UNIVERSITÄT BONN

BONN CENTER FOR DEPENDENCY AND SLAVERY STUDIES

Kostas Vlassopoulos

Enslaved Persons and Their Multiple Identities in Ancient Societies

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I first met Joe Miller back in 2006, at the *Slavery, Citizenship and the State* conference of the Institute for the Study of Slavery (ISOS) at Nottingham. Joe was a regular attendee of the biennial ISOS conferences; his stimulating and witty remarks, both during the formal conference proceedings and in the bar afterwards, played a key role in bringing into dialogue and cross-pollination the approaches and research traditions in the study of Atlantic slavery with those in the study of ancient slavery. Joe always insisted on the need to historicize slaving and eschew the essentialist approach to slavery as a static institution. From this historicist perspective, he called historians to rethink the multiple identities of enslaved persons:

> [This approach] also emphasizes alternative identities and communities that the enslaved forged among themselves, inevitably independently of their masters' attempts to obtain their exclusive loyalty. If slaves are defined primarily as being 'dominated', as Patterson's and virtually all other abstract efforts to conceptualize 'slavery' define them, they may play off the contradictions within the (presumed, axiomatic, accepted, given) confinement of 'slavery' to preserve some sense of personal dignity and even create opportunity within their captivity, or eventually to assert themselves beyond it in society as well, but they are unpromising agents of historical change. 'Socially dead' thus translates into historically inert. Within this logic, they make a historical difference only in rebellion, preferably violent, mass revolt, that is, no longer as 'slaves' but rather in asserting themselves outside their would-be masters' assumed control. Historians instead might better identify and appropriate for their analytical purposes the vitality that slaves, ineluctably human beings, possessed.[1]

It is a great personal honour to give one of the Joseph C. Miller Memorial Lectures; and it is with great pleasure that I take this opportunity to pay

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[1] Joseph C. Miller, "Slaving as Historical Process: Examples from the Ancient Mediterranean and the Modern Atlantic," in *Slave Systems, Ancient and Modern*, ed. Enrico Dal Lago and Konstantina Katsari (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008): 72.

homage to Joe's contribution by heeding his call to examine the multiple identities of enslaved persons in ancient societies.[2]

Until fairly recently, the study of ancient slavery was dominated by a top-down perspective. Slavery was considered a historical relationship exclusively shaped by masters for their own interests, while slaves were approached primarily as victims of exploitation and domination. There is no doubt about the great value of the immense amount of work that has been produced within this perspective;[3] but over the last decade, a growing number of scholarly work has started to approach slaves not only as victims, but also as active historical agents, who shaped the historical relationship of slavery and the development of ancient societies in their own ways within the limits imposed on them.[4] The study of slave agency is inherently linked with the study of slave identity. It would of course be misleading to believe that identities fully shape how people act, in particular when we examine the identities of enslaved persons and the severe constraints under which they always operated; but it would be equally futile to dispute that identities shape how individuals and groups see themselves, what aims and expectations they have, and in what ways they seek to fulfil them. If slave agency is to become the key preoccupation of the study of ancient slavery in the current generation of scholarship, we can no longer avoid a systematic engagement with the difficult issue of slave identities.

At some point in the early imperial period, a woman in the Roman province of Britannia deposited a tablet in order to seek divine help

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[2]   I would like to express my thanks to Professor Winfried Schmitz for the invitation to give this lecture and the audience at Bonn for the very stimulating discussion.

[3]   For recent overviews of the strengths and weaknesses of the traditional approach, see Jean Andreau and Raymond Descat, *Esclave en Grèce et à Rome* (Paris: Hachette, 2006); Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge, eds., *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 1, *The Ancient Mediterranean World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[4]   Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World, AD 275–425* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011); Sinclair Bell and Teresa Ramsby, eds., *Free at Last! The Impact of Freed Slaves on the Roman Empire* (London: Bloomsbury, 2012); Peter Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2018); Rose MacLean, *Freed Slaves and Roman Imperial Culture: Social Integration and the Transformation of Values* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018); Sara Forsdyke, *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Historicising Ancient Slavery* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2021).

for redressing an injustice: 'Memorandum to the god Mercury from Saturnina, a woman, about the linen cloth she has lost, so that he who obtained possession of it might not find rest before he brings the aforementioned thing to the aforementioned shrine, whether that person be a man or a woman, slave or free'.[5] Saturnina wanted to ensure that the unknown culprit would not escape divine punishment; accordingly, she decided to employ the most comprehensive categories she could think of in order to describe the culprit: the gender distinction between male and female, and the status distinction between slave and free. This mundane text is a characteristic example of a common way of thinking about slavery: as a comprehensive identity that expressed one of the most fundamental distinctions between human beings.

There is no doubt that this way of thinking was no mere rhetoric. Moses Finley, the doyen of ancient slavery studies in the twentieth century, liked to remind his readers that there was hardly any action or institution in ancient societies which was not affected by the possibility that one party might have been a slave.[6] To give just a few examples from classical Athens, the classification of individuals as free or slave determined whether they would be punished physically or pay a fine for the very same infraction, or whether they could freely act as witnesses in court or could only give evidence after being tortured.[7] Furthermore, as regards slaves, ancient legal systems usually behaved as if the only identity that mattered and was recognised was that of being slave: slaves might have been fathers or siblings, but these identities were legally invisible and had no legal consequences. As the sixth-century CE *Institutes* of Justinian stated, 'the

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[5] *L'Année Epigraphique* (1979), no. 384. For the social world of this curse tablet, see Stuart McKie, *Living and Cursing in the Roman West: Curse Tablets and Society* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2022). Unless otherwise stated, all translations used in this lecture are from the sourcebook of Eftychia Bathrellou and Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Greek and Roman Slaveries* (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2022).

[6] Moses I. Finley, *Ancient Slavery and Modern Ideology* (New York: Viking Press, 1980): 65.

[7] For slave status in Athenian law, see Virginia J. Hunter and Jonathan C. Edmondson, eds., *Law and Social Status in Classical Athens* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000). For a fascinating overview of the various operations of slavery in the Athenian legal and political system, see Paulin Ismard, *La cité et ses esclaves: Institution, fictions, expériences* (Paris: Seuil, 2019).

condition of all slaves is one and the same'.[8] Orlando Patterson famously used the concept of social death to describe the erasure of the fundamental identities of enslaved persons, like those of kinship.[9]

There are therefore valid reasons for which modern scholars took the identity of slave as the only identity that mattered for enslaved people. On the other hand, in the great debates of the 1970s and 1980s on whether ancient slaves constituted a class in the Marxist sense of the term, scholars casually accepted the existence of different ethnic, economic and social divisions among slaves. As a result, most scholars agreed that slaves did not constitute a single class; it was rather their common legal status that gave the diverse groups of slaves any common identity.[10] Unfortunately, this recognition of the important differences among ancient slaves did not lead to any systematic study of the diverse identities of ancient slaves and how they affected their historical agency. It is precisely in moving the discussion further down this path that this lecture hopes to make a contribution.

I start this exploration with an example that illustrates the diversity of the identities of enslaved persons. In 439 CE the Vandals succeeded in wresting Carthage from the weak military forces of the Western Roman Empire. As with all violent conquests of big towns in antiquity, the event was followed by the captivity of many people who ended up as slaves and were transported through the networks of the slave trade to areas far away from home.[11] Sometime after this event, between 443–448 CE, Theodoret, bishop of Cyrrhus in northern Syria, wrote the following letter to the bishop of Aegae in southern Asia Minor:

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[8]   *Institutes of Justinian*, 1.3.4; translation by the author.
[9]   Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).
[10] Jean-Pierre Vernant, *Mythe et société en Grèce ancienne* (Paris: La Découverte, 1979): 11–29; Geoffrey E. M. de Ste. Croix, *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World* (London: Duckworth, 1981): 31–111; Pierre Vidal-Naquet, *The Black Hunter: Forms of Thought and Forms of Society in the Greek World* (London and Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1986): 159–67; Yvon Garlan, *Slavery in Ancient Greece* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1988), 201–8.
[11] For the mass enslavement of the population of conquered cities, see Hans Volkmann, *Die Massenversklavungen der Einwohner eroberter Städte in der hellenistisch-römischen Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1961).

The story of the most noble Maria is fitting for a tragic play. She is the daughter of the most magnificent Eudaimon, as she herself claims and as has been attested by several others. At the disaster that has overtaken Libya, she fell from her ancestral freedom and her lot changed to slavery. Some merchants bought her from the barbarians and sold her to some people living in our region. Along with her, a girl was also sold, who had long been a slave at Maria's house. So, both the slave and the mistress had to pull the bitter yoke of slavery together. But the slave did not wish to disregard their difference, nor did she forget that she used to belong to Maria. Instead, she preserved her good will in this calamity and after serving their common masters, she would turn to the service of her reputed fellow-slave, washing her feet, making her bed and similarly taking care of everything else. This was discovered by their owners. And thus Maria's freedom and her slave's good character became the talk of the town. When the most faithful soldiers stationed in our region found out about this—I was away at the time—, they paid the price to those who had bought her and snatched her from the clutches of slavery. After my return, I was informed about both the dramatic misfortune and the praiseworthy initiative of the soldiers. I prayed for blessings for them and gave the most noble maiden to one of our most pious deacons, ordering sufficient provisions to be supplied to her. Ten months passed and she found out that her father was still alive and held office in the west; naturally, she set her heart on returning to him. Some had mentioned that many traders from the west were calling at the festival which is now being held in your region. So the maiden requested to depart with a letter from me. This is why I have written this letter, appealing to your fear of God, so that you might look after this noble offspring and charge a man adorned with piety to negotiate with ship-owners, captains and merchants and give her to the charge of faithful men, able to restore her to her father. Especially since their reward will be abundant if they take the girl to her father against all human expectation.[12]

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[12] Theodoret, *Letters*, 70. For the events narrated in this letter, see Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*: 273–79.

The story of the noble Maria and her nameless female servant raises a number of important aspects of slave identity. In the ancient world, the processes of violent slave-making could potentially turn anybody into a slave, irrespective of ethnicity, wealth, status and gender.[13] In the troubled conditions of the fifth century CE, the daughter of a Roman provincial governor in the Western Mediterranean could end up as a slave in the provinces of the Eastern Roman Empire.[14] Despite her noble status, it is obvious that Maria spent a couple of years as a slave, before her ultimate redemption and return to her family. It is also fairly evident from Theodoret's description that it was the recognition of her former elite status that started the process that led to her redemption. The actions of her fellow slave convinced her masters that Maria was of special status, creating gossip among the people in the local community in Syria where she was living as a slave; this brought her to the attention of the Roman soldiers locally stationed, who decided to redeem her and entrust her to the ecclesiastical network of the local bishop which, in collaboration with the networks of traders, could ensure her safe return to her father. If everyone in the ancient world could potentially end up becoming enslaved, rich people had better chances of either avoiding enslavement altogether, or regaining their freedom.[15]

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[13] See the characteristic example of the Athenian Nikostratos, who went after two fugitive slaves, was captured by pirates and sold as a slave in the nearby island of Aegina, before being redeemed and returning to Athens to collect the money to repay his redeemers, so that he would not end up becoming their slave in turn: Ps.-Demosthenes, *Against Nikostratos*, 6–11. See James Roy, "Cittadini ridotti in schiavitù: il consolidarsi della schiavitù nella Grecia classica," in *Nuove e antiche schiavitú*, ed. Annunziata Di Nardo and Giulio Lucchetta (Pescara: Ires Bruzzo Edizioni, 2012): 53–66; Joshua D. Sosin, "Ransom at Athens ([Dem.] 53.11)," *Historia* 66, no. 2 (2017): 130–46. For enslavement as a frequent danger for free people in the Black Sea area, see Christopher S. Parmenter, "Journeys into Slavery along the Black Sea Coast, c. 550–450 BCE," *Classical Antiquity* 39, no. 1 (2020): 57–94.

[14] For Eudaimon, the father of Maria, see John Robert Martindale, *The Prosopography of the Later Roman* Empire, vol. 2, *AD 395-527* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980): 406.

[15] Free captives had better chances to escape enslavement than slave captives; see Katharine P. Huemoeller, "Captivity for All? Slave Status and Prisoners of War in the Roman Republic," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 151, no. 1 (2021): 101–25.

Be that as it may, what is of interest here is the identity of Maria during the years that she lived as a slave. She might have protested that she was a Roman citizen who was illegally enslaved by the barbarians; she might have argued that she was the daughter of a Roman aristocrat, who would reward handsomely her current masters if they returned safe his daughter; perhaps her demeanour supported her claims and protests.[16] In fact, even the bizarre behaviour of her fellow slave was not sufficient to convince her masters to enquire about Maria's condition and free her in the hope of a significant reward. It is probable therefore that Maria faced a long time in the condition of slavery, even possibly the rest of her life. How did she conceive of herself during her years of enslavement? Did she resign to her fate and accept the imposed identity of slave, or did she consider herself an aristocratic woman in captivity? The text is not interested in answering our question; but the details of the narrative make highly plausible the hypothesis that Maria saw as her primary identity that of a free person in captivity.

Equally remarkable is the story of her nameless female fellow slave. This girl had been a slave in Maria's household before their joint capture and resale far away from home. It was her decision to maintain her role of service and subservience towards her former mistress that set in store the process narrated in our letter. The ideal type of loyal slaves, who maintained their loyalty towards their masters and mistresses even when circumstances had changed and they could have acted otherwise is a stock in trade of ancient literature; and while many of the literary examples are a mixture of wishful thinking, useful means for narrative development or cases that are good to think with in a literary context, this particular historical case and many other actual examples show that

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[16] For a characteristic example of the illegal enslavement of the inhabitants of a Roman province and their sale in other areas within the empire, see Augustine, *New Letters*, 10; see Claude Lepelley, "La crise de l'Afrique romaine au début du Ve siècle, d'après les lettres nouvellement découvertes de Saint Augustin," *Comptes rendus de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 125 (1981): 445–63; Joachim Szidat, "Zum Sklavenhandel in der Spätantike (Aug. Epist. 10*)," *Historia* 34, no. 3 (1985): 362–71; Kyle Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*: 92–95. For the Roman law of *postliminium* that regulated the right of Roman citizens to recover their rights after their return from captivity and enslavement abroad, see Luigi Amirante, *Captivitas e postliminium* (Naples: Jovene, 1950).

the stereotype was not mere fiction.[17] In the case of the nameless slave we might feel confident of establishing her identity: we seem to come across a human being who had such an ingrained sense of her identity as a slave that she behaved as such towards her former mistress even when they had become fellow slaves sharing an identical status.

But things might not be as simple as they might seem at first look. The very fact that the behaviour of the nameless slave was considered remarkable enough to become an item of gossip might show that most slaves were not normally expected to behave in such a way: perhaps our nameless slave is the rare exception that proves the rule. But we can also imagine that the behaviour of the nameless slave had little to do with slave identity and more to do with other things. Perhaps her loyalty did not derive from her identity as slave in general, but from her personal relationship with her particular mistress: if she had been enslaved alongside e.g. Maria's father, a cruel master, she might have behaved in a very different manner. Perhaps also her behaviour was merely based on a rational assessment of the situation and the likely outcome: it was probable that Maria would be ultimately redeemed, and by behaving in this way the nameless slave could ensure that she would be redeemed as well and return home to Africa, treated with gratitude as a result of her loyalty, perhaps even manumitted. We shall never know; but this fascinating text raises the possibility that two slaves serving in the same household at the same time might have very different identities, irrespective of their common classification as slaves.

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[17] For the employment of the motif in fiction, see e.g. William G. Thalmann, "Versions of Slavery in the *Captivi* of Plautus," *Ramus* 25 (1996): 112–45; Kathleen McCarthy*, Slaves, Masters and the Art of Authority in Plautine Comedy* (Princeton, NJ and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2000): 167–209; Christina Vester, "Tokens of Identity in Menander's Epitrepontes: Slaves, Citizens and In-Betweens," in *Slaves and Slavery in Ancient Greek Comic Drama*, ed. Ben Akrigg and Rob Tordoff (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 209–27.

1.   An Analytical Framework

In order to analyse the multiple identities of enslaved persons, we need a new analytical framework that can allow us to make important distinctions between different forms and kinds of identity. An important step in this direction is to break up the unitary concept of identity into three different aspects.[18] The first aspect of identity concerns *categorisation* or classification. It is the process through which individuals and groups are given particular labels, whether they are aware of them or not. While the process of categorisation emphasises the external classification of individuals and groups by third parties, the process of *self-understanding* focuses on the internal identification of individuals and groups. These two processes are distinct but co-existing and mutually constitutive aspects of identity. People identify themselves and categorise others, and at the same time are aware of how others identify themselves and categorise them.[19] Although the two aspects influence each other, this influence can take a variety of forms. Self-identification and categorisation might create the same outcome; alternatively, the self-understanding of individuals and groups might be radically different from how other people categorise them.

While categorisation and self-understanding are essential aspects of all forms of identity, we need to distinguish a third aspect that applies only to certain forms of identity: *groupness*. This refers to the process through which categorisation and self-understanding combine with other aspects to create groups. Groupness is a potentiality for many forms of identity, but whether an identity acquires groupness and the extent of its groupness are variable outcomes of historical processes. Categories and categorisations are necessary foundations for groupness; the members of a group must share certain features (being members of a category) in order to constitute a group: otherwise, they are merely a temporary collectivity, like a crowd or a mob. At the same time, categories are not

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[18]   Rogers Brubaker and Frederick Cooper, "Beyond 'Identity'," *Theory & Society* 29, no. 1 (2000): 1–47.

[19]   Richard Jenkins, *Social Identity*, 3rd ed. (London and New York: Routledge, 2008): 37–48.

sufficient for groupness. A category might exist only in the eye of the categoriser and might be unknown or have no meaning for the people categorised as such: the category of blue-eyed people who speak French is certainly valid, but unless the people in that category are aware of that categorisation and identify themselves as such, this category would have zero groupness. Accordingly, groupness requires both categorisation and self-understanding. People who belong to the same category and identify as such share a collective identity; but for a collective identity to become groupness, a third element is required, that of a network linking together at least some of those who share a collective identity and leading to common activities. Groupness is the combination of categorisation, self-understanding and networking.

The study of ancient slaves until very recently has overwhelmingly focused on slavery as a form of categorisation: the imposition of the label of slaves on innumerable human beings by ancient masters, other free people and the political communities in which they lived.[20] Modern scholars have also explored the relationships formed on the basis of this categorisation, primarily relationships between masters and slaves.[21] This is undoubtedly a very important aspect, and there is no point in redressing this issue here. What is far less explored is the second aspect of self-understanding: how did enslaved persons see themselves? In par-

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[20] Michel Faraguna, "Citizens, Non-Citizens, and Slaves: Identification Methods in Classical Greece," in *Identifiers and Identification Methods in the Ancient World*, ed. Mark Depauw and Sandra Coussement (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014): 165–83; Alberto Maffi, "Identificare gli schiavi nei documenti greci," in *Identifiers and Identification Methods in the Ancient World*, ed. Mark Depauw and Sandra Coussement (Leuven, Paris, and Walpole, MA: Peeters, 2014): 197–206; Paulin Ismard, "Dénombrer et identifier les esclaves dans l'Athènes classique," in *L'identification des personnes dans les mondes grecs*, ed. Romain Guicharrousse, Paulin Ismard, Matthieu Vallet, and Anne-Emmanuelle Veïsse (Paris: Éditions de la Sorbonne, 2019): 51–75. Cf. Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Slavery, Freedom and Citizenship in Classical Athens: Beyond a Legalistic Approach," *European Review of History / Revue européenne d'histoire* 16, no. 3 (2009): 347–63.

[21] See e.g. Hans Klees, *Herren und Sklaven: Die Sklaverei im oikonomischen und politischen Schrifttum der Griechen in klassischer Zeit* (Wiesbaden: Steiner, 1975); Keith R. Bradley, *Slaves and Masters in the Roman Empire: A Study in Social Control* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987); Monique Dondin-Payre and Nicolas Tran, eds., *Esclaves et maîtres dans le monde romain. Expressions épigraphiques de leurs relations* (Rome: Collection de l'École française de Rome, 2017).

ticular, the distinction between categorisation and self-understanding opens up for exploration various historical possibilities. The obvious scenario is that of categorisation by third parties shaping self-under-standing; in the case of slavery and the enormous asymmetry of power between masters and states on the one hand, and slaves on the other, there is no doubt that this was the case to an important extent for many enslaved persons. At the same time though, we should also explore an alternative scenario: that slavery constituted one of the most charac-teristic examples of widespread divergence between categorisation and self-understanding. In other words, we need to examine the possibility of a deep gap between the slave categorisation imposed on enslaved persons and the self-understandings espoused by slaves themselves and the historical consequences of such a gap. Finally, the weakest spot of current scholarly research on ancient slavery concerns the third aspect of groupness. Fortunately, there is a growing number of works which explore the various forms of slave communities in antiquity; but most of these works explore particular forms of slave communities without exploring the phenomenon of groupness as a whole.[22] We need a deeper engagement with the theoretical insights of a large body of research in the social sciences concerning the ontology of groupness, if we are to fully explore the peculiarities of slave groupness and its significance for the historical development of ancient societies.[23]

Beyond the three aspects of identity, we will also employ the dis-tinction between membership groups and reference groups, which was elaborated in the sociological work of Robert Merton. *Membership groups*

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[22] For the concept of slave community in the study of ancient slavery, see Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*: 273–79; Niall McKeown, "Slaves as Active Subjects: Collec-tive Strategies," in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Slaveries*, ed. Stephen Hodkinson, Marc Kleijwegt and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199575251.013.25; Vlassopoulos, *Historicising Ancient Slavery*: 134–46.

[23] For these issues, see José Maurício Domingues, *Sociological Theory and Collective Sub-jectivity* (London: Springer, 1995); Frédéric Vandenberghe, "Avatars of the Collective: A Realist Theory of Collective Subjectivities," *Sociological Theory* 25, no. 4 (2007): 295–324; Frédéric Vandenberghe, "Une ontologie réaliste pour la sociologie: système, morphogenèse et collectifs," *Social Science Information* 46, no. 3 (2007): 487–542; Jenkins, *Social Identity*: 102–17.

are the various groups that individuals belong to on the basis of various principles: family, kinship, work, religion, ethnicity etc. *Reference groups* work in two major ways: they can formulate the values that individuals employ to guide their aims and behaviour (normative reference groups); and provide the comparative peer group that individuals use to measure their abilities, entitlements, successes and failures (comparison reference groups). It is natural to assume that individuals usually take their values and compare themselves with other individuals from the membership groups they belong to, i.e. that the same group functions as both membership group and reference group. The value of Merton's work is to emphasise the substantial number of cases in which the reference groups of individuals differ from their membership groups: in such cases, individuals take their values from or compare themselves with people from reference groups to which they do not belong.[24]

The utility of this distinction for the study of enslaved persons in antiquity is immense and has been little explored. Enslaved persons belonged to the same membership group on the basis of their shared categorisation as slaves. But enslaved persons also belonged to diverse other membership groups, as a result of their different families and kinship networks, professions, ethnicities and religious affiliations. It is conceivable therefore that slaves who belonged to different membership groups had also different reference groups: slave artisans might have different reference groups from slave household servants; Phrygian slaves might have different reference groups from Celtic slaves; slave members of elite households might differ from slaves belonging to ordinary households. Furthermore, enslaved persons could take their values or compare themselves to individuals from reference groups that they

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[24] Robert K. Merton, "Continuities in the Theory of Reference Groups and Social Structure" in idem, *Social Theory and Social Structure* (New York: Free Press, 1968): 335–440; see the useful overview in Sinclair Bell, "Role Models in the Roman World," in *Role Models in the Roman World: Identity and Assimilation*, ed. Sinclair Bell and Inge Lyse Hansen (Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 2008): 1–39. For an application of reference group theory to ancient history, see Thibaut Boulay, "Les 'groupes de référence' au sein du corps civique de Téos," in *Groupes et associations dans les cités grecques (IIIe s. av. J.-C. - IIe s. apr. J.-C.)*, ed. Pierre Fröhlich and Patrice Hamon (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 2013): 251–76.

did not belong to: most importantly, free people and elites. We should not simply assume that all enslaved persons thought of other slaves as their reference group.

Finally, our analysis requires recognition of the fundamental distinction between two different forms of identification. In a *categorical* mode of identification people belong to the same category because they share the same features; all people with blond hair belong to the category of blondes. A *relational* mode is not based on shared features, but on relationships between people; kinship, where persons are identified on the basis of their relationships to parents, relatives and ancestors, is perhaps the most characteristic relational mode of identification.[25] Slaves partook in both modes of identification. The categorical mode tended to define slaves on the basis of the features they shared: their condition as human property, their status as socially dead, their lack of important virtues like manliness. As a result, there were few positive features that could define slaves categorically; the categorical mode was usually employed as a form of classification that was applied to slaves by other people. This does not mean that slaves did not avail themselves of the categorical mode for their own forms of self-understanding; but the slave categories they employed were often very different from the negative stereotypes assumed by masters, freeborn people and states, as we shall see. Furthermore, slaves also employed alternative categories that were partly or wholly independent from the slave categorisation, like those of work, function, ethnicity or religion; such categories did not usually apply to all slaves, but only to particular groups of enslaved people. The relational mode referred primarily to the relationship between slaves and their masters. It focused on the particular relationship between a specific master and a specific slave; as a result, it emphasised the particular features of the master and the slave and their specific relationship. Certain ancient societies, like Rome, placed particular importance on the significance of this relational mode; as a result, the identity created on the basis of this relationship could often be highly significant, in particular for slaves belonging to powerful and wealthy masters, like

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[25] Craig Calhoun, *Nationalism* (Buckingham: Open University Press, 1997): 29–50.

e.g. the Roman emperors. The relational mode could also be employed to create identifications based on other forms of relationship, beyond that of slaves and masters (e.g. families and kinship groups that slaves belonged to).

In the following discussion, I shall explore the diversity of the identities of enslaved persons around six axes. The first axis concerns the imposed identity of slavery and its impact on the self-understanding of enslaved persons. The second axis concerns work and function and the extent to which these led to the creation of identities. The third axis concerns gender, family and kinship: male and female identities and the identities and roles of spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings and relatives. The fourth axis concerns the ethnic and religious identities of enslaved persons. The fifth axis concerns time: the identities of enslaved persons who had lived as free people and of freedpersons and how these identities related to their past. Finally, the sixth axis explores the entanglement between the diverse identities of enslaved persons and the issue of groupness.

2.   Slave Categorisation and Self-Understanding

I start with how slavery affected the self-understanding of enslaved persons. Given the amount of existing work on the categorisation of enslaved persons as slaves, I opt to focus rather on slave identity as a form of self-understanding: what forms of identity did enslaved persons construct on the basis of their categorisation as slaves? In order to answer this question, it is important to explore how slaves conceptualized slavery, because that played a crucial role in terms of how they conceptualized their own slave identities. This exploration faces the obvious problem that we generally lack sufficiently detailed sources written by ancient slaves themselves. But this is less of a problem in this case, because the ancient sources written by slaveholders and freeborn people document the co-existence of various modalities of slavery in ancient societies. If slaveholders and freeborn people could simultaneously employ a variety of conflicting modalities of slavery, it is plausible to assume that slaves

also used these modalities, in particular those which proved to be more useful for slaves.[26]

Modern scholars have devoted most of their attention on modalities that focus on the inferiority of slaves.[27] Such modalities included slavery as property and as an instrumental relationship, in which slaves are fungibles who can be used as chattels and exist solely in order to fulfil the aims and desires of their masters.[28] Another modality was slavery as a state of being; Aristotle's theory of natural slavery is just one example among many theories that depicted slaves as inferior beings which lacked the main characteristics of free people: virtue, manliness, courage, trustworthiness, self-control.[29] The inherent inferiority of slaves and the degrading experiences that slavery brought on slaves meant that people who had lived as slaves were marked with the 'stain of slavery' (*macula servitutis*).[30]

Enslaved persons constantly faced the pressure of such modalities on their self-understanding. While many if not most of them never accepted such categorisations as their own self-understanding, it is equally undeniable that other slaves came to accept to some extent the inferiority inherent in such modalities.[31] Perhaps one of the most characteristic examples concerns the Spartan helots:

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[26] For modalities of slavery, see Kostas Vlassopoulos, "A Gramscian Approach to Ancient Slavery," in *Antonio Gramsci and the Ancient World*, ed. Emilio Zucchetti and Anna Maria Cimino (London and New York: Routledge, 2021): 101–23.

[27] For an overview of such modalities, see Peter Garnsey, *Ideas of Slavery from Aristotle to Augustine* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996).

[28] On slavery as property, see David M. Lewis, *Greek Slave Systems in their Eastern Mediterranean Context, c. 800–146 BC* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018): 25–55.

[29] Ingomar Weiler, "Inverted *kalokagathia*," *Slavery & Abolition* 23, no. 2 (2002): 9–28.

[30] There exists a stimulating debate about how significant the *macula servitutis* was for the post-emancipation identities of Roman freedpersons; see Henrik Mouritsen, *The Freedman in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 10–35; Kristof Vermote, "The macula servitutis of Roman Freedmen: Neque enim aboletur turpitudo, quae postea intermissa est?," *Revue belge de philologie et d'histoire* 94, no. 1 (2016): 131–64.

[31] This is the subject of the famous Elkins' thesis on the infantilizing effects of slavery on enslaved persons; Stanley M. Elkins, *Slavery: A Problem in American Institutional and Intellectual Life* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1959). See Richard H. King, "Domination and Fabrication: Re-Thinking Stanley Elkins' Slavery," *Slavery & Abolition* 22, no. 2 (2001): 1–28. For the personae employed by slaves to navigate

In all other respects, too, the Spartans used to treat the helots in a harsh and cruel way, to the point that they would force them to drink a lot of unmixed wine and introduce them to the communal messes, in order to demonstrate to the young what it means to be drunk. And they would order them to sing odes and dance dances ignoble and ridiculous, and abstain from those suitable for the free. This is why they say that later, during the invasion of Laconia by the Thebans, when the Thebans would order the helots they would capture to sing the songs of Terpandros, of Alcman and of Spendon the Spartan, they would decline, saying that their masters would not wish it.[32]

The passage is eloquent about the internalization of the servile inferiority in the self-understanding of helots; at the very same time, of course, it is important to remember that this was not the full story: helots were among the most restless servile groups in ancient history, so servile inferiority cannot have been their only form of self-understanding.[33]

Such modalities of slavery were clearly one-sided in presenting slaves in unambiguously negative light; but there also existed other modalities, which were either more positive or, at the very least, less one-sided. One such modality saw slavery as an extreme form of bad luck: slavery was a misfortune that could befell on anyone, like illness or poverty.[34] It would be misleading to assume that slavery as bad luck made slaves irreproachable; but the extent of humiliation and shame associated with this modality was clearly limited to a substantial degree. From the point of view of this modality, it was perfectly normal for slaves to wish to escape from this form of bad luck; free people and even slaveholders who accepted the validity of this modality could look sympathetically at slave attempts to reverse the 'day of slavery' and (re)gain their freedom. This modality of slavery allowed enslaved persons to accept their clas-

negative stereotypes, see Bertram Wyatt-Brown, "The Mask of Obedience: Male Slave Psychology in the Old South," *American Historical Review* 93, no. 5 (1988): 1228–52.

[32] Plutarch, *Life of Lycurgus*, 28.

[33] On the identities of Messenian helots, see Nino Luraghi, "Becoming Messenian," *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 122 (2002): 45–69.

[34] Bernard Williams, *Shame and Necessity* (Berkeley and Oxford: University of California Press, 1993): 116–24.

sification as slaves without shedding their sense of honour and without necessarily accepting the negative stereotypes about slaves. In fact, slavery could even be seen as a moral test of the ability of an individual to overcome adverse circumstances, escape unscathed and start over again. This modality is best attested in self-representations of Roman freedmen, who freely talk about their life in slavery and express their pride in having left behind this form of bad luck.[35] The speech of a freedman who reacts angrily to the dismissive attitude of his freeborn interlocutor in the *Cena Trimalchionis* expresses a characteristic version of this modality:

> He is laughing. What has he got to laugh about? Did his father buy him with good money when he was born? You are a Roman knight; well, I am the son of a king. 'Why then did you use to be a slave?' Because I gave myself up to slavery on my own initiative, and preferred to be a Roman citizen, rather than a tribute-paying man from the provinces. And now I hope I live in a way that no one can make fun of me. I am a man among men. I walk about with my head uncovered. I owe not a single copper coin to anybody. I've never had to arrange for delayed payments. No one has ever told me at the forum 'pay back what you owe me'. I have bought some pieces of land, I have put a little something in my strongbox. I keep twenty ewes and a dog. I redeemed the woman with whom I share my bed, so that no one can wipe his hands on her bosom. I paid 1000 denarii for freedom. I was made a priest of Augustus for free. I hope to die in such a manner, that I have nothing to blush about in the grave. Are you so hard at work, that you can't look behind you? You see the lice on others, but not the bugs on yourself. You are the only one to whom we freedmen seem laughable…I was a slave for forty years; yet, nobody knows whether I am slave or free. I was a long-haired boy when I arrived to this place. At that point the town hall had not yet been built. I tried hard to keep my master satisfied—a great, distinguished man, whose fingernail was worth more than your whole

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35 See the discussion in Marc Kleijwegt, "Freed Slaves, Self-Presentation and Corporate Identity in the Roman World," in *The Faces of Freedom: The Manumission and Emancipation of Slaves in Old World and New World Slavery*, ed. Marc Kleijwegt (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2006): 89–116.

body. And there would be in the house people who would try to trip me up, here and there; yet I slipped away, thanks to the genius of my master. These are real victories. For to be born free is as easy as saying 'come here!'[36]

All the above modalities employed the categorical mode of identification: slaves were seen as sharing a common feature, whether that feature was being property, lacking moral virtues or having bad luck. But it is important to also take into account relational modalities that stressed the relationships in which slaves were involved. A relevant modality conceptualised slavery as an asymmetrical exchange of benefactions and rewards between masters and slaves.[37] In this modality, masters were benevolent patriarchs who took care of their dependents; grateful slaves served faithfully their benefactors, and in turn expected rewards for their faithful service, the ultimate reward being of course manumission. The most famous example of this modality is the paternalist ideology of masters in the antebellum US South, superbly analysed by Eugene Genovese.[38] This modality stressed the mutual character of master-slave relationships; slaves were not mere instruments that fulfilled the wishes of their masters, but persons involved in a reciprocal relationship. Needless to say, this modality was deeply asymmetrical; not only in terms of the benefactions and rewards that each side contributed, but also in terms of the features and attitudes considered as valuable for slaves and masters respectively. This modality accepted the legitimacy of the respective roles of masters and slaves and the legitimacy of slavery; but within these constraints, it offered enslaved persons a positive way of conceptualising their imposed identities as slaves. The activities of slaves

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36 Petronius, *Satyricon*, 57. See John P. Bodel, "Freedmen in the 'Satyricon' of Petronius" (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1984).

37 For the significance of this modality for shaping manumission, see Rachel Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free: The Concept of Manumission and the Status of Manumitted Slaves in the Ancient Greek World* (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2005): 15–60.

38 Eugene D. Genovese, *Roll, Jordan, Roll: The World the Slaves Made* (New York: Vintage, 1976). For paternalism and slavery in the ancient Greek world, see Jason D. Porter, "The Archaic Roots of Paternalism: Continuity in Attitudes towards Slaves and Slavery in the Odyssey, Xenophon's Oeconomicus, and beyond," *Greece & Rome* 68, no. 2 (2021): 255–77.

could thus be conceptualised as benefactions to their masters, which created slave claims for reciprocal rewards. Life in slavery could thus be presented as exemplifying virtues like loyalty, effectiveness and perseverance. Among many examples, a small passage from a comedy of Plautus is characteristic:

> Agorastocles: Often have I assigned to you, Milphio, many affairs, uncertain affairs, needy ones, affairs helplessly needing counsel, which you, with your wisdom, knowledge, prudence and sagacity, returned to me in a state of splendour, through your efforts. For these benefactions I admit that you are owed both your freedom and much grateful gratitude.
> Milphio: […] Now you are flattering me. Yesterday you destroyed three ox hides on my back; no problem.[39]

Growing out of this relational modality, slaves could stress the relationship with their particular master as an important aspect of their identity. Slaves belonged to the household domain over which the *pater familias* exercised authority over his free and servile dependants; as Pliny the Younger phrased it, 'for slaves the household is a sort of republic, almost like a citizen community'.[40] Enslaved persons could therefore stress the relational link to their specific master; in particular for enslaved persons who belonged to the large-scale slaveholdings of Roman magnates, the *familia* of slaves belonging to the same aristocratic master constituted one of their main identities. The *columbaria* (collective burial grounds) of such Roman urban *familiae* that emerged in the late first century BCE and early first century CE are characteristic examples of how the domain of the master could create this particular form of slave identity.[41] Public slaves of Greek and Roman cities and the slaves and freedmen of Roman

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[39] Plautus, *Little Carthaginian*, 129–40.
[40] Pliny the Younger, *Epistles*, 8.16.
[41] Dorian Borbonus, *Columbarium Tombs and Collective Identity in Augustan Rome* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

emperors constructed distinct identities out of the relationship with their particular kinds of masters.[42]

We have explored the variety of ways in which categorisation as a slave shaped the self-understanding of enslaved persons. Being slave was the one membership group that in principle all enslaved persons shared. But the extent to which it also functioned as the main reference group for most slaves should not be taken for granted. Slave self-understanding was based on common experiences and a shared horizon of expectations: experiences like being under the unilateral whims of their masters, the constant threat or infliction of violence, the lack of sufficient nutrition, the unremitting labour; among expectations, the wish to gain freedom was probably the most important wish of most slaves. Experiences and expectations like these constantly suffused the shared self-understanding of being slave with feelings of sympathy and solidarity towards other slaves. In one of the third-century BCE mimiambs of Herodas, a jealous mistress decides to punish Gastron, her infidel slave lover, with beatings to be administered by a professional torturer and orders Pyrrhias, another of her slaves, to accompany Gastron to the torturer. She then decides to add further punishments and asks a third slave, Kydilla, to call back Pyrrhias for further instructions. Kydilla addresses her fellow slave Pyrrhias in characteristic terms:

> Pyrrhias! You wretch! You deaf one! She's calling you. Ah! But you look
> as if it is a grave-robber you pull to pieces—not your fellow-slave. Look
> how violently you are now dragging him to be tortured! Ah, Pyrrhias!
> It is you whom Kydilla will see, with these very two eyes, in five days,

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42 For public slaves, see Alexander Weiß, *Sklave der Stadt: Untersuchungen zur öffentlichen Sklaverei in den Städten des römischen Reiches* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2004); Paulin Ismard, *Democracy's Slaves: A Political History of Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2017); Franco Luciani, "Public Slaves in Rome: 'Privileged' or not?," *Classical Quarterly* 70, no. 1 (2020): 368–84. For imperial slaves and freedmen, see Paul R.C. Weaver, *Familia Caesaris: A Social Study of the Emperor's Freedmen and Slaves* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972); Gérard Boulvert, *Domestique et fonctionnaire sous le Haut-Empire romain: La condition de l'affranchi et de l'esclavage du prince* (Paris: Les Belles Lettres, 1974).

at Antidoros', rubbing your ankles with those Achaean chains that you recently shed.[43]

Kydilla scolds Pyrrhias for his lack of solidarity towards their fellow slave Gastron; she subsequently intervenes to save Gastron, by begging her mistress to show mercy and cleverly manipulating her to postpone the punishment until after the celebration of a religious festival.

Such examples can be multiplied; but it is important that they are balanced by the other side of the coin. Masters with one or a few slaves exercised their authority by giving orders and inflicting punishments themselves; but in larger slaveholdings, there usually existed hierarchies and divisions of labour which put certain slaves in positions of authority over other slaves.[44] It was often slave overseers who gave orders to other slaves and slaves who inflicted punishment on other slaves. The self-understanding of such powerful slaves could diverge significantly from that of the other slaves under their authority. The *Life of Aesop* narrates a conflict between the slave Aesop and Zenas, the slave steward of their common master. The conflict ensues when Aesop challenges Zenas for beating another slave and the steward, fearing for his position, convinces the master to allow him to sell Aesop away. The encounter that follows is telling:

> Zenas… said: 'One of you slaves go out to where they are working and call Aesop.' So one of the slaves went and, finding Aesop digging, said to him, 'Aesop, drop your mattock and come along, the master is calling for you'. And Aesop said, 'What master? My natural master or the steward? Tell me clearly and unequivocally if you mean "the steward" and not "the master"; for the steward is a slave and is himself consigned

43 Herodas, *Mimiambs*, 5.55–62; for this text, see Andreas Fountoulakis, "Punishing the Lecherous Slave: Desire and Power in Herondas 5," in *Fear of Slaves, Fear of Enslavement in the Ancient Mediterranean = Peur de l'esclave, peur de l'esclavage en Méditerranée ancienne: discours, représentations, pratiques*, ed. Anastasia Serghidou (Besançon: Presses Universitaires de Franche-Comté, 2007): 251–64.

44 For conflicts and tensions between slaves within such households, see Antón Alvar Nuño, "The Use of Curse Tablets among Slaves in Rome and its Western Provinces," *Religion in the Roman Empire* 5, no. 3 (2017): 398–416.

to the yoke of servitude' [….] Aesop threw his mattock down and said 'What a wearisome thing it is being a slave to a slave! What's more, it must be evil in the sight of the gods. "Aesop, lay the table. Aesop, heat the bath. Aesop, feed the livestock". Anything that's unpleasant or tiresome or painful or menial, that's what Aesop is ordered to do'.[45]

Aesop registers his protest at being bossed around by another slave and refuses to call the slave steward with the appellation 'master'; at the same time, it is equally clear that the steward's self-understanding is radically different from that of the slaves under his orders and that the other slaves apart from Aesop accept or acquiesce to the steward's self-understanding.

A final issue must be taken into account. It is a well-known fact that the institution of slavery was taken for granted in ancient societies; as far as we can tell, there is no extant evidence that even slaves were opposed to slavery in general, although of course most of them refused to accept their own enslavement.[46] This does not mean that there were no debates and disputes concerning slavery in antiquity; slavery was discussed within wider debates on war, justice, wealth, ethnicity and the proper way of living: but slavery per se was largely taken as a fact of life. It is highly unfortunate that the implications of this fact for the identities of enslaved persons have not been systematically explored. I want to focus in particular on one important aspect: the ownership of slaves by other slaves or former slaves. The phenomenon is already attested in the Homeric epics, where Odysseus' slave Eumaios owns Mesaulios, his own personal slave;[47] but the extent of the phenomenon diverged signifi-

[45] *Life of Aesop*, G13; translation adapted from William Hansen, ed., *An Anthology of Ancient Greek Popular Literature* (Bloomington and Indianapolis, IN: Indiana University Press, 1998): 116.

[46] Cf. Yvon Garlan, "L'anti-esclavagisme a-t-il existé en Grèce ancienne?," in *Esclavage et dépendances serviles*, ed. Myriam Cottias, Alessandro Stella and Bernard Vincent (Paris: Harmattan, 2006): 187–94.

[47] Homer, *Odyssey*, 14.449–52.

cantly between different periods and societies, with most of the available evidence dating to the Roman imperial period.[48]

What does ownership of slaves by other slaves imply about the identities of enslaved persons? Does it imply that enslaved and freed slave-owners took other masters as their reference group, rather than other slaves or former slaves? We can leave outside discussion all those cases in which slaves had to use the institution of slavery as the best available means of protecting their relationships and their loved ones. The Roman institution of the *peculium* as slave-controlled property gave some slaves the opportunity to buy their spouses and own their children; although ultimate ownership rested with the slaves' master, the fact that spouses and children belonged to their *peculium* paradoxically gave such slaves better opportunities to protect their families.[49] The implications of a slave owning his own family are not without interest; but I am rather more concerned here with cases in which slaves and former slaves owned other slaves as part of the same repertoire of slaving strategies employed by freeborn people (strategies for labour, revenue, gratification, prestige, expertise, authority and control).[50]

How did slavery figure in the identity of slaves and freedpersons who owned slaves? Two contrasting examples are particularly useful to think with. The first one is the famous funerary stele of Aulus Caprilius Timotheus from Macedonian Amphipolis, dating around 100 CE. The stele includes a short inscription with the deceased's name, stating that

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[48] Noriaki Baba, "Slave-Owning Slaves and the Structure of Slavery in the Early Roman Empire," *Kodai: Journal of Ancient History* 1 (1990): 24–35; Francesca Reduzzi-Merola, *'Servo parere'. Studi sulla condizione giuridica degli schiavi vicari e dei sottoposti a schiavi nell'esperienza greca e romana* (Naples: Jovene, 1990).

[49] Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto, *Ex ancilla natus: Untersuchungen zu den 'hausgeborenen' Sklaven und Sklavinnen im Westen des römischen Kaiserreiches* (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1994): 206–25; Ulrike Roth, "Food, Status, and the Peculium of Agricultural Slaves," *Journal of Roman Archaeology* 18 (2005): 278–92; Ulrike Roth, "Slavery and the Church in Visigothic Spain: The Donation and Will of Vincent of Huesca," *Antiquité Tardive* 24 (2016): 433–52.

[50] For an overview of these slaving strategies, see Kostas Vlassopoulos, *Historicising Ancient Slavery*: 58–74; for an application of the concept to classical Athens, see Jason D. Porter, *The Diversity of Private Slaving Strategies in Classical Athens* (PhD diss., University of Nottingham, 2019).

he was a freedman and that he worked as a slave trader.[51] The figural decoration of the stele includes relief panels depicting a *Totenmahl*, with the deceased banqueting reclined with two diminutive slaves serving him, as well as a panel depicting a coffle of chained slaves.[52] The scenes clearly celebrate Timotheus' profession as a slave dealer, alongside his status as a master served by his slaves; without the inscription, we would have never guessed that he was a former slave. It is fairly obvious that Timotheus' reference group are his fellow traders and masters of slaves; his identity as a former slave appears to be completely immaterial for his final post-emancipation identity projection.

We can turn to the fascinating case of Phaenia Aromation, a woman who made a substantial bequest to the Peloponnesian city of Gytheion in 42 CE, to be used for funding the distribution of oil for anointment in the local gymnasion.[53] The surviving part of the inscription does not explicitly record Aromation's legal status, beyond the fact that she possessed Roman citizenship. But given her Greek cognomen (Aromation = small aromatic herb) and its reference to the world of unguent-making, it is a plausible assumption that she was a freedwoman.[54] What is relevant in the document recording her bequest is a number of specific requests that Phaenia Aromation asked the city of Gythion to fulfil:

> I also wish that the slaves shall share in the eternal supply of oil every year for six days, of which three (should be) festival days of the Augusti

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[51] *Supplementum Epigraphicum Graecum* XXXVI, no. 587.

[52] For the iconography of the stele, see Hervé Duchêne, "Sur la stèle d'Aulus Caprilius Timotheos, sômatemporos," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 110, no. 1 (1986): 513–30. For other depictions of slave traders, see Michael Donderer and Ioanna Spiliopoulou-Donderer, "Spätrepublikanische und kaiserzeitliche Grabmonumente von Sklavenhändlern," *Gymnasium* 100 (1993): 254–66.

[53] Kaja Harter-Uibopuu, "The Trust Fund of Phaenia Aromation (IG V. 1 1208) and Imperial Gytheion," *Studia Humaniora Tartuensia* 5 (2004): 1–17.

[54] Athanassios D. Rizakis, "Les affranchi(e)s sous l'Empire: Richesse, évergétisme et promotion sociale: Le cas d'une affranchie de Gytheion (Laconie)," in *Esclavage antique et discriminations socio-culturelles: Actes du XXVIIIe colloque international du Groupement International de Recherche sur l'Esclavage Antique,* ed. Vasilis I. Anastasiadis and Panagiotis N. Doukellis (Bern: Peter Lang, 2005): 233–41; Athanassios D. Rizakis, "Commerce de parfums et évergétisme civique en Laconie (Gytheion) sous l'Empire," *Mediterraneo Antico* 16, no. 2 (2013): 549–62.

and three festival days of the goddess, when no archon of councillor or gymnasiarch shall prevent them from anointing themselves.[55]

This is a remarkable request. From the archaic until the late Hellenistic period laws and regulations from various Greek cities prohibited slaves from exercising in the gymnasion, a practice considered as quintessentially connected with free status. This text is among the earliest extant examples of an opening up of slave access to gymnasia that occurred for other Greek communities in the early imperial period.[56] After a provision about the publication of the donation, there follows another request:

> I entrust to the polis and the councillors my *threptoi* [people raised not by their natural parents but by a third party, often slaves] as well as all my freedmen and freedwomen. I adjure you by all the gods and the Tyche of the Augusti that, both while I am alive and when I die, you pay most heed, both individually and collectively for all time to my wish and to those *threptoi* and freedmen whom I cherish and have always cherished so that they will always be protected from seizure and harassment because of the benevolence of all of you towards me. For I shall appear to be immortal because I have made this just sacred trust (which is) very much in accordance with my feelings, in which matter I hope not to be failed because I have put my trust in the polis.[57]

Phaenia Aromation feared that after her death her freedmen and *threptoi*[58] would no longer have a protector and would suffer unjust seizure

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[55] *Inscriptiones Graecae* V.1, no. 1208, ll. 38–41; the translation of this and the next passage are adapted from Harter-Uibopuu, "The Trust Fund of Phaenia Aromation": 7.

[56] Nigel B. Crowther, "Slaves and Greek Athletics," *Quaderni Urbinati di Cultura Classica* 40, no. 1 (1992): 35–42; Athanassios D. Rizakis, "Esclaves, 'loisirs' et éducation sous l'Empire," *Studia Historica. Historia Antigua* 25 (2007): 245–60; Mark Golden, *Greek Sport and Social Status* (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 2008): 40–67.

[57] *Inscriptiones Graecae* V.1, no. 1208, ll. 48–58.

[58] On *threptoi*, see Marijana Ricl, "Legal and Social Status of *threptoi* and Related Categories in Narrative and Documentary Sources," in *From Hellenism to Islam: Cultural and Linguistic Change in the Roman Near East*, ed. Hannah M. Cotton, Robert G. Hoyland, Jonathan J. Price, and David J. Wasserstein (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009): 93–114.

and mistreatment. The concern of Phaenia Aromation for slaves and freedmen is quite remarkable; it includes both interest for slaves in general (the provision for the anointment with oil includes all slaves, not merely her own), as well as care for the future condition of her own freedmen and *threptoi*. It is also notable that she fears that her wishes concerning slaves and freedmen will not be respected by the relevant authorities or will be ignored: thus the explicit rule that no magistrate should prohibit slaves from being anointed in the gymnasion and the various invocations of the gratitude that citizens of Gytheion should feel towards her and which should motivate them to respect her wishes. It is evident that Phaenia Aromation, a former slave, cared deeply about slaves and former slaves; assuming that this care stemmed from her own experiences as a slave is not implausible in this particular case. At the same time, though, it is equally evident that her experiences as a slave were fully compatible with her becoming a relatively substantial slave-owner.

3.   Work and Function

Work constituted a dominant aspect of the everyday life of enslaved persons; accordingly, work provided a key element for the construction of identities.[59] On the one hand, it was directly related to their classification as slaves: the work that slaves performed was overwhelmingly conditioned by the wishes and needs of their masters. A fourth-century BCE law-court speech from Athens shows eloquently the extent to which masters shaped the work identity of their slaves; the speaker is involved in a dispute with Phormion, a slave banker who originally belonged to the speaker's father, before winning his freedom and ultimately even Athenian citizenship:

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[59]   The only detailed study of the role of work in slave identities concerns slaves in the city of Rome; see Sandra Joshel, *Work, Identity and Legal Status at Rome: A Study of the Occupational Inscriptions* (Norman, OK and London: University of Oklahoma Press, 1992).

It is right, Athenians, to feel indignation at the past deeds of Phormion […] when you have seen his shameless ways and his ingratitude. For, I believe, all of you know that if Phormion had happened to be purchased by a cook or some other artisan when on sale, he would have learnt the craft of his master and would be very far from the prosperity he now enjoys. But because my father, who was a banker, acquired him, he educated him in reading and writing, taught him his trade and put him in charge of a lot of money. As a result, he now enjoys good fortune, having used the luck through which he came to us as the beginning of his current good fortune.[60]

Phormion's work identity as a banker was conditioned by the fact that his master trained Phormion in the banking profession; a different kind of master would have resulted in a different work identity for Phormion. This link between the identity of the master and the work identity of slaves took different forms. In smaller households slaves were jacks of all trades, as attested by a parable of Jesus:

Which of you, if you own a slave who ploughs the land or tends the flocks, will say to him when he returns from the field: 'Go in and have your dinner immediately', instead of 'Prepare me some dinner, get ready and wait on me until I eat and drink; afterwards you too may eat and drink'? Surely this man won't be thankful to his slave for doing what he was told, will he?[61]

Such petty masters forced their slaves to perform the most diverse tasks, from cultivating the land to cooking and serving; this does not mean that such slaves could not prioritise one of these tasks as their main work identity, but the limited division of labour made this more difficult. On the other end of the spectrum were the households of elite

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[60] Demosthenes, *Against Stephanos I*, 71–72. For Athenian slave bankers, see Edward E. Cohen, *Athenian Economy and Society: A Banking Perspective* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992); Stefano Ferruci, "Schiavi banchieri: identità e status nell' Atene democratica" in *Nuove e antiche schiavitú*, ed. Annunziata Di Nardo and Giulio Lucchetta (Pescara: Ires Bruzzo Edizioni, 2012): 98–109.

[61] *Gospel of Luke*, 17.7–10.

Romans, which included hundreds of slaves; as a result, these households exhibited a highly-developed division of labour and specialisation among the numerous slaves.[62] A telling contrast with the Jesus parable is expressed in a funerary inscription from the *columbarium* of the slaves and freedmen belonging to the aristocratic family of the Statilii Tauri in Rome: 'Titus Statilius Spinther, freedman of Taurus, in charge of the litter-bearers'.[63] The division of labour among the *familia* of the Statilii was such, that some slaves and freedpersons specialized as litter-bearers and had their own foreman. As a result, division of labour was strongly linked with hierarchies based on work identity in large-scale slaveholdings, as illustrated by an ironic comment of Cicero:

> And as in a great family, some slaves (the major-domo, the fancy landscape-gardener) think of themselves as of a higher class, but all the same they are slaves, equally foolish are the people who take excessive delight in statues and pictures and chased silver and Corinthian works of art and magnificent buildings. And they say, 'It is we who are the chief people in the state.' On the contrary, you are not actually even the chief among your fellow-slaves; but as in the household those who handle articles of that sort, or dust, or oil, or sweep, or sprinkle them do not hold the most honourable rank of slavery, so in the state those who have given themselves up to coveting that sort of thing occupy almost the lowest place in the slave-order itself.[64]

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[62] Susan Treggiari, "Domestic Staff at Rome in the Julio-Claudian Period, 27 B.C. to A.D. 68," *Histoire Sociale* 6, no. 12 (1973): 241–55; Susan Treggiari, "Jobs in the Household of Livia," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 43 (1975): 48–77.

[63] *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* VI, no. 6301. For the *columbarium* of the slaves and freedmen of the Statilii, see Maria Letizia Caldelli and Cecilia Ricci, *Monumentum familiae Statiliorum: Un riesame* (Rome: Quasar, 1999); Henrik Mouritsen, "Slavery and Manumission in the Roman Elite: A Study of the Columbaria of the Volusii and the Statilii," in *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, ed. Michelle George (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 43–68.

[64] Cicero, *Paradoxa Stoicorum*, 5, 36–37; translation adapted from that of the Loeb Classical Library.

As Cicero attests, slaves who had positions of authority or special skills considered themselves of a higher class than slaves who performed mundane tasks like cleaning.

To understand better the role of work in slave identity the concept of work status is particularly useful. Work status can be distinguished from either legal status or the wider social status associated with honour, prestige and lifestyle. Work status refers to 'the material organization of an individual's working life, the mode of his remuneration and the influence it exerted on his mentality, the possibility of uniting in work, the manner in which work was conceived relative to the rest of life, how work was chosen and could be changed, or work's relationship to the state'.[65] Given the diverse slaving strategies and the work niches they created for slaves, work mattered for slaves in very different ways and created distinct work statuses.

The various work statuses of slaves and freedpersons in Roman ports provide a characteristic example. One work status concerned drudge slaves, like warehousemen, porters, oarsmen and boat haulers. These slaves performed manual labour and were largely unskilled or had limited professional training. They usually worked under the direct control of their masters or supervisors and received rations as remuneration; but some of them were allowed to work on their own on condition of surrendering part of their earnings to their masters. A second group involved trusted slaves in a variety of capacities: shipmasters, agents accompanying a ship, commercial agents or business managers. These slaves possessed various skills (navigation, literacy, accounting), were given different degrees of autonomy or initiative, were remunerated in diverse ways, and had often significant opportunities to become financially comfortable. Work statuses divided slaves into different groups; for slave-owning slaves and their under-slaves, which we examined in

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[65] Jean Andreau, *Banking and Business in the Roman World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999): 3–4; see also Nicolas Tran, *Dominus tabernae: Le statut de travail des artisans et des commerçants de l'Occident romain, Ier siècle av. J.-C. – IIIe siècle ap. J.-C.* (Rome: École française de Rome, 2013).

the previous section, their different work status was often more significant than their common legal status as slaves.[66]

At the same time, slaves might share the same work status with other freeborn or manumitted workers. Work linked slaves with other persons, slave or free, with whom they operated in the same workspaces, or who exercised the same kind of function or profession. A fourth-century BCE dedicatory inscription from Athens illustrates this well:

> The washers dedicated this to the Nymphs and all the gods after a vow: Zoagoras, son of Zokypros; Zokypros, son of Zoagoras; Thallos; Leuke; Sokrates, son of Polykrates; Apollophanes, son of Euporion; Sosistratos; Manes; Myrrhine; Sosias; Sosigenes; Midas.[67]

Four of these washers have both personal names and father's names and are thus free persons, either citizens or metics (resident foreigners). The remaining ten persons, eight males and two females (Leuke, Myrrhine), are recorded only with personal names, and are probably slaves or freedpersons; two of them bear foreign names only attested for slaves in Athens (Manes, Midas). This dedication was made by a group who shared a common work identity, despite their differences in legal status and gender.[68] The work identity of enslaved persons was strongly linked to their classification as slaves; at the same time, as we saw above, work created hierarchies and divisions among slaves, while also forging common identities between slaves, freedpersons and freeborn people.

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[66] Nicolas Tran, "Les statuts de travail des esclaves et des affranchis dans les grands ports du monde romain (Ier siècle av. J.-C. - IIe siècle apr. J.-C.)," *Annales. Histoire, Sciences Sociales* 68, no. 4 (2013): 999–1025.

[67] *Inscriptiones Graecae* II², no. 2934.

[68] Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Two Images of Ancient Slavery: The 'Living Tool' and the 'Koinônia'," in *Sklaverei und Zwangsarbeit zwischen Akzeptanz und Widerstand*, ed. Elisabeth Herrmann-Otto (Hildesheim, Zurich, and New York: Olms Verlag, 2011): 467–77.

4. Gender, Family and Kinship

Slavery was deeply shaped by gender; but until very recently there has been little work specifically focused on the gender identities of enslaved persons.[69] Rather, scholarship has tended to take the experience of male slaves as the default, without always enquiring whether what applied to male slaves was also relevant for female slaves. Gender norms, expectations and identities were deeply divergent in ancient societies. Free men and women were supposed to live their lives in separate spheres that mingled only occasionally, and most of their roles were fundamentally shaped by their gender. This applied for example to work identities: certain roles and forms of work were exclusively performed by slave women; at the same time, slave women were far less likely to be commemorated with the mention of a work identity.[70] But the most significant impact of gender identities concerned sexuality. As far as free respectable women were concerned, gender norms entailed their sexual inviolability, access to the marriage market, new roles as wives and mothers after marriage, and forms of work and function within their own households. Slavery had serious implications for the gender identity of enslaved women, in particular the absence of protection from sexual inviolability, as females slaves were considered fully available to the sexual wishes of their masters; thus, one of the fundamental aspects of gender identity was seriously compromised for slave women. We have seen above how enslaved persons used alternative modalities of slavery in order to construct slave self-understandings that were not exclusively negative and debased; the same was also the case with the gender self-understanding of slave women. Female slaves who were the concubines of their masters or formed conjugal relationships with fellow slaves from the same *familia* could claim a form of respect that to some extent mitigated their lack of honour; appropriate relationships within the master's

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[69] Alison Glazebrook, "Gender and Slavery" in *The Oxford Handbook of Greek and Roman Slaveries*, ed. Stephen Hodkinson, Marc Kleijwegt, and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), DOI: 10.1093/oxfordhb/9780199575251.013.13.

[70] Susan Treggiari, "Jobs for Women," *American Journal of Ancient History* 12 (1976): 76–104; Ulrike Roth, "Inscribed Meaning: The Vilica and the Villa Economy," *Papers of the British School at Rome* 72 (2004): 101–24.

domain could be utilised to construct positive self-understandings.[71] We shall examine below various cases of how slavery and gender affected the family and kinship identities of enslaved persons.

I have already mentioned above Patterson's influential theory of slavery as a form of social death: slaveholding societies generally denied the legal validity of slave marriage and kinship and refused to recognize the relevant slave roles as legally binding. As recent assessments of Patterson's theory have argued, social death should be taken as an existential threat that slaves continuously faced and struggled against, rather than as the essential nature of slavery as a global phenomenon.[72] The significance of family and kinship for the identities of ancient slaves is reflected in numerous ancient sources; a characteristic example comes in a funerary inscription from third-century CE Termessos in Pisidia:

> Syros, son of Syros, grandson of Syros, slave of the heirs of the late Aurelia Perikleia, daughter of Aurelius Perikles Hermaios Keuas, with the permission of his masters, (made) this sarcophagus for himself, his wife Pamphylia, his daughter Agoraste and his daughter's husband Kalokairos and for his already interred cousin Trokondas.[73]

The pride of Syros in recording his father and grandfather and the onomastic continuity of his ancestral line is remarkable; equally telling is the epigraphic recording of a number of family and kinship roles for this group of slaves (wife, daughter, son in law and cousin).[74] In certain

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[71] Matthew J. Perry, *Gender, Manumission and the Roman Freedwoman* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 37–41.

[72] Vincent Brown, "Social Death and Political Life in the Study of Slavery," *American Historical Review* 114, no. 5 (2009): 1231–49; James H. Sweet, "Defying Social Death: The Multiple Configurations of African Slave Family in the Atlantic World," *William & Mary Quarterly* 70, no. 2 (2013): 251–72. For an overall assessment of Patterson's theory, see John Bodel and Walter Scheidel, ed., *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death* (Chichester: Wiley Blackwell, 2017).

[73] *Tituli Asiae Minoris* III, no. 769.

[74] See Dale B. Martin, "Slave Families and Slaves in Families," in *Early Christian Families in Context: An Interdisciplinary Dialogue*, ed. David L. Balch and Carolyn Osiek (Grand Rapids, MI and Cambridge: W. B. Eerdmans, 2003): 207–30.

ancient societies these slave roles had legal implications; an interesting example occurs in the fifth-century BCE law code of Gortyn in Crete:

> If a slave woman gives birth to a child while separated, she shall bring the child to the master of the man who had married her, in the presence of two witnesses. If he does not accept it, the child shall be in the hands of the master of the slave woman. But if she gets married again to the same man before the end of the year, the child shall be in the hands of the master of the male slave […] If a slave woman becomes pregnant and gives birth out of marriage, the child shall be in the hands of the master of her father. But if her father is not alive, the child shall be in the hands of the masters of her brothers.[75]

The law is concerned with the legal ownership of slave progeny and does not accord slaves any right to marry or any protection to slave marriage.[76] But it posits as a rule that slave offspring would not follow the widespread rule of belonging to the master of the mother; instead of employing the matrilineal principle for determining property over slave children, Gortyn applies to the slave population the patrilineal principle of kinship and inheritance employed by the free population, despite the evident complications that such an application would create. Identities and roles like that of slave husband, father and brother had legal implications, as they changed who had property rights over the slave children.[77] It is fairly obvious that the family and kinship identities of enslaved persons in such a society had a good chance of becoming particularly pronounced.

Family and kinship shaped deeply the self-understanding of enslaved persons; but we need to also take into account the ways in which slavery inflected these self-understandings in particular ways. We can start with

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[75] *Inscriptiones Creticae* IV, no. 72, ll. iii52–iv23.
[76] David Lewis, "Slave Marriages in the Laws of Gortyn: A Matter of Rights?," *Historia* 62, no. 4 (2013): 390–416.
[77] Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Historicising the Closed City," in *La cité interconnectée: Transferts et réseaux institutionnels, religieux et culturels aux époques hellénistique et impériale*, ed. Madalina Dana and Ivana Savalli-Lestrade (Bordeaux: Ausonius, 2018): 43–57.

a passage from a sermon by the fourth-century CE Church Father John Chrysostom:

> Every man's household is a city; and every man is the chief magistrate of his own household. That this is the case with the households of the wealthy is easy to see: there are farms here, and overseers and magistrates upon magistrates. But I say that the household of the poor is a city too. For here too there are magistracies: for example, the husband rules over his wife, the wife rules over the slaves, the male slaves rule over their own wives, while men and women rule over their children.[78]

Chrysostom takes for granted that slave husbands exercised the prerogatives of their male roles over their slave wives, while both slave parents exercised the prerogatives as parents over their children. On the other hand, one of the most widely attested limits on the roles of male slaves as husbands and fathers was their inability to properly protect their wives and children from sexual exploitation and violent punishment by their masters and mistresses. A passage from Ammianus Marcellinus illustrates the kind of situation that must have happened recurrently, as well as the rarer occasions when slaves were able to redress the imbalance. Ammianus narrates the state persecution around 375 CE of the Roman aristocrats Abienus and Eumenius:

> Of the two, Abienus was hiding for a long time in the house of Anepsia. However, as unexpected events often aggravate pitiable misfortunes, a man called Sapaudulus, a slave of Anepsia, stricken by pain because his spouse (*coniunx*) had received a beating, denounced the matter to Simplicius, after reaching him in the night.[79]

Sapaudulus had to endure to see his wife being beaten, without being able to do anything to protect her; his identity as a husband who protected his family was seriously conditioned by his slave status. It was

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[78]   John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians*, 22.2.
[79]   Ammianus Marcellinus, *History*, 28.1.49. For these events, see Harper, *Slavery in the Late Roman World*: 69–78.

only the exceptional circumstances of his mistress's secret which gave him an opportunity to take revenge and enact the norms associated with being husband.

Many female slaves became wives and mothers; but their identities and roles as mothers were significantly altered by the conditions of their life in slavery. In ancient patriarchal societies the identity of people was fundamentally based on a relational mode of identification with their father: in Greek societies, the official identity of free people was simply x, son/daughter of y. This means that in the absence of official recognition of slave parentage, mothers and siblings acquired an enhanced significance for the categorisation and self-understanding of enslaved persons. A papyrus with official proceedings from fourth-century CE Egypt records officials interrogating a slave named Patricius:

Q: 'Are you slave or free?'	A: 'Slave'.
Q: 'Whose slave?'	A: 'Firmus's'.
Q: 'From where did he acquire you?'	A: 'From Reskoupos'.
Q: 'From whom?'	A: 'From Nikostratos'.
Q: 'Is your mother a slave?'	A: 'Yes'.
Q: 'What is her name?'	A: 'Hesychion'.
Q: 'Do you have siblings?'	A: 'Yes, one, Eutychios'.
Q: 'Is he a slave too?'	A: 'Yes'.[80]

The one question that is tellingly missing from the list is the first question that would have been addressed to all freeborn people: the identity of their father. Instead, master (current and past), mother and siblings constituted the three major nodes in the relational identification mode of the slave Patricius.

Motherhood carried an enhanced significance for the identities of slave parents and children. The manumission inscriptions from Delphi record the emancipation of around 1,500 slaves. While most manumissions concern adults, in a significant number of cases an adult is manu-

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[80] *Papyri from Hermopolis and Other Documents of the Byzantine Period*, ed. Brinley R. Rees (London: Egypt Exploration Society, 1964), no. 18, ll. 1–12.

mitted along one or more children; almost without exception, the adult is the mother.[81] On the other hand, slavery placed terrible burdens on what it meant to be a mother. A first-century CE inscription from Delphi records the conditional manumission of two female slaves, Epiphanea and Epaphro. They will had to remain with their former mistress until her death, as well as fulfilling a further condition:

> After my own death, Epaphro shall give to my grandson Glaukias, son of Lyson, three two-year-old infants. If she does not have the infants, she shall give him two hundred denarii. And after five years Epiphanea shall give to my son Sostratos a three-year-old child, and after three years she shall also give to my grandson Glaukias a three-year-old child.[82]

The two female slaves will had to give birth multiple times and raise their children before surrendering them to the descendants of their mistress to live as slaves in order for the mothers to gain full freedom. How did these two women square their identities and wishes as slaves with their identities and wishes as mothers? In both its significance and its challenges, slave motherhood differed substantially from the equivalent identity among freeborn people.[83]

5. Ethnicity and Religion

How did ethnicity and religion inform the identities of enslaved persons in ancient societies? It is often assumed that slaves possessed their own distinct ethnic and religious identities, which supported resistance to slavery. This assumption is not necessarily wrong, but needs to be

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[81] C. Wayne Tucker, "Women in the Manumission Inscriptions at Delphi," *Transactions of the American Philological Association* 112 (1982): 225–36.

[82] *Fouilles des Delphes* III, no. 6.38 ll. 9–12; see Zelnick-Abramovitz, *Not Wholly Free*: 229–30.

[83] Cf. Ingomar Weiler, "Die Sklavin und ihre Kinder: Überlegungen zur Mutter-Kind-Beziehung im Altertum," in *Kindersklaven – Sklavenkinder: Schicksale zwischen Zuneigung und Ausbeutung in der Antike und im interkulturellen Vergleich*, ed. Heinz Heinen (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2012): 141–70.

placed within a wider framework. Ethnicity and religion could act both as sources of slave resistance, as well as forces of slave integration in the slaveholding societies they lived in; they could also work in both ways at the same time. Furthermore, it is important to keep the ethnic and religious identities of enslaved persons distinct from the issue of slave resistance.[84] Ethnic and religious identities could lead slaves to resist their masters, but often for issues that had little to do with slavery per se, and more to do with the dictates of ethnic and religious identities. As Franz Bömer showed in a series of comprehensive studies, it is impossible to find in the ancient world cults which were exclusively or primarily adhered to by slaves. It is accordingly a red herring to search for exclusively slave religious identities in the ancient world.[85]

Around 38 CE, the philosopher Philo wrote a text to defend his fellow Jews in their conflicts with the Greek citizens of Alexandria. One of his arguments was that the emperor Augustus had shown great respect for Jews:

> How was it then that Augustus acknowledged the great section of Rome on the other side of the Tiber, which he knew was occupied and inhabited by Jews? The majority were Romans who had been manumitted. That is, they had been taken to Italy as captives and were manumitted by those who had bought them, without being forced to falsify their ancestral customs. So he also knew that they organized prayers and held gatherings for this purpose, especially on the holy seventh day, when they publicly receive training on their ancestral philosophy. He also

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[84] For this issue, see Walter Johnson, "On Agency," *Journal of Social History* 37, no. 1 (2003): 113–24; Aviva Ben-Ur, "Bound Together? Reassessing the 'Slave Community' and 'Resistance' Paradigms," *Journal of Global Slavery* 3, no. 3 (2018): 195–210.

[85] Franz Bömer, *Untersuchungen über die Religion der Sklaven in Griechenland und Rom*, 4 vols., 2nd ed. (Stuttgart: Steiner, 1981–1990). See also Stephen Hodkinson and Dick Geary, eds., *Slaves and Religions in Graeco-Roman Antiquity and Modern Brazil* (Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Press, 2012); Bassir Amiri, *Religion romaine et esclavage au Haut-Empire: Rome, Latium et Campanie* (Rome: Ecole Française de Rome, 2021); cf. the views espoused in Dan-El Padilla Peralta, "Slave Religiosity in the Roman Middle Republic," *Classical Antiquity* 36, no. 2 (2017): 317–69.

knew that they collected money for sacred purposes from first-fruits and sent it to Jerusalem with those who would offer sacrifices.[86]

Philo states that a significant proportion of the Jewish population of the city of Rome consisted of Jewish slaves and freedpersons, who managed to maintain their ethnic and religious identity despite the novel conditions of their enslavement away from home.[87] If Jewish slaves had a different ethnic and religious identity from their Roman masters, at the same time the Jewish community that emerged in Rome included freeborn, freed and slave members.

In 88 BCE, during the war between king Mithridates and the Romans, the king instigated the mass slaughter of the diasporic communities of Romans and Italians resident in the Greek cities of Asia Minor, including their freedmen and slaves of Italian origin.[88] Who were these slaves and freedmen and how were their identities created? A good way of exploring this question takes us to the cosmopolitan port of Delos in the Cyclades, where from the second century BCE onwards an Italian and Roman diaspora of businessmen and settlers made its presence visible. One of the characteristic aspects of their presence was the celebration of the quintessential Roman and Italian ritual of the Compitalia, a neighbourhood festival in honour of the Lares. The Lares, along with the Penates, were the key deities of Roman household cult; but they were also associated with the crossroad shrines that were the ritual nuclei of the neighbourhoods of Roman and Italian cities.[89] What is remarkable in both the household and the neighbourhood aspect of the cult of Lares is that slaves and freedpersons played a key role in organising a ritual on behalf of the whole household and the whole neighbourhood. The excavation of the Hellenistic settlement of Delos has brought to light the frescoes that adorned the houses of the Italian and Roman residents, with depictions of iconographic themes related to the Lares and

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86   Philo, *Embassy to Gaius*, 155–56.
87   Cf. David Noy, *Foreigners at Rome: Citizens and Strangers* (London: Duckworth, 2000): 255–67.
88   Appian, *Mithridatic War*, 4.22–23.
89   Harriet I. Flower, *The Dancing Lares and the Serpent in the Garden: Religion at the Roman Street Corner* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2017).

the Compitalia.[90] But the most significant aspect from our point of view is the Competaliasts, magistrates of the Italian community who were in charge of organising the festival of the Compitalia. The Competaliasts erected a number of inscriptions like the following:

> Damas, [slave] of Manius Clovius
> Thraseas, [slave] of Quintus and Publius Samiarius
> Agathokles, [slave] of Lucius Paconius
> Alexandros, [slave] of Lucius Babullius
> Aulus Apollodoros, [freedman] of Decimus Atanius
> Xenon, [slave] of Lucius and Marcus Mondicius
> Stephanos, [slave] of Quintus […]
> Damonikos, [slave] of Quintus Maecius
> Antiochos, [slave] of Titus Crepereius
> Tryphon, [slave] of Lucius Audius.
> Upon becoming Competaliasts, the aforementioned dedicated this in the year when Theodosios was magistrate.[91]

The Compitalia in Delos were organised by freedmen and slaves, as was also the case in Italy; this board of Competaliasts included nine slaves and one freedman. But while the masters and patrons recorded in this inscription have typical Italian and Roman names, the names of the slaves and freedmen are all Greek. It would be of course wrong to assume that Roman slaves who bore Greek names were necessarily Greek in origin;[92] but given the Greek context, and the exclusive use of Greek names for all these slaves and freedmen, it is highly plausible that many of them must have been Greek in origin. What were the ethnic and religious identities of these slaves and freedmen?[93] Were these the

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[90] Claire Hasenohr, "Les Compitalia à Délos," *Bulletin de Correspondance Hellénique* 127, no. 1 (2003): 167–249.

[91] *Inscriptions de Délos*, no. 1760.

[92] Christopher Bruun, "Greek or Latin? The Owner's Choice of Names for Vernae in Rome," in *Roman Slavery and Roman Material Culture*, ed. Michelle George (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013): 19–43.

[93] Claire Hasenohr, "Les Italiens à Délos: entre romanité et hellénisme," *Pallas* 73 (2007): 221–32; Claire Hasenohr, "L'emporion délien, creuset de mobilité sociale? Le cas des

kind of slaves and freedmen of Italian origins who were massacred by the supporters of Mithridates? If so, it is important to stress the existence of an ethnic and religious identity that linked together Roman and Italian masters and their slaves and freedmen. If the Greek names reflect the actual origins of these slaves, what conclusions should we draw about the ethnic and religious identities of the people who organised the characteristic festivals of the Italian and Roman community at Delos? It is likely that such slaves had retained their own original ethnic and religious identities; but it is equally plausible that the organisation of such rituals attests to some kind of adoption of Roman religious and ethnic identity by these slaves.[94] Would such slaves be on the way to be categorised as Italian slaves by third parties? Would they be on the way to an Italian self-understanding?

More generally, what exactly were the ethnic identities of first-generation foreign slaves in ancient societies? Research on slave ethnicities in New World societies has gradually revealed the processes of ethnogenesis that constructed such identities. Many of these ethnicities started as forms of categorisation: they reflected the slave ports which acted as collection centres of slaves from various areas of origin, or the geographical understanding of masters, slave traders and states. In the course of time, though, some of these ethnic categorisations were adopted by enslaved persons as self-understandings. This adoption was partly facilitated by processes of ethnogenesis in the origin areas of slaves, and partly fashioned by conditions in the slaveholding societies where slaves ended up.[95] Unfortunately, there

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esclaves affranchis italiens," in *Social Dynamics under Roman Rule: Mobility Status Change in the Provinces of Achaia and Macedonia*, ed. Athanassios D. Rizakis, Francesco Camia, and Sophia Zoumbaki (Athens: Institute of Historical Research, National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2017): 119–31.

[94] The same phenomenon is also attested in western Mediterranean during the same period, with the Roman diasporic community in Arles; see Nicolas Tran, "Esclaves et ministres des Lares dans la société de l'Arles antique," *Gallia* 71, no. 2 (2014): 103–20.

[95] Philip D. Morgan, "The Cultural Implications of the Atlantic Slave Trade: African Regional Origins, American Destinations and New World Developments," *Slavery & Abolition* 18, no. 1 (1997): 122–45; Mariza de Carvalho Soares, *People of Faith: Slavery and African Catholics in Eighteenth-Century Rio de Janeiro* (Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2011); James Sidbury and Jorge Cañizares-Esguerra, "Mapping Eth-

is currently very little work explicitly focused on these issues in the case of ancient slavery.[96]

These comments introduce the most unfamiliar aspect of the ethnic and religious identities of ancient slaves: i.e. the identities of second-generation slaves, people who were born into slavery and were native inhabitants of the societies they lived in. One of the biggest gaps in the study of ancient slavery is the absence of detailed works devoted to the identities of such slaves.[97] This is a major difference between the study of ancient slaveries and the study of New World slaveries. The New World colonial societies called such second-generation slaves Creoles, and there is a substantial literature studying the major differences that existed between first-generation Africa-born slaves and second-generation America-born Creoles.[98] Particularly significant in this respect is the link between the identities of second-generation slaves and their first-generation ancestors or first-generation fellow slaves: did second-generation slaves primarily see themselves as enslaved native inhabitants, or did they prioritise the identity link with the native homeland of their parents? Did they construct new ethnic identities, that were distinct both from the original identities of their first-generation slave ancestors, as well as from the identities of the free native inhabitants? Or did all three forms of identity co-exist, and in what ways?

In a highly influential article, Walter Scheidel argued that during the Roman imperial period the overwhelming majority of the slave popula-

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nogenesis in the Early Modern Atlantic," *William & Mary Quarterly* 68, no. 2 (2011): 181–208.

[96] See Peter Hunt, "Trojan Slaves in Classical Athens: Ethnic Identity among Athenian Slaves," in *Communities and Networks in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Claire Taylor and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 128–54.

[97] The only comprehensive study concerns Roman *vernae*, and gives limited space to issues of identity: see Herrmann-Otto, *Ex ancilla natus.*

[98] Sidney W. Mintz and Richard Price, *The Birth of African-American Culture: An Anthropological Perspective* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1992); Ira Berlin, *Many Thousands Gone: The First Two Centuries of Slavery in North America* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 1998); Mieko Nishida, *Slavery and Identity: Ethnicity, Gender, and Race in Salvador, Brazil, 1808–1888* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 2003); Linda M. Heywood and John K. Thornton, *Central Africans, Atlantic Creoles and the Foundation of the Americas, 1585–1660* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007); Jane G. Landers, *Atlantic Creoles in the Age of Revolutions* (Cambridge, MA and London: Harvard University Press, 2010).

tion was replenished through natural reproduction of Roman slaves.[99] The issue is hotly debated, as other scholars have emphasised the significance of sources like abandoned infants, violent enslavement and trade.[100] There is no space to rehearse the arguments of this debate in this context;[101] but even if the proportion of natural reproduction was not as high as originally suggested by Scheidel, there should be no doubt that slave children and abandoned infants, which for our purposes count both as second-generation slaves born and raised in slavery, accounted for a very substantial number of the Roman slave population, probably more than half of it. This should have profound implications for the study of Roman slaves and slavery; if at least half the slave population were native inhabitants, born and raised in the slaveholding societies where they lived as slaves, what consequences did that have on their identities and on their strategies and practices? A telling example of this blind spot occurs in one of the most stimulating recent syntheses on ancient slavery. The book devotes a substantial section on slave culture, and examines the fascinating examples of foreign slaves in Athens and the Greek-speaking slaves from the Eastern Mediterranean in Republican Rome.[102] The identity and culture of slaves as foreigners is obviously an important aspect; but the absence of any discussion of the equivalent identity and culture of second-generation slaves shows the current lack of conceptual tools for studying this issue in ancient slavery studies.

The issue requires a detailed methodological discussion on its own, something impossible in the space available here; I will simply mention

[99] Walter Scheidel, "Quantifying the Sources of Slaves in the Early Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 87 (1997): 156–69; Walter Scheidel, "The Roman Slave Supply," in *The Cambridge World History of Slavery*, vol. 1, *The Ancient Mediterranean World*, ed. Keith Bradley and Paul Cartledge (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011): 287–310.

[100] William V. Harris, "Child-Exposure in the Roman Empire," *Journal of Roman Studies* 84 (1994): 1–22; William V. Harris, "Demography, Geography and the Sources of Roman Slaves," *Journal of Roman Studies* 89 (1999): 62–75; Keith Bradley, "On Captives under the Principate," *Phoenix* 58, no. 3–4 (2004): 298–318.

[101] For a stimulating overview, see Niall McKeown, *The Invention of Ancient Slavery?* (London: Duckworth, 2007): 124–40. See also the argument for a more balanced assessment of Roman slave sources in Bruun, "The Owner's Choice of Names for Vernae in Rome."

[102] Peter Hunt, *Ancient Greek and Roman Slavery*: 83–98.

one relevant example. In the course of the first century BCE the funeral iconography of Roman Italy experienced the emergence of funerary reliefs in bust form, often depicting family groups; a substantial number of these reliefs depicted freedpersons, so there is a strong connection between freedpersons and the emergence of this form of funerary commemoration. Equally remarkable is the fact that these reliefs, despite the initial impression of being veristic portraits, employ physiognomic elements which also occur in the portraits of elite Romans.[103] The consumers of these portraits and their audiences were clearly familiar with the Roman iconographic language, otherwise these portraits of freedpersons would have little effect and value; consumers and audiences were cultural insiders. Are such developments more likely to be associated with first-generation foreign slaves or second-generation native slaves? The answer would probably involve people from both categories, but it helps to emphasise the need for a comprehensive study of the identities of second-generation slaves. The link with the physiognomic elements that appear in elite iconography also underlines the fact that elites constituted an important reference group for a section of freedpersons.[104]

We can now turn to the religious identities of enslaved persons. Towards the end of the fourth century CE, the Church Father Jerome met an elderly man called Malchus in the vicinity of Syrian Antioch. He was so impressed, that he went on to write a text that purports to present Malchus' first-person narrative of his early life of Christian renunciation, his captivity by Saracen raiders, his life in slavery as a shepherd, and his miraculous escape to freedom.[105] Particularly interesting from our point of view is an incident during his life in slavery:

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[103] Paul Zanker, "Grabreliefs römischer Freigelassener," *Jahrbuch des Deutschen Archäologischen Instituts* 90 (1975): 267–315; Barbara E. Borg, "The Face of the Social Climber: Roman Freedmen and Elite Ideology," in *Free at Last! The Impact of Freed Slaves on the Roman Empire*, ed. Sinclair Bell and Teresa Ramsby (London: Bloomsbury, 2012): 25–49.

[104] Marc Kleijwegt, "The Social Identity of Roman Freedmen: Probing the Religious Evidence," *Antiguedad Religiones y Sociedades* 4 (2001): 181–96.

[105] For this text, see Christa Gray, *Jerome, Vita Malchi: Introduction, Text, Translation, and Commentary* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015). For the wider context, see Noel Lenski, "Captivity and Slavery among the Saracens in Late Antiquity (ca. 250–630 CE)," *Antiquité Tardive* 19 (2011): 237–66.

Oh! How nothing is ever safe with the devil! O how intricate and unspeakable are his snares! Thus, even when I was in hiding, his envy found me! My master, seeing that his flock was increasing and discovering no deception in my stance—for I knew that the Apostle had instructed that masters be served faithfully, like God—, wished to reward me, so that I would become even more faithful towards him. So he gave me that woman fellow-slave who had once been captured together with me. And when I refused and said that I was a Christian and was not allowed to take as wife a woman whose husband was still alive—for her husband, who had been captured along with us, had been taken away by another master—, my master, unrelenting, turned furious, drew his sword and started to attack me. And if I hadn't been quick enough to seize the woman by the arm, he would have shed my blood on the spot. Deep night had already come, darker than usual and all too soon for me. I take my new wife into a shabby cave. With sadness leading our 'nuptial' procession, we felt unacknowledged loathing for each other. At that moment I truly felt my captivity. I threw myself on the ground and began to lament for the monk I was losing, with the following words: 'Is it for this that I, wretched man, was preserved? Is it to this that my crimes have led me, that with my hair already greying I should become a husband, while before I was a virgin? What good does it do me to have shown contempt for my parents, my homeland, my paternal property in the name of the Lord, if I do the thing which I tried to avoid through my contempt? Unless I am undergoing all this, because I have longed for my homeland... What are we to do, my soul? Are we to perish or win? Shall we wait for the hand of the Lord or shall I stab myself with my own blade? Turn the sword against yourself! Your death, my soul, should be feared more than that of the body. The preservation of chastity also has its martyrdom. Let the witness of Christ lie unburied in the desert. I myself shall be both persecutor and martyr'.[106]

What makes this passage remarkable is that a slave describes how significant one of his identities from his earlier life in freedom was for

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[106] Jerome, *Life of Malchus*, 6.

his identity in enslavement and how this religious identity shaped his actions to a very important extent. Malchus had lived as a Christian ascetic for some time, before deciding to leave the monastery he was living in order to return to his fatherland and reclaim his paternal property. It was during his return journey that the caravan of travellers he had joined for safety was captured by the Saracens. His Christian identity shaped how he perceived his enslavement: it was punishment for the decision to return to the affairs of the world. But Christian identity also shaped his behaviour as a slave: the master's decision to marry him with a married captive with a living husband went against the core of his Christian beliefs about sexual renunciation and matrimony. Malchus risked his master's ire by initially refusing to marry the fellow captive; and even after the forced marriage, he agreed with his 'wife' to have an unconsummated marriage, thus risking again violent punishment if their secret was discovered by their master.[107]

But religious identity was not only something that slaves inherited from their lives before enslavement; it was also an important identity for people born into slavery. A fascinating illustration of the phenomenon comes from a little-known third-century CE martyrological text, which has been preserved in Greek, Latin and Syriac versions. The text concerns a female slave martyr, whose name is given as Ariadne in the Greek, and as Maria in the Latin and Syriac version.

> Now at that time the blessed Mary, the bride of the Christ, had grown up in the Christian confession; for she was the slave of Tertullius, a chief man of the city. But she was altogether a free woman of the Christ, and as it is written, 'He who is called being a slave in the Christ, is the Lord's freeman.' Now the birthday of the son of Tertullius arrived. And on that day he offered sacrifices and libations to the demons. And the noble Mary was slandered in the presence of her mistress by one of her

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[107] An equally fascinating example of the multiple identities of Christian slaves appears in the fifth-century CE autobiography of St. Patrick; for this text, see Mary Ann Beavis, "Six Years a Slave: The *Confessio* of St Patrick as Early Christian Slave Narrative," *Irish Theological Quarterly* 85, no. 4 (2020): 339–51. For an overview of the historical relationship between Christianity and slave agency, see Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Christianity and Slavery: Towards an Entangled History?," *Post Augustum* 5 (2021): 62–103.

companions. And she called her and said to her, 'Tell me, why didst thou fast, and didst not keep the feast with us? Was it a vexation to thee?' Mary said, 'Because I have lately been fasting. Or didst thou not know that I am a Christian, like my fathers?' And her mistress constrained her by force to eat. But she cried to the heavenly Bridegroom, to Jesus the Christ. And she answered and said, 'Ye have power over this my body, but not over my soul. Let my speech be heard (though spoken) with boldness. Dost thou not understand that the festival of thy son was celebrated with the music of flutes and with cymbals and with impure rites and with drums and with lyres? But the festival of the Christians is celebrated with fasting and with praying and with purity and with spiritual songs.' But as her mistress could not endure her boldness, she said, 'I will treat thee so that thou shalt die of scourging.' Mary answered, saying, 'Do what thou wilt, because of the help of the Lord that is with me.' And when her husband Tertullius came from the forum she told him about the blessed Mary. And immediately without examination he commanded them to scourge her with whips. And he commanded them further to shut her up alone in a closet, and to give her food by measure. But the blessed one praised God, praying continually, that she might remain constant in bearing testimony for the Christ.[108]

Ariadne/Maria states that she had inherited her Christian religious identity from her slave parents; as with Malchus and his female fellow slave, Ariadne/Maria's actions were shaped by the norms and dictates of her religious identity. The religious identity of Ariadne/Maria was fully compatible with her categorisation as a slave; but at the same time, where the wishes of her masters clashed with her own religious identity, the religious identity provided a means that in Ariadne/Maria's eyes legitimised disputing the authority of the master and resisting orders.

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[108] *Life of Mary, Slave of Tertullius*, 100b–101a; translation of the Syriac version, adapted from Agnes Smith Lewis, *Select Narratives of Holy Women: Translation from the Syro-Antiochene or Sinai Palimpsest* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1900): 85–86. See Hans R. Seeliger, "Der Tertullusprozess. Zum Besitz christlicher Sklaven im 2. und 3. Jahrhundert," in *Fünfzig Jahre Forschungen zur antiken Sklaverei an der Mainzer Akademie 1950–2000: Miscellanea zum Jubiläum*, ed. Heinz Bellen and Heinz Heinen (Stuttgart: Steiner, 2001): 365–80.

Malchus and Ariadne/Maria were slaves; but they also had religious identities, and their historical agency involved both aspects of their identities as slaves, as well as their identities as Christians. Paying equal attention to both identities is essential.

6.   The Temporality of Identity: Freedom and Slavery

The next aspect to broach is the temporal relationship between past and present identities of enslaved persons. I shall focus here on merely one issue: the link between freedom and slavery in the self-understanding of enslaved persons. The enslavement of formerly free persons meant that the identities and experiences they had as free persons had diverse consequences on their new identities and experiences during their lives in slavery. At the same time, we shall examine the various ways in which freedpersons negotiated the link between their identities and experiences under slavery with their post-emancipation identities and experiences.

One of the most fascinating speeches of Cicero, delivered in 69 BCE, concerned a series of complex affairs in the community of Larinum, in the central Italian region of Samnium. What is of particular interest is a series of events that took place in the course of the Social War between Rome and her erstwhile Italian allies between 91-88 BCE. Cicero narrates the internecine affairs of the prominent local family of the Oppianici and accuses Oppianicus, the enemy of Cluentius, Cicero's client, of a series of crimes. Among these was Oppianicus' alleged attempt to inherit the fortune of Dinaea, his mother in law, by ensuring that his son, Oppianicus the Younger, would be the only surviving inheritor of Dinaea's fortune.

> There was a woman from Larinum called Dinaea, the mother-in-law of Oppianicus the Elder. She had three sons, Marcus Aurius, Numerius Aurius and Gnaeus Magius, and one daughter, Magia, who was married to Oppianicus the Elder. When he was a young lad, Marcus Aurius was captured at Asculum during the Italian war. He fell into the hands of the senator Quintus Sergius […] and was kept in the *ergastulum* (estate

prison) at Sergius' estate. However, Numerius Aurius, his brother, died and left their brother Gnaeus Magius as his heir. Later, Magia, Oppianicus the Elder's wife, died too. Lastly, the single remaining son of Dinaea, Gnaeus Magius, died. He appointed as his heir Oppianicus the Younger, his sister's son, and ordered that the inheritance be shared with his mother Dinaea. In the meantime, a trustworthy and precise informer came to Dinaea. He announced that her son, Marcus Aurius, was alive and lived in slavery in the Ager Gallicus.[109]

As one might expect, Cicero goes on to accuse Oppianicus of masterminding the execution of the enslaved Marcus Aurius, the only other surviving inheritor of Dinaea's fortune. Despite the inherent interest of this amazing crime story, with much further lurid detail, our interest here lies solely in Marcus Aurius, the son of a rich Italian family, who was captured in war and found himself enslaved in an estate nearby the Adriatic Sea. Our text is not interested in exploring the identities of Marcus Aurius during his enslavement; but how likely is it that he would have conceived of himself as a slave, rather than as a free person in captivity? Or take the example of the father of the Athenian Euxitheos, who was captured by enemies during the last phase of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta (411-404 BCE) and was sold as a slave in the island of Leukas, before finally managing to come across compatriots who ensured his return to Athens. Euxitheos' life in slavery was not a short period; his son had to admit that he spoke with a Leukadian accent even after he returned to Athens, so we must assume that he worked as a slave in Leukas for many years.[110] How did he conceptualise his identity in the course of these many years of servitude?

If texts that refer to real historical cases do not help answer our questions, perhaps we can profitably turn to fictional examples for illumination. Among the most eloquent texts is a passage from a novel by Achilles Tatius. At the point of time in which our passage occurs, Leukippe, the female protagonist, who was descended from an elite family of Byzan-

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[109] Cicero, *In Support of Cluentius*, 21.
[110] Demosthenes, *Against Euboulides*, 18.

tion, has been sold as a slave to the estate of Thersandros and Melite, a wealthy Ephesian couple. Thersandros initially tried to seduce Leukippe, but after his failure he threatens to use his right as a master to sexually violate his female slave.

> And Leukippe responded: 'If you want to treat me as a tyrant would, I in turn will be your subject; but you shall not use force on me'. And, turning to Sosthenes, she said to him: 'Be my witness and tell him how I react to blows. Because you wronged me even more than him'. And Sosthenes, put to shame by having been proven guilty, said: 'Master, you should card the body of this woman with whips and throw her to a million tortures, so that she might learn not to show contempt to her master'. 'Go on, do what Sosthenes tells you', Leukippe said. 'He gives you good advice. Set up the tortures. Let him bring the torture wheel; here are my arms—stretch them out. Let him bring whips too; here is my back—beat it. Let him bring fire; here is my body—burn it. Let him bring an iron blade; here is my throat—cut it. Behold, everyone, a new type of contest. One woman contends with all manners of torture, and is victorious in all. [...] Arm yourself then. Take up your whips against me, the torture wheel, the fire, the iron blade. Have Sosthenes too, your councillor, fight by your side. Naked, alone, a woman, I have one weapon: my freedom. But freedom cannot be beaten up by blows, nor cut up with iron blades, nor burnt in fire. I will never surrender it. Even if you try to burn it up, you will find that fire is not hot enough'.[111]

Leukippe claims that, despite her current condition of enslavement, her real status as an inviolable free woman will protect her from Thersandros's threat to rape her by exercising his right as a master. This claim makes sense in the fictional context of the novel: readers were familiar with the narrative precondition that despite all kinds of threats and dangers faced by the couple in love, in the end the chastity of the female

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[111] Achilles Tatius, *Leukippe and Kleitophon*, 6.21–22; see Alain Billault, "Achilles Tatius, Slaves and Masters," in *Slaves and Masters in the Ancient Novel*, ed. Stelios Panayotakis and Michael Paschalis (Groningen: Barkhuis and Groningen University Library, 2019): 95–106.

heroine will survive intact and the lovers will be reunited in matrimony.[112] In reality, of course, most free women who fell in conditions of captivity and enslavement would have found such a line of argument of little use against their new masters.[113] But it is the very absurdity of the claim that underlines the power of an identity espoused by many first-generation slaves: that, notwithstanding their current predicament, they were essentially free people in captivity.

Many ancient fictional texts base their plots on narratives of recognition: the slave heroes were really children of free parents who had lived their lives in slavery without knowing their true origins; the plot sets out a series of events that lead to the final recognition of the original status and the return of the heroes to the privileges inherent in their original status. Such narratives often insist on the inherent distinction between 'real' slaves, descendants of slaves and of servile character, who deserve to be slaves, and of 'temporary' slaves, who are unjustly enslaved for a limited period of time, but who retain their free character and will ultimately manage to regain their freedom. Scholarly discussion of this theme has focused on its ideological and essentialist assumptions; this is undoubtedly true, and these modern discussions have made important contributions.[114] What has not been explored so far is the extent to which a significant number of ancient slaves espoused a similar view of their own identities and the historical consequences of such a phenomenon. To use the terminology of Merton we discussed above, we need to explore the implications of the fact that many slaves used as reference

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[112] Simon Goldhill, *Foucault's Virginity: Ancient Erotic Fiction and the History of Sexuality* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995).

[113] Kyle Harper, "Freedom, Slavery, and Female Sexual Honor in Antiquity," in *On Human Bondage: After Slavery and Social Death*, ed. John Bodel and Walter Scheidel (Hoboken, NJ: Wiley Blackwell, 2017): 109–21; John Hilton, "The Role of Gender and Sexuality in the Enslavement and Liberation of Female Slaves in the Ancient Greek Romances," in *Slaves and Masters in the Ancient Novel*, ed. Stelios Panayotakis and Michael Paschalis (Groningen: Barkhuis and Groningen University Library, 2019): 1–18.

[114] See e.g. William Fitzgerald, *Slavery and the Roman Literary Imagination* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000): 87–114; Anastasia Serghidou, *Servitude tragique: esclaves et héros déchus dans la tragédie grecque* (Besançon: Institut des Sciences et Techniques de l'Antiquité, 2010); William M. Owens, *The Representation of Slavery in the Greek Novel: Resistance and Appropriation* (London and New York: Routledge, 2019).

group for normative and comparative purposes a group (free people) to which they no longer belonged.

We should also explore the same phenomenon in relation to freedpersons: the multiple ways they framed their identities in relation to their lives, experiences and identities in slavery. Freedpersons were by definition former slaves; but at the same time they were also free people: it is accordingly an open question how much their identities would owe to their servile past and how much to their free present. Generally speaking, we can register a major disjuncture between Greek and Roman societies in this respect. Most of our evidence for freedpersons comes from epigraphic sources, so my comments are primarily restricted to this kind of source. Freedpersons are generally invisible in Greek funerary and dedicatory inscriptions of all periods;[115] this is not because they did not create tombstones and dedications, but because they overwhelmingly chose to make invisible their past lives in slavery and exclude them from their post-emancipation identities.[116] Freedpersons are extremely common in Latin inscriptions; this is obviously dependent on the fact that many (but not all) Roman freedpersons also gained citizenship alongside their manumission, and therefore the recording of their freed status is also an advertisement of their newfound status as citizens. Historians have observed that the proportion of individuals that record their status in Latin inscriptions decreases substantially from the first century CE onwards, although interpretations of this phenomenon differ.[117] In any case, it is remarkable to note a number of Latin inscriptions in which freedpersons make explicit reference to their servile past and stress continuity between their identities in slavery and their identities in freedom.

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[115] The overwhelming majority of freedpersons attested in Greek inscriptions occurs in the Roman imperial period and they are usually freedpersons of Roman citizens.

[116] Hellenistic Thessaly constitutes the relative exception to this generalization; see Richard Bouchon, "Statut(s) des affranchis dans la Thessalie hellénistique," in *Statuts personnels et main-d'œuvre en Méditerranée hellénistique*, ed. Stéphanie Maillot and Julien Zurbach (Clermont Ferrand: Presses universitaires Blaise Pascal, 2021): 165–91.

[117] Lily Ross Taylor, "Freedmen and Freeborn in the Epitaphs of Imperial Rome," *American Journal of Philology* 82, no. 2 (1961): 113–32; Pier Luigi Morbidoni, *Freedom and Citizenship in the Roman Empire: Legal and Epigraphic Approaches to Status Identification* (PhD diss., University of Edinburgh, 2019).

I commence with a funerary inscription from second-third century CE Brescia:

> Marcus Hostilius Dicaeus. I came to this city when I was 14 years of age. The home into which I came—neither home nor master did I change, except for this, the eternal one. I lived for 70 years. No-one summoned me to court or before a judge. You who are standing and reading this, tell us: If this is not the best, what is better? Clodia Paullina Optuma gave this site.[118]

Given his triple name, Dicaeus was clearly a freedman at the point of his death. Dicaeus stressed his long life in Brescia, from his arrival at the age of 14, presumably as a slave, to his death at the age of 70. Furthermore, Dicaeus was proud of the fact that during this long period he remained with the same master and in the same house, even after his manumission. The reason for this explicit reference to his servile past is that it is evidence of his moral character and his trustworthiness; this is underlined by his reference to the fact that he was never summoned in court. Dicaeus did not refer to the indignities of his life in slavery; the continuity between his servile and freed identities was based on the alternative modalities of slavery that framed the self-understanding of enslaved persons. Another fascinating example is recorded in a Latin inscription from early imperial Assisi:

> Publius Decimius Eros Merula, freedman of Publius, clinical doctor, surgeon, eye specialist, priest (*sevir*) of Augustus.
> He gave 50,000 sesterces for his freedom;
> he gave 2,000 sesterces to the community for becoming a *sevir*;
> he gave 30,000 sesterces to the temple of Hercules for statues to be set up;
> he gave 37,000 sesterces to the public treasury for the paving of streets;
> the day before he died he left an estate of 14,000 (?) sesterces.[119]

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[118] *L'Année Epigraphique* (1980), no. 503. See Kleijwegt, "Freed Slaves, Self-Presentation and Corporate Identity": 96–100.
[119] *Corpus Inscriptionum Latinarum* XI, no. 5400. For the monument in which this inscrip-

The inscription expresses pride in the financial resources that Eros was able to command for various purposes; but while most amounts mentioned concern public benefactions, Eros also records with pride the amount of 50,000 sesterces he was able to pay to buy his own freedom. Professional success was the common link between his identity in slavery and his identity in freedom. The pride about overcoming the travails of bad luck and showcasing moral virtues despite the condition of slavery that we saw above in the freedman's speech from the *Cena Trimalchionis* founds its echo in these inscriptions.

7.   The entanglement of slave identities

I have presented a general typology of the multiple identities of enslaved persons in ancient societies. But were these various identities entangled, and if so, how? We can start with an example that illustrates the co-existence of these different identities in the process of naming, the primary form of identification for all persons. There are about 1,000 slave names extant for late archaic and classical Athens.[120] The most popular slave names were almost without exception ethnic (e.g. Lydos = the Lydian) and foreign names (e.g. Manes, a Phrygian name). Such names clearly identified slaves as foreigners; in addition, a number of other names stressed desirable slave qualities (e.g. Epikerdes = the profitable). Nevertheless, once the full range of names was taken into account, it emerged that half of all attested slaves and two thirds of all freedpersons bore Greek names shared with Athenian citizens. This remarkable phenomenon was caused by a series of overlapping factors. Some Athenian slaves were of Greek origin, and accordingly bore Greek names. Many slaves must have been second-generation slaves born in Athens, and it is plausible that such native-born slaves would have Greek names. It is likely that at least some slaves were given names by their parents, rather

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tion is recorded, see Margaret L. Laird, *Civic Monuments and the Augustales in Roman Italy* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2015): 215–22.

[120] Charilaos Fragiadakis, *Die Attischen Sklavennamen von der spätarchaischen Epoche bis in die römische Kaiserzeit* (Athens: Self-publication, 1988).

than their masters: this stresses the significance of family and kinship in slave identity. It is also evident that slaves with 'white-collar' and 'privileged' jobs tended overwhelmingly to have Greek names shared with the Athenians; clearly, work and function had a significant impact on the naming of enslaved persons. Finally, various sources attest the phenomenon of name change, in which marginalised persons like slaves would adopt 'better' names in order to avoid easy detection as slaves and the casual mistreatment by third parties that came with it.[121] The contradictory evidence of Athenian slave names was a direct consequence of the multiple identities of enslaved persons in classical Athens.

Did these various forms of self-understanding create group identities for enslaved persons in ancient societies? And how exactly did these group identities affect slave agency? Identity politics in the contemporary world often lead to the fragmentation of wider subjectivities; it is accordingly unsurprising that the diverse self-understandings of enslaved persons in antiquity had grave implications for group identities based on the shared classification as slaves. The most prominent group identity based on slave classification was that of slaves belonging to the same household. This group identity became particularly prominent in the late republican and early imperial period, when Roman masters created large slaveholdings consisting often of hundreds of slaves, a phenomenon generally rare in earlier historical periods. At the same time, though, such forms of slave groupness reflect the significance of the master's household as a unifying link and the distinction between groups of slaves belonging to different households. Self-understandings based on work and function could create cleavages between slaves in positions of authority and slaves with lower work status; a shared professional status could link slaves with freeborn and freed people, while distinguishing them from other slaves with different professions. The diverse identities of enslaved persons had often negative implications

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[121] Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Athenian Slave Names and Athenian Social History," *Zeitschrift für Papyrologie und Epigraphik* 175 (2010): 113–44; Kostas Vlassopoulos, "Plotting Strategies, Networks and Communities in Classical Athens: The Evidence of Slave Names," in *Communities and Networks in the Ancient Greek World*, ed. Claire Taylor and Kostas Vlassopoulos (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015): 101–27.

for the groupness of the shared slave identity; but this merely stresses the significance of forms of identity and groupness that brought slaves together with freeborn and freed people. The history of enslaved persons cannot be restricted to studying exclusively slaves; it must be extended to studying the numerous mixed membership and reference groups that were relevant for slaves.

If the diverse self-understandings could create fragmentation, they could also intermingle. Collective slave agency was usually the result of the entanglement between the different identities of enslaved persons. The Roman historian Livy discusses an event that took place in 198 BCE, in the aftermath of the Roman victory over Carthage in the Second Carthaginian War (218-201 BCE).

> If Gaul was unexpectedly quiet that year, what was almost a slave uprising broke out around Rome. Carthaginian hostages were being kept under guard at Setia. As they were sons of prominent men, there was a large host of slaves with them. The number of the latter was growing, since, after the recent African war, captives of African origin were purchased from the booty as slaves by the people of Setia themselves. *** After they had formed a conspiracy, they sent some of their number first to the territory of Setia, then around Norba and Cerceii to incite other slaves. When all had been sufficiently prepared, they had decided to attack the people of Setia, when they would be intent on watching the games, which would fairly soon take place in the town. Setia was captured in the bloodshed of the sudden uprising […] News of this horrible incident was brought to Rome, to the praetor Lucius Cornelius Lentulus. Two slaves reached him before dawn and revealed everything in an orderly manner: what had happened and what was likely to happen. The praetor ordered that they be kept under guard in his house. Then, he summoned the Senate and informed them of the news brought by the informants. He received orders to set off to investigate and suppress that conspiracy [...] He arrived at Setia, while no-one knew where he was going. There, he swiftly arrested the leaders of the conspiracy, and the slaves fled the city […] Not very long afterwards, it became known that some slaves remaining from the same conspiracy were about to occupy

Praeneste. The praetor Lucius Cornelius set off and exacted punishment from about 500 men, who were involved in the crime. The state was in fear that the Carthaginian hostages and captives were behind this. For this reason, night watches were instituted in the streets of Rome, the junior magistrates patrolling them. Also, the triad of officials responsible for prisons and executions were ordered to guard the Prison of the Quarries with more vigilance. Also the praetor sent letters around to the Latin communities, advising that the hostages should be kept in private houses and not be given access to public spaces, while the captives should be bound with chains weighing at least ten pounds, and detained nowhere else but under guard in the public prison.[122]

Livy identifies three groups that took part in this conspiracy: Carthaginian elite hostages, the slaves who accompanied them, and captives from the recent Carthaginian War who had been sold as slaves in various Italian communities. Livy characterises the event as a slave conspiracy; at the very least, we can accept that the Romans saw fit to stress the participation of slaves in the conspiracy. At the same time, it is equally clear that what brought the three groups together was their common association with Carthage and its African territory. Given the fact that most captives had recently become enslaved, it is natural to assume that most of them saw themselves as free people in captivity. It is fairly obvious that the groups identified by Livy were united by the opposition between Carthage and Rome; we are not explicitly told whether other slaves, who had no link with Carthage or Africa, joined the conspiracy, though this would be a plausible interpretation of Livy's text. Was this a conspiracy of slaves who happened to be Carthaginian and African in origin, or a conspiracy of Carthaginians and Africans, most of whom happened to be slaves at that moment?[123] This is a telling example of the entanglement between the different identities of enslaved persons.

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[122] Livy, *History of Rome*, 32.26.4–18.
[123] For this event, see Keith R. Bradley, *Slavery and Rebellion in the Roman World, 140 BC–70 BC* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1989): 41–42; Gregory G. Golden, *Crisis Management during the Roman Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013): 71–73.

Around 400 CE, Melania and Pinianus, a Roman aristocratic couple, decided to liquidate their vast wealth and donate it to the Church. But things did not go as planned:

> And while Melania and Pinianus were making these plans, the enemy of truth, the devil, raised a most challenging trial for them. He felt envy at the young couple's godly fervour and suborned Severus, the brother of the blessed Pinianus, and he convinced the slaves of Melania and Pinianus to say: 'By no means are we being put up for sale! If we are forced, rather than being put on the market, we will have your brother Severus as our master, and he will buy us himself'. This disturbed them greatly, seeing their slaves in their estates around Rome revolting.[124]

This event was the outcome of a collusion between Severus and the slaves; they were both against the piecemeal sale of the slaves on the market, something that would raise the greatest revenue for Melania and Pinianus, and in favour of selling the slaves *en bloc* to Severus. The passage does not explicitly state what were the motives of Severus and the slaves, but it is not difficult to gauge them: Severus would benefit by purchasing the slaves at a bargain price; the slaves would manage to maintain their families and communities, which would be seriously disrupted if they were sold piecemeal. This collective action involved both their identities as slaves, as well as their family and kinship identities and the wish to protect them.

8.   Conclusion

The future study of ancient slaveries must maintain a delicate but necessary balance. On the one hand, the categorisation of millions of people as slaves had huge implications for ancient societies; not only did it severely affect the lives of enslaved persons, but it also shaped all aspects of the economic, social, political and cultural life of these societies. We

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[124] Gerontius, *Life of Melania*, 10.

must never lose sight of this fact; but, on the other hand, we must also take seriously into account the precise ways in which slave categorisation affected slave self-understanding and the multiple alternative identities that enslaved persons inherited, constructed and maintained. We have explored above the classification of people as slaves and its impact on the self-understanding of enslaved persons. At the same time, we have examined a range of other self-understandings of enslaved persons based on work, gender, family, kinship, ethnicity and religion. Some of these identities employed categorical modes, by stressing shared features like slave status, work or ethnicity; in other cases the relational mode stressed relationships like those between masters and slaves, or among slaves, as e.g. in slave families.

Slaves belonged to diverse membership groups. The biggest membership group was that based on the shared categorisation as slaves; slaves employed various modalities of slavery in order to construct identities on the basis of slave status. At the same time, the shared slave status was cross-cut by hierarchies; slave overseers and managers or slaves who owned other slaves could create distinct identities and see masters rather than slaves as their reference group. Furthermore, slave populations in many ancient societies consisted primarily of first-generation slaves, who had lived a substantial part of their lives as free people; many of these slaves identified themselves as free people in captivity and saw freeborn people as their reference group. In other societies, second-generation slaves constituted a substantial proportion or even the majority of slaves. Such slaves were, in one way or another, native inhabitants and cultural insiders of the societies they lived in and their identities were shaped in various ways by this basic fact.

The study of ancient slavery must be reoriented towards the role of slave agency in the changing history of ancient societies, economies, politics and cultures. Achieving this aim necessitates both breaking down the multiple identities of enslaved persons, as well as reconstructing the diverse and often contradictory communities they participated in. Enslaved persons did not act solely on the basis of their identity as slaves; they were also historical agents on the basis of their alternative identities. Sometimes these various identities created fragmentation and

pointed in divergent directions, while at other times they were strongly entangled. The above discussion has ranged extensively in space and time, covering the whole of the ancient Mediterranean, Near East and temperate Europe between the archaic period and late antiquity. While this was necessary for illustrating the diverse identities of enslaved persons in antiquity, future work will need to focus on specific temporal and spatial entanglements, while also taking into account wider historical changes in identity formation among enslaved persons. Joe Miller's plea for a dynamic global history of slavery is a powerful source of inspiration for writing a history from below which puts ancient enslaved persons at its centre.[125]

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[125] See his ultimate plea in Joseph C. Miller, *The Problem of Slavery as History* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2012).

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This lecture explores the multiple identities of enslaved persons in ancient societies. Ancient masters and slaveholding societies often behaved as if the only identity that mattered for enslaved persons was their classification as slaves. While slave classification had profound implications, it was not the only identity that mattered. Employing key conceptual tools from the study of identities, it analyses the diversity of the identities of enslaved persons around six axes. The first axis concerns the imposed identity of slavery and its impact on the self-understanding of enslaved persons. The second examines work and function and the extent to which these led to the creation of identities. The third focuses on gender, family and kinship: male and female identities and the identities and roles of spouses, partners, parents, children, siblings and relatives. The fourth explores ethnic and religious identities. The fifth concerns time: the identities of freedpersons and of enslaved persons who had lived as free and how these identities related to their past. Finally, the sixth axis explores the entanglement between the diverse identities of enslaved persons and the groupness of slave identities.

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