised in Roman law. For a free person enslaved by captivity, any such former relationships simply ceased to have legal effect. If he was subsequently freed, they were not revived, since his status was now that of a Roman citizen – unlike captive Romans, whose status and legal relationships were regarded as merely suspended, and revived if and when they emerged from captivity (*postliminium*).¹⁶ A child born to a slave woman, whether by another slave or a free man, was legally simply another piece of property.

Until AD 52, any children born from sexual relations between Roman women and male slaves were free and citizen, though illegitimate. In 52, however, the *senatusconsultum Claudianum* ordered that if a free woman and a slave had cohabited without the owner's consent, both she and the child were his slaves, whereas if he did consent, she remained free, but became his freedwoman.¹⁷ Hadrian modified the rule to the extent that, if the owner had consented and the woman remained free, then so did the child. Later jurisprudence also introduced a number of refinements of interpretation. Nevertheless, it is clear that despite the ruling such slave-free 'marriages' were not uncommon, and notably so in the imperial household. Weaver (1972: 167–9) therefore suggested that the *senatusconsultum* was devised primarily in the interests of the imperial service, both to maintain the supply of *vernae* and to secure inheritance rights from the 'wives' and children of imperial slaves.

However, according to another, otherwise unknown, law mentioned by Gaius (*Inst.* 1.85), a different rule applied if a free man had relations with a female slave believing her to be free; the child, if female, was a slave and belonged to her owner, but, if male, was free (though illegitimate). Vespasian, 'moved by the awkwardness of the law', restored the normal *ius gentium* ('rule of nations', or generally accepted principle) that male as well as female children were slaves of their mother's owner. The father himself remained free; clearly it was felt inappropriate to interfere with one Roman man's status merely in the private interest of another. Women's status, however, was apparently of less concern, probably because they lacked *patria potestas*.

Slaves, in the eyes of the law, had no relatives. 'We do not avoid using these terms,' remarked Paul in his work 'Degrees of Relatives and their Names' (*Dig.* 38.10.10.5), 'that is, the names of cognate relatives, even in

¹⁶ Buckland 1908: 291–310; 1963: 67–8.

¹⁷ Gai. *Inst.* 1.84–86; Paul, *Sententiae* 2.21, 4.10.2; Tac. *Ann.* 12.53.1; Buckland 1908: 412–18; Weaver 1972: 162–9; 1986: 145–69.

the case of slaves. So we speak of parents and sons and brothers of slaves; but slave relationships have nothing to do with law.’

Biological relationships between freed slaves might be recognised, as with other illegitimate children, for the avoidance of incest, or observance of proper *pietas* towards a parent (*Dig.* 23.2.14.2, 2.4.4.3,5), but there was no question of membership of a *familia*, or of *patria potestas*. In order to create such legally recognised links, adoption was necessary.¹⁸

In practice, whether slaves, when transferred to other owners, were kept together with their families tended to depend on the interpretations of individual lawyers. In the mid-second century AD, the jurist Scaevola’s interpretations of the terms of bequests showed no particular concern to keep slave families together. A daughter who had been left a legacy of slaves to take effect when she married was not also entitled to any slave children born to them in the meantime (*Dig.* 33.5.21). There was no reason shown why a legacy of a slave agent (*actor*) who lived in town, should include his wife and daughter, living on the country estate (*Dig.* 33.7.20.4). When farms and slaves on them were left as a legacy, those slaves were not included who had accompanied their master to the province where he died, even if they had subsequently returned to rejoin their relatives (*Dig.* 33.7.20.5).

In contrast, Ulpian, the ‘pioneer of human rights’ (Honoré 2002), favoured keeping slave relatives together. Healthy slaves, he says, are generally returned by buyers along with those found to be diseased, ‘when they cannot be separated without great inconvenience or affront to family feeling (*pietas*)’. An owner is not obliged to hand over, in order to fulfil a legacy, a slave who is his natural parent or brother and can offer the monetary value instead, but he cannot do this in the case of material objects, ‘for human beings are one thing, objects another’. In a legacy of specialised workers on a rural state, their wives and children living there should be presumed to be included, ‘for it is not to be believed that the testator would have imposed so cruel a separation’.¹⁹

The fate of such family groups continued throughout the classical period of Roman law to depend upon juristic interpretations in individual instances. A rule against separating them eventually appears when Constantine ordered that divisions of property be made so as to allow close relatives among slaves to stay together (*Cod. Iust.* 3.38.11). Before that, they could be separated, by sale, bequest, manumission, or otherwise, at the owner’s will.²⁰

¹⁸ For the difficulties involved, see Gardner 1997: 35–53.

¹⁹ *Dig.* 21.1.35, 30.71.3–4, 33.7.12.7 (cf. 33); Honoré 2002: 87, 101.

²⁰ See Bradley 1984 for evidence from Egypt indicating disregard of family relationships in slave sales or bequests; Flory 1984 and Treggiari 1981: 63–9 provide examples of families in which one parent or some children are slaves and others free.

This is one example of the occasional, but inconsistent, apparent humanitarianism of Roman treatment of slaves in Roman law, considered in more detail below, which may, to some extent at least, have been a response to the sheer numbers of slaves in Roman society in the classical period.

DANGER IN NUMBERS?

As already noted, slaves are already an established feature of Roman society in the Twelve Tables. Rome's territorial expansion was accompanied by an increase in the numbers of slaves and concomitantly of freedmen, an early indication of which is the senate's institution in 357 BC of a 5 per cent tax on the manumission of slaves (*vicesima libertatis*). This was expected to bring significant revenue to the depleted public treasury. It was still being collected as late as the fourth century AD, though the evidence is scanty and cannot help us to estimate slave numbers at any given time.²¹ Freed slaves, if duly manumitted by a Roman citizen owner, became Roman citizens, and this had a marked effect upon the composition of the citizen body. By the early Principate a substantial proportion of the citizen population was descended from slaves – even among the upper classes, the senators and *equites*, according to Tacitus' account (*Annals* 13.26–27) of a senatorial debate in AD 56. This, incidentally, should make one doubt Suetonius' claim (*Augustus* 40) that Augustus' motive for legislation restricting manumission, discussed below, was to keep the Roman people 'pure and unsullied by any taint of foreign or servile blood'. Romans were already thoroughly heterogeneous.

The expansion of Roman power through warfare, both in Italy and abroad, from the middle of the third century BC to the end of the first century BC swelled the numbers of slaves enormously. The danger was highlighted by slave rebellions in Sicily in the second century and in Italy in the early part of the first, which were suppressed by military force. Slave support was a factor in the civil wars of the first century, often with the promise of freedom. And it was to the numbers of freedmen, rather than of slaves, that attention first turned, in public law. In one of the censuses held between the First and Second Punic wars, freedmen, formerly enrolled in all thirty-five tribal voting units, were confined to the four urban tribes. Thereafter in the censuses of 189 and 179 there seem to have been attempts first to extend, then in 169 to curtail in some way their voting powers. In the civil war of the 80s BC, and again by 'popular' politicians in 67, 66 and

²¹ Slave numbers: Westermann 1955: 60–1; Bradley 1987a; see Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume. Manumission tax: Bradley 1984: 149–50.

52, attempts were made to distribute freedmen (and their votes) among all the tribes (see Nicolet 1980: 227–30).

The two decades of civil war ended by the battle of Actium in 31 BC left Romans unsettled and anxious, alert to real or imagined threats to society. Dionysius of Halicarnassus (*Roman Antiquities* 4.42.4–6, written shortly before 8 BC), in a rhetorical speech attributed to the king Servius Tullius, gives us some idea of public concerns about the numbers and characters of slaves who were being released by manumission into the citizen population. Some allegedly, after complicity in their owners' crimes, including crimes 'against the people' (i.e. during the civil wars), won freedom by blackmailing them. Many owners freed large numbers of slaves simply out of ostentation; Dionysius mentions in particular large funerary processions of freed slaves, many of them, he claims, criminals.

Similar concerns are discernible in the two laws on manumission passed during Augustus' reign, the *lex Fufia Caninia* in 2 BC and the *lex Aelia Sentia* in AD 4 (Gai. *Inst.* 1.12–47; Buckland 1908: 533–48). Legal manumission, conferring Roman citizenship, could be performed in either of two ways, by will (*testamento*) or in the owner's lifetime by the procedure of *vindicta* (Gai. *Inst.* 1.13–41), both requiring the participation of magistrates and other citizens.²²

The *lex Fufia Caninia* limited the number of slaves who could be freed by will, on a sliding scale (Gai. *Inst.* 1.41–6), up to half of between 2 and 10 slaves; from 10 to 30, a third; from 30 to 100, a quarter; from 100 up to 500, one fifth. Above that number, the maximum number that could be freed was still only 100 (note the implication that there were still larger households). The law itself, as well as various subsequent senatorial decrees, nullified any devices aimed at evading the law (Gaius mentions one, writing the names in a circle, so revealing no order).

The primary intention was obviously to limit the actual number of manumissions. It is likely that there were further ends in view. Bradley (1984: 91–2) sees a link with the objectives of the *lex Aelia Sentia*, and suggests that owners were being encouraged to employ selectivity, in particular by manumitting for preference those slaves who had most exemplified the desirable qualities of loyalty and obedience. (This perhaps takes insufficient account of the social pressure to leave desirable legacies to one's friends and relatives.) I have suggested (Gardner 1991; 1993: 40–1) that the law was aimed at childless testators, since owners with no direct heirs were perhaps more likely to set free large numbers of slaves. This related to social order;

²² A third, less common, form, entry in the census with owner's consent, existed in the Republic but became obsolete with the census itself; Cic. *Orat.* 1.183; *Caecin.* 99; Ulpian, *Reg.* 1.8. See Buckland 1908: 437–48; Watson 1987: 23–34; Gardner 1993: 7–11.

children inherited patron's rights, but freedmen without patrons had no bond of loyalty or *pietas* to any living citizen. However, as Bradley observes (1984: 90), the *lex Fufia* may not have had a great impact on numbers of manumissions, since owners could still free as many slaves as they wished during their lifetimes.

The *lex Aelia Sentia* (Gai. *Inst.* 1.13–41), which does concern manumissions by living owners, applies only to a restricted group of slaves and owners. It shows concern not only about the numbers, but also about the characters of slaves being given their freedom, as well as the possibility that some slaves might exercise undue influence over their owners. Slaves must be over the age of thirty to receive Roman citizenship on manumission, and owners under the age of twenty could not manumit either by will or by *vindicta*. An exception was made for certain special cases, namely if the slave was a blood relative of the owner (natural son, daughter, brother, sister or parent), was in close personal service (*paedagogus* or nurse) or association (*alumnus* or *conlactaneus*, fellow nursling), or was intended for a position of responsibility and trust (potential wife or business agent) (Gai. *Inst.* 1.19, 39).²³

These could be manumitted and receive citizenship, but only if 'just cause' was shown before a tribunal. This consisted of a Roman magistrate and, at Rome, a panel of five senators and five knights sitting only on certain fixed days, or, in the provinces, twenty assessors (*recuperatores*), who must be Roman citizens, meeting on the last day of the assizes (Gai. *Inst.* 1.20). For many people, such as Vitalis' father, it would simply be too difficult to arrange to be present.

Slaves, manumitted 'informally', i.e. by some sort of expressed wish of the owner but without meeting the legal requirements, had since the late Republic been allowed *de facto* freedom. A *lex Junia* of unknown date gave them free status, as 'Junian Latins' (though their property continued to pass directly to their owners when they died). They were stateless foreigners but had a means of gaining Roman citizenship (Gai. *Inst.* 3.56; Sirks 1983).

Either by this law or, according to Gaius (*Inst.* 1.29), the *lex Aelia Sentia* itself, such slaves might obtain Roman citizenship if they showed their willingness to conform to Roman values by entering into a marital relationship (confirmed as such before seven citizen witnesses) with a Roman or Latin woman (though not a Latin woman with a Roman man), and having a child who survived to the age of one year. The birth and the survival of the child had both to be attested before a magistrate and citizenship could then be applied for. A *senatusconsultum* of the early 70s (Gai. *Inst.* 1.31) extended the right to Latins manumitted over the age of thirty. Modern

²³ For *alumni* (foster children) and *colactanei* (slave children suckled by the free child's nurse) in the Roman household, see Rawson 2003: 250–9.

commentators use the term *anniculi probatio* for this process (Gai. *Inst.* 1.29–31).²⁴

Subsequent emperors from Tiberius to Hadrian made citizenship available also to Latins in virtue of certain services to Rome (Gai. *Inst.* 1.32b–35): six years' service (later reduced to three) in the *vigiles* (watchmen) of Rome; owning and using to convey grain to Rome for six years a ship of a capacity of at least 10,000 *modii*; amassing a fortune of at least 200,000 sesterces and using no less than half to build a house at Rome; operating in Rome for at least three years a mill grinding no fewer than 100 *modii* of grain a day.

None of these conditions would be particularly easy in practice to fulfil, even *anniculi probatio* (Weaver 1990), but it is clear that the intention was to encourage these ex-slaves to make a positive contribution to Roman society. Similarly, the Augustan laws on marriage, the *lex Julia de maritandis ordinibus* of 18 BC and the *lex Papia Poppaea* of AD 9, gave freed slaves incentives to marry and have legitimate citizen children (Gai. *Inst.* 1.194, 3.39–43; Treggiari 1991: 60–80; Gardner 1997).

In contrast, certain slaves, even if manumitted, were never to be allowed citizenship (Gai. *Inst.* 1.13–15, 25–7). This applied to those who had been put in bonds by their masters as a punishment, or branded, those questioned under torture about some crime of which they were found guilty, and those handed over to fight with gladiators or wild beasts, or put into a gladiatorial school, or imprisoned. They were given the status of *dediticii* (a term originally applied to surrendered opponents in war) and banned from living within a hundred miles of Rome, on pain of perpetual reenslavement. Such slaves are assumed to be undesirable and a threat to society, although, as pointed out by Watson (1987: 118), the law does not question the rightness or otherwise of their owner's treatment of them.

Bradley (1984: 148–9) notes that neither the *lex Aelia Sentia* nor even the *lex Fufia* can be regarded as solely concerned with the numbers of slaves manumitted, as earlier scholarship has tended to assume. However, both can be seen as reactions to the anxieties and strained relations generated by such numbers. The possibility of freedom for slaves had to be retained, as an incentive for them to accept their situation. As Bradley shows (1984: 84–7), the abuse of manumission by both private individuals and politicians in the late Republic had contributed to destabilise Roman society. The Augustan legislation was an attempt to counter this.

It is also worth mentioning that, unlike much of Roman law, the *lex Aelia Sentia* was of most potential benefit to owners who were not of the Roman elite. This is clear from the list of those for whom 'just cause' could be shown; some owners are likely to have been – and some must have been – freed slaves. A slave who was his owner's brother or sister could be the result

²⁴ For a clearly attested example, L. Venidius Ennychus, see *AE* 1978: 119.

of sexual relations between the present owner's father and one of his slaves. Alternatively, the present owner or his father could be a freed slave who had then bought his slave kindred, or had been bequeathed them in his master's will, and wished to free them. However, if the slave was actually the owner's father or mother (Gai. *Inst.* 1.39), then the owner himself must have been born in slavery.

Slaves in urban households were more likely to be manumitted than those remoter from the master, on country estates. As the *lex Fufia* indicates, by the first century AD some urban households might contain very large numbers, hundreds or even thousands, of slaves and Romans were not unaware of the potential danger these represented.²⁵ Seneca's famous letter (*Letters* 47) on the treatment of slaves draws attention not only to the humanity of slaves, but the vulnerability of their owners. In the first century BC Diodorus Siculus, in his account (34.2) of the first Sicilian slave war (135–132 BC), had laid stress on cruel treatment by their owners as a major cause of the outbreak. Later, at the start of the second century, the younger Pliny (*Ep.* 3.14) attributes the murder of the ex-praetor Larcus Macedo to his brutality and cruelty – but also to servile criminality, against which even a master's kindness is no protection.

The *senatusconsultum Silanianum* of about AD 10 (*Dig.* 29.5; Buckland 1908: 94–7; Bradley 1994: 113–14) provided that, if a master was killed, all slaves in the household were to be interrogated under torture, and any who might have prevented the killing were to be put to death. This decree 'may have been intended to act as a strong deterrent against the murder of masters by their slaves' (Talbert 1984: 438). Tacitus (*Ann.* 14.42–5), reporting the murder of the urban prefect L. Pedanius Secundus in AD 61, gives the jurist C. Cassius Longinus an emotional speech to the senate stressing the dangers inherent in huge households, and the need to control them by such exemplary punishment. Similarly, Ulpian gives as a reason for the decree (*Dig.* 29.5.1 pr.): 'No household can be safe unless slaves are compelled, at risk of their own lives, to guard their masters both against members of the household and against outsiders.' The common people took a different view. According to Tacitus, the senatorial debate was necessitated by a riot of the *plebs*, opposing such severity, and the emperor Nero had to call in troops to guard the route along which the condemned were taken to execution.

Buckland (1908: 96–7) saw as the main object of the decree that the death should be avenged and the guilty punished. The decree prevented the will being opened and beneficiaries of the estate from taking it, and therefore slaves freed in the will from getting freedom and so being immune from questioning under torture, until a full enquiry had been made. Slaves

²⁵ On resistance to slavery, see Bradley 1994: 107–31; ch. 17 in this volume.

who had run away in the meantime, even if found to have been freed in the will, should still be tortured and punished (*Dig.* 25.1.3.17).

Since slaves had no legal capacity, this would seem to rule out their use as witnesses in court. However, for convenience ways were found of taking their evidence.²⁶ They must be examined under torture, but only to supplement other evidence, and mainly in criminal cases, only exceptionally in civil. Under the Republic, slave evidence was occasionally taken where there was thought to be a danger to the safety of the state, such as sacrilege, or suspected conspiracy (Schumacher 1982: 13–80). For obvious reasons, slaves were not normally allowed to give evidence against their owners, or to be informers (*delatores*) against them. However, under the Principate by the time of Septimius Severus (*Cod. Iust.* 9.41.1), exceptions were made for what were regarded as particularly serious crimes, especially adultery, *maiestas* (treason) and fraud against the treasury. The Augustan *lex Julia de adulteriis* of 18 BC expressly provided for the examination of slaves of the accused (since in the nature of things other evidence might not be readily obtainable) and nullified any manumissions made in order to prevent their evidence being taken. *Maiestas* clearly concerned public security, or, as Septimius Severus expressed it, the security of the emperor. As well as fiscal fraud, slave information was accepted also in other matters of public utility, such as the food supply (*annona*), or coinage (*Dig.* 5.1.53; 48.12.1). Otherwise, slaves were not allowed to inform against their owners, and in the fourth century, Constantine made it punishable by death (*Cod. Theod.* 9.5.1.1).

The torture prescribed in the *senatusconsultum Silanianum* is therefore part of the normal judicial process. One symptom of the widening gulf in status under the Principate between the elite (*honestiores*) and the lower classes of citizens (*humiliores*) is the subjection of such lower-class citizens not only to torture, but also to certain forms of punishment previously regarded as suitable for slaves (*serviles poenae*), that is, the development of the ‘dual-penalty system’.²⁷ This began early in the Principate, though there is comparatively little evidence until towards the end of the first century, and the distinction was recognised in Roman law by the latter half of the second century (*Cod. Iust.* 9.41.11; *Dig.* 48.19.9.11–14). Indeed, in the early third century, Marcian (*Dig.* 8.19.10 pr.) actually uses this distinction between free citizens in order to specify what punishments are appropriate for slaves: ‘The rule is observed that they are to be punished after the fashion of men of low rank (*exemplo humiliorum*).’ These punishments included flogging, sending to the beasts in the arena, or to work in the mines, or crucifixion.

²⁶ Buckland 1908: 86–91; Schumacher 1982; Rutledge 2001: index s.v. ‘slaves’.

²⁷ Garnsey 1970: 126–33; Robinson 1981: 227–33; Millar 1984; Bauman 1996: 124–35.

TREATMENT OF SLAVES BY THEIR OWNERS

With the exception of work in the state's mines, all the punishments just mentioned, and also torture, could be and were used by private owners. A well-known inscription from Puteoli (*AE* 1971: 88) gives the regulations and terms of business for firms which, it seems, commonly combined the roles of funeral undertakers and contractors for punishment and torture, as ordered either by magistrates, or by private slave-owners. Details are given of equipment and personnel to be supplied by the contractor, and the tariff, for flogging, use of the fork (a form of pillory), crucifixion and *supplicia* (probably torture).

An owner's right to treat his slaves, part of his property, as he wished was taken for granted. Under the Republic, it has been claimed (Buckland 1908: 36; Thomas 1976: 393), slaves were protected by the power of the censors, although no instances are known of their intervention. From the early Principate onwards, sporadic legislation seems intended to provide some protection for slaves.²⁸ However, the humanitarian intent, if such it was (Griffin 1976: 273), of the legislators seems to have produced little effect upon practice, and the law itself does little to limit the rights of owners – nor, indeed, would it have been easy for the slave to avail himself of such protection as it offered (cf. Bradley 1984: 123–6). As Watson (1987: 127–8) points out, slaves had direct access to courts only for suits concerning entitlement to freedom or, by a rescript of Hadrian (*Dig.* 48.8.4), to complain that they had been castrated – rather too late in that case, one would have thought, to do them much good. They could not sue, either to bring civil actions or criminal charges. They could not inform against their owners, nor could fellow-slaves testify on their behalf. In short, they were dependent on the initiative being taken either by other owners in complaining, or by the state authorities themselves in investigating. As Bradley (1984: 124) points out, 'Roman law as a whole favoured the interests of the elite over those of the lower social orders', and, as he further notes, there were numerous practical difficulties likely to hinder the slave in gaining a hearing.

Under a *senatusconsultum* of AD 20, the same procedure was to be used in the trial of slaves accused of crime as for free men (*Dig.* 48.3.12.3). This, however, affected only the formalities of procedure and brought no benefit to the slave. They were still liable to torture in order to produce evidence or a confession, and still liable to the same range of 'servile' penalties (Robinson 1981: 216–17), and, if found guilty, they would, under the *lex Aelia Sentia*, have no hope of citizenship if ever manumitted.

The owner's power of life and death over his slaves was curtailed by a number of measures, though some pessimism is justifiable as to whether

²⁸ Buckland 1908: 36–8; Griffin 1976: 268–74; Bradley 1984: 123–37; Watson 1987: 115–33.

these either significantly benefited the slave or damaged the interests of the owner.

Under a *lex Petronia*, from before AD 79, and a related *senatusconsultum*, masters could not consign their slaves to fight wild beasts in the arena, nor sell them for such a purpose, without first obtaining the approval of a magistrate (*Dig.* 48.8.11.1–2; cf. *Dig.* 18.1.42). Who, however, was likely to testify against the owner in such cases? An edict of Claudius said that sick and infirm slaves abandoned by their owners were to be given their freedom, though as Latins, not citizens (Suet., *Claudius.* 25.2; *Dig.* 40.8.2; *Cod. Iust.* 7.6.1.3). If they recovered, they were not to be re-enslaved to their owners (though any property they subsequently acquired would return at death to their owners). To an owner who had already written off a slave, the loss was surely not significant, and for the sick slave the value of freedom was offset by loss of means of support. Suetonius further alleged, perhaps inaccurately, that the edict also made an owner who killed his own slave liable to a charge of murder. Hadrian went only so far as to forbid an owner to kill his slave without the judgement of a court, or to sell a slave to a pimp or a *lanista* (gladiator-trainer) without justification (SHA, *Hadrian* 18.7–8). But he did exile a certain matron for five years for excessive cruelty to her slaves (*Collatio legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum* 3.3.4).

Antoninus Pius ruled that someone who killed his own slave without a cause known to the law was, no less than someone who killed another's slave, to be liable to prosecution (Gai. *Inst.* 1.53; Just. *Inst.* 1.8.1). Buckland (1908: 37) curiously said 'for homicide', although Gaius is more likely to have meant liability under the *lex Aquilia*, concerning damage to property (*Dig.* 9.2.2 pr.). Gaius relates both this and another ordinance of the same emperor on the forced sale of slaves whose masters were found guilty of excessive cruelty to the principle by which spendthrifts were prevented from administering their own property. Moreover, Antoninus' rescript, quoted by Justinian, asserts both that masters' power over their slaves should be unlimited, and that it is in the interests of masters that slaves' complaints should be heard.

In this, there seems as much, or more, concern for owners as for their slaves. We learn from the text of Justinian's *Institutes* cited above that the practice had developed in certain provinces of slaves fleeing to a temple or to the emperor's statue for a kind of sanctuary, in order to plead for protection, so giving their complaints publicity. It may have been concern for public order that prompted certain magistrates to approach the emperor (we may remember the unrest, mentioned above, among the Roman *plebs* under Nero when some slaves were executed). Antoninus' ruling was that the slaves were to be given a hearing by the magistrates, and if the latter judged that the masters' severity was intolerable, the slaves were to be sold 'on good terms', and the price given to their owners. The slaves achieved merely a change to another and – possibly – kinder owner.

There was, unsurprisingly, a reaction among owners. A slave who had 'fled to the statue' was regarded as a less desirable purchase, and a guarantee to the contrary expected from the vendor (*Dig.* 21.1.19.1).

The types of ill-treatment mentioned in Antoninus' rescript, quoted in the *Institutes*, were *saevitia* (cruelty), *fames* (starvation) or *intolerabilis iniuria* (intolerable abuse). *Fames* recalls Claudius' edict against owners who stopped maintaining sick slaves. The other two terms are less specific. *Saevitia* might cover such things as extreme physical punishment, and consigning to the arena. *Iniuria* might cover several types of physical abuse, sexual and otherwise.

Buckland (1908: 37) took *intolerabilis iniuria* to have a sexual reference, which he curiously expresses as the 'attempt to debauch an *ancilla*'. However, so far as we know female slaves were always regarded as completely available to their owners for sexual purposes. Imperial intervention supporting appeals by female slaves against prostitution is first attested under the Christian empire. In the late fourth century, Theodosius provided that, if a slave woman prostituted against her will appealed to a bishop or magistrate, the owner lost his slave (though nothing is said about her being freed), and was severely punished (*Cod. Iust.* 1.4.12, 11.41.6; *Cod. Theod.* 15.8.2). There was, however, no action to ban prostitution as such.

By the early Principate, it appears that owners sometimes sold slaves subject to a stipulation that they were not subsequently to be used as prostitutes (*ne prostituatur*).²⁹ Their motives are matter only for speculation. Sellers might stipulate that, if the condition was violated, the sale was void and the slave returned to them, or they might add a condition, that the buyer pay the vendor a penalty, or that the slave be freed (the original seller became her patron). After Marcus Aurelius, the slave was always freed, whether or not there had been an additional stipulation to that effect, when the condition against prostitution was violated. This may affect both the presentation of the topic in our legal sources and modern understanding of the intention of these measures.

Vespasian, the first emperor to rule on the matter, decreed that, if a slave was sold under a covenant that she was not to be prostituted, and to be freed if this was broken, this could be enforced even against a subsequent buyer to whom she was sold without such a condition (*Dig.* 37.14.7 pr., cf. 18.1.56). Hadrian, as we know from a rescript of Alexander Severus, confirmed that the urban prefect should allow the original vendor the right of seizure of the slave, if this had been agreed; this applied no matter how many times she had subsequently been sold without statement of the condition. If he then himself prostituted her, she was to be freed (*Cod. Iust.* 4.56.1; cf. *Dig.* 40.8.6). Alexander Severus' additions to Hadrian's ruling

²⁹ Sicari 1991; McGinn 1990; 1998: 288–319; see also Buckland 1908: 70–1, 603–4.

are procedural, specifying the types of evidence admissible, and providing for a military escort to the magistrate's court. He also closed a loophole – a covenant against prostitution could not be evaded by the cover of setting the women to work in a tavern (*caupona*) (*Cod. Iust.* 4.56.1–3). Under subsequent emperors the rules were further refined by imperial rulings and legal interpretation (McGinn 1998: 294–304).

What are Vespasian's and Hadrian's rulings actually about? Vespasian enforces a contractual condition of the original sale, even against subsequent buyers with whom no such condition was made. This would be startling indeed if, as Sicari (1991: 79) supposes, it introduced a new juridical principle. It becomes comprehensible, however, if seen as a closing of a loophole for attempted evasion of this particular condition, against prostitution, by use of a dummy buyer.

Hadrian's measure can already assume this as law and is concerned only with maintaining another sale condition which might be made, namely the original owner's right to seize the slave if the condition against prostitution was violated. Since, after Marcus Aurelius, the slave became free, seizure (if agreed) would be needed only if the original owner decided to sue for violation of the condition.³⁰

The point which should not be lost sight of is that it rested entirely upon the volition of individual owners whether to impose a condition of sale against prostitution in the first place, and whether to take legal action if it was breached.

Castration, unlike prostitution, was actively prohibited and penalised, from the Principate onwards. Domitian, among other innovations in 'common practice' (Suet., *Domitian* 7), prohibited the castration of males (whether slave only is not stated). In AD 97, under Nerva, a *senatusconsultum* prescribed a fine of half his property on any owner who handed over his slave for castration (*Dig.* 48.8.6). Hadrian brought it under the *lex Cornelia*, so treating it as murder, and allowed slaves so treated to complain to a magistrate. Whether the motive was lust or profit, and whether the victim had consented or not, castrators, if free, had all their property confiscated. If slaves, they suffered the ultimate penalty, as did the surgeon, and also anyone who voluntarily offered himself for castration, 'for no one ought to castrate a free man or a slave, willing or unwilling, nor should anyone voluntarily offer himself for castration' (*Dig.* 48.8.4.23.4; cf. 48.8.4.5). Later emperors, Constantine and Leo, reiterated that the penalty was capital, and by the reign of Justinian, the castrated slave was also declared free (*Cod. Iust.* 4.42.1; Just. *Novels* 142).

Domitian fixed a low maximum price for them, perhaps in an attempt, apparently ineffective, to discourage castration. Castration of someone

³⁰ Cf. McGinn 1998: 315, and Buckland 1908: 71 on *Dig.* 18.7.9.

else's slave was regarded as unlawful damage (*iniuria*) not to the slave but to his owner. The Trajanic jurist Vivianus, noting that castration increased a slave-boy's worth, recommended that his owner sue for four times his value (*Dig.* 9.2.27.28). Creating eunuchs was punished; owning them was not, so long, according to Leo (*Cod. Iust.* 4.42.2), as they were made abroad by non-Romans.

Why was castration treated so differently from prostitution? The difference perhaps lies in the consequences for the slave when freed (and note that the penalties apply also to castration of free men). Free prostitutes and ex-prostitutes, of either sex, were legally disgraced persons, *infames*.³¹ But prostitution as a slave did not stigmatise a slave once freed, nor could a patron require prostitution as part of any *operae* (contracted service) (*Dig.* 3.2.24; 38.1.38 pr.). Castration, on the other hand, was irreversible. Male slaves could potentially become Roman citizens, but those made eunuchs could never father children.

CONCLUSION

Slavery in Roman society was essentially oppressive and exploitative. Roman life, particularly among the wealthy upper classes, was heavily dependent upon the labour of slaves, to an extent which Roman law helps to illuminate, and this dependence carried with it a problem of control. The apparent humanitarian concern for slaves occasionally visible, as just illustrated, in Roman law is perhaps better seen as a form of manipulation in the interests of owners, aimed, like the possibility of manumission, at encouraging servile acquiescence. The concessions are few, and dependent almost entirely on the initiative of owners. Throughout the history of Roman law, the legal reality is unchanged: slaves are property.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The most important primary source for Roman law is Justinian's *Digest*, of which there is an English translation in four volumes (Watson 1985). Also essential is Gaius' *Institutes*, which is available in two translations (Zulueta 1946–53, with commentary, and Gordon and Robinson 1988). Justinian's *Institutes* exists in several English translations, of which the most accessible is probably that of Birks and McLeod (1987), to which the essays in Metzger (1998) provide a helpful commentary. Crawford (1996) contains text, translation and commentary, with bibliography, of sixty-five Roman statutes, attested epigraphically or in literary sources, including a reconstruction of the Twelve Tables. Robinson (1997) gives an

³¹ *Lex Julia municipalis (Tabula Heracleensis)*, lines 122–5: Crawford 1996, 1: 367; *Dig.* 48.5.14(13).2.

account of the main legal sources, includes details of the main editions of literary and epigraphic material and discusses the problems these may present for ancient historians. The tablets from Pompeii (*CIL* 4.3340), a collection of receipts, are discussed in detail in Andreau (1974). The other two collections of tablets cover a variety of topics. Those from Herculaneum were published in Arangio-Ruiz and Pugliese Carratelli (1946: 379–85); (1948: 129–51, 165–84); (1951: 130–224); (1953: 454–63); (1954: 54–74); (1955: 448–77); (1961: 66–73). For those from Puteoli, Camodeca (1992) provides a discussion of some, and Camodeca (1999) a complete edition. Useful introductory books on Roman law are Crook (1967b), which illustrates the social and economic life of Rome through its law and discusses many private documents, and Johnston (1999), which explains Roman law in the light of Roman society and economy. Also accessible to non-lawyers is Borkowski and du Plessis (2005). Buckland (1908, repr. 1970) was written for advanced students of Roman law. It contains a comprehensive discussion of Roman law relating to slavery. More accessible to the non-specialist reader is Watson (1987), which sets out the main elements of Roman law applying to slaves and casts light on the ideology behind them.

CHAPTER 20

SLAVERY AND THE JEWS

CATHERINE HEZSER

INTRODUCTION

Although mass (chattel) slavery was a specifically Roman phenomenon in antiquity, Jews do not seem to have been less affected by this common and all-pervasive institution than Romans, Greeks and other provincials in whose immediate environment they lived. Ancient Jewish literary sources suggest that Jews were both slaves and slaveholders in antiquity, and that slavery had a major impact on almost all areas of Jewish daily life, whether in Hellenistic and Roman Palestine or in the Mediterranean Diaspora. The phenomenon of slavery shows how and to what extent Jews were part of Greco-Roman society while at the same time maintaining their biblical roots. It is therefore of particular interest to examine similarities as well as differences between the Jewish and Greco-Roman discourse on slavery to determine whether there was a particularly Jewish perspective and approach.

This chapter will focus on the Jewish experience and rhetoric of slavery from post-exilic to Roman imperial times and late antiquity (fifth century BC to fifth century AD). Previous scholars have usually assumed that slavery was insignificant in ancient Judaism of the post-biblical period. Since the Hebrew Bible refers to Jewish slaves as temporary bondsmen who are to be released in the seventh or Sabbatical Year (cf. Exod. 21:2–3; Lev. 25:40–41; Deut. 15:12), it was commonly assumed that Jews could not be proper slaves of Jews and that Jewish slaveholders treated their gentile slaves as slaves only. Some scholars argued that after the Babylonian Exile the institution of Hebrew bondage came to an end, and that Jews advocated a particularly humane treatment of their non-Jewish slaves. Scholars such as Farbstein (1896) who propagated such theories usually wrote in the second half of the nineteenth or the beginning of the twentieth century and were sympathisers of the Reform movement in Judaism. They wrote in a German-Jewish context in which Jews were eager to assimilate into a predominantly Christian society. In this context, they were eager to show that the moral values represented by Jewish traditions were equal or even superior to those of their Christian fellow-citizens. The

claim that ancient Jewish sources reveal a proto-abolitionist stance towards slavery can therefore be considered apologetic rather than historically persuasive.

Although the two studies which followed in the 1960s (Zeitlin 1962–3; Urbach 1964) acknowledge the significance of slavery in Judaism throughout antiquity, they did not yet share contemporary scholars' concerns for a historical-critical examination of the sources, especially as far as the rabbinic material is concerned (Mishnah, Tosefta, Palestinian and Babylonian Talmud, Midrashim). It has been recognised since then that references to slaves and slavery in ancient Jewish sources must primarily be understood as literary discourses revealing their authors' and editors' worldviews and ideologies, rather than being taken as historically reliable depictions of everyday life. What actually happened can only be assumed hypothetically, on the basis of certain recognisable patterns in the sources. Only those literary works which originated in the Greco-Roman cultural environment can be properly interpreted in the Greco-Roman context. This means that slavery in Babylonian Jewish society, for which the proper context would be ancient Persia, is excluded from the discussion here.¹

With the exception of a few inscriptions from Rome and elsewhere, most sources on ancient Jewish slavery are literary in nature. They consist of Greek Jewish writings from the Hellenistic and early Roman period, including the works of Philo and Josephus, and Palestinian rabbinic literature from the Mishnah (edited around AD 200) to the Talmud Yerushalmi and amoraic Midrashim (fourth–fifth centuries AD). None of these texts can be considered to provide historically reliable information on the actual use and treatment of slaves by Jews in antiquity or allow us to determine the exact percentage of slaves within ancient Jewish society. What the literary sources do allow us to determine is the ancient Jewish discourse on slavery and the moral values and ideology on which it is based. Recurrent patterns of behaviour in different literary forms are especially relevant for social historical inquiries.

JEW AS SLAVES AND SLAVEHOLDERS IN ANTIQUITY

Throughout the period under discussion, Jews appear as both slaves and slaveholders. They were the slaves of Jews and non-Jews and owned both Jewish and non-Jewish slaves.

In Jewish as in Greco-Roman society, slavery was one of the consequences of imperialist politics. According to Josephus, Jewish enslavement of non-Jews seems to have occurred in the Hasmonaean and Herodian periods in connection with various rulers' attempts to expand their territories. The

¹ Cf. Daniel C. Snell's chapter in this volume.

inhabitants of the conquered lands were partly enslaved. For example, after the capture of Sebaste, John Hyrcanus and his sons allegedly 'reduced the inhabitants to slavery' (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.2.6–7, 63–5). This pattern is mentioned several times in connection with other places and regions. Alexander Jannaeus seems especially to have either killed or enslaved war captives in conquered territories (cf. *BJ* 1.4.2–3, 87–88). However, due to the nature of our sources, the exact number of people who were enslaved by the Hasmonaeans and later Herodians cannot be determined.

As far as the enslavement of Jews is concerned, Josephus states that Jews were already enslaved by Hellenistic rulers. For example, both Antiochus III and Antiochus IV are said to have captured and enslaved some of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (Josephus, *Jewish Antiquities* 12.3.3, 144). The main periods of Jewish enslavement, however, were during and immediately after Pompey's conquest of Jerusalem (63 BC), and during the first and second Jewish wars against Rome (AD 66–70, 132–135). Josephus (e.g. *BJ* 3.10.10, 539–542.) repeatedly mentions the murder of the old and weak and the enslavement of women and children. Men were either killed, if they were rebellious, or enslaved and sold or sent to work on large-scale projects. Josephus states of the first war (*BJ* 6.9.3, 420) that 'the total number of prisoners taken throughout the entire war amounted to ninety-seven thousand'. Although the historical trustworthiness of this number is uncertain, we can nevertheless assume that tens of thousands of Jews were enslaved by the Romans during the revolt.

About the enslavement of Jews during the Bar Kochba revolt, few literary sources exist. From Jerome we know, however, that enslavement took place. He writes (*Ad Jer.* 31.15.6) that numerous Jewish captives of different ages were sold at slave markets in Hebron, Gaza and Egypt, and that the price of Jewish slaves was very low at that time due to their wide availability (*Chronicon Paschale* 1: 474, ed. Dindorf).

Jerome's remarks suggest that not all Jews enslaved by Romans during the first and second century were sent to Rome. A certain percentage was sold at local slave markets, where they could be bought by both Jews and non-Jews. In all likelihood, some of these slaves would eventually become the slaves of Jewish owners. Wealthy Jewish landowners who had remained loyal to the Romans or went over to the Roman side towards the end of the war, such as Josephus, were allowed to maintain their estates after AD 70. The Romans may have given land confiscated from rebels to their loyal supporters. These Jewish landholders would have considered the use of cheap Jewish slaves economically advantageous. And they may have considered the enslavement a just fate imposed on those who were rebellious.

Once they were enslaved, slaves could hardly maintain their original religious orientation. Slaves who worked in Roman households would

necessarily come into contact with pagan worship. Gentile slaves bought by Jews would almost always be circumcised or immersed for purity reasons.² Similarly, Christian slaveholders would baptise their pagan (and Jewish?) slaves. These slaves would be forced to live together with slaves of other ethnic and religious backgrounds and have sexual relations with them. Accordingly, ethnic and religious identity could hardly be preserved or at least not be exposed during enslavement. The slave *familia* was naturally of mixed origin and therefore denationalised, and the view of the slave as a blank slate was in the owner's interest. The very small number of identifiably Jewish (freed) slaves in the few slave inscriptions from Rome and elsewhere is therefore understandable.

Circumcision and immersion did not make the gentile slaves of Jewish households Jewish. These rituals merely qualified them to work in Jewish houses. The circumcised and immersed slaves became *avde Yisrael* rather than converts (cf. *y. Yeb.* 8:1, 8d). Yet it seems that once manumitted, former male slaves could become members of the Jewish community. Freed women would forever be stigmatised as sexually promiscuous and rabbis would warn against marrying them (*T. Hor.* 2:11).

FORMS OF ENSLAVEMENT AND MANUMISSION

In Jewish society slaves could be enslaved and manumitted in a number of ways, some of which were similar to and others different from Greco-Roman practices. The main form of enslavement, as in Greco-Roman society, was the enslavement of war captives seized during conquests. The number of Jews enslaved in this way will have been highest from the first century BC to the second century AD, that is, after the Roman conquest of Palestine and the first and second revolts. Such slaves would officially be imperial property, but at least some of them would be given to Roman officials and loyal clients as gifts.

The revolts against Rome will also have increased the occurrence of other forms of enslavement: self-sale, the sale of children, and debt-slavery. After the revolts large amounts of farm land were confiscated by the Romans, a phenomenon which left part of the peasant population impoverished. At least some of them would have had no other choice than to sell themselves or their children in order to survive. While Roman law prohibited debt-slavery, the New Testament and rabbinic literature suggest that it was widely practised in Roman Palestine. Although rabbis shared Roman jurists' resentments against self-sale, they recognised the difficult situation of the rural population and allowed it under certain circumstances. According to *T. Ar.* 5:8, only the poor person is permitted to sell himself (cf. *Lev.* 25:39).

² Hezser 2005: 35–47.

Similarly, a father's right to sell his children (or at least his daughters) as slaves is already mentioned in the Hebrew Bible (cf. Ex. 21:7–11) and confirmed by the rabbis (*M. Sot.* 3:8). Some texts try to limit the right to sell a girl to the time before her puberty (*M. Ket.* 3:8; *M. Qid.* 1:2), probably to avoid selling daughters directly into prostitution. Therefore the Mekhilta also prohibits an adult Jewish woman from selling herself (*Mekh. Mishpatim/Neziqin* 3). In contrast to the unlimited power of the *paterfamilias* in Roman law, the Mekhilta explicitly states that a father may not sell his son. But whether such rabbinic advice was always followed by the impoverished Jewish families of the first centuries AD is doubtful. Yet for economic reasons, one may assume that families were more inclined to sell daughters than sons.

Other forms of enslavement seem to have been less prevalent but were nevertheless important in that they occurred empire-wide: the use of abandoned children as slaves and the capture and enslavement of travellers by bandits on the road. The existence of foundlings is already taken for granted by the Mishnah (*M. Qid.* 4:1–2; *M. Makh.* 2:7), and *threptoi* are also mentioned in a few Jewish inscriptions, the most famous being the Severus-inscription from the synagogue of Hammat Tiberias (Severus, 'the *threptos* of the very illustrious patriarchs'). It must be assumed that abandoned children (*threptoi*) were usually raised as slaves, even if the status of Severus – (manumitted) slave or adopted son of the patriarchal family? – remains uncertain.

Although the sale of free people into slavery was prohibited, bandits who seized travellers and tried to sell them as slaves abroad, where their real identity was unknown, were a common phenomenon in antiquity known to Jewish writers. Alluding to the biblical Joseph story, the *Testament of Joseph* (12:2–3, 13:6) discusses the possibility that Joseph had been stolen by the slave-trader who sold him to Pharaoh. The fact that rabbinic literature discusses the theft and sale of fellow human beings indicates that rabbis were also aware of this practice (e.g. *T. B. Q.* 8:1).

Besides conquest, debt, poverty and banditry, the slave population was also increased through slave-breeding and natural procreation. Masters were obviously interested in encouraging their female slaves to have children in order to increase the number of slaves born within their household (*vernae*), and these slaves were considered particularly reliable. The practice of slave-breeding is reflected in a rabbinic story about a matron's encounter with R. Yose b. Halafta (*Lev. R.* 8:1 *par. PRK* 2:4). The matron rejects the rabbi's suggestion that God spends a lot of time joining couples. In order to prove to him that she can do this work in seconds, she randomly couples her slaves, an action which results in chaos and broken bones. Although the story's impact is theological rather than sociological, it indicates in a humorous way that intentional slave-breeding was not always easy and successful.

Slaves were sold at fairs, slave markets and individually, from one owner to the next. It is evident from several rabbinic traditions that Jews attended fairs in order to purchase Jewish and non-Jewish slaves (*T. A.Z.* 1:8 and *y. A.Z.* 1:1, 39b). The specific ways in which the ownership of slaves was transferred from one person to another were regulated by both Roman property law and rabbinic halakhah. Whereas earlier Jewish literature does not provide any guidelines about the sale of slaves, rabbis were as scrupulous as Roman jurists with regard to regulating the sales transaction. According to *M. Qid.* 1:2–3, slaves were acquired through the transfer of money and the writing of a document. It is not clear whether the monetary transaction was sufficient by itself or whether it had to be accompanied by a document. The first possibility seems more likely in view of the fact that gentile slaves could also be acquired by usucapion (*M. Qid.* 1:3), which is clearly presented as an alternative form of gaining ownership. According to *M. B.B.* 3:1, usucapion is effected by occupation, that is, employment or usage of the slave for three full years, whereas *T. Qid.* 1:5 provides examples of domestic services without specifying a time.

According to some biblical passages, Hebrew slaves were to be released by their masters in the seventh year of their service or in the Jubilee year (*Ex.* 21:2; *Deut.* 15:12; *Lev.* 25:40). The special treatment of Hebrew slaves is explained by reference to God's liberation of Israelites from Egypt (*Lev.* 25:42; *Deut.* 15:13). Only if the Hebrew slave freely wants to stay with his master will he be allowed to do so (*Ex.* 21:6; *Deut.* 15:16–17). For Canaanite slaves, on the other hand, no such recommendations concerning manumission are given. In the book of Leviticus, non-Israelite slaves are considered the Israelite owner's permanent property.

It is obvious that the biblical manumission laws concerning Hebrew slaves are diverse and contradictory. They must be understood as social ideals which offered differing solutions to the moral problems involved in Israelite ownership of fellow-Israelites as slaves. Whether these ideals were ever put into practice cannot be determined. On the two occasions where a general release of slaves is mentioned in the Hebrew Bible, the seventh and Jubilee year rules are not mentioned (*Jer.* 34:8–11; *Neh.* 5:1–13). In both texts the release is presented as a one-time event, not an institution to be repeated at fixed intervals. These texts therefore suggest that the seventh and Jubilee year rules were not commonly practised. This is also evident from Philo and Josephus: besides mentioning the biblical rules in exegetical contexts, they refer to actual releases of slaves on particular occasions by individual political leaders only (e.g. Josephus, *BJ* 4.508).

In *M. Qid.* 1:2 the contradictory biblical rules concerning the release of slaves in the seventh and Jubilee years seem to be harmonised: those slaves who had not been released in the seventh year are to be manumitted in the Jubilee year. The Jubilee year manumission is applied to 'permanent'

slaves (slaves who have their ears pierced) here as well. A third way of manumission, specified in *M. Qid.* 1:2, is financial redemption, which could take place at any time. Purchasing freedom was also customary in Roman society.

Several rabbinic texts suggest that the release of slaves in the seventh and Jubilee year could not be enforced by a court but depended on the individual master's own conscience (e.g. *Sifra Behar, pereq* 2:4–5, 74a–b: 'For it is possible to have a Jubilee year without the sending forth of slaves'). It seems that in rabbinic times the manumission of Jewish slaves in the seventh or Jubilee year continued to be seen as an ideal which rabbis knew was not always (or rarely?) practised.

If the seventh and Jubilee year rules were not generally observed, however, there would have been little difference between the manumission of (originally) Jewish and non-Jewish slaves. This conclusion stands in harmony with rabbinic literature's major interest in the distinction between slaves and freeborn people rather than in the ethnic distinction between Israelite and Canaanite slaves put forth by the Hebrew Bible.³ Since the slave population of the Roman Empire must be considered a denationalised mass that was hardly able to maintain its religious and ethnic affiliations, it is understandable that differences between Hebrew and gentile slaves would have been negligible as far as manumission and other aspects of slavery were concerned.

DOMESTIC AND AGRICULTURAL SLAVERY

Most Jewish sources on slavery are rabbinic documents from Roman Palestine of the second to fifth centuries AD. Their chief concern is domestic slavery. This corresponds with the situation known in late antiquity from other Roman provinces.⁴

Slaves were part of the ancient Jewish household (*bayit*). Alongside wives and children, they were the householder's dependants who stood under his authority and had no property on their own.⁵ This power situation was the basis of their role within the family and their relationship to other family members. Since the status of women, slaves and minors within the household was so similar, they are often mentioned together in rabbinic sources, and often the same regulations concerning religious practice and observance of holidays are applied to them.⁶

It can be assumed that the presence of slaves within the household had a large impact on family relationships.⁷ Wives who knew that their

³ Cf. McCracken Flesher 1988 on the slave-free taxonomy of the Mishnah.

⁴ MacMullen 1990. ⁵ Cf. Sievertsev 2002. ⁶ Hezser 2005: 69–82.

⁷ Cf. Saller 1987.

husbands slept with their female slaves are likely to have become jealous or apathetic. Wealthy women whose female slaves took over their household work could dedicate their energies to other pursuits, a phenomenon which worried rabbis and caused them to warn such women against laziness and adultery (*M. Ket.* 5:5). If slave nurses and pedagogues were employed to care for the family's children, mothers' relationships with their children would have been more distant than if they had had more contact with their children themselves. Nurses and pedagogues are repeatedly mentioned in rabbinic king parables, where the ambiguity involved in their intimate relationship with the sons and heirs of the family is revealed: they can be dangerous as well as protective, distance the son from the father or reunite them (e.g. *Gen. R.* 28:6; *Lev. R.* 10:3; 11:7). Such texts reflect the ambiguities that characterised master–slave relationships: the slave was potentially dangerous but could, at the same time, become the saviour of the family.

It is well known that slaves could be sexually exploited by their masters, and the use of slaves as prostitutes within or outside the family was common in antiquity. The Hebrew Bible already mentions slave concubines. The so-called 'Concubine Law' of Exodus (21:7–11) suggests that Israelite daughters sold by their fathers could have sexual relationships with their owners without being their owners' wives. The passage rules that the slave concubine will remain in her master's household throughout her life. If he does not like her any more, he may not simply sell her to someone else; she should rather be redeemed and freed.

In addition, there are many biblical stories about Israelite patriarchs' relationships with their foreign-born slave women. The sons whom the biblical patriarchs are said to have had with their slave women could be accepted as proper children and heirs to the householder's property. Hagar, Zilpah and Bilhah, the female slaves of Sarah, Leah and Rachel, could function as their mistresses' substitutes as far as the production of children was concerned (*Gen.* 16: 29). The children born to slave women are considered the patriarchs' proper children, regardless of their mothers' foreign and servile status. In a tribal social structure with its emphasis on large families, the increase of one's offspring was presumably considered most important, and slave women and their offspring became an integral part of the household. A later repercussion of this notion is found in the Elephantine papyri, where a free Israelite is said to have been married to an Egyptian slave woman with whom he had a child while she still remained the slave of someone else (*Kraeling, Aramaic Papyri*, no. 2).

This liberal attitude towards slave women seems to have changed in Hellenistic and especially Roman times, when we find polemics against sexual relationships with slave women in the Jewish sources. Such relationships were increasingly seen as illegitimate, and clear boundaries between the

freeborn members of the family and the slave *familia* were established. The new position on marriages with slaves is explicitly stated by Josephus: 'Let your young men, on reaching the age of wedlock, marry virgins, freeborn and of honest parents . . . Female slaves must not be taken in marriage by free men, however strongly some may be constrained thereto by love: such passion must be mastered by regard for decorum and the proprieties of rank' (*Ant.* 4.244). Rabbis were also opposed to marriages with slaves. They explicitly stated that they did not consider marriages between slaves and freeborn Israelites valid, and they declared all offspring of slave mothers slaves. *M. Qid.* 3:14 rules that in legally valid marriages the offspring obtains the status of the father. In cases where a free Israelite had sexual intercourse with a slave woman, however, the union was not considered legally valid and the offspring followed the status of the mother, that is, the children are considered slaves. This ruling would prevent the householder from considering the children he had with his female slaves proper sons (and daughters) and heirs. Sexual relations between masters and their slaves were still tolerated (although not by all; cf. *Lev. R.* 9:5), but they did not have any repercussions as far as the family and inheritance structure was concerned.

The reason for this change may be the greater significance of the nuclear family in Roman society at large.⁸ The creation of large families was no longer the ideal. On the contrary, families were now interested in limiting the number of heirs to the householder's property. Roman law similarly ruled that the child of a slave mother was a slave (cf. Gaius, *Institutes* 1.81). Rabbinic and Roman law arrived at amazingly similar conclusions on this issue. Besides inheritance issues, the maintenance of family purity may also have motivated rabbis to exclude illegitimate children: only children born to a Jewish mother were considered proper Jews. Thus the matrilineal principle and the ruling that the children of slave women were slaves served one and the same goal: to preserve the purity of the nuclear Jewish family at a time when the Jewish family was thought to be threatened by a lack of political autonomy.

Although slaves seem to have fulfilled a great variety of functions in the ancient Jewish family and differed among themselves in status, rabbis – like Roman writers – tend to talk about them as a homogeneous and faceless collectivity. The attempt to distinguish a free male adult Israelite – or a free Roman citizen – from the slave as 'Other' is clearly recognisable in this regard. Only traces of the actual diversity among slaves have survived.

Education, skills and beauty distinguished one slave from the next and determined slave prices. Defects and proven misbehaviour would, on the other hand, lower the prices. Rabbis were as concerned about these issues

⁸ Hezser 2005: 191–201.

as Roman jurists (*T. B.B.* 4:5). They also knew that some slave-owners had slaves to whom they were very close and whom they treated favourably. The stories about Rabban Gamliel and his slave Tabi portray an ideal master–slave relationship (e.g. *M. Ber.* 2:7; *M. Suk.* 2:1) in which Tabi represents the main value of sages, namely Torah learning. Although slaves, as slaves, could not officially become disciples of sages, they may sometimes have been able to overhear discussions and memorise teachings of their masters.

Besides education and training, another major difference among slaves was whether they were agricultural or domestic slaves. The living and working conditions of domestic slaves can be assumed generally to have been better than those of agricultural slaves, especially those who had to perform menial tasks such as planting, harvesting and ploughing.

Although domestic slavery seems to have prevailed in Jewish society in late antiquity, agricultural slavery will have continued to exist. But the number of Jewish sources that speak to this issue is limited. In Roman Palestine of the first centuries AD, as elsewhere in the Roman empire, slave labour will have coexisted with other forms of agricultural work. In the gospels of the New Testament and in rabbinic literature, slaves are mentioned alongside free labourers, tenants and smallholders. But we cannot determine the relative percentage of these types of labour in Roman Palestine any more.

Their respective significance can only be considered hypothetically, on the basis of what we know about the ancient Jewish economy and the economy of the Roman Empire at large. Slave labour was economical only on large estates where slaves could be occupied throughout the year. Since slaves were part of a property that needed to be preserved, day labourers were generally preferred for arduous and exhausting agricultural tasks, as Cato and Columella noted. Tenants would guarantee a certain degree of continuity, but they would transfer to the landowners part of the proceeds only. But the relative advantages of these forms of agricultural labour are never discussed in ancient Jewish literary sources.

In the Hebrew Bible, slaves appear as the servants of wealthy, cattle-breeding and land-owning masters for whom they fulfilled a variety of functions, including shepherding and farming. In the post-exilic, Hellenistic and Roman periods, land-owning upper-class Jewish families will have continued to employ slaves both on their estates and in their households, as evidenced by the book of Tobit, Judith, Philo and Josephus. But there is a recognisable shift to the predominance of domestic tasks and the role of the slave as an intermediary in business transactions.

Slaves could not own property but were sometimes put in charge of (part of) their master's property for business reasons. In Roman society slaves were given a *peculium*, or working capital, which theoretically belonged to the master but was practically used by the slave – to increase his master's property through the profits he was able to achieve (cf. *Digest* 41.2.49.1).

If the profits were high, and also to motivate the slave to achieve high profits, the master would reward the slave with gifts which, once accumulated, could enable him to purchase his freedom. If the master decided to manumit the slave, the slave could take part of his *peculium* with him into freedom (*Codex Iustinianus* 4.14.2).

Cohen (1951) maintained that the Hebrew term *segullah*, which already appears in the Hebrew Bible, was equivalent to the Latin *peculium*. But this is unlikely. The term rarely appears in either tannaitic (first and second centuries) or amoraic (third to fifth centuries) sources. When it does, it refers to a fund set aside for minor sons, with money that usually comes from outsiders. Slaves are not mentioned in connection with it.

What is true, however, is that in both rabbinic and Roman law the status of the slave resembled that of the son with regard to his dependence on the householder and his inability to own property independently. In Roman society, children *in potestate* could not have their own property. According to a ruling in the Tosefta, 'the son who does business with what belongs to his father, and likewise the slave who does business with what belongs to his master, behold, they [the proceeds] belong to the father, behold, they [the proceeds] belong to the master' (*T. B. Q.* 11:2). This text indicates that in rabbinic as in Roman law the income gained through the slave's and the son's work is the property of the *paterfamilias* under whose authority they stand.

Although Roman and rabbinic law allowed slaves to make use of their masters' property for business purposes, they were not allowed to make gifts to a third party from the *peculium* or their master's property (cf. *Dig.* 20.3.1.1; *M. Shen.* 4:4, 55a). This indicates that masters wanted to maintain control over the use of their property and curtail the monetary independence of slaves. Independence was granted only if they made use of the property for the master's benefit.

In certain circumstances it seems to have been beneficial for slave-owners to use their slaves as intermediaries rather than conduct business transactions themselves, not only as far as time and effort are concerned. Both rabbinic and Roman law discuss the many and complex issues involved in business transactions with slaves as intermediaries between owners and third parties. According to a tannaitic ruling attributed to R. Meir, which appears in various contexts, 'the hand of a slave is like the hand of his master' (cf. *y. Peah* 4:6, 18b). On the one hand, slaves were given a certain amount of freedom in conducting business and entering contracts; on the other hand, they acted as extensions of their masters in all regards.

The most important incentive to use slaves in business was probably the master's limited liability in case anything went wrong. Since slaves were not considered legal persons and had no legal rights, they could not be sued in cases of fraud. Since slaves were nevertheless considered responsible for the

damages they incurred (*M. Yad.* 4:7), masters enjoyed a certain immunity. Although slaves were generally seen as chattel, they were attributed reason in as far as they were considered responsible for any damages they caused.

Can the evidence from the Hellenistic and Roman periods that locates slaves in domestic and business contexts more than in agricultural settings be considered representative for Jewish society? Or should this emphasis perhaps be attributed to the mostly urban environment in which the writers of the surviving sources lived? Some rabbis will have been landowners themselves, and at least in the first two centuries many lived in villages. The over-representation of domestic slavery in the sources may have had some basis in reality. In as much as both authors of Greek Jewish writings such as Philo and Josephus and some later rabbis participated in the lifestyle of the Roman urban elite, they would represent themselves as owners of slaves who performed various household tasks. Although landholders may have had a few slaves to assist them in maintaining their rural landholdings, alongside day labourers and tenants, slaves will have been more prevalent in wealthy urban households that did not depend on them for their economic survival. The ownership of slaves endowed their masters with prestige and was probably considered a status symbol in Jewish as much as in Roman society.

As members of the intellectual rather than the political and economic elite, rabbis would have had fewer slaves than wealthy urban grandees, but they may have followed the model of Libanius, Augustine and other intellectuals in considering the possession of a few slaves desirable, especially from the third century onwards, when they seem to have resided in cities more often. Very few rabbis are presented as slaveholders in tannaitic texts of the first two centuries. But the number of rabbis associated with slaves increases in amoraic texts from the third and fourth centuries.⁹ This phenomenon may partly be due to the fact that the Talmud is much more voluminous than the Mishnah and Tosefta and gives more space to narrative traditions. In addition, we may assume that the rabbinic movement had increased over the centuries, so that more traditions about rabbis circulated. Nevertheless, the development is striking and may be related to the greater urbanisation of rabbis from the third century onwards.

SLAVERY METAPHORS

Since slavery played such a large role in almost all aspects of ancient Jewish everyday life, it was also used theologically to express human beings' relationship with God, politically to express Jewish subjugation to Rome,

⁹ Hezser 2005: 294–8.

and psychologically to express personal 'enslavement' to bad habits and emotions.

Theological usage of the slave metaphor appears already in the Hebrew Bible. Patriarchs, kings, prophets, but also less important figures and ordinary Israelites are presented as 'slaves' of God. The terminology appears, for example, in prayers to express humility before God. Especially in Deutero-Isaiah, Israel as a collectivity is called 'slave of God' (Isa. 41–2). The slave metaphor is used to denote the close and intimate relationship between individual Israelites or the entire people of Israel and God. It also indicates the status difference between the two partners, the difference between the Divine sphere and humanity. Given the Hebrew Bible's emphasis on obedience to Divine laws and regulations revealed at Sinai (cf. Exod. 19–23), the slave metaphor stresses the need for Israelites' compliance to God and God's option to punish misdeeds.

The theological usage of the slavery metaphor is expanded in the many slave parables found in rabbinic texts, especially in Midrashic contexts.¹⁰ Here a king generally stands for God, whereas human beings are represented by slaves, pedagogues and sons. The parables concentrate attention on aspects of the relationship between God and human beings, such as obedience and disobedience, praise and punishment, attraction and escape. Sometimes the king's son and slave are compared with regard to their relation to the father and master (e.g. *Lev. R.* 1:15). Interestingly, both the son and the slave metaphors are used side by side and interchangeably to denote two different aspects of God's relationship to human beings: that of the caring father and that of the strict and just master.

In political discourse, slavery metaphors were commonly used in antiquity to denote subjugation to foreign rulers. Subjected people would lack the independence and freedom they enjoyed at the time of political autonomy. In ancient Jewish literature this usage of the slave metaphor appears most frequently in Josephus' writings. The term servitude (*douleia*) is continuously used in the *Jewish War* and the *Jewish Antiquities* to express Jewish subjugation to Roman rule, both of the rebels and of those who opposed rebellion. For example, it appears in the speech of Agrippa, who allegedly tried to dissuade his fellow Jews from fighting against the Romans. Unlike the rebels, he is said to have advocated submission to the Romans, since he considered them too powerful to defeat: 'For servitude is a painful experience and a struggle to avoid it once and for all is just; but the man who having once accepted the yoke then tries to cast it off is a contumacious slave, not a lover of liberty' (*BJ* 2.355–6).

The argument that Jews had a long experience in enduring slavery *qua* subjugation seems to have been advanced by Roman politicians to justify

¹⁰ Hezser 2005: 346–62.

their policies. According to Titus, as reported by Josephus (*BJ* 6.42), Jews who have lived under foreign dominion for so many centuries should be experienced in slavery and be aware of the uselessness of revolt. Josephus is aware of the anti-Jewish argument implied in Titus' speech, that the lack of political independence would render Jews a 'nation of slaves', as explicitly propagated by Apion: 'A clear proof, according to him, that our laws are unjust and our religious ceremonies erroneous is that we are not masters of an empire, but rather the slaves, first of one nation, then of another, and that calamity has more than once befallen our city' (*Contra Apionem* 2.125). Josephus responds to such claims that due to political misfortune almost all people have at times been the victims of political subjugation, so that Jews are not exceptional in this regard (*C. Ap.* 2.126–7).

The psychological usage of the slavery metaphor is most frequently used by Philo of Alexandria and has analogies in Stoic and other Hellenistic philosophical writing. Among others, Seneca, Plutarch, Epicurus and Zeno wrote philosophical works on restraining personal passions. It was emphasised, for example, that the Stoic wise man had to be in control of his senses and emotions and show *ataraxia* (psychic tranquillity). He could neither be seduced by food, wine, or women and other vices, nor by anger, fear, jealousy or other negative emotions that held the mind in their grip. He was rather free of all such constraints on his mind and body and could devote himself to philosophy. Similarly Philo argues (*De cherubim* 107; *Legum allegoriae* 3.198–99, 221, 240) that the purified soul, which has only God as its master, must be free from enslavement to passions and emotions; those who are inclined to give in to their passions will always remain slaves and never achieve spiritual freedom. This argument is further developed in the tractate *Every Good Man Is Free* (*Quod omnis probus liber sit*), where Philo distinguishes between slavery of the body and slavery of the soul (17). True liberty can be achieved through liberation of the spirit only. Therefore a person can be physically free and at the same time possess an enslaved soul, or be physically enslaved and spiritually free: 'Those in whom anger or desire or any other passion, or again any insidious vice holds sway, are entirely enslaved, while all whose life is regulated by law are free' (45).

The notion of spiritual slavery and freedom was later also adopted by early Christians and elaborated in the theory of original sin.¹¹ It probably helped to justify the status quo of real slavery, while at the same time claiming that spiritual freedom was what mattered most. The Stoic focus on spiritual freedom and slavery may also, at least ideally, have improved relations between slaves and free people, since it transposed the boundaries between them into the moral–spiritual sphere. A master would have been more likely to behave in a friendly manner towards a slave who shared his

¹¹ See Glancy 2002, and Cam Grey's chapter in this volume.

moral and religious concerns, if those concerns were most important to him. The transfer of the slave–free distinction to the moral–spiritual sphere probably takes account of the fragility of freedom in the ancient world and the constant danger of enslavement through political subjugation, banditry and poverty.

In ancient Judaism slavery was closely associated with the Exodus experience, which was commemorated during Passover. After AD 70 the sacrificial rite performed on Passover was transformed into a ritual family meal in the course of which each participant was supposed to identify with the Exodus generation and its liberation from Egyptian slavery (*M. Pes.* ch.10). The Hebrew Bible already stresses that slaves, in contrast to hired labourers, may eat from the Passover sacrifice as soon as they are circumcised (Exod. 12:44). Slaves were considered part of the household and could therefore participate in the ritual. Arguably the Torah states that slaves may eat from it, but that they are not obliged to do so.

The biblical inclusion of slaves reappears in the Mishnah and Tosefta, where aspects not mentioned in the Torah (half-slaves, female slaves) are also addressed. *M. Pes.* 8:7 rules that women, slaves and minors should not eat from the sacrifice in separate congregations. They should rather partake of the meal together with the male Israelite members of the household or community (cf. *T. Pes.* 8:6). As a banquet in which women, slaves and minors participated, the Passover meal would differ from ordinary banquets held in Greek society, which would usually be all-male affairs.

A possible analogy to the Passover meal was a meal at the Saturnalia, an annual festival in honour of Saturn, where according to tradition Roman slaves were served at table by their masters. The reversal of roles was what mattered. Passover lacked the element of role reversal: masters did not assume the role of slaves because it would have stood in opposition to the liberational aspect of the holiday. Nevertheless, Passover and the Saturnalia shared the extraordinary aspect of slaves' dining at their masters' table, an exception that perhaps made normal status differences all too clear. The shared meal of the Passover *seder*, even if more ideal than real, would celebrate liberation and autonomy and point to human beings' essential equality before God. In this sense it seems to have been unique in antiquity.

JEWISH SLAVERY IN THE GRECO-ROMAN CONTEXT

How can the relationship between the Jewish and Greco-Roman discourse on slavery be assessed? Martin (1993: 113) has suggested that Jewish slavery was entirely identical with Greco-Roman practice: 'Jewishness itself had little if any relevance for the structure of slavery among Jews. . . . Slavery among Jews of the Greco-Roman period did not differ from the slave structures of those people among whom Jews lived.' Martin reached this

conclusion from epigraphic and papyrological material only, however, without having analysed the literary sources. Although the socio-economic basis of slavery may have been similar in Roman Palestine, Roman Italy and other Roman provinces, it is likely that the discourse on slavery and the actual treatment of slaves would have differed in each society due to its particular political situation, ancestral traditions and moral values.

One major difference between Roman and Jewish society of the first centuries AD was that Roman society was an imperialist power, whereas Jews were subdued by the Romans and victims of Roman colonialism. We already noted that the discourse on slavery was closely interlinked with colonialist discourse in antiquity: the conquest by foreign rulers was considered 'enslavement', and the actual enslavement of at least a part of the native population was a common aspect of military defeat. Since Jews were conquered rather than conquerors for most of the period under discussion, did their attitude towards slavery differ from that of the imperialists? Were they more prone to sympathise with slaves because they were sometimes identified as such by Greeks and Romans?

Another issue to consider is the biblical tradition of the Exodus experience. The liberation of the Israelites from Egyptian slavery is to be relived by each generation during the annual Passover celebration. Would the Exodus experience have caused Jews to be more friendly towards their slaves? Could the ritual remembrance of the enslavement of ancestors have changed contemporary Jewish views and practices of slavery?

The sources clearly indicate that Jewish writers, like their Greco-Roman counterparts, took slavery for granted as an integral part of everyday life in the Land of Israel and the Diaspora. Neither Philo and Josephus nor the rabbis were opposed to slavery. They never questioned the institution of slavery as such, nor did they consider the possibility of its abolition. They favoured returning runaway slaves to their owners like any other kind of lost property. Whether the slaves were of Jewish or non-Jewish origin does not seem to have made much difference. What mattered most was free or servile status, and free male adult Israelites distinguished themselves from slaves just as male Roman citizens did. The slave was the quintessential 'Other' in ancient Jewish as in Greco-Roman society.

Such similarities were probably due to the basic socio-economic structures of wealth and poverty, authority and dependence in which slavery developed, as outlined above. Ancient Jews lived in a context in which certain power structures were taken for granted or were maintained 'for the good order of the world'. We can assume that the wealthy slave-owning strata of Jewish society were quite assimilated to the Greco-Roman lifestyle. Even if rabbis did not generally belong to the upper strata of society, as free Jewish men they seem to have shared the rhetoric of free Roman citizens, who distinguished themselves from women, slaves and minors.

Yet despite the similarities we can also recognise certain nuances which give this discourse its particularly Jewish flavour and seem to be partly based on biblical regulations. Ancient Jewish intellectuals such as Philo and the rabbis sometimes advocated a mild treatment of slaves and tried to protect slaves from a too cruel treatment. They opposed the 'natural slave' theory which suggested that certain people were born to be slaves.¹² While advocating a master's punishment of his disobedient slaves, Palestinian rabbis did not share Roman jurists' notion of the master's power of life and death over his slaves (*T. B. Q.* 9:10, 21). Since rabbis were interested in guarding the purity of the Jewish family, they criticised men's sexual relationships with their slave women (*M. Ket.* 2:2–4). Although rabbis focus on the distinction between slaves and free persons, some traces of the biblical distinctions between Hebrew and Canaanite slaves survive in rabbinic literature and reappear in exegetical and halakhic contexts. For example, *M. B.M.* 1:5 associates the objects found by Canaanite slaves with the finds of minor children and wives, whereas the finds of adult children and divorced wives are compared with those of Hebrew slaves. But the traces of these distinctions are sporadic, disconnected and not further elaborated.

Although the biblical manumission laws advocated the manumission of Hebrew slaves in the seventh or Jubilee year, these rules seem to have been more ideal than real already in biblical times. We do not know whether ancient Jewish slave-owners actually practised manumission more than their Greek and Roman counterparts. In all likelihood manumission was practised whenever it was economically advantageous in both Jewish and Greco-Roman society. The status of the freedman was not as well defined in Jewish as in Roman society. The freedmen of Jewish owners did not form a special order within society, but rabbinic taxonomy assigned them a special status between slaves and free people. No fixed obligations that the freedman would have to render to his master are specified, but Jewish masters seem to have expected their slaves to remain loyal to them after liberation. As in Roman society, a certain stigma was attached to former slaves. Rabbis tried to limit their choice of marriage partners and to assign them the very lowest status in the Jewish community. To what extent they succeeded remains unknown.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Books and articles on Jewish slavery are sparse. Besides the works which were written approximately a hundred years ago (e.g. Farbstain 1896) and

¹² Hezser 2005: 55–63; cf. Goldenberg 2003.

therefore do not meet the standards of contemporary critical methodology, two relevant articles were written in the 1960s (Zeitlin 1962–3; Urbach 1964). Hezser (2005) is the first comprehensive and methodologically sophisticated study of Jewish slavery in antiquity. Goldenberg (2003) treats Jewish slavery in the broader context of racism and Christian and Islamic attitudes and practices.

CHAPTER 21

SLAVERY AND THE RISE OF CHRISTIANITY

JENNIFER GLANCY

Slavery was legal and common in the Jewish, Greek and Roman societies in which Christianity emerged and developed. Christians, who debated every aspect of theology, Christology and ecclesiology, likewise debated the nature of slaves and slavery. Although the words of some ancient Christian can be summoned to rebut almost any generalisation about the ancient Church and slavery, Christians, who frequently insisted that the distinction between free and slave was of no importance in the eyes of God, typically supported the institution of slavery. Slaveholding practices affected the lives of individual Christians and insinuated themselves into ecclesiastical policy. After first analysing in this chapter slavery as root theological metaphor in early Christian theology, I consider next the range of ancient Christian attitudes towards slaves and slaveholding and the impact of Christianity on the institution itself, in particular whether Christianity had an ameliorating effect on the conduct of slaveholders or the lives of their slaves.

Jesus of Nazareth would have known that the Jewish national story highlighted a period of enslavement in Egypt that culminated in divinely inspired liberation. He would also have been aware that the Torah permitted and regulated slaveholding; a mythic heritage of enslavement and liberation did not motivate an abolitionist ideology. Practices of slaveholding among ancient Jews followed the contours of slaveholding practices in surrounding cultures, a pattern of assimilation that complicates any attempt to isolate distinctively Jewish elements in Jesus' sayings or in primitive Christian attitudes toward slavery. Philo Judaeus and Flavius Josephus report a possible exception. They claim that the Essenes, a Jewish sect, rejected the practice of slaveholding. However, the Damascus Document, widely thought to be an Essene tract, implies that at least some Essenes owned slaves. While it is nonetheless possible that a community of messianic Jews living not far outside Jerusalem had eliminated slavery, our sources provide no evidence that John the Baptist, Jesus or their followers advocated such a rejection of slaveholding. Moreover, as increasing numbers of Gentiles were baptised, the influence of Jewish practices and attitudes waned and the wider

context of slavery in the Greco-Roman world emerges as the primary matrix in which Christian attitudes towards slavery were formed.

Jesus and his followers interacted with both slaves and slaveholders. A centurion petitioned Jesus to heal his male slave, for example, and a female slave in the household of the priest accused Peter of fellowship with Jesus (Matt. 8:5–13; 26:69–75). The Gospels neither depict Jesus' disciples as slaveholders nor specify that any of his followers were slaves or freed persons, but the first missionary efforts by the nascent Christian community explicitly embraced both slaveholders and slaves. The centurion Cornelius sent two of his slaves and a soldier to summon Peter, a mission that resulted in the baptism of Cornelius and his household, which presumably included Cornelius' household slaves (Acts 10). The New Testament supplies no clear evidence of a golden age of Christian origins without boundaries between slave and free.

Transcending such status differences may have been a cultic ideal. From the outset of Christian literature, Christian authors, despite their socially marginal position, contended with the social reality of slavery. The apostle Paul wrote, 'There is no longer Jew or Greek, there is no longer slave or free, there is no longer male and female; for all of you are one in Christ Jesus' (Gal. 3:28). Slavery was not, ultimately, a matter of theological indifference, although what difference slavery might make was variously defined. Early Christian literature occasionally hints that some slaves expected their incorporation into the body of Christ to transform their relations with Christian slaveholders, but that ideal was not translated systematically into an ethical ideal or political practice. Christianity emerged in a world where slaveholders and slaves were part of the everyday landscape, a landscape that, in the years and decades after the conversion of Cornelius, was increasingly Gentile. Both slaveholders and slaves populated the Christian congregations dispersed around the Mediterranean, underscoring the persistent structural importance of slavery in ancient societies. From the earliest years of the Christian movement until late antiquity, Christians proclaimed the essential equality of humans before God, even as they promoted behaviour that effectively maintained the institution of slavery.

SLAVERY AS METAPHOR

In classical antiquity, slavery was fertile ground for generating metaphorical language, from the poetic metaphor of the slave to love to the Stoic trope of slave to the passions. Christian metaphors of slavery are polymorphous, including both negative associations, for example, slavery to sin, and positive associations, for example, slavery to Christ. The Christian

can be termed both a slave of Christ and a freed person of Christ, as the death of Christ buys the sinner's freedom and yet secures for the neophyte Christian a new master. Jesus used slave metaphors in his teaching. The tradition of Jesus' sayings is preserved primarily, though not exclusively, in the canonical Gospels. Although successive quests for the historical Jesus have attempted to separate Jesus' own sayings from those later attributed to him, no scholarly consensus has been achieved. All vectors of the sayings tradition rely on the trope of slavery; to construct a version of the corpus of Jesus' teaching in which the figure of the slave played no role would be difficult.

Although Jesus does not use the phrase 'slave of God', the concept is implicit in his teaching. 'No slave can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth' (Luke 16:13; cf. Matt. 6:24; Gospel of Thomas 47). Two alternatives stand before the hearer, to be a slave of wealth or a slave of God. God is personified as a master, as is wealth. In the synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke), Jesus speaks frequently in parables, and his parables frequently feature slaves (*douloi*). A long tradition of English biblical translation referred to them as servants. In parables, the faithful or unfaithful slave, ultimately rewarded or punished by his master, serves as a figure for the human person before God. Jesus relies on the vulnerability of slave bodies to corporal abuse to symbolise the violence to be meted out to sinners at the end of time. In one Lukan parable (12:42–8), the owner entrusts a slave to manage an estate in his absence. Greater responsibility is in store if the overseer is faithful; punishment awaits a worthless overseer. The authority of the enslaved overseer extends to corporal control over the other household slaves. In the absence of the owner, the slave overseer eats, drinks to excess and beats the other slaves, both male and female. The parable ends with a gruesome scene of corporal abuse in which the angry slaveholder cuts his overseer in pieces. Luke (12:47–8a) offers a sober assessment of the prospects of slaves for corporal punishment: 'The slave who knew what his master wanted, but did not prepare himself or do what was wanted, will receive a severe beating. But the one who did not know and did what deserved a beating will receive a light beating.' What seems inevitable, in many of Jesus' parables, is that the body of the slave will be battered, and this serves as a cautionary tale for the end of time. 'As for this worthless slave,' Jesus concludes a parable in Matthew (25:30), 'throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' God most resembles a slaveholder in his propensity to punish.

The phrase 'ebed Yahweh', servant or slave of Yahweh, appears in the Hebrew Bible and in Second Temple period Jewish literature; devotees of some other Greco-Roman cults also identify themselves as slaves of a

deity. Some have suggested that such 'slave of God' imagery, particularly the biblical heritage of the phrase, provides the primary context in which to interpret the apostle Paul's self-designation as slave of Christ. However, Christ and God are not interchangeable in Pauline theology: Paul proposes, for example, that at the end of time all things will be subjected to Christ, and Christ will, in turn, be subjected to God (1 Cor. 15:28). Slave of Christ is not, for Paul, another way of saying slave of God.¹

Martin (1990) argues that Paul's self-designation as a slave of Christ validated his authority, at least among Christians of lower social status: slaves of powerful figures wielded significant power. So, for example, slaves and freedmen of the family of Caesar often rose to positions of prominence and authority. While free persons of high social status might be scandalised at the prospect of the leadership of a slave, persons of lower social status would recognise enslavement to a powerful figure as a potential means to advancement, a source of authority. For Paul, however, Jesus does not represent the kind of honour instantiated in Caesar; therefore, membership in the family of Christ would not bring prestige parallel to membership in the family of Caesar. Quoting a Christian hymn, Paul writes (Phil. 2:7–8): 'Jesus emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death – even death on a cross.' Although not reserved for slaves, crucifixion was strongly associated with them. The identification of Jesus as a slave who dies a characteristically servile death is an abasing identification. Paul identifies himself as the slave of Christ, that is, slave of the crucified one, not slave of Caesar. To read the metaphor in the context of political or social advancement is to misunderstand Paul's humility in subordinating himself to one who has already lowered himself to the point of dying a slave's death. As Jesus embraces dishonour, so Paul, in calling himself a slave of Christ, embraces dishonour.

Paul refers to himself not only as the slave of Christ but also as the slave of all (1 Cor. 9:19). As slave of all, Paul models the exemplary posture of the Christian, a posture of mutual service. So in Galatians (5.13b), the letter where Paul most develops the theme of Christian freedom, he finally instructs his readers, 'Through love become slaves to one another.' Paul's instruction echoes Jesus' exhortation to become the slave of all (Mark 10:44). Jesus conveys this teaching with gesture as well as words. The Gospel of John (13:3–15) describes Jesus acting the part of a slave, removing his outer robe while wrapping a towel around himself, washing his followers' feet and even drying them with the towel. Thus, he tells them, they ought

¹ On the possible relevance of Scriptural and Jewish antecedents for slavery metaphors in Christianity, see Byron 2003; Combes 1998: 42–8.

to wash one another's feet, that is, through love they are to be slaves to one another. The humiliated slave models humility for the Christian. Humility was not a classical virtue but rather emerges as a virtue in the context of early Christian thinking. The choice of the slave as a moral exemplar, and in particular the injunction to Christians to be slaves to one another, is a striking Christian innovation. But Christian pursuit of humility did not, over the centuries, lead to a revision in Christian treatment of the humiliated.

Although both Jesus and Paul depict the submissive service of the slave as morally exemplary, the metaphor of slavery does not have an exclusively positive valence in their teachings or the teachings of later generations of Christians. In the Gospel of John (8:34), Jesus identifies the person who commits sin as a slave, or possibly a slave to sin: the manuscript tradition includes both variants. The difference is significant. To say that whoever sins is a slave is consonant with the widespread ancient belief that there are natural slaves, persons whose weak nature suits them for servitude – a way of thinking that ultimately justifies the existence of slavery as a product of natural inferiority. To say that whoever sins is a slave to sin suggests in a more limited way that sin is an enslaving power, from which the human person, who does not necessarily have the power to free him- or herself, must be freed. Whether Jesus actually said words of this kind is historically uncertain, but the manuscript tradition attests that both understandings of the relationship between slavery and sin circulated in Christian communities.²

Although Jesus employed the metaphors of 'slave of sin' and 'slave of wealth', we cannot trace all later Christian uses of such metaphors to him. These concepts had wider currency in Greco-Roman thinking, including Stoic notions of slavery to the passions, a tradition that also informed ancient Jewish rhetoric. In a similar way, we find in Christian texts instances in which slavery – slavery to sin, to the Law, to false gods and to desire – characterises the unredeemed human condition. Not all figurative uses of slavery are commensurate with one another: metaphorical slavery is not intrinsically a condition to embrace or to repudiate. The ambivalence of the trope is apparent, for example, in Romans (6:15–23), where Paul contrasts the slave to sin with the slave to righteousness. Slavery to sin is undesirable, but slavery to righteousness is desirable.

Many slave metaphors implicitly or explicitly evoke narratives, including narratives of reduction to slavery, redemption from slavery, and sale from one owner to another. 'For freedom Christ has set us free,' Paul writes (Gal. 5:1). Implicit is a narrative: Christ has secured the freedom of Christians, formerly enslaved to what Paul calls the elements of the cosmos (Gal. 4:3).

² Combes 1998: 72–5.

Elsewhere, however, it is less clear whether Paul believes that Christ has secured the freedom of those for whom he has paid or whether Christ has become their new owner: 'You were bought with a price: do not become slaves of human masters' (1 Cor. 7:23).

The *Acts of Thomas*, typically identified as a Gnostic Christian text, opens with a scene that spins the central Christian metaphor of enslavement into a narrative. The apostles divide the known world into missionary territories. To Judas Thomas comes the call to India, which he refuses. Jesus appears to him and implores him to embrace the challenge, but Judas Thomas is disobedient: 'Send me where you will – but somewhere else!' Jesus, identified as the Lord/Master, spies in the marketplace an Indian merchant named Abban. Jesus announces, 'I have a slave who is a carpenter, and wish to sell him.' When Abban agrees, Jesus writes out a bill of sale: 'I Jesus the son of Joseph the carpenter confirm that I have sold my slave, Judas by name, to you Abban, a merchant.' Abban and Jesus approach Judas Thomas in the marketplace, and Abban asks the apostle whether Jesus is his master. Thomas affirms that Jesus is his master. Abban informs Judas Thomas that he has purchased him from his master, Jesus. As Judas prepares to leave with Abban, Jesus hands him the price of his redemption from slavery and instructs him to carry with him always the price of liberation, which Jesus has paid for him. The *Acts of Thomas*, like other apocryphal narratives about the apostles, is more critical of the ancient social order than other vectors of Christian discourse, a critique especially apparent, for example, in condemnation of sexual activity even within marriage. Although passages from the apocryphal acts are critical of the institution of slavery, they ultimately subordinate criticism to warnings about spiritual slavery, especially slavery to lust.

By expanding a metaphor into a narrative, the *Acts of Thomas* exposes the debt of Christian theological discourse to ancient social realities. When Christians living in the Roman Empire called Jesus of Nazareth *kyrios*, lord or master, and referred to themselves as slaves, their imagery was rooted in the social relations of their age. Even in antiquity, however, countless repetitions of 'Lord Jesus' would have deadened those who employed such language to the metaphorical dimension of the title. The story that opens the *Acts of Thomas* both relies on and revivifies the metaphor.

CHRISTIAN SLAVEHOLDERS

Every generation of Christians in antiquity included slaveholders. The persistence of slaveholding as a practice among geographically scattered Christians over a period of centuries testifies to the enduring power of the institution of slavery in antiquity. With rare and limited exceptions, Christian authors expressed no opprobrium towards Christian slaveholders.

Slaveholding was not considered a sin. Accommodation to slavery coloured ecclesiastical policy when the Church assumed political prominence in the fourth century. Even theologians who expressed antipathy towards the institution or the behaviour endemic to slaveholding produced no systematic critiques of slavery, nor did they advocate its abolition. Some bishops, priests, deacons and monasteries were slaveholders. Although individual theologians spoke against particular aspects of characteristic slaveholder behaviour, including brutal corporal punishment and the sexual use of slaves, we can adduce little evidence to distinguish the behaviour of ordinary Christian slaveholders from that of other Jewish, Greek or Roman slaveholders in locales as geographically and chronologically diverse as first-century Jerusalem, second-century Alexandria and fourth-century Milan.

The Acts of the Apostles supplies a theologically informed narrative of the earliest years of the Church, which it conceives as a theological as well as a social reality. Slaveholders, beginning with the centurion Cornelius, feature positively in its portrayal of the first Christians. When the centurion Cornelius was baptised, he was not required to manumit his slaves. If his slaves were also among the baptised, Luke nowhere hints that their new status as brothers and sisters in Christ altered their mode of interacting with Cornelius, an observation equally true of other Christian slaveholders depicted in Acts. After a miraculous escape from jail, Peter made his way to the Jerusalem home of a slaveholding Christian woman, Mary, where believers had assembled to pray. Rhoda, Mary's slave, carried the report of Peter's arrival at the gate, but the voice of a female slave had little credibility in the Christian assembly. They dismissed her report (Acts 12:12–16). In Philippi, Paul and Silas encountered a female slave possessed by a divinatory spirit who, proclaiming them slaves of the Most High God, followed them for days. Because he was annoyed by her commentary, Paul ultimately exorcised the divinatory spirit in order to silence the slave's proclamations; he did not invite the slave to be baptised (Acts 16:16–18). Paul instead made inroads in the Philippian community through his conversion of the merchant Lydia, who, along with her household, was baptised. A merchant's household typically included slaves, so the impression created by Acts is that the conversion of the householder Lydia led directly to the baptism of her household chattel (Acts 16:13–15). Descriptions of household conversions in Acts imply that slaveholders played a disproportionate role in the baptisms of their households and therefore a role in the Christian body that derived not from a gift of the spirit but from their secular status.³

The earliest Christian communities were dependent on the hospitality of those willing to host their gatherings. Christians who owned appropriate

³ On dismissal of voices of female slaves in Acts of the Apostles, see Spencer 1999.

residences would also have owned the household staff necessary for maintaining them. Slaveholders thus played a significant role in the survival, spread and growth of the Christian movement. In the Epistle to Philemon, Paul writes on behalf of the newly baptised slave Onesimus to Onesimus' owner Philemon and the church that meets in his house, a church likely to number among its members other slaves of Philemon. Several deutero-Pauline letters, that is, letters attributed to Paul whose authorship is disputed, address Christian slaveholders, urging them to treat their slaves fairly (Eph. 6:9; Col. 4:1). In 1 Timothy (6.2), an exhortation to slaves to show deference to their believing masters indicates the presence within the local Christian community of both slaves and slaveholders. The New Testament epistles consider slaveholding compatible with membership in the Christian body.

Although local practices varied in the succeeding centuries and throughout the vast geographical territory in which churches were established, slaveholders, as slaveholders, continued to hold sway over the lives of fellow Christians and even over the lives of would-be Christians. Manuals of church order from the third and fourth centuries mandated that church authorities should inquire whether potential catechumens were slaves. A slave of a believing owner could not join the catechumenate until the slaveholder certified the slave's worthiness for baptism. Those who were the property of non-believing slaveholders were adjured to please their owners in order to safeguard the reputation of the gospel (*Apostolic Constitutions* 8.32.3; Hippolytus, *The Apostolic Tradition* 15:3–5).

From early generations, slaves and former slaves played leadership roles in some churches. In the early second century, Pliny for example (*Letters* 10.96) wrote to Trajan about slave women who were deacons; the visions of a freedman are recorded in the second-century Christian work known as *The Shepherd of Hermas*, and the freedman Callistus, in an episcopacy marked by controversy, served as bishop of Rome (AD 218–23). Leadership by slaves and freedmen, however, raised questions for some Christians. By the fourth century slaveholders often dictated whether slaves were permitted to join monasteries or to seek priestly ordination. The Council of Elvira (AD 309) decreed that freedmen who had been owned by pagans were ineligible for ordination until their former owners died (*Canon* 80). The Council of Chalcedon (AD 451) insisted on the owner's permission as a prerequisite for a slave to join a monastery, a ruling that, given the Church's reiterated insistence that fugitive slaves must be returned to their owners, is not surprising, as a slave who moved into a monastery against the slaveholder's wishes qualified as a runaway (*Canon* 4). A slave wishing to be ordained a priest had to secure not only permission but also liberty from his owner (*Apos. Con.* 8.47.82). Practices varied not only according to generation and region but also according to theological affiliation and

even individual whim. Jerome (*Epistulae* 82) points to a dispute over local practice in fourth-century Palestine. He wrote that, while John of Jerusalem accused him of authorising the ordination of a slave, John had also overseen the ordination of a slave.

Patristic authors objected to ownership of excessive numbers of slaves, not out of concern for the slaves but out of concern for the owners. Owning slaves was associated with gluttony and dissipation. Clement of Alexandria (*Christ the Educator* 3.4.26), writing in the late second century, derided those who maintained specialist kitchen staff for honey cakes and porridges, to guard precious vessels and to polish goblets. Slaves did not physically differ from masters, Clement wrote, except that the master was sicklier, more fragile, because of his pampered upbringing (*Paed.* 3.6.34). Noting that God gave humans hands and feet not only to attend to their own personal needs but also to minister to their neighbours, the fourth-century theologian John Chrysostom suggested that a Christian should be content with one or two slaves. To own more slaves, he insisted, was an exercise in self-indulgence (*Homiliae in epistulam i ad Corinthios* 40.6).

From the first century through late antiquity, Christian authors, like many ancient pagan writers, condemned the slave trade. When great Babylon falls, writes John of Patmos in the Book of Revelation, rich merchants will mourn their loss of trade. John details the luxury wares that enriched traders, from gold to cinnamon to olive oil, to the bodies and souls of human beings, a climactic reference to traffic in slaves. By emphasising that not only bodies but also souls were for sale, John implicitly condemned the practice of trading in human flesh. Slave-trading is included in a vice list in 1 Timothy. Harrill (1999) shows that the author of 1 Timothy relied on widely held Roman attitudes towards slave-dealers to imply that his opponents violated norms of decency. Slave-dealers at times kidnapped free persons to sell as chattel. Anxiety over this phenomenon intensified in late antiquity, when deteriorating social conditions exposed increasing numbers of people to such danger. Augustine, for example, who accepts slavery as a theological necessity, nonetheless demonstrates concern for what he characterises as pervasive traffic in freeborn persons. Thus, from first-century Asia Minor to North Africa in the fifth century, the slave trade warranted outbursts of Christian opprobrium as it likewise warranted criticism from pagan authors.

From the deutero-Pauline epistles to late antiquity, Christian writers urged slaveholders to moderate their treatment of slaves: 'Masters, treat your slaves justly and fairly, for you know that you also have a Master in heaven' (Col. 4:1). Do such injunctions indicate that Christian slaveholders were more temperate than Jewish or pagan slaveholders? Did slaves owned by Christians live and work under better conditions? Ancient standards about what might constitute fair treatment differ from contemporary

standards. 1 Peter instructs slaves, 'For it is a credit to you if, being aware of God, you endure pain while suffering unjustly. If you endure when you are beaten for doing wrong, what credit is that?' (2:19–20). The New Testament epistles do not forbid whippings or other punishments, nor would ancient slaveholders, accustomed to such discipline, have understood admonishments to treat slaves fairly to constrain them from using corporal punishment, so long as it constituted correction and not an exercise in arbitrary rage. Even in antiquity, advice to treat one's slave unfairly was rare indeed. So Clement of Alexandria, for example, told slaveholders (*Paed.* 3.12.93) that torturing slaves was wrong, even as he urged them to apply the rod correctively in chastisement.

Early Christian slaveholders punished slaves physically, sometimes brutally. In the early third century, Tertullian wrote casually, and seemingly without condemnation, 'you have subjected your slave's skin to stripes and shackles and branding' (*The Resurrection of the Flesh* 57). In his diatribe against Callistus, Hippolytus claimed that when the fugitive Callistus was returned to the Christian slaveholder Carpophorus, the aggrieved master subjected Callistus to harsh physical punishment, only releasing Callistus when other Christians asked that he be released, not to relieve Callistus of his torment but to enable him to pay his debts to them (*Refutation of All Heresies* 9.7). Whatever misgivings some Christians evinced about physical punishment, many Christian slaveholders perceived no tension between inflicting corporal punishment and adhering to the demands of the Gospel.

Some Christian writers represented punishment as a duty of the responsible slaveholder. The fourth-century Lactantius insisted that punishment not be an outlet for the slaveholder's frustration, but an occasion for the slave's moral improvement (*The Wrath of God* 17.9). Justice, Lactantius averred, required that slaveholders beat their slaves, not that they refrain from beating them: if a slaveholder owned two slaves, one faithful and one feckless, and treated them equally gently, he was both unfair and foolish. The just slaveholder should beat his slaves to demonstrate to his household the consequences of reprobate behaviour (*Ira* 5.12). In contrast to the apostle Paul, who addressed slaves directly, Augustine addressed slaveholders, enjoining them to maintain order in their households; he believed that to maintain household order corporal punishment was, at times, a necessity.

In tension with these voices are the voices of Christians who protested against the severity of the punishments meted out by slaveholders, including Christian slaveholders. Cyprian, a third-century bishop of Carthage, charged (*To Demetrian* 8) that Christians impiously abused their slaves, who shared their humanity, to the extent of imposing hunger, thirst, nakedness and even worse. The *Apostolic Constitutions* attempted to curb

slaveholder behaviour by instructing bishops not to receive the offerings of sinners, including slaveholders who excessively abused their slaves (4.6.4). Yet even those who condemned what they saw as excesses did not issue outright condemnations of all corporal punishment. John Chrysostom adjured female slaveholders to desist from extreme treatment of their female slaves. He explained the kind of behaviour he sought to modify: for a female slaveholder to invite her husband to witness a female slave, stripped and bound, being lashed so severely as to leave lasting marks (a charge that mimics allegations familiar from pagan moralists). Yet, Chrysostom allowed (*Homiliae in epistulam ad Ephesios* 15), it was inevitable that a slave would, from time to time, require corporal punishment for his or her own good. Chrysostom did not advocate the elimination of corporal punishment but its moderation. The Council of Elvira established limits to permissible violence against the bodies of slaves and, at the same time, signalled limits to the Church's concern for the bodies of slaves. A female slaveholder who whipped her female slave, resulting in the slave's death within three days, received five years' penance if the death had been unintentional, seven years' penance if intentional, a temporary excommunication that could be lifted if the slaveholder fell ill, and a lesser penalty than she would have received for leaving her husband without cause (*Canon* 5; cf. *Canon* 8). We do not have sufficient evidence to conclude that Christian slaveholders were appreciably distinguished from other Greco-Roman slaveholders by avoidance or even moderation of corporal punishment.

A contentious area in the study of Christian slaveholding is the question of Christian attitudes towards slaveholders who enjoyed casual sexual access to their slaves. New Testament scholars have typically assumed that the earliest Christians restricted sexual activity to legitimate marriages, a restriction that would place slaves off-limit to their owners, unless, of course, their owners married them. First- and second-century Christian sources did not address the sexual use of slaves. Osiek (2003: 274) summarises our options for interpreting the silence of our limited sources: 'Did earlier Christian writers not speak of sexual exploitation of one's slave because a prohibition was self-evident (unlikely), because it was not done by Christians (also unlikely given the prevailing acceptance in the culture), because it was too much of a problem to tackle . . . or because they did not consider it a problem?' Just as Christians in antiquity accepted as morally unproblematic a slaveholder's right to beat a slave, they seem, in the first decades of the Christian movement, to have accepted the sexual use of slaves as part of the normal order of the world.

Although we do not have sufficient evidence to plot the trajectory of Christian attitudes to the sexual use of slaves, by the third century, some Christians explicitly wrestled with the moral status of sexually exploited slaves and sexually exploitative slaveholders. The *Apostolic*

Tradition includes a list of those whose baptism was proscribed or otherwise regulated. Enslaved concubines were welcome in the community if they were faithful to their masters and if they raised their children. Men who kept concubines (given the context, presumed to be enslaved) could only join the community if they instead entered legitimate marriage (16:14–16). Basil of Caesarea, writing in the fourth century, expressed concern for female slaves compromised by their owners' sexual appetites. He cited as a mystery (*In Psalm. 32:5*). 'Why one man is a slave, another free, one is rich, another is poor, and the difference in sins and virtuous actions is great: she who was sold to a brothel-keeper is in sin by force, and she who immediately obtained a good master grows up with virginity.' Basil specified that women who were forced into sexual relations should not be held responsible for their actions and added (*Letters 199.49*), 'Thus even a slave, if she has been violated by her own master, is guiltless.'

John Chrysostom warned slaveholders (*Homiliae in epistulam i ad Thesalonicensis 5*) that they sinned when they had sexual relations with their female slaves, even as they would sin if they had sexual relations with the empress; he commented, however, that he expected his warning to disturb the expectations of Christian slaveholders, who, even in the fourth century, did not perceive moral problems with sexual enjoyment of their human chattel. Thus, by late antiquity, a number of Christian authors explicitly addressed and condemned the sexual use of slaves by their owners, yet the impression created by their texts is that they spoke bravely against a practice deeply entrenched among Christians. An exception is Jerome, who not only objected to the sexual use of slaves but also implied that his position was accepted among Christians. He wrote (*Ep. 77.3*) that, for the Romans, 'Free permission is given to lust to range the brothels and to have slave girls, as though it were a person's rank and not the sexual pleasure that constituted the offence. With us what is unlawful for women is equally unlawful for men.' By the time Jerome wrote, however, the empire was ruled by Christian emperors, and more than half a century had passed since Constantine's legislation reaffirmed the traditional Roman definition of adultery in terms of a wife's infidelities, but not a husband's infidelities. The theologian's insistence that married men should refrain from sexual use of their household chattel did not convince the majority of Christian men of such an obligation.

Other Christians who decried the sexual use of slaves expressed motivations other than protection of the slaves. Lactantius, for example (*Divine Institutes 6.23.23–30*), appended to his strongly worded condemnation of the sexual double standard the observation that women exploited their husbands' infidelities to justify their own adulteries. In his fourth-century treatise *On Abraham*, Ambrose of Milan struggled with the biblical account of Abraham conceiving a son by his wife's slave. He counselled men that

they owed the same exclusive fidelity in marriage that was owed by their wives; he urged men not to engage in sexual liaisons with slaves lest they give their wives pretexts for divorce; and he urged wives not to be jealous should their husbands stray. Ambrose implied that the wantonness of female slaves corrupted Christian men and lamented that a master's sexual use of his female slave might provoke that slave to become arrogant and proud towards her mistress. In light of the alleged proclivity of enslaved concubines to defy their mistresses, Ambrose concluded that, while he preferred men to abstain from sexual use of their slaves, Christian men who regrettably pursued sexual relations with their slaves should insist that those slaves subordinate themselves to their mistresses (4.22–6). Commenting on the story of the patriarch Joseph who was, as a slave in Egypt, the target of his mistress's sexual overtures, Ambrose wrote (*De Joseph patriarcha* 5.22), 'It was not within the power of a mere slave not to be looked upon.' Nonetheless, on Ambrose's account, the moral harm done to a sexually exploited slave arises from the possibility that the liaison will engender insubordination and arrogance in the slave. In contrast, he celebrated elite women who, when sexually threatened, took their own lives (*Ep.* 37; *De virginibus* 3.7.32–37).

Most references to the sexual use of slaves appear in third- and fourth-century texts, not surprisingly since Christian sources proliferate in that period. From the east to the west of the empire, Christian theologians wrestled with a situation they confronted in their own communities, the socially sanctioned sexual use of slaves by slaveholders, including Christian slaveholders. Despite the objections of theologians, Christian slaveholders conformed to the universally attested ancient practice of relying on slaves as sexual outlets.

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDES TOWARDS SLAVES AND SLAVERY

The prejudices towards slaves Christians expressed in casual asides were common to the age. Slaves were seen as enemies in the heart of the home, submissiveness was identified as a signal servile virtue, and fugitive slaves were vilified. But Christians also struggled to make theological sense of slavery. In doing so, they drew on the resources of Greco-Roman philosophical traditions, especially Stoicism. They grappled with scriptural representation of slaves and the implications of Scripture for thinking about slavery. Some saw the existence of slavery as a sign of the fallen character of the cosmos; others pointed to Esau and Ham and argued that slavery could play a positive pedagogical role in advancing moral ends. Perhaps most commonly, Christian theologians affirmed that God did not distinguish between slave and free and that the legal institution of slavery was therefore of no ultimate consequence. Like many Stoics who espoused parallel

views, Christians insisted on the indifference of slave status and upheld the institution of slavery. To Christian imaginations, the essential equality of slave and free was starkly evident in the sufferings of martyrdom: slaves and free persons were equal in the face of death.

Theologians shared mundane patterns of ancient thought, as in Ambrose's comment (*Ep.* 5.20) that what slaves fear is not to sin but to be caught sinning, an observation shaped by the stereotype of the slave as sneaky and deceitful. In an attempt to dissuade Christian men from frequenting prostitutes, themselves commonly slaves, John Chrysostom relied on the repugnance of slaveholders towards the persons of slaves. You would not put on a garment previously worn by your slave, Chrysostom noted (*Hom. 1 Thess.* 5), because of the filthiness of the garment, so why would you be willing to share a woman with the same unclean slave? Jerome commented (*Ep.* 117.9) that slaves tended to ingratitude and complaints. According to Lactantius (*Ira* 18), slaves and free persons deserved differing degrees of respect. Lactantius wrote that a slaveholder warranted respect when he restrained his justified anger against a citizen but erred when he neglected to punish slaves and children who, unchastised, incline to greater sins. Lactantius believed in the morally salutary potential of violence directed at the bodies of slaves.

Thus Christian elites, like other Roman elites, perceived slaves as inherently cowardly, physically base and morally deficient. As Harrill argues (2006: 233–46), Christian elites also shared a wider Roman perception that slaves, who laboured and lived side by side with slaveholders, were potential enemies lodged within the home, a perception most urgently expressed in times of persecution. Slaves, intimately familiar with all details of their owners' lives, were liable to interrogation under torture when authorities sought information about the activities of those owners. Athenagoras claimed (*Legatio pro Christianis* 35.3) that even under torture the slaves of Christian owners refused to fabricate falsehoods impugning Christian rectitude; but other Christian authors lamented the betrayal of Christians by their household chattel (Justin, *Second Apology* 12.4; Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.1–3; Tertullian, *To The Heathen* 1.7.14–17). Athenagoras noted (*Leg.* 35.3) that slaveholders lived under the constant observation of their slaves, a situation of surveillance to which Tertullian imputed a sinister cast: slaves were spies, peering through chinks in the wall to obtain surreptitious information about the doings of slaveholders, although slaves were equally likely to manufacture tales about their owners. Why, then, Tertullian asked (*Nat.* 1.7.14–17), should the tales of such sneaky, unreliable and self-interested witnesses be accorded credence? In the second-century *Martyrdom of Polycarp*, slaves owned by the Christian Polycarp were tortured by the authorities to discover his whereabouts. The highly allegorised *Martyrdom* likened the slave who betrayed Polycarp's hiding-place to Judas

(6:1–2). Tertullian too (*Against Marcion* 5.6.7) likened slaves to potential Judases who might turn on their masters.

Like others in the Roman Empire, Christians equated servile virtue with submission to the master's will and fidelity to the master's interest. In Christian thought, the equation between servile virtue and the faithful slave dated from the teachings of Jesus, who asked in a parable, 'Who then is the faithful and wise slave, whom the master put in charge of his household, to give them their food at the appropriate time?' (Matt. 24:45). In another parable (Matt. 25:21, 23), the master acknowledged two of his slaves, who had been entrusted with the considerable sums of two talents and five talents, with the phrase, 'Well done, good and faithful slave.' Who was the wicked slave? The third slave in the parable of the talents explained to his owner that he buried his single talent because he feared his master, a harsh man. Slave and owner differed in assessments of the slave's inaction. Whereas the slave focused on the harshness of the master, citing fear as the reason for his paralysis (25:25), the master attributed the slave's inaction to laziness and wickedness, an assessment that echoed the ancient stereotype of slaves as slothful. On the other hand, both master and slave acknowledged that the master exacted difficult standards. Although the faithful slaves in the parables did not identify fear as a motivation, vulnerability to physical abuse was inherent in the situation of the slave and thus a negative inducement to fidelity and submission.

The deutero-Pauline epistles enjoined slaves to submit to their owners: 'Slaves, obey your earthly masters (*kyrioi*) in everything, not only while being watched and in order to please them, but wholeheartedly, fearing the Lord (*kyrios*). Whatever your task, put yourselves into it, as done for the Lord and not for your masters, since you know that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward; you are slaves of the Lord Christ' (Col. 3:22–5; cf. Eph. 6:5–9; 1 Tim. 6:2). Such advice yielded a powerful new tool for slaveholders to exact submission from slaves and a powerful motivation for slaves to submit, that is, fear of the Lord, the fear not only of punishment in this life but also of judgement at the end of time. Barclay (2001: 47–8) writes that 'the Colossian household code is profoundly "Christianized" even if, to an outside observer, Christian wives, children and slaves performed no differently than their non-Christian counterparts, beyond taking the (conventional) duties with the utmost seriousness. The new Christian rationale for, and comprehension of, domestic roles does not necessarily result in visible difference.' Barclay notes that the 'ambiguous legacy' of Colossians undermined potential motivation for Christians to work to improve material conditions for slaves, and adds, 'What is more, the household code comes extremely close to sanctioning the present hierarchical structures as if they were supervised and supported by the ultimate master, Christ.' The Epistle to Titus is even more explicit

in specifications for the behaviour of slaves: 'Tell slaves to be submissive to their masters and to give satisfaction in every respect: they are not to talk back, not to pilfer, but to show complete and perfect fidelity' (2:9–10a). The deutero-Pauline epistles did not challenge ancient norms for the behaviour of slaves; they reinforced and even intensified those norms, and later generations of Christians explicitly evoked these teachings in casting moral instruction for slaves (e.g. Clement of Alexandria, *Paed.* 3.12.95–96; Cyprian, *To Quirinius: Testimonies against the Jews; Test.* 3.7.2). From the earliest writings of the imperilled sect to the writings of the fourth century, when the Church was established as an institution, admonishments to slaves to submit to owners varied little.

In the Epistle to Philemon, Paul wrote to a slaveholder and to the church that met in his house concerning the slave Onesimus, who had spent time with Paul in prison, where Paul had baptised him. Paul encouraged Philemon to receive Onesimus warmly; moreover, he promised to repay Philemon whatever Onesimus owed him. The brief letter leaves us with more questions than answers about relations among slaveholder, slave and apostle. The received tradition of the letter is that the slave Onesimus, a runaway, had encountered and been baptised by Paul in prison and that through this letter Paul asked Philemon for mercy for Onesimus, and, perhaps, for manumission, although the letter does not make this final request explicit. Although other scenarios have been suggested, notably that the church that gathered in Philemon's home sent Onesimus to aid Paul in prison, and that Paul's subtly worded missive implicitly requested that Onesimus should be freed from his duties to Philemon in order to return, preferably as a freedman, to aid Paul in his continuing imprisonment, the ancient tradition that Paul asked Philemon for clemency for the runaway Onesimus best accounts for the letter's cryptic argument.⁴ Paul wrote that Philemon should now receive Onesimus back 'no longer as a slave but more than a slave, a beloved brother' (16a), an ambiguous formulation that hints at a change in cultic status (that is, that Onesimus, now a 'beloved brother', has been baptised) without calling explicitly for his manumission, much less the manumission of other slaves, Christian or non-Christian, in Philemon's household. Nonetheless, Paul did not oppose the manumission of slaves; indeed, as Harrill has demonstrated (1995: 68–128; cf. 1 Cor. 7:21), Paul elsewhere advised slaves to accept opportunities for manumission, opportunities that were common in Roman-era slavery.

The Epistle to Philemon was one of the key scriptural texts with which Christians throughout antiquity contended as they wrote about slavery and, particularly, as they defined their attitudes toward fugitive slaves.

⁴ On alternative scenarios for interpretation of Philemon, see Winter 1987. On the viability of the traditional scenario for interpretation of Philemon, see Mitchell 1995.

Commenting on Philemon in the late fourth century, John Chrysostom implied that some Christians heard in the gospel a message of liberation from slavery, an interpretation Chrysostom fiercely rejects. Against such a subversive reading of the gospel, Chrysostom concluded in his homily on the letter that one moral of Philemon was that Christians should not attempt to liberate slaves from their owners. Basil of Caesarea also cited the example of Onesimus in mandating the return of runaway slaves to their owners, but Basil, who elsewhere evinced concern for the ways that the sexual vices of slaveholders harmed slaves, qualified this mandate by noting that fugitive slaves should not be returned to slaveholders who would force them to violate God's law (*Reg. fus.* 11; cf. *Ep.* 199.49; *In Psalm.* 32:5). Inspired both by Scripture and by Roman law, Christian writers admonished slaves to stay with their owners and criticised those who helped slaves escape.

But some slaves seem to have expected that baptism itself might release them from slavery. Some expected the Church to ransom them from slavery, while others were emboldened to leave their owners' households without permission. The evidence is scattered, typically inferred from remarks of writers who sought to frustrate such expectations. Ignatius of Antioch, writing in the early second century, urged slaveholders to avoid arrogance in dealings with slaves but also urged slaves not to be puffed up. Instead, he said, their willing servitude would lead to spiritual freedom. Slaves should not seek to secure their own manumission out of the common chests of churches. Ignatius did not oppose the manumission of slaves; rather, he wanted to curb the use of church funds to manumit slaves, perhaps because such a practice might induce slaves to convert for material reasons, to be 'slaves of desire' (*douloi epithumias*, *To Polycarp* 4:3; Harrill 1995: 158–92). Evidence regarding the occasional practice of ecclesial manumission of slaves recurs in late antiquity under different circumstances. At a time of escalating violence in the fourth century, Ambrose of Milan refers several times to what he considers the laudatory ransoming of Christians who had been captured by pagans, but he also notes that he had been criticised for his willingness to redirect church resources to the redemption of captives (*De officiis* 2.15 [70–71], 28 [136]).

Paul's declaration that in Christ there is neither slave nor free was likely a repetition of an earlier Christian slogan (Gal. 3:28). Perhaps the most consistently stated Christian attitude towards slavery throughout antiquity was that the legal status distinction between slave and free is immaterial in God's eyes: all humans are fellow-slaves before God, and, at the same time, through Christ, God has freed believers. Those who articulated this position had both direct and indirect debts towards Stoic philosophy, but Christians additionally grappled with Scripture. So Basil, for example, who concluded, 'It follows that even though one man be called master and another

slave, nevertheless, both in view of our mutual equality of rank and as chattels of our Creator, we are all fellow slaves', in the same passage argued (*Spiritu sanctu* 20.51), citing the Genesis story of Jacob and Esau, that God reduced some persons to slavery because, innately weak in reason and self-control, they would benefit from the guidance of wiser men, their masters. Yet Basil hardly thought that slaves universally benefited by their enslavement, as he noted that some were reduced to slavery because of war or poverty, and mused elsewhere on the mystery that some slaves acquired virtuous owners who respected their persons while other slaves acquired vicious owners who prostituted them (*De spiritu sancto* 20.51; *In Psalm.* 32:5). Ambrose too (*Ep.* 77.6; 37) perceived Esau's reduction to slavery as a benefit, enjoyed by others who were likewise in bondage to wiser persons, although, again, as Ambrose intervened to redeem enslaved Christians from pagans, he did not conclude that enslavement universally conferred benefits on slaves.

Again and again, Christian writers returned to the position that distinctions between slave and free were of no ultimate significance, or more accurately, that legally sanctioned differences between slave and free, which Christians generally upheld, were of no significance in God's eyes, a doctrine redolent of Stoicism but also informed by scriptural exegesis. Ambrose, for example, wrote that, because the legal condition of slavery affected only body and not spirit, a slave could prove morally superior, more truly free, than his owner. Ambrose cited Jesus' words, that the one who sins is a slave of sin (John 8:34), and argued that, in parallel fashion, the person who remained free from sin was free indeed. For Christian authors, the example par excellence of such freedom in slavery was the biblical patriarch Joseph, whose bondage by Pharaoh did not compromise his essential nobility. Ambrose noted (*Jos.* 4.20) that Joseph could inspire Christians who were reduced to slavery through no fault of their own to realise that enslavement could compromise their legal status but not their characters, a poignant observation in an era when violence threatened the stability of elite households. In an extended meditation on the nature of true liberty and bondage, Ambrose argued (*Ep.* 37) that the free man is one like Joseph who, regardless of legal status, has mastered passions, anger, desires, pleasures, fears, vice and sin itself.

In decrying the excessiveness of slaveholders in bending slaves to their wills and pleasures by physical abuse, Cyprian (*Demetr.* 8) insisted on the essential equality of slave-owners and slaves: both masters and slaves were born, died, had like bodily qualities, and human souls. Beyond an implicit critique of slaveholders who wielded excessive force against their slaves, Cyprian sketched no practical consequences from his strongly worded statement of equality, just as, in general, other Christians who commented on the artificiality of legal distinctions between slave and free desisted from

urging reform of practice, except of limited kinds. So the fourth-century Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oration* 40.27) instructed rich men to share baptismal waters with poor men, and slaveholders to share baptismal waters with their own slaves. In his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes, Gregory of Nyssa penned what may be the most scathing ancient Christian critique of slavery, a critique that, though not setting forth a programme of reform, anticipates some of the hermeneutical moves of nineteenth-century Christian abolitionists. Gregory's primary scriptural reference was the Genesis creation account, which figures the human person as the master of creation and the image of God (Gen. 1:26). Gregory demanded to know what price could be paid for a slave who was himself, by dint of his humanity, lord of the sea and sky, how a scrap of paper could document the sale of a slave who was ultimately an icon of God. The brunt of Gregory's attack was slaveholder arrogance; he did not explicitly call for the abolition of slavery or even wholesale manumission of slaves. However, his condemnation of the morality of slaveholding comes as close as anything in extant early Christian literature to a sustained attack on the foundations of slavery.

As evidence that slavery was not part of God's original plan in creation, Chrysostom noted (*Hom. 1 Cor.* 40.6) that God did not create a slave to attend Adam; slavery came later, a penalty for sin, an exegetical insight that did not move Chrysostom to challenge the legitimacy of Christian slaveholding. Arguing on the basis of Scripture that slavery was alien to God's intention in creation, Augustine mounted a complex argument: slavery, albeit a consequence of sin, was an inevitable part of God's plan. Quoting Genesis (1:26), in which God gives humanity dominion over fish, birds and other animals, he argued that God did not intend human beings to be enslaved, either to other persons or to sin. Rather, sin gave rise to slavery: Scripture does not allude to servitude until Noah curses his son Canaan (Gen. 9:25). Citing Daniel as an example, Augustine contended that a man who justly entered battle could be enslaved; his servitude was the result of sin, though not necessarily of his individual sin. Yet God is ever just; he does not mete out undeserved punishment. All are sinners; all deserve punishment; God ordains punishments and dispenses mercies. Augustine acknowledged that, at times, slaves were more moral than their owners; he asserted that it was preferable to be enslaved to another person, even an evil person, than to be enslaved to sin, for example to the desire to dominate, for Augustine a paradigmatic sin. Recognising that slave could exceed slaveholder in morality, Augustine did not argue that God intended the condition of slavery for the moral improvement of the slave. Rather, slavery was seen as punitive, but also as necessary for the peaceful functioning of society (*City of God* 19.15).

Thus, according to Augustine, slavery, though the consequence of sin, was nonetheless ordained by God. For him, the household formed the

nucleus of the social order. Because harmony was mandated for the household as for the rest of society, slaves were to submit themselves to the rule of their owners. The slaveholder, in turn, was responsible for maintenance of order in his household, a responsibility that Augustine expected to require the use of corporal punishment, which benefited not only the punished slave but other slaves who learned from the example. The ideal slaveholder, like the ideal father, did not govern out of a desire to dominate, which Augustine identified as sin, but out of a desire to foster the good of the governed. Indeed, Augustine maintained that the good slaveholder was more burdened by the responsibility of maintaining peace in the household than the slave by the obligation to submit (*De civ. D.* 19.16).⁵ Garnsey (1996: 206) summarises,

In response to the ubiquity of institutional slavery and the inevitability of spiritual slavery of one kind or another, Augustine produced, on the one hand, a moral theology of slavery, or pastoral advice about the way masters and slaves should comport themselves in relation to one another, and, on the other hand, a dogmatic theology of slavery, or a theoretical statement about the place of slavery in the divine order.

Cyril of Jerusalem grounded his claim (*Catechetical Lectures* 15.23) for God's indifference to human distinctions of slave and free in the person of Christ: do not be ashamed to be a slave, he said, as Jesus was not ashamed to take the form of a slave. Jesus' lowly status and his corresponding corporal vulnerability to abuse offered a lens through which at least some ancient Christians viewed slaves. The author of 1 Peter exhorted slaves to bear with brutality, especially when they were innocent, in imitation of Christ, who had also suffered. 1 Peter (2:23–4) emphasised the physical violation of the tortured and crucified Jesus as he encouraged slaves to persevere: 'When he was abused, he did not return abuse; when he suffered, he did not threaten; but he entrusted himself to the one who judges justly. He himself bore our sins in his body on the cross . . . by his bruises you have been healed.' 1 Peter enjoined the entire community to endure suffering in a Christ-like manner; thus, enslaved Christians whose bodies absorbed unwarranted abuse served as a model for the entire Christian community to emulate. Slaves were exhorted to tolerate abuse, but the author did not trivialise the sufferings of the slave body. Rather, he associated Christian identity with the very violation of that body.

Eusebius (*Hist. eccl.* 5.1.36–47) preserved a second-century letter that told the story of the martyrdom of Christians in Vienne and Lyon. Blandina was a slave-martyr whose death was expressly represented as morphically Christ-like. After suffering more than anyone could be expected to endure,

⁵ Garnsey 1996: 206–17; Corcoran 1985: 70–86.

Blandina, still alive, was hung on a post as fodder for wild animals. She hung, it was said, in the form of a cross, so that those who gazed on the spectacle could see in her cruciform suffering the image of Christ. Beyond the oft-repeated equality of slave and free before God, an equality especially apparent in martyrdom, as, for example, the joint martyrdom of the slave Felicitas and the noblewoman Perpetua who stood side by side as they faced their bloody deaths, some ancient Christians viewed the corporal vulnerabilities of slaves as iconographic of the redemptive suffering of Christ.

THE IMPACT OF CHRISTIANITY ON ROMAN SLAVEHOLDING PRACTICES

Scholars of early Christianity have told two stories about slavery and the Church. While not precisely contradictory, these stories follow distinct trajectories, one of descent and the other of ascent. According to the first story, the earliest years of the Christian movement were a golden age for relations between women and men, slaves and slaveholders. Although this story begins with the men and women who were disciples of Jesus, those who recount the story tend not to acknowledge Jesus' reliance on the trope of slavery. An anchor in this tale is the proclamation that those in Christ are divided neither by gender nor by legal status, slave or free (Gal. 3:28). This story supposes that, as the decades continue, the Christian movement accommodates itself more and more to the structures of the surrounding society, so that ultimately the Roman Empire triumphs over the social values of the first Christians. According to the second story, in which Christianity eventually triumphs over the social values of the Roman Empire, the rise of Christianity leads over a period of centuries to the weakening and demise of slave society. Although the Church does not directly oppose the institution of slavery, Jesus' teaching about the dignity of each person ultimately undermines centuries of the dehumanisation of slaves.

Both stories attempt to impose linear order on scattered and at times paradoxical references to slavery in early Christian literature. We can say with certainty that Jesus relied on slavery as a theological metaphor and that the earliest Christian writings, the letters of the apostle Paul, acknowledge the problematical social reality of slavery. While Christians of Paul's time were not in a position to challenge the imperial social order, they neither condemned nor forbade slaveholding within Christian communities. In succeeding centuries, Christians throughout the Empire, Christians, moreover, of conflicting theological affiliations, continued to contend with slavery. Theologians critical of slavery were frequently as concerned with the moral wellbeing of slaveholders as with the physical and social

wellbeing of slaves. Continued references to slaves and slaveholders into the fifth century point to the ongoing structural significance of the institution. Ancient Christians experienced slavery as a perdurable cosmic structure and did not dream of a world free from the burdens, for slave or slaveholder, of slavery.

In the nineteenth century, Allard argued that Christian influence catalysed a decline in slavery in late antiquity. He was convinced that Christians, who proclaimed the essential equality of all humans before God, manumitted so many slaves that their sheer numbers were reduced and the conditions under which they lived and laboured improved. Such nineteenth-century views, oft-disputed by specialists, still inform popular views of Christianity and slavery in antiquity. No evidence has been produced that credibly supports the hypothesis of widespread manumissions by Christian slaveholders who putatively repudiated slaveholding. Many Christians manumitted slaves, as did other Romans. Like some other Christian slaveholders, Macrina, sister of Basil of Caesarea and Gregory of Nyssa, manumitted large numbers of slaves; but in his memoir of her Gregory does not suggest that she offered a principled exception to the institution of slavery per se. Macrina, he remembers (*De vita Macrinae* 7, 11), persuaded her mother to liberate the family's large company of slaves not by arguing that slavery violated the gospel but by arguing for a simpler life. From a legal perspective, the fourth-century decision that manumissions that took place before a bishop should have the same formal legal status as manumissions that took place before a magistrate did not sanctify the practice of manumission nor attempt to promote it, but simply recognised the authority of a bishop as parallel to that of a magistrate (*Theodosian Code* 7.4.1).

Evidence is limited both for and against the meliorist hypothesis that under Christianity conditions improved for slaves. By late antiquity, theologians spoke against the sexual use of slaves by Christian slaveholders, yet the practice remained common. Moreover, not all theologians who objected to the sexual use of slaves did so to protect slaves. While Basil, for example, expressed concern for the moral good of sexually exploited slaves, Ambrose expressed concern for the moral good of slaveholders. A number of theologians decried physical violence against slaves, but such condemnations were not a Christian innovation, nor can we read our contemporary standards opposing all corporal punishment into ancient calls to moderate punishment or to restrict punishment to instances where such corporal control was seen to benefit the slave. Slave collars, evidence for the brutal force necessary for maintenance of a slave society, increased in popularity in post-Constantinian times, and many slave collars bear Christian iconography, such as the alpha and the omega or the chi-rho figure. So discomfiting are these objects that nineteenth-century scholars described

them as dog collars rather than acknowledge that ancient Christians regularly bound other persons in a crude manner. Thurmond (1994), who acknowledges the implicit brutality of the collars, nonetheless argues that they mark a melioration of conditions for slaves. Christian slaveholders, he hypothesises, might have preferred such paraphernalia to the practice of tattooing or branding runaway slaves on the face, which Constantine forbade.

The notion that, on the basis of treatment of household slaves, particularly slaves' vulnerability to sexual exploitation and physical abuse, one could differentiate a typical Christian household from a Jewish household in first-century Palestine or from a pagan household in third-century Carthage remains, at best, uncertain. The complexity of Christian attitudes toward slavery may be discerned in the writings of a single theologian. As seen above, Lactantius in the *Divine Institutes* proclaimed the equality of all Christians, arguing that Christians viewed the slaves among them rather as 'brothers in spirit and as fellow slaves in religion'. Nonetheless, strewn throughout his writings are casual references to the mundane brutalisation of slaves. Lactantius was unperturbed that Christian slaveholders wielded the whip against slaves they called brothers and sisters.

Although Paul's proclamation that there is in Christ no slave or free did not transform relations of slavery in antiquity, in the fourth century, a handful of Christians in both the East and the West interpreted the gospel as a mandate to encourage slaves to resist their owners, even to run away from them. In Asia Minor, Eustathius of Sebaste encouraged slaves to assert themselves, encouragement perceived by his powerful critics as incitement to insubordination and flight. In response, the Council of Gangra cursed anyone who, for reasons of piety, encouraged slaves to defy their owners or to run away (*Canon* 3). In North Africa, a group known as the Circumcellions, associated with the Donatist Church, went even further. Circumcellions encouraged slaves to leave their owners; they destroyed records that documented ownership of individual slaves. They actively sought to humiliate slaveholders through symbolic actions: forcing slaveholders to run alongside carriages as slaves rode, for example, and harnessing slaveholders to mills. The Catholic Church, which used its considerable influence to quell the uprising, did not view these actions as prophetic enactments of Jesus' proclamation that the last would be first and the first last. We know of the actions of Eustathius and the Circumcellions only through the words of those who opposed them. These accounts afford us glimpses of ancient Christians whose reception of the gospel led to an active opposition to the institution of slavery, or at least, to action promoting the liberty of slaves. Such Christian actors were few in antiquity, and the powers of the institutional Church arrayed themselves on the side of slaveholders and the very institution of slavery.

How could churches permit members to own slaves? How could Christian teachers instruct slaves that virtue required submission to slaveholders? When the Church developed imperial influence in the fourth century, why did bishops and monks not demand an end to the institution of slavery? Christianity's seemingly ready accommodation to slavery, its simultaneous proclamation that in Christ there is no slave or free and insistence that slaves should obey their owners, is troubling. Given the diversity of ancient Christianity, no single explanation is sufficient. Paul, for example, couples his advice to slaves to accept their present condition with the observation (1 Cor. 7:21, 31) that 'the present form of this world is passing away': expecting the end of the world, he perceives the structures of the social order to be in the process of dissolution. Therefore, one infers, human transformation of the social order is not worth pursuing. In marked contrast, by the time Augustine wrote the *City of God*, instability in the civic order and the escalating chaos of late antiquity evoke concern rather than hopeful anticipation. As Garnsey (1996) notes, the fact that ancient slavery was not only part of an economic system, but, even more profoundly, a seemingly inalienable part of household structure magnified the difficulty of imagining a society without slaves. Augustine and others concerned with ensuring the stability of society, beginning with household stability, accepted the inevitability of slavery, even with its evident moral ambiguities.

As Garnsey also notes, Christians, like Stoics, subordinated physical or legal bondage to spiritual bondage, which was seen as both more onerous and more dangerous, even as the only true slavery. Christians, who often advocated disciplining the body for the good of the soul or the spirit, were able to justify admittedly negative dimensions of slave status as consonant with an ultimate good: the legal institution of slavery, they argued, only damaged the body, while the spirit or soul could still soar free. However, unlike Stoics, the imaginations of Christians were informed by Scripture, which permitted and regulated slaveholding. True, the story of Exodus, the national story of the Jews, centred on the liberation of an enslaved people, but this emancipation was not stressed in early Christian preaching. In retelling the Exodus story in Acts of the Apostles, for example, Luke omits reference to the enslavement of the Israelites, emphasising instead that the Egyptians forced the Israelites to abandon their newborns (7:17–43; 13:17–18). By the fourth century, Christians regularly referred to the patriarch Joseph to back the claim that the condition of slavery was not a liability for the truly free man, and they referred to Esau to back the claim that God deliberately inflicted the condition of slavery, at least on some. Perhaps even more significantly, Christians contended with Paul's letter to Philemon and with the deutero-Pauline epistles, with their household codes enjoining slaves to obey their owners. As the Christian canon slowly took shape,

newly canonical texts established parameters for Christian reflection on slavery.

Be slaves to one another, Jesus taught. The cultivation of humility and a slave-like ministry of mutual service were moral innovations characteristic of the Christian movement, innovations that did not result in systematic opposition to the institution or ethical critique of slaveholders. In the modern period, European and American abolitionists turned to biblical teachings to argue that slavery was an illegitimate institution. Whatever seeds the gospel planted yielded no such harvest in antiquity.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

Studies of slavery and early Christianity are concentrated, though not exclusively, on the writings of the New Testament, and, within the field of New Testament studies, on the Pauline corpus. Within the Pauline corpus, Philemon, a slim letter written to the eponymous slaveholder and the church that meets in his house, attracts recurrent attention from scholars trying to reconstruct the earliest Christian attitudes towards, if not slavery, at least a particular slave and a particular slaveholder. Winter (1987) advances the thesis that Onesimus, Philemon's slave, is not a fugitive but rather an emissary to Paul in his imprisonment. Callahan (1993) advances the more tendentious hypothesis that Onesimus is not a slave at all but Philemon's blood brother. Mitchell (1995) convincingly, to my mind, defends the traditional hypothesis that Onesimus is a runaway slave while tracing the reception of the letter in the first centuries of Christianity. Osiek (2000) offers a helpful summary of scholarly controversies engendered by the short letter.

Did Paul encourage or discourage slaves from seeking manumission? The influential treatment by Bartchy (1973) has been rightfully supplanted by Harrill (1995), who was able to take advantage of critical work on Roman slavery published in the intervening decades. Paul proclaimed that for those in Christ there was neither slave nor free; a number of scholars have questioned whether that ideal was realised within Paul's communities or whether it remained utopian. Briggs (1989) considers the tension between social realities of slavery and the representation of Christ as slave in Philippians (2:6–11); Barclay (1991) analyses the quandaries that would have been faced by Christians owned by other Christians; Glancy (2002) asks how, given Paul's teachings on sexual conduct, the routine sexual use of slaves would have affected their ability to participate in the Christian community.

Munro (1998) proposes a provocative if ultimately unconvincing hypothesis: that Jesus was either a slave or a freedman, son of a slave mother. Her argument hinges in part on the centrality of slavery in Jesus' parables. Scott

(1989) picks up on the category of master–servant parables only to subsume the coercive relationship of slavery under the rubric of patron–client relations, a scholarly sleight-of-hand he nowhere justifies. Beavis (1992) and Glancy (2002) more systematically situate the parables' references to slaves and slaveholders in the context of the realities of first-century slavery.

Slave metaphors are common in early Christian theology. Combes (1998) catalogues, though not exhaustively, instances of slave metaphors in the first four centuries of Christian writings. Byron (2003), who posits Hebrew Scripture and the writings of Second Temple period Judaism as the primary background to Pauline slavery metaphors, represents a deliberate step backward from the more social-historically grounded approach of Martin (1990), whose argument that Paul's self-designation as slave of Christ advances his authority rests on the social and economic advantages enjoyed by many slaves who served as agents for wealthy and powerful owners, a thesis that continues to provoke scholarly discussion.

Harrill (2006) neatly demonstrates that Christian apologists share more widely held views of slaves as potential enemies embedded in the household. Corcoran (1984) affords a compendium of references to early Christian allusions to slaves, slaveholding, and slavery. Klein (1999) argues that early Christian attitudes towards slavery must be understood squarely in the intellectual context of the Roman world. Glancy (2002) also treats later Christian authors; her emphasis on corporeal dimensions of slavery, including gendered and sexual dimensions of slavery, is a corrective to a long tradition of justifying early Christian accommodation to slavery by minimising harsher dimensions of ancient slavery.

Scholars offer varying assessments of Gregory of Nyssa's strongly worded critique of the morality of slaveholding in his fourth homily on Ecclesiastes. Stramara (1997) draws additionally on Gregory's other writings to argue that Gregory expected Christian slaveholders to manumit their slaves. I remain convinced by the more moderate positions of Wickham (1993) and Bergadá (1993), who, while acknowledging the vehemence of Gregory's fourth homily, hold that Gregory did not mount an attack on slavery as a social system. Finally, those interested in Christian attitudes toward slavery as the empire declined in the West may find helpful the overview of Augustine in Corcoran (1985), the more analytic treatment of Ambrose and Augustine in Klein (1988), as well as the pithy remarks on Augustine in Garnsey (1996). Nathan (2000) relates the writings of theologians in late antiquity to evidence regarding the actual treatment of slaves at the close of antiquity.

CHAPTER 22

SLAVERY IN THE LATE ROMAN WORLD

CAM GREY

THE STATE OF THE QUESTION

The fate of slaves and slavery in the late Roman world is a subject that may be taken as a weather vane for prevailing trends in scholarship concerning late antiquity. The late third to fifth centuries were long regarded as an awkward appendage to the classical period, or a prequel to the mediaeval world, to be dealt with swiftly in both cases. Surveys of slaves and slavery tended to follow suit. Standard accounts of slavery in the Roman period characteristically ended with the Severans, leaving the Dominate well alone. When the late empire was discussed, it was as a period during which numbers of slaves declined drastically, either as a result of a significant reduction in external sources, or as an attendant to the more general economic stagnation of the period.¹ The most elegant statement of this was Marc Bloch's (1947) posthumous article 'Comment et pourquoi finit l'esclavage antique', which argued for a growing tendency to settle slaves on land as tenants, rather than in the slave gangs of the early imperial period, and a coalescence of this group of agriculturalists with the large numbers of formerly free peasant proprietors and tenants, whose condition declined to one little short of slavery in the period.² Similarly, Marxist scholars focused upon the problem of the transition from the slave to the feudal mode of production. The late Roman empire was considered a period during which the inherent limits of slave productivity became increasingly apparent. The failure of slave-based agriculture was linked in relationships of causality, dialectic or coincidence with the collapse of the state, the rise of Christianity and the migration of barbarian peoples in the period to produce a picture of a world in inevitable transition from one set of economic structures to the next.³

¹ Discussions in Nehlsen 1972: 52–7; Wickham 1984: 4–8; Whittaker 1987: 89–94; Vera 1989: 32–4; 1992–3: 293–5; 1998: 298–310; Verhulst 1991: 195; Cameron 1993: 118–21; Giardina 1997; Scheidel 1999b; García Moreno 2001: 198–201.

² Analysis of Bloch's argument: Vera 1998: 304–7.

³ Anderson 1974; Dockès 1979; Ste. Croix 1981; Wickham 1984 for critique.

Two developments in the scholarship of the 1970s and 1980s led to important revisions of the terms in which this transition was conceptualised. The first was the work of Peter Brown in ‘inventing’ or ‘discovering’ late antiquity as neither the appendage of the classical period nor the precursor of the mediaeval world, but instead a subject worthy of study in its own right. Brown (1971; cf. 1997) eschewed long-standing assumptions about late antiquity. His late Roman world was a period of transformation rather than decline, gripped by tremendous energy and intellectual ferment rather than a sense of its own impending doom. While Brown’s focus was on the thought world of late antiquity rather than the economic aspects of the period, his work stimulated a number of important re-evaluations of the late Roman empire. These re-evaluations have included a fresh look at economic matters in general, and socio-economic structures in particular. Scholars now generally agree that assumptions of generalised economic decline in the period are overly pessimistic. Recent studies have emphasised a diversity of experiences in the Mediterranean world of late antiquity, and even posited some economic expansion in some areas during the fourth century.⁴

The second strand leading towards a re-evaluation of slavery in late antiquity was a challenge to the notion that slavery was the pre-eminent system of economic exploitation throughout the Roman period. In a number of important monographs and articles, European scholars of the subject argued that the slave mode of production was of only limited distribution in the ancient Mediterranean world at any time, and of only negligible importance in the late empire – that is, the exploitation of the soil by large gangs of slaves in the so-called ‘villa system’ familiar from the agronomic writings of Cato and Columella was not a feature of late Roman rural economies.⁵ This, in turn, undermined the validity of straightforward connections between a perceived decline in the agrarian economy of the late Roman period and a supposed drop in slave numbers.

These insights were further developed in the work of Moses Finley, who debunked arguments for a sharp decline in slave supply predicated upon the assumption that there was an unsustainable rise in the price of slaves during the period. In addition, Finley cast further doubts upon the proposition that slaves had ever dominated the rural labour force outside the ‘classical heartland’ of Italy. Finley argued for a gradual decline in slave numbers stretching well into the mediaeval period and connected this to an equally gradual yet fundamental shift in the character and organisation

⁴ Summary accounts: Vera 1989: 33; 1992–3: 295; Whittaker 1994: 270; Tate 1997: 58–9. Detailed discussions: Garnsey and Whittaker 1998; Whittaker and Garnsey 1998; Vera 1998: 293–6, 315–16; van Ossel and Ouzoulias 2000.

⁵ Giardina and Schiavone 1981; cf. Wickham 1984; Vera 1998: 307–8.

of the labour force. Finley's 'replacement theory' assumed a degradation in the status of numbers of formerly free rural people, until they found themselves in conditions that were so little different from slavery that the latter legal category ceased to be important – and in this he endorsed Bloch's argument. He also posited a move away from the strict dichotomy between slavery and freedom that held true in the classical period, and the (re-)emergence of a continuum of dependency. Finally, he suggested that the far from negligible numbers of slaves in urban and domestic contexts endured but became parasitic elements in the economy (Finley 1980).⁶ Finley's work generated a number of important responses, particularly among Italian scholars. Attention focused in these studies upon clarifying rural labour relations, and exploring in more detail the Marxist problematic of the transition from ancient to feudal modes of production.⁷ In a crucial reformulation of this issue, Wickham (1984) observed that more than one mode of production can coexist in the same society, and it is therefore important to identify which mode of production was dominant. He used this as a way to reinvigorate and nuance the argument among Marxist scholars over how the late Roman empire can best be described and characterised.⁸

There emerged also several articles focused specifically on the subject of slavery in late antiquity. Whittaker (1987; cf. 1982) took issue with Finley's 'replacement theory', and rejected the argument that slaves were replaced by dependent tenants in the period. He suggested rather that the fundamental change to the rural labour force of the late Roman world was connected to the settlement, under a variety of terms and conditions, of large numbers of barbarian prisoners of war. He also argued that precise quantification of slave numbers is impossible, and that it is more useful to focus upon the 'place occupied by slaves in the fabric of society'. In an article that emerged in the same year, MacMullen (1987) reopened debate over the extent to which slavery was a rural or an urban phenomenon in the period, and the importance of the economic role(s) played by slaves. After offering a province-by-province survey of the evidence for slaves and slavery in the late Roman empire, he endorsed Finley's proposition that slaves had become largely a parasitic element in the economic activity of the period, using the epigraphic sources in particular to demonstrate that slaves were largely absent from rural contexts, and present only in very limited circumstances in domestic and urban settings. MacMullen's method provoked a strong reaction from Samson (1989, 1992), who dismissed the

⁶ See also Finley 1964, 1965, 1987. For assessments, Whittaker 1987: 89–94; Vera 1998: 302; cf. the collection of essays in *Du latifundium au latifondo* (1995).

⁷ Momigliano 1987; Wickham 1984: 5 (with n. 5); Vera 1986: 413–18; 1992–3: 312–15.

⁸ Wickham (1984: 5) dismissed the centrality of slavery in the economy of the late empire, citing Finley and the work of a number of Italian scholars, 'often posed in explicit opposition to him'.

epigraphical evidence as an unsatisfactory base from which to identify and quantify slaves, and argued strongly in favour of a continuing slave presence on Roman villas in rural contexts. This last question has received a considerable amount of attention in recent decades, particularly the relationships between slaves and tenants in the economies of those villas, the changing balance between 'slave' and 'free' labour, and the implications for our interpretation of late Roman labour relations.⁹ Additionally, Egypt's rich papyrological material has made it a fertile area for undertaking case studies that have illuminated the balance of urban and rural, and the character of the labour force.¹⁰

In recent decades, these accounts of the social and economic position of slaves have been supplemented by a number of articles and monographs which focus upon various aspects of slavery in the late antique period as independent problems in their own right. The attitudes of the Church fathers towards slaves have received some attention, within the context of attempts to integrate the patristic sources into mainstream social, socio-economic, political and intellectual history.¹¹ As part of the explosion of interest in Roman families, a number of scholars have concentrated upon the place of slaves and slavery within family structures and strategies of the period.¹² And, with reference to the transitions from Roman to Byzantine and post-Roman societies in the Mediterranean world, the legal and social position of slaves into the sixth century and beyond has also been the subject of important studies.¹³ Taken together, this is a valuable body of literature addressing a broad range of questions. But the picture remains fragmented and has not yet broken entirely free from paradigms of thought that have now been firmly rejected in current accounts of the socio-economic history of the period in general.

The current *communis opinio* on the subject of slaves in late antiquity may be broadly summarised as follows. The late Roman empire was not a 'slave society,' but it continued to be a slave-owning society.¹⁴ The rise of the Church did not make a significant difference to the place of slaves in late Roman society, although it is possible that Christian teaching affected their treatment.¹⁵ Slaves continued to be an integral part of urban and

⁹ Vera 1992–3, 1998; Giardina 1997; cf. De Martino 1986; Vera 1989, 1995; Rosafio 1994, 2002; Koptev 1995a; Lo Cascio 1997; Garcia Moreno 2001; cf. Neville Morley's chapter in this volume.

¹⁰ Bagnall 1993b; Banaji 1999, 2004; Sarris 2004.

¹¹ Klein 1988, 2000, 2001; Grieser 1997; cf. Momigliano 1987: 2–3, observing Finley's omission of the subject.

¹² Shaw 1987; Arjava 1996; Grieser 1997: 51–89; Nathan 2000; Vuolanto 2003.

¹³ Grieser 1997; Melluso 2000; Nehlsen 2001; Rotman 2004.

¹⁴ MacMullen 1987: 375; Whittaker 1987: 108–9; Vera 1992–3: 309–10; 1998: 303, 307; Bagnall 1993b: 237–8; Garnsey 1996: 2; Grieser 1997: 43–7; Whittaker and Garnsey 1998: 287, 294; Garnsey and Humfress 2001: 86.

¹⁵ Whittaker 1987: 105; Vera 1998: 334–5; Nathan 2000: 171–3, 177; Garcia Moreno 2001: 200–1.

domestic contexts, and to be owned not only by the fabulously wealthy but also by the relatively poor.¹⁶ Slaves also appear to have continued cultivating the land in some areas, although the terms under which they did so may have been those of tenancy rather than as gangs of labourers.¹⁷ It is possible that there was some decline in numbers in the period, at least in rural contexts, although exact figures are impossible to define.¹⁸ These phenomena continue to be linked by some scholars to a general degradation in the status of the free poor in the period, and the homogenisation of a variety of socio-economic relationships of dependence into a single broad category of quasi-servility.¹⁹ It seems that the period also witnessed an increase in the phenomenon of individuals selling either themselves or their children into slavery – or at least leasing their labour in an arrangement that closely resembled slavery.²⁰ Some of these issues will receive more attention below. First, however, it is worth offering brief surveys of the sources for slavery in the period, and the evidence they provide for the location of slaves and the roles they fulfilled across the Mediterranean world.

THE SOURCES

There exists a relatively rich collection of sources for slaves and slavery in the late Roman period, although much of this material is ambiguous and opaque. Our largest body of evidence may be found in the two great codifications of law undertaken under Theodosius II in the mid-fifth century, and Justinian in the mid-sixth. The abundant but highly formulaic hagiographical literature of the period is also populated with slaves. Additionally, slaves and slavery provided a rich metaphor for Christian writers of the period, either to expatiate upon the proper relationship between humans and God, or to critique the behaviour of their contemporaries (cf. Jennifer Glancy's chapter in this volume). Slaves appear in various guises in the histories and panegyrics, poetry and plays of the period. Finally, they can be observed being bought and sold, chastised and manumitted in the epistolary, epigraphic and papyrological sources.

¹⁶ Whittaker 1987: 95, 97; Bagnall 1993b: 228–9; Garnsey 1996: 6; Grieser 1997: 43–8 (on the sixth century and beyond in Gaul).

¹⁷ Whittaker 1987: 94, 106–7; Samson 1989: 222; Vera 1995, 1998: 309–10; Whittaker and Garnsey 1998: 296; Garcia Moreno 2001: 201–2. See further below.

¹⁸ Whittaker 1987: 89 (with nn. 8–9); Samson 1992: 222–4. MacMullen (1987: 376–7) demurs; Vera (1992–3: 311–12; 1998: 315, 316–18) is cautious. Mediaeval historians place the *terminus* of the decline in slavery much later, perhaps as late as the tenth century: Bonnassie 1985; Bois 1989. Brief surveys of recent scholarship: Verhulst 1991; Samson 1994; cf. Vera 1998: 302–4; Garcia Moreno 2001: 200; cf. Walter Scheidel's chapter in this volume.

¹⁹ Marcone 1998: 356; Vera 1998: 312–13, 319, 324–5; Garcia Moreno 2001: 201–2, 207.

²⁰ Ramin and Veyne 1981; cf. MacMullen 1987: 380 (with n. 98); Vuolanto 2003. See further below.

While the legal sources of the late empire are generously populated with slaves, it is difficult to determine whether and in what ways the law of slavery differed from earlier centuries. The codifications of Theodosius and Justinian both preserved the body of the classical Roman law of slavery, and much of the legislation directly pertaining to slaves in those codifications echoed or responded to it.²¹ There seems to be no diminution in the volume of references to slaves in the later Roman period. But statistics tell us little, for they indicate legal difficulties rather than the prominence of the group in society.²² In this case the legal difficulties were as much with phenomena for which slavery provided a convenient analogy as with slavery itself. Some novelties in the legal position of slaves can be detected. Constantine forbade the purchase by Jews of Christian slaves, but, as a later law of Honorius reveals, this did not amount to a prohibition on the ownership of Christian slaves in general, nor did regulations against Jews owning slaves apply to followers of other sects or religions (*Theodosian Code* 16.9.1–5). The process whereby slaves could be freed underwent some changes in the period, although the relatively limited evidence for freedmen suggests that their position and obligations had changed little. It is possible, for example, that the incidence of testamentary manumissions increased.²³ More importantly, in the early fourth century a new form of manumission, *manumissio in ecclesia*, emerged. This process appears to have been instituted or at least formalised by Constantine, and church formularies of the fifth century concerning the formalities of *manumissio in ecclesia* reveal that it was not modelled on existing manumission practices.²⁴

This does not amount to wholesale changes in the law of slavery. Much of the legislation of the third, fourth and fifth centuries was promulgated in response to local situations in particular regions. It is difficult therefore to generalise from individual laws.²⁵ Further, the temptation to search in the legislation of the period for evidence of a change in attitudes towards slaves and slavery should be resisted (cf. Finley 1980: 126, ‘slavery is not a moral category’). It is true that there are texts suggesting an amelioration in the position of slaves. In an edict aimed at preventing the separation of slave families on imperial estates, Constantine acknowledged the possibility that

²¹ Finley 1980: 125–6, 130; Samson 1992: 221; Garnsey 1996: 101 (with n. 18); Grieser 1997: 97–112, 135–9; Nathan 2000: 176; cf. on new possibilities Turpin 1987; Pazdernik 1999. On Justinian’s codification, see Honoré 1978; for the Theodosian Code, Matthews 2000.

²² Whittaker 1987: 103; Samson 1992: 219; Whittaker and Garnsey 1998: 294. García Moreno (2001: 206) offers statistics for the post-Roman kingdoms.

²³ Nathan 2000: 174, 182; cf. Champlin 1991: 136–42 on the High Empire; Van Dam 1995 on the will of Gregory of Nazianzus.

²⁴ Manumission: *Cod. Iust.* 1.13.1 (316); *Cod. Theod.* 4.7.1 (321) = *Cod. Iust.* 1.13.2; *Cod. Theod.* 2.8.1 (321); see Grieser 1997: 136–7. *Manumissio in ecclesia*: Synod of Toledo (400), c. 10, with Grieser 1997: 150–2, 161; Nathan 2000: 172.

²⁵ Finley 1980: 125–6, 130; Nathan 2000: 170.

slaves might have quasi-marital relationships, and couched his interdict in humanitarian terms (*Cod. Theod.* 2.25.1 = *Cod. Iust.* 3.38.11).²⁶ This implicit acknowledgement is matched by an edict of Valentinian, Theodosius and Arcadius, which directs that slaves of public workshops who have married slaves of private households should be returned, along with their new families, to their obligations (*Cod. Iust.* 6.1.8; cf. Lenski 2006). Some controls over the actions of slave-owners with regard to their slaves were endorsed, but it is doubtful whether the legislation had any real impact. In a law that threatens masters with a charge of murder if they kill their slaves intentionally, it is conceded that the former need have no fear if the latter died accidentally as a result of a beating administered with light rods or lashes (*Cod. Theod.* 9.12.1; cf. Samson 1992: 221). In general, it seems fair to argue that the legislation of the late empire endorsed either implicitly or explicitly the existing legal understanding of slavery.²⁷

It is possible to make some further observations about the character of the legislation, the information it provides about the place of slaves in late Roman society, and the nature of that society. There are some hints in the legal evidence of a greater degree of state intervention in private law matters than during the High Empire. Typically, such intervention is concerned with matters that are perceived to impact upon the integrity of the community as a whole. Mixed marriages between free persons and slaves receive a great deal of attention, for the status of offspring of such marriages was hotly contested. By the late Roman period, there was a large, complex and self-contradictory body of literature on the subject of mixed marriages in general.²⁸ In his broad-ranging legislation on the subject of marriage and social morality, Constantine restated both the principle that children of slave women followed their mother's status and the provision that if such children have been living as free persons in good faith for a period of sixteen years, they should be considered free by the principle of *favor libertatis*. He also self-consciously revived and reinforced the provisions of the *senatusconsultum Claudianum*, which had originally been applied to marriages between slaves in the *domus Augusta* and freeborn women. By the early fourth century, the law directed that such a woman become either the freedwoman or slave of her partner's owner, according to the latter's knowledge of the union. Any children were free in the first instance, and slaves of their parents' owner in the second. Constantine's position on

²⁶ Cf. Evans Grubbs 1995: 307–9, discounting Christian influence; Grieser 1997: 99–100; Vera 1998: 319–20. Constantine's ban on tattooing criminals and slaves on the face does appear to have a Christian origin: *Cod. Theod.* 9.40.2; *Aur. Vict. Caes.* 41.4; *Soz. HE* 1.8.13.

²⁷ *Cod. Iust.* 6.1.3; cf. Ausonius, *Epigr.* 16–17 (Green): punishment and branding; Grieser 1997: 109 for branding; cf. Bradley 1984: 119; Evans Grubbs 1995: 26.

²⁸ Evans Grubbs 1993; 1995: 261–316; Koptev 1995b; Arjava 1996; Grieser 1997: 99–101; Storch Marino 1999; Vuolanto 2003; Koptev 2004: 291, 302.

the subject fluctuated over the course of the seventeen-year period during which he enacted four separate constitutions (*Cod. Theod.* 4.8.7; 9.9; cf. 4.12.1–3; *Cod. Iust.* 9.11).²⁹ This ambiguity surrounding mixed marriages continued to exercise the minds of lawyers into the fifth century and beyond. In a discussion of the various strategies used by decurions to evade their responsibilities, a novel of Majorian directed that male children of mixed marriages should be placed in the guilds ‘in order that the splendour of the municipal senate may not be polluted by the baseness of the maternal blood,’ while female children remained the property of the mother’s owner. Meanwhile, slaves who married the daughters of decurions were to ‘perish by the penalties suitable to slaves’ (*Novels of Majorian* 7.1.2; 5). Nearly two decades later, Anthemius responded to the petition of a certain Julia concerning her marriage to a freedman with a declaration of immunity for free women who had married freedmen prior to that year, followed by a restatement of the prohibitions on marriages between free women and slaves, and an explicit extension of the principle to cover freedmen as well (*Novels of Anthemius* 1.1).

If we are to take the legislation at face value, the municipal *curiae* and ranks of the clergy were riddled with slaves in the fourth and fifth centuries.³⁰ This is, of course, unlikely, but the prevalence of such legislation reveals that concerns over mixed marriages can be placed within the context of legislation dealing with circumstances in which the boundaries between freedom and slavery are perceived to have been breached in other ways. The permeability was not always from unfree to free. An edict of the mid-third century attempts to ensure that men did not pass themselves off as slaves in order to con a purchaser out of the purchase price (*Cod. Iust.* 7.18.1; cf. Ramin and Veyne 1981: 474). Further, legislation banning *curiales* from acting as farm managers accuses them of abandoning their rank and accepting a position of servitude, which reveals that undertaking wage labour had not lost its stigma among the aristocracy of the period.³¹ In each case, the emphasis upon maintaining boundaries between free and slave is clearly visible.

These texts take as their context a world where distinctions within Roman society were becoming more important than distinctions between citizens and non-citizens. The distance between men of high social standing and wealth (*honestiores*) and those of the lower classes (*humiliores*) had by the Severan period become established in social practice, legal procedures

²⁹ Evans Grubbs 1995: 261–316.

³⁰ *Cod. Iust.* 7.16.11, 10.32: slaves unlawfully obtaining public office or the office of decurion. *Cod. Iust.* 7.16.42: slaves as chief decurion. On slaves becoming priests, see Klein 1993.

³¹ *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.92 = *Cod. Iust.* 10.32.34 *mut.*; cf. *Nov. Theod.* 9.1.1. The unsuitability of banausic labour as a *topos* in ancient literature: Ste. Croix 1981: 114–15; Zimmermann 1996: 338–9. Also August. *Ep.* 24*.2.

and the criminal law.³² However, we should be careful not to overemphasise the impact and implications of this development, and of the *Constitutio Antoniniana* of 212, whereby Caracalla declared almost all inhabitants of the empire citizens. Citizenship continued to matter, and slaves continued to be non-citizens.³³ But it seems reasonable to suggest that the rash of legislation against slaves occupying roles that were not suitable to their status may be interpreted as part of a broader tendency in the legislation of the period to define and delineate statuses and roles within Roman society.³⁴ It is in this context, too, that legislation affirming and expanding limitations upon the dress codes within the cities of Constantinople and Rome may perhaps be interpreted (*Cod. Theod.* 14.10.1; 4).

On the other hand, the fuzziness that had always existed at the boundaries between the free poor and the unfree received a great deal of attention in the period. Over the preceding centuries, punishments appropriate for slaves had gradually been extended to cover lower-class criminals as well.³⁵ During the fourth and fifth centuries, some of the provisions surrounding mixed marriages between slave and free came to act as a template for analogous limitations on unions between registered tenants (*coloni*) and those of curial and higher status (*Novels of Valentinian* 31.6; cf. *Nov. Maj.* 7.1.2). In the matter of agency, too, boundaries between free and non-free, those *in potestate* and those *sui iuris* become less sharp.³⁶ The principal criteria determining treatment of slaves, tenants, *procuratores*, *actores* and other agents found to be acting fraudulently became the extent to which they were acting with the knowledge of the principal, rather than whether they were free or unfree themselves (*Cod. Theod.* 9.17.1; Harries 1999: 142–3).

This has been taken as part of a more general process of erosion of the legal privileges of the free poor, but here too, caution is needed. Uncertainty over status, and a mixing of free, freed and unfree among the poorest and humblest members of Roman society are not new phenomena of the late empire.³⁷ In the legal sources of the period at least, two processes seem to be at work. First, we may observe a more deliberate utilisation of regulations concerned with slaves as part of attempts to describe limitations placed upon the behaviour of certain members of Roman society. This

³² Garnsey 1970; 2004: 140; Marcone 1998. ³³ Garnsey 2004: 141–3; Evans Grubbs 1995: 277.

³⁴ See *Cod. Theod.* 9.45.3: attempting to limit flight to the church; *Cod. Theod.* 7.13.8: forbidding slaves and others in base professions from joining the most honourable squadrons of the military; *Cod. Inst.* 7.16.11, 38, 41: concerning the status of children of slaves who had achieved high military or civil offices.

³⁵ Harries 1999: 122–3, 126, 140–1. Note *Cod. Theod.* 8.2.5: threat of torture of minor municipal officials.

³⁶ Paulus, *Sent.* 5.8, with G. and M. Sautel 1959: 264; Aubert 1994: 108; *Cod. Inst.* 4.25.5, with Aubert 1994: 109.

³⁷ Ramin and Veyne 1981; Gardner 1986a; Bagnall 1993b: 227. Note *Cod. Inst.* 6.1.4, distinguishing between a slave who declares himself freeborn out of ignorance and one who does so deliberately.

phenomenon can be connected more broadly to a concern with control in the legislation of the period, primarily for purposes of taxation, and receives more attention below (see Grey and Parkin 2003). Secondly, there appears to be a conscious reaction against the ambiguity that had always been present in the law of persons, and an impulse to identify clearly the precise terms in which a particular relationship or legal status should be defined. This impulse brought with it a new panoply of hybridised statuses and conditions, at least as far as the law was concerned.

This hybridisation is evident in discussions of the sale of children into quasi-slavery. The legal sources reveal conflicting positions concerning the legality of sale of children by their parents, although it appears that the practice was never expressly forbidden.³⁸ Poverty or economic need was recognised as justification for selling a newborn child, and the sale of family members is attested as a survival strategy for the peasant household in the period.³⁹ Following the letter of the law, one might expect a child thus sold to become a slave of the purchaser, who would become his *possessor* and *dominus*. However, the legal sources reveal ambiguity here, too. The legality of the sale was regarded as something of a grey area. Most attention was focused upon the status of the child sold, and the remedies open for restoring that child to his or her previous status. Legally, upon sale, a child would move from the *potestas* of the father into the *mancipium* of the purchaser. This latter term is customarily understood to indicate some kind of bondage, but in this case, it was more specifically the labour of the child, rather than the child's person, that was the subject of the obligation. Consequently, the price paid to redeem a child was not considered to be a purchase price, but rather a reimbursement for the expense of keeping the child while exploiting his or her labour.⁴⁰ It appears, then, that a hybridisation of rights and responsibilities results. The children are not slaves but are described in terms that encourage the analogy with slavery. Nor are they free, for their capacity to regain their (rightful) status as *ingenui* through a variety of avenues is jealously defended in the legal sources.

This example starkly highlights a prevailing and continuing tension in the legal sources of the period. On the one hand, we observe blurred boundaries between freedom and slavery, and uncertainty at the penumbra of those boundaries about what constituted unfreedom and whether

³⁸ Vuolanto 2003; cf. Lepelley 1983: 333–4; Humbert 1983, with reference to August. *Ep.* 24*; Grieser 1997: 95–6. Augustine (*Ep.* 10*.2) avers that parents could sell their children's labour for twenty-five years.

³⁹ Boswell 1988: 202. See *Cod. Theod.* 3.3.1; *Nov. Val.* 33.1; Libanius, *Or.* 46.23; Basil, *De spiritu sancto* 20 (*SC* 17 bis).

⁴⁰ Vuolanto 2003: 187, 191 (with n. 60). This seems to be Augustine's understanding (*Ep.* 24*), and the basis for his concern over the relative rights of father, landlord and slave-owner.

unfreedom was to be equated with slavery.⁴¹ On the other hand, we witness conscious attempts to define and delimit these problem cases, and to strengthen and confirm the boundaries between various legal conditions. The sources reveal a continuing dialogue between these two phenomena, the balance of which was in a constant state of flux. Much of this legislation was galvanised by the need to protect the fiscal interests of the state in the wake of the changes wrought upon the tax system under the Tetrarchy and later. It is clear that slavery continued to be a legal category, and that slaves continued to be the subject of legislation. Regulations surrounding their condition came to be applied in circumstances that were interpreted as in some way analogous to slavery, and this is an indication of the extent to which slaves continued to be an integral and unconsciously accepted part of the social fabric of the late Roman world.

The hagiographical literature provides a rich source of information for slaves in a variety of spectacular and mundane circumstances. Significant questions remain over approaches to and interpretations of these texts, but for our current purposes these problems are less relevant, for slaves are in many cases incidental to the aims of the authors and the heroic events they describe. We witness them serving as secretaries and scribes in municipal and imperial *scrinia*.⁴² They form one element in the households of the aristocrats with whom the saints come into contact. In Sulpicius Severus' *Life of Martin*, for example (17.1–4 [*CSEL* 1: 126]; cf. Theodoret, *Historia Religiosa* 9.4; 9), it is the saint's power to heal a member of the *familia* of a pagan aristocrat in the city of Trier that convinces the man to convert to Christianity. Slaves constitute the saint's own household, thereby providing him or her with an opportunity for self-denial or the display of conspicuous kindness.⁴³ In the hagiographical literature of the western Mediterranean, at least, the redemption of captives became one of the markers of a saint's sanctity in the period (Klingshirn 1985). In a curious twist on the same theme, the life of an Egyptian monk in the late fourth century offers the story of a bandit chief who takes pity on a woman he finds wandering in the desert, and redeems her husband and children who had been imprisoned and enslaved, respectively, as a result of fiscal debts (*Historia Monachorum in Aegypto* 14.4–7). In the hagiographical texts, then, slaves functioned as both analogue and object of the saint's actions.

Similarly, in other Christian literature of the period, slaves and slavery provided a rich metaphorical vocabulary. This is perhaps most clearly visible in Jerome's *Life of Malchus*, where slavery forms a central element

⁴¹ Cf. the blurring of boundaries between children and slaves in Christian sources: Garnsey and Humfress 2001: 179–80, 186.

⁴² Paulinus, *Vit. Ambr.* 43 (Kaniecka 86–8); Eugippius, *Vita Severini* 36.

⁴³ Greg. Nyss. *Vita Macrinae* 966D; Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 24.3; Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 46.3, 61.6; *Life of Polycarp* 5 (cf. Stewart-Sykes 2002). Further references: Jones 1964: 851 (with n. 66).

in the saint's journey towards sanctity. Similarly, other Christian sources of the period display authors enlisting the motif of slavery in pursuit of larger arguments. Slavery functioned as a convenient metaphor for the relationship between humanity and God, and was presented as the only viable alternative to moral slavery, which was inextricably connected to sin (Garnsey 1996: 220–35; see Jennifer Glancy's chapter in this volume). Slavery also provided a frame of reference in bishops' exhortations to their flocks to moderate their behaviour for the good of their souls.⁴⁴ These Christian texts can be connected with their broader intellectual and literary contexts, for pagans, too, employed the motif of slavery in pursuit of their own particular ideological or rhetorical ends, or mused upon the condition of slaves as a philosophical exercise. The arguments that Libanius (*Orationes* 25.66–7) and Theodoret (*On Divine Providence* 7, 677B–680B; cf. Garnsey 1996: 50–2) provide in favour of the institution of slavery, for example, display marked similarities. Similarly, in both Christian and pagan authors there exists a current of thought that the protection offered by slavery was preferable to the somewhat more precarious position of freedom or the status of a freedperson; on the other hand, both retained their contempt, fear and distrust of the slaves in their midst.⁴⁵ Salvian of Marseille manipulates this distaste masterfully in his diatribe against the moral depravity of his fellow-Christians when he observes that, while one might expect slaves and the dregs of society to behave in the worst ways, the very fact that his audience themselves are behaving in the same ways indicates that their sins are greater.⁴⁶

We may take this casual enlistment of slavery in pursuit of broader arguments as another indication of the extent to which slaves were enmeshed in the fabric of late Roman society. But it is difficult to generalise from these vignettes to arrive at broader patterns of economic exploitation of slaves, or to comment upon continuities or changes in attitudes towards slavery among Christians in the period. The hagiographical texts, for example, are as dependent upon literary models provided by the New Testament as they are reflective of the social realities of the periods in which they were written. Similarly, the prevalence of slaves and slavery in sermons, philosophical and moral discourses does not necessarily indicate a greater consciousness among pagans and Christians of slavery, still less an acknowledgement of the evils of the institution. In a recent monograph on the subject, Garnsey (1996: 87–101; cf. Garnsey and Humfress 2001: 207–10) has observed that,

⁴⁴ E.g. John Chrys. *Hom. Eph.* 14.3–4 (PG 62.109–10); *Hom. Jo.* 80.3 (PG 59.436).

⁴⁵ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 61.5; *Querolus* 74; John Chrys. *Hom. I. Cor.* 19.3–5 (PG 61.154–8). Symmachus, *Ep.* 4.48; Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharist.* 333–7; Jer. *Ep.* 54.6; Ambrose, *Ep.* 19.20; John Chrys. *Hom. in Tit.* 4 (PG 62.685–6). See Garnsey 1996: 72–3; Samson 1992: 225; Bagnall 1993b: 234–7; Nathan 2000: 179.

⁴⁶ Salvian, *De Gubernatione Dei* 3.10.50–1, 4.3.13, 4.6.29, 4.12.57–8, with Grey 2006.

in the majority of cases, such criticisms of slavery as existed tended not to question its legitimacy, but rather to focus upon particular aspects of the system that were perceived to be functioning in less than ideal ways. Garnsey goes on to discuss a small sample of texts which may with caution be interpreted as direct criticisms of slavery as an institution, but it is difficult to determine the extent to which these texts reflected or tapped in to a wider current of opinion in the period.

There survive also texts which speak more directly to slavery as a lived experience. Slaves are found being bought and sold in markets.⁴⁷ In Egypt, papyrological sources detail sales arrangements between buyers and sellers.⁴⁸ It was long assumed on the basis of this evidence that slave prices increased prohibitively in the period and slave numbers declined markedly in that province. But it has recently been demonstrated that this approach is based on a sample that is far too small to support the weight of interpretation.⁴⁹ In Diocletian's *Edict of Maximum Prices* (2.29), prices of slaves are established according to age and sex, but as throughout this text, it is difficult to reconcile hopeful ideal with realities of practice.⁵⁰ Slaves appear occasionally in court, or receiving rescripts directly from the emperor; slaves carried and wrote letters on behalf of their masters, as they had in earlier periods; they were listed as part of the resources on a landowner's estate for purposes of taxation and when the property of proscribed men was evaluated; if they ran away, fugitives were pursued and punished by their masters and by agents of the state.⁵¹ Christian synods dealt with the status of slaves and freedmen from the fourth century onwards, and there exist also formularies concerned with manumission.⁵²

Taken together, these texts provide a collection of individual snapshots, from which it would be unwise to generalise. Little can be done of a quantitative or even pseudo-quantitative nature with this material, for the texts that we have do not lend themselves easily to such a project. Samson (1989: 100–2), for example, has argued that differences in the form that the evidence for slaves takes in different regions of the Mediterranean world should not necessarily be interpreted as confirmation of differences in the

⁴⁷ Evidence from Egypt: Straus 2004. Sale of eunuchs: Jones 1964: 852 (with n. 68). Note also Cassiodorus, *Variae* 8.33.4: children sold into slavery at a market in sixth-century Lucania.

⁴⁸ *Archiv für Papyrusforschung* 3.415 ff; *BGU* 1.316 = Mitteis, *Chr.* 271 = *FIRA* III.134; Theodoret, *Ep.* 70 (*SC* 98). General discussion of slave markets: Melluso 2002.

⁴⁹ Bagnall 1993b, critiquing Fikhman 1973; cf. Finley 1980: 129, against Jones 1956.

⁵⁰ Text in Crawford and Reynolds 1979: 177; cf. Scheidel 1996c.

⁵¹ *Cod. Inst.* 1.19.1, 7.13.1, with Evans Grubbs 2000 (especially 86–7). Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 4.12; Severus, *Ep.* 3; Paulinus of Nola, *Ep.* 23. Detailed studies of the couriers of letters: Perrin 1992; Letourneur 2002. *Cod. Theod.* 10.8.4 (Numidia); *Cod. Theod.* 9.42.7 = *Cod. Inst.* 9.49.7 (Illyricum, Italy, Africa). *Cod. Inst.* 6.1.5 (Moesia), holding the *defensor civitatis* responsible for tracking down fugitive public slaves. Ausonius, *Epigr.* 16–17 (Green). See further Bagnall 1993a: 209; Neri 1998: 159; Grieser 1997: 107–12, 122–4; Bellen (1971).

⁵² Grieser 1997: 3, 150–2, 161.

relative frequency or function of slaves between those regions. Similarly, Bagnall (1993b) has demonstrated that it is extremely problematic to conclude on the basis of changes in the number of surviving papyri dealing with slaves that the number of slaves declined in the late Roman period in Egypt. Archaeology is of only limited use in fleshing out the picture that can be drawn on the basis of the written evidence.⁵³ Thus, in spite of the comparative richness of the sources for late antiquity in general, scholars of the history of slavery in the period are hampered by the same sets of problems and limitations that dog studies of earlier periods. While the anecdotal and incomplete nature of our sources need not deter us, it does signal, and to a certain extent determine, the form that our inquiry should take, and the questions that can be asked of the material. In what follows, I concentrate upon reconstructing a picture of the socio-economic position of slaves in the late Roman world, rather than attempt to quantify or provide a legalistic analysis of the texts.

THE GEOGRAPHY OF SLAVERY IN THE LATE EMPIRE

Where were slaves to be found in late Roman society? The question may be answered on both an imperial and a regional scale. In geographical and socio-economic terms, slaves continue to be found throughout the empire and beyond its boundaries. While our evidence for the supply of slaves in the period is anecdotal and unevenly distributed, pirates, bandits, barbarians and slave-traders acquired and sold slaves across the Mediterranean world. These slaves were both Roman and non-Roman in origin. Augustine (*Letters* 10*) describes his experiences with slave raiders in North Africa, and suggests that barbarian tribes living within the province of Africa functioned as a source of slaves.⁵⁴ In Pannonia, Eugippius notes the actions of Giso, wife of King Feletheus, who kidnapped and enslaved certain inhabitants of a village near Favianis, and speaks of the king offering to protect the townsfolk of the region against the depredations of the Thuringii and Alemanni across the Danube river (*Vita Severini* 8; 31; cf. *Expositio Totius Mundi* 60). Ammianus (22.7.8; 29.4.4; cf. 16.7.5) describes Julian dismissing the Goths in Thrace as fodder for Galatian slave-traders, and recounts an encounter between Valentinian and a group of slavers beyond the Rhine.⁵⁵ Jerome's ascetic friend Malchus is captured and enslaved by Saracens on the road between Beroea and Edessa (*Vita Malchi* 4). We should not assume, however, that all slaving activity was to be found at the margins of the Roman world. John Chrysostom (*Adversus Iudaeos* 1.1 [PG 48.855]) gives

⁵³ Bradley 2003; Scheidel 2003a.

⁵⁴ See Humbert 1983; Szidat 1985; Vera 1998: 334; Melluso 2002. Cf. August *Ep.* 199.12.46; *Expositio Totius Mundi* 57.

⁵⁵ Galatian slave-traders as proverbial: Claudian, *In Eutrop.* 1.58–9; cf. Priscus, *Fr.* 11.2, lines 423–8: (Danube).

a sense of the ubiquity of slavers when he uses their techniques for luring small children into their clutches as a simile for the wiles of demons in entrapping the unwary.⁵⁶ As in earlier centuries, these slave-traders were generally despised. Asterius of Amasea, for example, counts them alongside vulgar flatterers as the wrong sort of people among whom to be popular.⁵⁷

Some of the documentary and epistolary evidence for the sale of slaves reveals the geographical distances that might exist between a slave's acquisition and sale. In Egypt, for example, a Frankish officer finds a Gallic boy for sale as a slave (*BGU* 1.316.13 = Mitteis, *Chr.* 2.271 = *FIRA* III.134). Alongside small-scale transactions such as these may be placed instances of large quantities of slaves flooding the market at certain times. Characteristically, these individuals are captured prisoners of war, whose status and fate remain hotly contested. Panegyrics to various emperors sometimes give numbers of defeated barbarians who were made available to landowners within the bounds of the empire, although they rarely provide details as to how this process worked. Our most detailed account of the terms of their settlement envisages some kind of registered tenancy arrangement, but scattered references in other sources suggest that, at least in some circumstances, captured enemies were sold as slaves.⁵⁸ The effects of warfare were felt among Romans, too. The experiences of Augustine and Severinus in attempting to defend or recover their flocks from slave raids offer evidence of a broader practice in the period, namely attempts to recover captives from beyond the bounds of the empire through the right of *postliminium*. This was a practice of long standing, but in the late Roman period, the Church and its office-holders took an increasing role.⁵⁹

Beyond capture and military defeat, alternative sources of slaves endured into the late Roman period. Abandoned and exposed children continued to provide a source of slaves, although it is possible that oblation to monasteries emerged as an alternative in the period.⁶⁰ Individuals might sell themselves or their children into slavery or a condition of servitude closely connected to slavery. Their motivations could include debt, poverty or the

⁵⁶ Cf. Ambrose, *Ep.* 37.13; Synesius, *Ep.* 104; Sid. Apoll. *Epist.* 6.4; Themistius, *Or.* 10.138b. Symmachus often remarks upon slave raiders: *Epp.* 2.46, 78, 4.48, 9.53, 121, 140. See further Jones 1964: 853–5.

⁵⁷ Asterius of Amasea in Pontus, *Or.* 4 (*PG* 40.224B).

⁵⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 5.6.3; cf. Ammianus 22.8, 31.6.5, 31.4–5; Isidor. *Hist. Goth.* 54, with Ste. Croix 1981: 509–18. The importance of barbarian captives as a labour force: Whittaker 1982, 1987: 113; Grey (forthcoming). Cf. Synesius, *De Regno* 15 (*PG* 66.1093B); *Epp.* 4, 130.

⁵⁹ Klingshirn 1985: 184–7; Grieser 1997: 173–90; Evans Grubbs 2000: 87. *Postliminium*: Maffi 1992; Sanna 2001. The efforts of the bearers of Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 6.4 are apposite.

⁶⁰ *Cod. Theod.* 5.9.1, 5.10.1, 11.27.2, with Ramin and Veyne 1981: 475–8; Boswell 1984, 1988; Harris 1994. Contracts for wet nurses, who might be expected to feed foundlings and raise them as slaves, are scarce beyond the late third century: Masciadri and Montevecchi (1984) provide evidence.

hope of financial gain, and the subject receives much attention in the legal sources of the third and fourth centuries.⁶¹ 'Homegrown' slaves are also visible in the sources. The children of slave couples remained slaves themselves, and evidence for house-born slaves carries on into the late Roman period.⁶² Finally, the children of slave-owners with their *ancillae* continued to occupy an awkward place in legal and social thought. Paulinus of Pella's somewhat sheepish admission of paternity of a child in his own household illustrates his capacity to entertain a disjunction between the pursuit of chastity on the one hand, and a master's acknowledged right to have recourse to the female slaves in his household on the other (*Eucharisticus* 166–74).⁶³

Wealthy landowners were expected to possess slaves in both urban and rural contexts. It is the estates of these individuals for which the most extensive evidence exists, although they should not necessarily be considered typical of slave-owners in the period.⁶⁴ In any case, slaves can be observed fulfilling the same variety of economic tasks that they did under the High Empire. There are explicit references in the legal sources to slaves on farms in far-flung regions such as Macedonia, Numidia and Cappadocia, as well the so-called classical heartland of Italy, Sardinia and Sicily.⁶⁵ It is likely that this is an under-representation of their distribution, and likely also that these slaves formed one element in mixed workforces, which included tenants and wage labourers as well. These workforces were the characteristic pattern employed by large landowners during the High Empire, and the pattern continued into the late empire.⁶⁶ On some of those farms, slaves appear to have worked in gangs of labourers. Alternatively, they might be settled on small plots of land *quasi coloni*, and the implications of this pattern of exploitation for legal constructions of registered tenancy will receive attention shortly. It appears that there was a tendency among large landowners towards tenancy as a strategy for exploiting their agricultural holdings, although the motivations for such a decision need not have been the same in all cases. Whatever mode of exploitation a landowner chose, it is likely that the estate was under the direction of

⁶¹ *Cod. Iust.* 7.18.1; *Cod. Theod.* 4.8.6. See Morabito 1981: 70–8 on evidence from the *Digest*, and cf. MacMullen 1987: 380; Ramin and Veyne 1981: 486. Finley 1965 is seminal for debt-servitude; cf. Lintott 1999a. Sarapion the Sindonite is reputed to have sold himself into slavery as part of his *asesis*: Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 37.2.

⁶² Herrmann-Otto 1994; Grieser 1997: 90–2.

⁶³ See Evans Grubbs 1995: 281–2; Nathan 2000: 179.

⁶⁴ *Cod. Theod.* 10.8.4 (Numidia); *Cod. Theod.* 9.42.7 = *Cod. Iust.* 9.49.7 (Illyricum, Italy, Africa); also *Vita Melaniae* (L) 18. Small number of census returns from the period: Jones 1953; also Vera 1998: 311.

⁶⁵ *Cod. Theod.* 11.3.2; Julian, *Or.* 14.45; *Cod. Theod.* 10.8.1, 12.1.6, 11.1.12, 7.18.2, 10.9.2.

⁶⁶ Jones 1964: 1325 (n. 53); cf. Bagnall 1993b: 232; Vera 1998: 307, 321–2; Corbier 2005: 397, 431–3. Ausonius, 3.1.24 *De Herediolo* speaks only of *cultores*, without distinguishing between slave and free. Palladius' *Opus Agriculturae* is obscure on labour.

a bailiff or foreman. It is probable that the majority of bailiffs continued to be slaves as they had been under the High Empire, although relative proportions of slaves to freedmen and *ingenui* are once again impossible to recover.⁶⁷

Slaves could also be found occupying other socio-economic niches. They appear in the domestic entourages of wealthy aristocrats in the cities of the Mediterranean world, where they acted as butlers, secretaries and personal attendants, just as they had in earlier centuries.⁶⁸ Both pagan and Christian writers criticise the use of slave entourages as a means of personal display in the period. Ammianus (14.6.17; 26.3.5) vents his spleen at the enormous entourages of slaves and attendants that the Roman aristocracy brought with them when they paraded the streets of the city, including eunuchs, kitchen hands, weavers and flute players. Likewise, Basil (*Homilia de ieiunio* 7 [PG 31.176A]), and Gregory of Nazianzus (*Oratio in laudem Basili* 14.17 [PG 35.877]) offer words of caution to their flocks about the inappropriate or intemperate display of wealth through large numbers of slaves. We may expect some of these domestic slaves to have been the subject of sexual exploitation and cruel treatment by their masters.⁶⁹ Their responses to this treatment seem to be the same as those of their predecessors: passive resistance, occasional violence and flight.⁷⁰ There is a small amount of evidence for slaves in private industry. Libanius (*Or.* 42.21; 53.19) observes of his friend Thalassius that he owned a factory of slave craftsmen producing knives, and mentions the presence of a female slave in a corn mill.⁷¹ Slaves continued to be involved in the military, too. At times of particular military need, they were exhorted to enrol in the army, encouraged by a promise of freedom (*Cod. Theod.* 7.13.16). More common, though, was the practice of soldiers possessing slaves, who acted as personal attendants. Such slaves might be bought out of the soldier's military allowance, or provided by the soldier himself upon his enlistment. Indeed, a law of Constantine offers incentives for recruits to furnish their own slaves by declaring that they be enlisted at an elevated rank. Sulpicius Severus (*Mart.* 2) reveals that this

⁶⁷ *Cod. Theod.* 4.12.5 forbids women to marry or cohabit with 'a bailiff or manager of a private citizen, or with any other man polluted by servile status'; cf. *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.65.3; *Nov. Maj.* 7.1.4, providing different penalties for harbouring of fugitives if the bailiff were free or slave. Free or freedmen becoming bailiffs: Scheidel 1990; Teitler 1993; cf. Jones 1964: 788–92; Lepelley 1983: 337–9; Carlsen 1995: 68; Vera 1998: 311–12; Corbier 2005: 432.

⁶⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 14.17.5; Auson. *Epigr.* 16–17 (Green); *Cod. Theod.* 14.10.4. See Liebeschuetz 1972: 47; MacMullen 1987: 371; Bagnall 1993a: 123–7.

⁶⁹ Palladius, *Hist. Laus.* 3; Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharist.* 166–74; August. *Conf.* 9.9. See Shaw 1987; Clark 1998.

⁷⁰ John Chrys. *Hom. Matt.* 35.5 (PG 57.411); August. *Conf.* 9.9; Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 8.11.12; August. *Epp.* 108.18, 185.15; *Cod. Theod.* 14.18.1. On flight see Bellen 1971; Neri 1998: 152–9; Rivière 2002; cf. Bagnall 1993a: 210–12.

⁷¹ Cf. Jones 1964: 848, 860, on *Cod. Theod.* 12.1.96; MacMullen 1964: 53. Bagnall (1993b: 232) sees little evidence for craft production by slaves in Egypt.

practice could be perceived to encourage luxury when he praises Martin's self-denial in taking only one slave with him.⁷²

Slaves are found as property of the state and individual municipalities, too. They laboured in mines quarrying copper and porphyry, among other substances. Condemnation to the mines had long been a punishment inflicted upon slaves and *humiliores*, often for religious crimes, and this aspect of the sentence did not instantaneously disappear with the accession of Constantine. Religious deviants continued to be sent *ad metalla* into the fourth and fifth centuries, in the form of heretics. Additionally, free individuals were condemned to enslavement and labour in the mines for crimes as diverse as fraud, complicity with a deserter, use of enormous vehicles, demolishing tombs, kidnapping or forcing a daughter or female slave into prostitution.⁷³ Constantine directed explicitly that fugitive slaves could be sent to the mines if they had been caught while fleeing to barbarians.⁷⁴ Reduction to slavery is also part of Prudentius' account of the suffering of Agnes, whom he describes, perhaps melodramatically (*Peristephanon* 14.21–30), as having been condemned as a slave to a public brothel.⁷⁵ Additionally, the state and its municipalities also continued to possess and employ slaves in certain industrial, administrative and service roles, much as they had throughout the imperial period. These included the staffs of the mints, state factories, aqueducts, *cursus publicus* and bakeries.⁷⁶ In some cases, these positions appear to have acquired a hereditary character in the period.⁷⁷ Slaves fulfilled certain functions in imperial and municipal *scrinia*, although there was some confusion over whether this should be allowed, and who could be held responsible in the case of fraud.⁷⁸ Eunuchs begin also to populate the upper ranks of the imperial administration. The origin of this phenomenon is generally dated to the reign of Diocletian, and eunuchs become an increasing, and increasingly influential, presence over the ensuing reigns.⁷⁹

It seems reasonable to conclude on the basis of the foregoing survey that, if there was a decline in the number of slaves in any particular region, it was not because of a diminution in either supply or demand (Corbier 2005: 432). However, the evidence presented here lends itself to quantification

⁷² Slaves of military *peculium*: *Cod. Theod.* 7.1.3. Incentives: *Cod. Theod.* 7.22.2.2 (326).

⁷³ *Cod. Theod.* 1.5.3, 4.8.8, 9.18.1, 9.40.2, 12.1.6, 15.12.1; cf. Gustafson 1994; Grieser 1997: 92–4; pre-Constantinian period: Millar 1984. On *servi publici* and *servi poenae*, see Lenski 2006.

⁷⁴ *Cod. Iust.* 6.1.3; cf. Valens' condemning monks to hard labour in mines: Theodoret, *Hist. Eccl.* 4.22.26–8, with Lenski 2004: 99–101.

⁷⁵ Cf. Tert. *Apol.* 50.12, with McGinn 1998: 310.

⁷⁶ Libanius, *Or.* 53.19, 57.54; cf. Liebeschuetz 1972: 53.

⁷⁷ *Cod. Iust.* 6.1.5, 8; II.43.10.4–5; *Cod. Theod.* 8.5.31, 34, 37, 50, 53, 58; 9.40.3, 5, 6, 7; 10.20.1, 10; 14.3.7; Julian, *Misop.* 367d, 368; Soc. 5.18. See Jones 1964: 435, 696, 699, 833.

⁷⁸ *Cod. Theod.* 8.2.5; cf. Paulinus, *Vit. Ambr.* 43 (Kaniecka 86–8), with Lo Cascio 2005: 149–50.

⁷⁹ Tougher 1997, 1999.

at only the most superficial level, and more detailed analyses are needed if firm conclusions are to be drawn about the diffusion of slaves in the economy of the late Roman world. For our current purposes, it is sufficient to endorse the prevailing *communis opinio* that, while slavery was not a dominant economic pattern in the Roman period, slaves continued to be present in late antiquity. But what of the microscale – that is, what of the distribution in the landscape of slaves? Did they begin to locate increasingly in the cities of the empire, where they came to constitute a parasitic element in the economies of those cities? Should these urban-based slaves be kept strictly separate from slaves fulfilling agricultural roles in the period? Finley's argument (1980: 132, 137–8, 149) in favour of this interpretation was closely connected to his belief that towns and their hinterlands ought to be kept analytically distinct, that the ancient city was a site of consumption rather than production, and that while slaves had hitherto been dominant as producers in both rural and urban spheres, they had in the late antique period been replaced by nominally free yet dependent rural and artisanal labour. In recent scholarship each of these positions has been challenged, and it is worth reflecting upon the implications of current attitudes towards town/country relations and the role of the city in the period for the assumption that urban and rural slavery underwent a fundamental parting of the ways. The theory that slaves were replaced in rural contexts is nuanced below.

Recent research has led to a reinterpretation of the rural and urban landscapes of the late Roman period. The archaeological evidence reveals that a wide variety of fragmented and nucleated settlement types coexisted in these landscapes. It is now generally accepted that large and small settlements must be interpreted as coexisting in complementary, symbiotic relations, and that the fundamental divide between the two that emerges from some literary sources was an ideological fiction rather than a socio-economic reality. It is therefore no longer sufficient to speak merely of the 'consumer-city', or the 'organiser-city' as models of the interactions between cities, the empire of which they were a part and the hinterlands upon which they relied for agricultural produce. Scholars now recognise that the diversity in town/country relations was matched by a comparable variability in the socio-economic niches occupied by cities, and that this variability continued or increased in the period following the political upheaval of the third century.⁸⁰ Permanent or semi-permanent movement can be observed in the period, both from country to city and from city to country. Individuals or communities might abandon rural residences in favour of the (perhaps dubious) security provided by newly fortified

⁸⁰ Rich 1992; Vera 1992–3: 302–4; 1995: 203–6; Giardina 1997: 312–13; Burns and Eadie 2001; Whittaker 1990, 1995.

city walls.⁸¹ Alternatively, urban-based aristocrats, artisans or members of *collegia* might relocate to the countryside, prompting complaints about the denuding of the cities.⁸² But these examples were probably at the extreme end of the spectrum, and it seems reasonable to assume that individuals moved relatively regularly between town and country.⁸³

In exploring the implications of this for the location of slaves in the late Roman world, we are hampered by the difficulty of drawing clear connections between residence patterns and economic roles, for the two are seldom associated explicitly in the ancient sources.⁸⁴ Nevertheless, some propositions can be advanced with a certain degree of confidence. Our sources suggest that it continued to be commonplace for many individuals to own slaves.⁸⁵ It is therefore likely that the large numbers of slaves fulfilling strictly defined and demarcated functions in the households of the wealthiest among the aristocracies of the late Roman world were the exception rather than the rule of slavery. Indeed, there is some evidence that may with caution be taken as an indication of slave-owners working alongside their slaves. The most explicit attestations are again to be found in Egypt, but there are suggestions from elsewhere in the Mediterranean world. The holdings in question appear to have been relatively small, and to have required a degree of flexibility in the composition and skills of their labour force. Slaves were one means of ensuring that flexibility.⁸⁶

In combination, these arguments problematise the separation of urban-based, economically parasitic domestic slaves from rural-dwelling, agricultural slaves. Did household slaves accompany their masters to their rural estates? Were they there absorbed into the *instrumenta* of the estate, or did they remain separate from the bailiff or any other slaves already present? What, on the other hand, of slaves residing on small rural estates, for example, that were abandoned as dwellings by their masters but continued to be worked on a commuter basis from the local town? Did they relocate to the cities with their masters and commute alongside them each day? It is clear that no single model suffices to encompass the range of possibilities, and there is precious little evidence in the ancient sources. The complaints of Pantomalus in an anonymous fifth-century Latin comedy should not

⁸¹ Brühl 1988: 43; cf. Christie 2000: 57–8; Bender 2001: 191.

⁸² *Cod. Theod.* 12.18.1, 12.18.2 = *Cod. Iust.* 10.38.1; *Cod. Theod.* 12.19.1–3. See Evans Grubbs 1995: 280.

⁸³ *Cod. Theod.* 5.18.1.4 = *Cod. Iust.* 11.48.16 *mut.*; *Apa Mena: Further Miracles*, 75, 151; *Vita Severini* 10.1. See Burns and Eadie 2001.

⁸⁴ Finley 1980: 133–4; Whittaker 1987: 92–4; cf. Vera 1998: 324–5.

⁸⁵ August. *Enarr. in Ps.* 124.6–7 (*CSEL* 95/3.1840–41); Synesius, *De Regno* 15 (*PG* 66.1093B); John. Chrys. *Hom. Eph.* 22 (*PG* 62.148); Libanius, *Or.* 31.11. See MacMullen 1987: 365; Garnsey 1996: 6; Bagnall 1993b: 228–9.

⁸⁶ Bagnall 1993a: 223–5; 1993b: 228–30 for papyrological evidence; Libanius, *Ep.* 1041; Sulp. Sev. *Mart.* 8.2; Paulinus of Pella, *Eucharist.* 537; cf. Sid. Apoll. *Ep.* 5.19.

be interpreted as providing a slave's perspective, for his monologue is primarily a collection of stereotypes about the immorality and laziness of slaves common to the genre (*Querolus* 68–9). But the text does provide hints of slaves travelling with some degree of regularity, both alongside and independently of their masters. It seems most likely that the norm is better represented by a slave such as Pantomalus than by the huge numbers of domestic slaves whom our authors accuse the elite of having possessed primarily for show in the period.⁸⁷ We may assume that these slaves, like their owners, divided attention between a variety of economic spheres and functions in the normal course of their duties, and that those duties were fulfilled in both urban and rural settings.⁸⁸

SLAVERY, TENANCY AND TAXATION

The continued presence of slaves in both urban and rural contexts in the late Roman world seems beyond doubt. What of their relationships with the free members of that world? Difficulties in keeping free and unfree labour separated in the legislation of the period have already been noted, and these difficulties were not confined to the idealised world envisaged by the lawyers of the late empire. In a letter to a certain Eustochius, whom he considered something of a legal expert, Augustine (*Ep.* 24*) asked a number of questions about the relationship between slavery and freedom in various circumstances.⁸⁹ Augustine was primarily concerned about three phenomena, the first two of which have already received attention above. First, he asked about mixed unions, in particular the status of children of a free woman and a slave. Next, Augustine asked about children sold into some kind of fixed-term or even perpetual bondage by their parents. Finally, Augustine expressed confusion over the relative rights of landowner, parent and slave-owner in the event of a tenant farmer selling his child into slavery, and whether a landowner was permitted to sell a *colonus* or his son into slavery. Eustochius' reply is not recorded, so we are none the wiser as to the advice Augustine received. But the letter reveals hints of the impact that changes to the machinery of tax assessment might have had upon familial and socio-economic relations in rural contexts in the late Roman period, and the competing claims of private and public law relationships that could result.

At issue here is the conceptualisation of rural labour. The relationship between slavery and tenancy in the late Roman period continues to generate a huge volume of scholarly literature.⁹⁰ Essentially, this debate emerges

⁸⁷ Libanius, *Ep.* 177–8; Optatus Milevus, *Contra Don.* 3.4.

⁸⁸ Bagnall 1993b: 232; cf. Hopkins 1993; Garnsey 1996: 2. ⁸⁹ See Lepelley 1983.

⁹⁰ Vera 1992–3, 1998; Giliberti 1999; Scheidel 2000; Rosafio 2002; Corbier 2005: 433–4.

from the new significance attached to registration in the census lists in the period following the reforms to the tax assessment system carried out by Diocletian and his colleagues in the Tetrarchy. It is not clear whether the entry of individuals onto the tax rolls in connection with particular areas of land was entirely new in the period. Nor is it possible to determine how widespread the practice was. But the legal sources emphasise the responsibilities of tenants to the land upon which they were registered through the census, and to the owners of that land. These responsibilities were matched by certain limitations upon the actions of the landowners themselves, who also experienced challenges to their rights over slaves entered on the tax rolls. This coincidence of registration and limitation of the behaviour of the various participants in that registration has evinced arguments for eliding registered tenancy with slavery in the period.⁹¹ It is worth examining this proposition in more detail.

Essentially, registration was a means of guaranteeing that responsibility for the tax burden assessed upon a particular area of land could be assigned to identifiable individuals. In the case of tenants and landlords, each could be held responsible. The landowner's responsibility for the taxes of his estate was to be guaranteed by his assets. Those assets were itemised in a document termed a *professio* during the High Empire, and a *iugatio* in the later period.⁹² A tenant might not possess such a collection of assets, and in consequence his responsibility for the tax burden of the land could be guaranteed by his person. Thus, a law of the late fourth century for Thrace directs of registered *coloni* that 'although they appear to be free in status, they must be treated as slaves of the land on which they were born' (*Cod. Iust.* II.52.1). However, it is clear from this text that the act of registration was not understood to have affected the legal status of these individuals as free men.⁹³ This follows an early fourth-century law, which keeps the positions of *colonus* and slave strictly separated, threatening the former with reduction to the latter condition should they choose to leave their responsibilities. The threat assumes an enduring separation of the two, in legal terms at least, and the distinction is carried on in the language of an interpretative gloss upon this law, dated to the late fifth or early sixth century (*Breviarium Alaricum* 5.9.1 = *Cod. Theod.* 5.17.1 and *Interpretatio*). In exploring the implications of this threat to reduce a registered tenant to slavery, further problems present themselves. Such a threat presupposes some kind of formal legal process, but we have no information about what form the process might have taken. It is unclear,

⁹¹ Krause 1987: 81–2; Mircovic 1997: 29–30; cf. Vera 1998.

⁹² *Dig.* 50.15.4; *Cod. Iust.* II.17.4 = *Cod. Theod.* 15.1.49.

⁹³ Giliberti 1981: 14–15; Lepelley 1983: 335; Whittaker 1987: 109; Vera 1992–3: 317; Sirks 1993: 332, 350–1; Carrié 1997: 94; Scheidel 2000: 731.

for example, whether responsibility for the sale and enjoyment of its fruits lay with the landowner, the municipality or the state. Nor are we informed about the steps taken to notify the municipal or state authorities of the sale, for such an act would change the taxable assets of the land, and the character of labour force that could be held responsible for its tax burden. It is this set of questions that seems to trouble Augustine in his letter to Eustochius.

In any event, it is likely that the hold of some registered tenants upon their status as free men would have been tenuous at best – particularly when we recall the phenomenon of debt-servitude, whereby an individual or that individual's child might be given over to a creditor to work off a debt incurred.⁹⁴ Further, the act of registration itself carried with it the potential for some *coloni* to lose some of the rights customarily enjoyed by free men. Laws of the fourth and fifth centuries placed limitations upon a *colonus*' freedom of movement, on the basis of this responsibility for taxation.⁹⁵ *Coloni* might also experience restrictions upon their capacity to dispose of their own goods, and in a chapter title preserved only in the sixth-century *Breviarium Alaricum*, that property is termed *peculium* (5.11. tit. = *Cod. Theod.* 5.19. tit.).⁹⁶ While current scholarship is of the opinion that the term *peculium* is used metaphorically rather than in its strict legal sense, the analogy with slavery is again clear.⁹⁷ The language of the legal sources concerning registered tenants vacillates between the vocabulary of personal dependence and that of public obligation. Laws concerning slavery provided a convenient but imperfect tool for expressing their fiscal responsibilities.

The legal sources also reveal vagueness as to the rights and obligations of their landlords, and the foundation upon which those rights and obligations rested. This is best encapsulated in the law for Thrace already noted (*Cod. Inst.* 11.52.1). The law goes on to define the responsibility of the landowner for ensuring that his registered tenants remain on the fields that they cultivate, and the foundation upon which his authority to compel their payment of the tax burden rests. That power is located in the landowner's *potestas* as *dominus* rather than his *sollicitudo* as a patron. But the law creates an ambiguity in the way it describes the position of the *dominus*. The claim upon the *coloni* here resides in the land – they are described as *servi terrae*. Upon what basis, then, did the role of the *dominus* rest? Was he *dominus-as-landowner* or *dominus-as-slave-owner*? It seems that both meanings are

⁹⁴ Finley 1965; Ste. Croix 1981: 136–7, 162–70; Giliberti 1981: 5–6; Sirks 2001: 258–9; Vuolanto 2003; Corbier 2005: 427–8.

⁹⁵ *Brev.* 5.9.1 = *Cod. Theod.* 5.17.1; *Cod. Inst.* 11.50.2, 11.51.1; *Cod. Theod.* 4.23.1 = *Cod. Inst.* 11.48.14.

⁹⁶ Cf. *Cod. Theod.* 14.18.1, with Grey and Parkin 2003: 297.

⁹⁷ Sirks 2001: 262–5; Vera 1997: 216. *Peculia* were not restricted to slaves and sons *in potestate* in the late Roman period: cf. *Cod. Theod.* 16.5.54.

deliberately invoked. However, against this apparent extension of the rights of landowners must be placed limitations upon their freedom to expel or transfer registered tenants (*Cod. Iust.* 11.63.3; *Nov. Val.* 35.1.18). As far as the fisc was concerned, such a move would have implications for the tax-paying capability of the land. Restrictions such as these amounted to limitations upon the economic strategies that landowners might adopt in exploiting their estates.

It is worth noting here the practice of installing slaves on agricultural estates *quasi coloni*. While this was not a novelty of the period, it is possible that it became more widespread as landowners turned towards tenancy as their preferred mode of economic exploitation.⁹⁸ In this arrangement, the slave paid his rent out of his *peculium*, was legally categorised as distinct from the *instrumenta* of the estate and was encouraged to make a profit. Legally, then, these individuals were slaves, but in economic terms, they were tenants (Veyne 1981: 3). The *dominus* of a *servus quasi colonus* was *dominus* of both the individual and the land. It is possible that this dual role of the *dominus*, and the distinction between the slave-as-cultivator and the rest of the *instrumenta* of the estate, served in some instances as a partial framework for describing the relationship between *dominus* and registered *colonus* in the period. We may recall here also the extension of the provisions of the *senatusconsultum Claudianum* to cover marriages between *coloni* and free women. While slavery and registered tenancy are kept separate in both cases, legal strategies developed to deal with the former are used as analogues for the latter.

These mutually contradictory practices simultaneously bolstered and limited the landowner's position with regard to registered tenants. They are matched by an erosion of the rights of *domini* vis-à-vis slaves entered into the census rolls through their *professiones* or *iugationes*. These slaves appear only rarely in the legal sources, where they are called *censiti servi* or *mancipia censibus ascripta*.⁹⁹ Once registered, they appear to have been regarded as part of the tax-paying capability of that land. A conflict between the public law demands of the tax system and the private law relationship between *dominus* and *servus* can here be observed. A proportion of the land's total tax burden was assigned to a slave registered in the census lists, and his *dominus* was held liable for that tax burden. The fundamental principle underpinning this legislation was that, once attached to an estate, a slave was connected to the estate's tax burden regardless of whether he continued to reside or work on that land (*Cod. Theod.* 11.1.12; *Cod. Iust.* 11.48.7). Thus, the law of Constantine forbidding the separation of slave families goes on to observe that 'if any person should lack the due number

⁹⁸ Giliberti 1981: 9–10; Whittaker 1987: 92; Vera 1989: 34; 1998: 320–4.

⁹⁹ Giliberti 1981; Whittaker 1987: 103; Vera 1989: 35.

of slaves on account of the restoration of family ties, substitute slaves shall be given in return by the person who has received the aforesaid slaves' (*Cod. Theod.* 2.25.1 = *Cod. Iust.* 3.38.11). While the humanity of the gesture should not be disregarded, the state's interventionism in matters of private law is also clearly highlighted.¹⁰⁰

Slavery and tenancy continued to be complementary strategies for landowners to employ in exploiting the land in the late Roman period. Regardless of whether slaves had ever been a dominant feature of rural landscapes, they were not unilaterally replaced by what has been labelled in the secondary literature 'the colonate of the later Roman empire' – that is, a system of dependent tenancy which tied the tenant or *colonus* to his landlord in a relationship that was the precursor of mediaeval serfdom. The sources attest to intervention by the state in the economic strategies of both landowners and tenants through the practice of registration. This in turn placed limitations upon relationships between the two, and upon the rights of slave-owners over their slaves. The sources reveal also a process of hybridisation in the language used to describe various types of relationships in the period. This is visible in attempts to define the obligation of registered tenants to the land upon which they were registered, and the terms in which their landowners were expected to enforce that obligation. It is also visible in the legal strategies adopted for defining the terms in which a child's labour could be bought and sold, while the child remained technically free. It is clear that one result of the increased importance of registration in the tax rolls during the late empire was confusion over both the relationship of registered tenants to registered slaves, and the relative rights of the *domini* of both.

CONCLUSIONS

Essentially the propositions advanced above amount to an argument for continuity: continuity in economic structures from the early to the late empire, in spite of significant changes to the fiscal system with which those economic structures continued to interact, and corresponding confusion over the legal status and social position of the individuals concerned. Continuity also in attitudes towards and treatment of slaves, in spite of isolated and spectacular examples of self-denial and piety among ascetic Christians, and self-conscious expressions of fellow-feeling and shared experience on the part of preachers and theologians. Continuity, finally, in the legal separation of freedom and slavery, alongside and in tension with the emergence of hybridised categories of dependence. The breaks with the past came

¹⁰⁰ The fiscal interests of the state are also visible in actions for vagrant slaves and other agricultural labourers: *Cod. Theod.* 10.12.1–2.

in stages, at different times, and affected different aspects of slavery. The role of barbarians as both a source of slaves and slave-owners themselves is difficult to estimate, but it is clear that the labour of slaves continued to be exploited in the post-Roman kingdoms and in the Byzantine world. The impact of Constantine's conversion to Christianity cannot be denied, but it should not be overemphasised, for Christians continued to own and mistreat slaves into the following centuries. With Justinian's massive project of legal codification and reform, the tensions between ambiguity, hybridity and polarisation in the legal sources appear to have undergone another series of revisions.

The period of the 'Late Empire' was neither a vestigial appendage to the classical and mediaeval worlds, as earlier scholars would have it, nor a period of unparalleled novelty and upheaval, as an incautious application of Brown's interpretation might suggest. Change there certainly was, but it was in style rather than substance, in appearance rather than practice. Slavery provided a language for describing and a model for structuring newly important relationships: between registered tenants, their landlords and the land for which both were responsible; between humans and God. Arguably, then, in the thought-world of late antiquity, slavery was more important than it had been in previous centuries. The legal sources also reveal an increased tendency to intervene in matters of private law, in an attempt to protect or ensure the transfer of tax revenues to the fisc. The legal character of relations between some masters and some of their slaves, at least, was affected by this phenomenon. In socio-economic terms, however, little had changed in the balance between slave and free labour in the late Roman empire. Slaves did not need to be replaced as a labour force, for their exploitation had never been the dominant mode of production. Similarly, the cities of late antiquity did not unilaterally collapse, or devolve into parasites upon their hinterlands. It would be unwise, therefore, to overemphasise the difference between rural and urban slavery in the period, and to insist upon either their contraction into the cities or their continued dominance in the countryside. Slavery in the late Roman empire remains a hotly debated topic. This debate must be contextualised within current paradigms of scholarship concerning the world in which the slaves themselves lived.

BIBLIOGRAPHIC ESSAY

The fundamental general study of the late Roman world, demonstrating an unparalleled mastery of the ancient sources, remains Jones (1964). The economic importance of slaves and slavery in the late Roman world has long been the subject of debate. At stake is the mechanics of the transition from the ancient to the mediaeval world. In a seminal article, Bloch (1947)

established the essentials of an orthodoxy that was to have a long history: in the late Roman period, landowners increasingly settled slaves on the land as tenants, rather than exploiting their fields with gangs of slave labourers; meanwhile, peasant proprietors and tenants experienced a decline in status, until they found themselves in a condition vis-à-vis their landlords that differed so little from slavery that the latter category became obsolete.

The problematic of the transition from the ancient world to feudalism has been the subject of crucial reformulations, both as a general structural principal (Wickham 1984), and with particular reference to slaves (Finley 1980). Finley rejected Bloch's suggestion that slavery declined in the late Roman period, suggesting instead that slaves became increasingly located in the cities, where they fulfilled largely domestic roles, and were, like the cities themselves, economic parasites. However, in the countryside, their labour was replaced by the formerly free peasant proprietors and tenants whom Bloch had envisaged merging with slaves. They came to constitute a heterogeneous body of rural dependants who ultimately would become the serfs of the mediaeval world. Whittaker (1987) offered a series of challenges to both Bloch's assumptions about the importance of settlement of slaves as tenants in the period and to Finley's 'replacement theory'. He suggested that there is little evidence of a significant change in the use of slaves and argued that the most profound change in the late Roman countryside was an influx of large numbers of barbarian prisoners of war, who were settled on terms less favourable than those of (legally) free peasants, and were therefore attractive to landlords seeking to exploit their rural labour forces more effectively.

This debate marks the point of intersection between scholarship on slavery and scholarship on the 'colonate of the late Roman empire', an arrangement of tenancy that has generated a vast literature. Scholars disagree over the extent to which the legal evidence dictating limitations upon the economic freedom of registered tenants (*coloni*), and describing them as 'slaves of the soil' (*servi terrae*) may be taken as evidence for a diminution in social status. Scheidel (2000) provides a summary of the current state of the question; the breadth of interpretations may be grasped from Lo Cascio (1997), in which the essay of Carrié is particularly important.

Finley's conceptual separation of city and country has also been the subject of much recent argument. His proposition received support from MacMullen (1987), but other scholars have questioned his view of the ancient city as a 'consumer city' (Whittaker 1990, 1995) and the extent to which city and country experienced a parting of the ways in the late Roman period. Burns and Eadie (2001) provides a convenient place to start. MacMullen sought to demonstrate the immense variety in roles fulfilled by slaves in late antiquity through a region-by-region survey; his statements about the numbers and distribution of slaves are problematic. Samson

(1989) argues in favour of a continuing rural presence of slaves in significant numbers, also problematically, but his views accord better with existing constructions of the socio-economic role of slaves throughout the Roman period (e.g. Bradley 1984, 1994; Hopkins 1993) and fit methodologically more closely with Whittaker (1987), arguing for a structural rather than a quantitative analysis of slavery in late antiquity. Neri (1998) includes slaves alongside the poor and *infames* as marginal figures in the late Roman world, relying principally on legal evidence.

Legal sources constitute the largest body of evidence for slavery in the period and have received the most attention. Nehlsen (1972) contains a useful collection of references for the legal position of slaves, while Morabito (1981) studies the *Digest* for the *realia* of slavery. A more nuanced treatment of the methodological issues involved may be found in Melluso (2000), who concentrates on the Justinianic legislation. Evans Grubbs (1995) offers an important analysis of mixed slave–free marriages, focusing on the legislation of Constantine. This legislation engages uneasily with the problematic boundary between freedom and slavery, which is further blurred in the practice of selling a child (or, perhaps, a child's labour) to another; this receives considerable attention in both primary and secondary sources. The treatments of Augustine's attitude to the phenomenon by Lepelley (1983) and Humbert (1983) remain seminal, while the most recent and detailed study is Vuolanto (2003), who observes the difficulties authors of the period had in distinguishing between sale, lease, pimping or pawning of one's own labour or that of one's children. Garnsey (1996) surveys attitudes to slavery in both Christian and pagan sources, offering the important observation that slavery is nowhere subjected to sustained criticism or attack. Detailed studies of the Christian sources from late Roman Cappadocia (Klein 2000) and post-Roman Gaul (Grieser 1997) have also recently appeared.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

JOURNALS

Abbreviations, where used, follow the usage of *L'Année philologique*. For items not there listed, standard disciplinary conventions have been used.

EDITIONS AND REFERENCE WORKS

<i>AE</i>	<i>L'Année Épigraphique</i> , published in <i>Revue Archéologique</i> and separately (1888–)
<i>BGU</i>	<i>Berliner Griechische Urkunden (Ägyptische Urkunden aus den Kgl. Museen zu Berlin)</i> , ed. W. Schubart <i>et al.</i> (1895–)
<i>CAH^F</i>	<i>Cambridge Ancient History</i> , 2nd edn (14 vols.) (1961–2005; 1st edn 1923–39)
<i>CIL</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum</i> (1863–)
<i>CISem.</i>	<i>Corpus Inscriptionum Semiticarum</i> (1881–)
<i>CSEL</i>	<i>Corpus Scriptorum Ecclesiasticorum Latinorum</i> (1866–)
<i>FGrH</i>	<i>Fragmente der griechischen Historiker</i> , ed. F. Jacoby <i>et al.</i> (1923–58)
<i>FIRA</i>	<i>Fontes Iuris Romani AnteIustiniani</i> , ed. S. Riccobono (1941)
<i>Fr. Vat.</i>	<i>Fragmenta Vaticana</i> , ed. J. E. Spruit and K. E. M. Bongenaar (1987)
<i>IDélos</i>	<i>Inscriptions de Délos</i> , ed. F. Dürrbach (1923–37)
<i>IG</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae</i> (1873–)
<i>IGLS</i>	<i>Inscriptiones graecae et latinae de la Syrie</i> (1906–22)
<i>IGRom</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Graecae ad Res Romanas Pertinentes</i> (4 vols.), ed. R. Cagnat <i>et al.</i> (1901–27; repr. 1964)
<i>ILLRP</i>	<i>Inscriptiones Latinae Liberae Rei Publicae</i> , ed. A. Degrassi, rev. edn (2 vols.) (1963)
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- Gen. R* Midrash Genesis Rabbah
- Lev. R* Midrash Leviticus Rabbah par. Pesiqta de Rav Kahana = *PRK*
- M. B.M.* Mishnah Baba Metzia
- M. B.B.* Mishnah Baba Batra
- M. Ber.* Mishnah Bereshit
- M. Ket.* Mishnah Ketubot
- M. Makh.* Mishnah Makhshirin
- M. Pes.* Mishnah Pesahim
- M. Qid.* Mishnah Qidushin
- M. Shen.* Talmud Yerushalmi Maaser Sheni
- M. Sot.* Mishnah Sotah
- M. Suk.* Mishnah Sukkah
- M. Yad.* Mishnah Yadayim
- Mekh. Mishpatim/Neziqin* Mekhilta Mishpatim/Neziqin
- T. A.Z.* Tosefta Avodah Zarah

<i>T. Ar.</i>	Tosefta Arakhim
<i>T. B.B.</i>	Tosefta Baba Batra
<i>T. B.Q.</i>	Tosefta Baba Qama
<i>T. Hor.</i>	Tosefta Horayot
<i>T. Pes.</i>	Tosefta Pesahim
<i>T. Qid.</i>	Tosefta Qidushin
<i>y. A.Z.</i>	Talmud Yerushalmi Avodah Zarah
<i>y. Peah</i>	Talmud Yerushalmi Peah
<i>y. Yeb.</i>	Talmud Yerushalmi Yebamot

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